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THE
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Anecdotes, Similes, Emblems, Illustrations;
Expository, Scientific, Geographical, His-
torical, and Homiletic, Gathered from
a Wide Range of Home and Foreign
Literature, on the Verses of The Bible

BY

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SECOND CORINTHIANS



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INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

I. THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE TWO EPISTLES. St. Paul's departure from Ephesus was probably hastened by the tumult raised by the shrine-makers of Artemis (or Diana) against him (Acts xix. 21; xx. 1). It was some time before Pentecost, in the year 58, when he "departed for to go into Macedonia." He journeyed to Troas, the port of embarkation for Macedonia, where he stayed for a while awaiting the return of Titus from Corinth, and making use of the "door opened" to him at this place to preach Christ (chap. ii. 12, 13). Accordingly we find a Pauline Church in existence at Troas on the Apostle's return journey this way in the following spring (Acts xx. 6-12). But Titus did not arrive at the time expected; and the Apostle, finding "no rest in his spirit" on this account, oppressed with anxiety about the Church of Corinth, bade farewell to his new friends at Troas, and pushed on to meet Titus in Macedonia. This was the darkest hour in the Apostle's history since the days he spent in blindness at Damascus (chap. vii. 5). Corinth appeared to be in full revolt against him. Galatia was falling away to "another gospel." He had narrowly escaped with his life from the enraged populace of Ephesus—"wild beasts" with whom he had long been fighting, and at whose mercy he had left his flock in that city (1 Cor. xv. 32). He was "pressed out of measure, above strength." Under this continued strain of excitement and anxiety, his strength succumbed; he was seized with an attack of sickness, which threatened to terminate his life (chap. i. 8, 9; iv. 7-v. 4). Together with his life, the fate of his mission and of Gentile Christianity trembled in the balance. Never had he felt himself so helpless, so beaten down and discomfited as on that melancholy journey from Ephesus to Macedonia, and while he lay upon his sick bed (perhaps at Philippi), knowing not whether Titus or the messenger of death would reach him first. Titus, however, now returned with news from Corinth which re-established his shattered health more quickly than all the medicine in the world. The relief which St. Paul now experienced was as intense as the previous distress and alarm into which he had been plunged by the misconduct of the Corinthians (chap. vii. 6-16). Evidently, the First Epistle had brought about a reaction in the Church; there had been an outburst of loyalty towards the Apostle, and of indignation and repugnance against the chief offender, who, in addition to his gross immorality, had treated St. Paul's authority with insolent defiance. (*Prof. G. G. Findlay. B.A.*)

II. THE QUESTION OF A THIRD EPISTLE, AND OF PAUL'S RELATIONS WITH THE CORINTHIANS. There are many who think it absurd to speak of the First Epistle as written "out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears," and who cannot imagine that Paul would speak of a great sin like that of the incestuous person in such language as he employs in chaps. ii. 5 ff. and vii. 12. Such language, they argue, suits far better the case of a personal injury, an insult or outrage of which Paul—either in person or in one of his deputies—had been victim at Corinth.

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Hence they argue for an intermediate visit of a very painful character, and for an intermediate letter, now lost, dealing with the painful incident. Paul, we are to suppose, visited Corinth on the business of 1 Cor. v. (among other things), and there suffered a great humiliation. He was defied by the guilty man and his friends, and had to leave the church without effecting anything. Then he wrote the extremely severe letter to which chap. ii. 4 refers—a letter which was carried by Titus, and which produced the change on which he congratulates himself in chap. ii. 5 ff. and vii. 8 ff. It is obvious that this whole combination is hypothetical, and hence though many have been attracted by it, it appears with an infinite variety of detail. It is obvious also that the grounds on which it rests are subjective; it is a question on which men will differ to the end of time whether chap. ii. 4 is an apt description of the mood in which Paul wrote (at least, certain parts of) the First Epistle, or whether chap. ii. 5 ff., vii. 8 ff. is becoming language in which to close proceedings like those opened in 1 Cor. v. But surely it is far easier to suppose that the proceedings about the incestuous person took a complexion which made Paul's language natural. The visit, however, it may be said, at all events, is not hypothetical. It is distinctly alluded to in chaps. ii. 1, xii. 14, xiii. 1. Granted; yet the close connection of our Epistles compels us to assume that this second visit belongs to an earlier date than the First. We know nothing of it save that it was not pleasant, and that Paul was very willing to save both himself and the Corinthians the repetition of such an experience. It is nothing against this view that this visit is not referred to in Acts or 1 Cor. Hardly anything in chap. xi. 24 ff. is known to us from Acts, and probably we should never have known of this journey unless in explaining the change of purpose which the first letter announced it had occurred to Paul to say, "I did not wish to come when it could only vex you; I had enough of that before." As for the letter supposed to be referred to in chap. ii. 4, it has also been relieved of its hypothetical character by being identified with chaps. x. 1, xiii. 10. In the absence of the faintest external indication that 2 Cor. ever existed in any other than its present form, it is perhaps superfluous to treat this seriously. The letter must have had two main objects—(1) To accredit Titus, who is assumed to have carried it, as Paul's representative; (2) To insist on reparation for the assumed personal outrage of which Paul had been the victim on his recent visit. But chaps. x. 1, xiii. 10 have no reference whatever to either of these things, and are wholly taken up with what the Apostle means to do, when he comes to Corinth the third time; they refer not to this (imaginary) insolent person, but to the misbelieving and the immoral in general. Let us now briefly review Paul's relations with the Corinthians. His first visit to Corinth (Acts xviii.) extended over eighteen months. In all probability he had many communications with the Church, through deputies whom he commissioned, in the years during which he was absent; the form of the question in chap. xii. 17 implies as much. But it is only after his coming to Ephesus, in the course of his third missionary journey, that personal intercourse with Corinth can have been resumed. To this period the visit of chaps. ii. 1, xiii. 2 is to be referred. What the occasion or circumstances were we cannot tell; all we know is that it was painful and perhaps disappointing. Paul had used grave and threatening language (chap. xiii. 2), but had been obliged to tolerate some things he had rather seen otherwise. This visit was probably made towards the close of his Ephesian ministry, and the letter referred to in 1 Cor. v. 9 would be most likely written on his return. In this letter he may very naturally have announced that purpose of visiting Corinth twice (chap. i. 16). This letter, plainly, did not serve its purpose, and not long afterwards Paul received at Ephesus deputies from Corinth (1 Cor. xvi. 17) who apparently brought with them written instructions in which Paul's judgment was sought more minutely on a variety of ethical questions (1 Cor. vii. 1). Before these deputies arrived, or at all events before Paul wrote 1 Cor., Timothy had left Ephesus on a journey of some interest. Paul meant Corinth to be his destination (1 Cor. iv. 17), but he had to go *viâ* Macedonia, and the Apostle was not certain that he would get so far (1 Cor. xvi. 10), and he does not seem to have gone further than Macedonia (Acts xix. 22), and Paul now joins his name with his own (chap. i. 1) in Macedonia, and never hints that he owed to him any information as to the state of the Church. All he knew was from Titus (chap. ii. 13, vii. 16). But how did Titus happen to be in Corinth representing Paul? By far the happiest suggestion is that which makes Titus and the brother of chap. xii. 18 the same as the brethren of 1 Cor. xvi. 12, whose return from Corinth Paul expected in the company of Timothy. Timothy, however, did not get so far. Paul's departure from Ephesus was hastened by a great peril; his anxiety to hear the effect produced

by his First Epistle was very great; he pressed on past Troas, and finally encountered Titus in Macedonia, at which point this Epistle begins. (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE. The First Epistle was entirely appreciated by those for whom it was mainly intended. The licentious party who, whether from misunderstanding or perverting the Apostle's teaching, had used his name as a watchword for their excesses were humbled. Some complaints were raised against the Apostle's change of purpose in not coming to them direct from Ephesus (chap. i. 15-ii. 1); some cause still remained for fear lest the intercourse with the heathen should be too unrestrained (chap. vi. 14-vii. 1); but on the whole the submission of the mass of the Corinthian Church was complete. They received Titus with open arms (chap. vii. 13-16); and in the matter of the incestuous marriage, the correction of which had been the chief practical subject of the First Epistle, they had been struck with the deepest penitence (chap. vii. 7-11); an assembly had been convened, and a punishment inflicted on the offender (chap. ii. 6); and although their sorrow for themselves, and this severity towards the guilty person, had passed away before Titus's departure (chap. vii. 8), and the sin itself had been forgiven (chap. ii. 10), yet there was nothing to indicate any disinclination to follow the spirit of the Apostle's teaching. Thus far all had gone beyond the Apostle's expectations; in the one point in which his command might seem to have been only partially followed out, in the temporary character of the penalty inflicted on the incestuous person, his mind was relieved even more than if they had literally observed his orders. They had judged, he almost seemed to think, more wisely in this respect than himself (chaps. vii. 12, ii. 9, 10), and generally he felt that confidence between them was now restored (chaps. vi. 11, vii. 16), and that he was now more inseparably united with them in that union in their common Lord, which none but Christians knew (chaps. i. 5-6, iii. 2-3). Mingled, however, with this good news were other tidings, not wholly unexpected by the Apostle, for he had already anticipated something of the kind in 1 Cor. ix. 1-6, but still demanding new and distinct consideration. The Jewish party at Corinth, which claimed especially the name of Peter, and apparently that of Christ also, had at the time of the First Epistle been so insignificant in itself or as compared with the opposite party, as to call for only a few passing notices from the Apostle. It had, however, even then reached a sufficient height to question his apostolical authority (1 Cor. ix. 1-6); and in the interval, apparently from the arrival of a new teacher or teachers, with letters of commendation (chaps. iii. 1, x. 12) from some superior authority, probably from Jerusalem, the opponents of the Apostle had grown into a large and powerful party (chaps. i. 12, 17, iii. 1, x. 1, xii. 21), constituting even the majority of the teachers (chap. ii. 17); openly assailing the Apostle's character, claiming almost despotic dominion over their followers (chaps. i. 24, ii. 17, xi. 13, 20), insisting on their purely Jewish origin (chap. xi. 22), and on their peculiar connection with Christ (chaps. v. 16, x. 7, xi. 13-23, xiii. 3), on their apostolic privileges (chap. xi. 5, 13), and on their commendatory letters (chaps. iii. 1, v. 12, x. 12, 18). These two subjects, the general acquiescence of the Corinthians in the Apostle's injunctions and the claims of the Judaizing party, must have been the chief topics of Titus's communication. The first and prominent feeling awakened in St. Paul's mind was one of overwhelming thankfulness for the relief from the anxiety which he had up to that moment felt for the effects of his Epistle; next indignation at the insinuations of his adversaries. To give vent to the double tide of emotion thus arising within him, was the main purpose therefore of this Epistle. A third subject of less importance, but which gave him a direct opportunity for writing, was the necessity of hastening the collection for the Christian poor in Judæa. He had already spoken of it in the close of his First Epistle; but his sense of the need of success had been further impressed upon him by the generosity of the Macedonian churches, of which his recent stay among them had made him an actual witness. (*Dean Stanley.*)

IV. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO EPISTLES. This connection is not a hypothesis of greater or less probability, it is a large and solid fact. Thus chaps. i. 8-10, ii. 12, 13, attach themselves immediately to the situation described in 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9. Similarly in chap. i. 12 there seems to be a distinct echo of 1 Cor. ii. 4-14. More important is the unquestionable reference in chap. i. 13-17, 23, to 1 Cor. xvi. 5. And not to point to general resemblances in feeling or temper, the correspondence is at least suggestive between *ἀγνός ἐν τῷ πράγματι* (chap. vii. 11; cf. the use of *πᾶγμα* in 1 Thess. iv. 6), and *τοιαύτη πορνεία* in 1 Cor. v. 1; between *ἐν*

προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ (chap. ii. 10), and ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ Κ. ἡμῶν' I. X. (1 Cor. v. 4); between the mention of Satan in chap. ii. 11, and 1 Cor. v. 5; between πενεῖν in chap. xii. 21, and 1 Cor. v. 2; between τοιοῦτος and τις in chap. ii. 6 f., chap. ii. 5, and the same words in 1 Cor. v. 5, and 1 Cor. v. 1. If all these are examined and compared, I think it becomes extremely difficult to believe that in chap. ii. 5 ff. and vii. 8 ff. the Apostle is dealing with anything else than the case of the sinner treated in 1 Cor. v. If this view is accepted it is natural and justifiable to explain the Second Epistle as far as possible out of the First. Thus the letter to which St. Paul refers in chaps. ii. 4, vii. 8, 12, will be our First Epistle; the persons referred to in chap. vii. 12 will be the son and the father in 1 Cor. v. 1. (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

V. THE STYLE OF THE EPISTLE. As in the occasion so also in style, this contrast between the First and Second Epistle is very great. The First is the most, the Second the least systematic of any of the Apostle's writings. The three subjects of the Epistle are, in point of arrangement, kept distinct. But so vehement were the feelings under which he wrote, that the thankful expression of the first part is darkened by the indignation of the third; and the directions about the business of the collection are coloured by the reflections both of his joy and his grief. And in all the three portions, though in themselves strictly personal, the Apostle is borne away into the higher regions in which he habitually lived; so that this Epistle becomes the most striking instance of what is the case, more or less, with all his writings; a new philosophy of life poured forth, not through systematic treatises, but through occasional bursts of human feeling. The very stages of his journey are impressed upon it; the troubles at Ephesus, the repose of Troas, the anxieties and consolations of Macedonia, [the prospect of moving to Corinth. "Universa Epistola," says Bengel, "itinerarium refert, sed præceptis pertextum præstantissimis." (*Dean Stanley.*) Erasmus compares this Epistle to a river which sometimes flows in a gentle stream, sometimes rushes down as a torrent bearing all before it; sometimes spreading out like a placid lake; sometimes losing itself, as it were, in the sand, and breaking out in its fulness in some unexpected place. The full play allowed to the peculiarities of mind and feeling of the sacred writers is in no way inconsistent with their inspiration. The grace of God in conversion accommodates itself to all peculiarities of disposition and temperament. And the same is true with regard to the influence of the Spirit in inspiration. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*)

VI. ITS RELATIONS WITH AND DIFFERENCES FROM THE OTHER EPISTLES. If hope is the key-note of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, joy of that to the Philippians, faith of that to the Romans, and heavenly things of that to the Ephesians, affliction is the one predominant word in this Epistle (chaps. i. 4-8, ii. 4, iv. 8, viii. 13). The Epistles to the Thessalonians contain the Apostle's views on the Second Advent; the Epistle to the Galatians is his trumpet-note of indignant defiance to retrograding Judaizers; that to the Romans is the systematic and scientific statement of the scheme of salvation; that to the Philippians is his outpouring of tender and gladdened affection to his most beloved converts; the first letter to the Corinthians shows us how he applied the principles of Christianity to daily life in dealing with the flagrant aberrations of a most unsatisfactory church; the second letter opens a window into the very emotions of his heart, and is the agitated self-defence of a wounded and loving spirit to ungrateful and erring, yet not wholly lost or wholly incorrigible souls. (*Dean Farrar.*) The Second Epistle differs very greatly from the First. The First is objective and practical; the Second intensely subjective and personal. The First is calm and measured in tone—sometimes severe, but always collected and deliberate; the Second is broken, vehement, impassioned—now melting into the softest affection, now rising into a storm of indignant reproach and sarcasm. The First Epistle reflects the nature of the Corinthian Church—its abundance of talent and activity, its truly Greek factiousness and love of display, its defects of conscience and moral sense, its close relations with heathen society; the Second reveals the nature of the Apostle Paul himself—his sensitive honour and contempt for all chicanery, the tenderness and ardour of his affections for the Gentile Churches—those of a mother or lover rather than those which commonly belong to the teacher and the pastor, the frailty of his delicate yet active and enduring frame, the unparalleled hardships he endured, the violent enmities amidst which he moved, his continual sense of eternal things, the supernatural visitations and mystical raptures that he not unfrequently experienced,

the awful miraculous powers he was capable of exerting, his absolute sincerity and self-abnegation, his absorbing devotion to the doctrine and message of the Cross—all these qualities of the great Apostle and characteristics of his work stand out in the pages of this letter, in their variety and combination, with amazing vividness and power. Never has any man painted himself more naturally and more effectively than St. Paul in the letter before us. To see him at his greatest as a thinker and theologian, we turn to the Epistle to the Romans; to know him as a saint, we read the Philippian Epistle. But if we would measure him as a man amongst men, and as a minister of Christ; if we would sound the depths of his heart, and realise the force and fire of his nature, the ascendancy of his genius and the charm of his manner and disposition, we must thoroughly understand the second letter to the Corinthians. This is Paul's *Apologia pro vita sua*. Its main interest is not doctrinal, as in Galatians and Romans—although there are weighty passages of doctrine in it; nor practical, as in 1 Corinthians and the Pastorals—although chaps. viii. and ix., in the middle of the letter, are practical enough; it is intensely personal, full of explanation, defence, protestation, appeal, reproach, invective, threatening—with a vein of subduing pathos blended with the most subtle irony running through the whole. St. Paul's heart just now is very tender. He has been down in the gulfs of sorrow, and lying beneath the shadow of death. The restored affection of the Corinthian Church found him in the state when such a cordial was most needed, and it moved his whole nature in response; while the insolence and intrigues of the Judaists, now laid open to him in their full baseness, roused in him a scorn that knew no bounds and a triumphant confidence in the "weapons of" his Apostolic "warfare," and in his power to "overthrow" their "strongholds" (chap. x. 1-6). (*Prof. G. G. Findlay.*)

VII. PLAN OF THE EPISTLE. A. SALUTATION AND INTRODUCTION (chap. i. 1-11). B. THE TIDINGS BROUGHT BY TITUS. 1. Confidence of St. Paul in the intentions of the Corinthian Church (chap. i. 12-ii. 11). 2. The arrival of Titus (chap. ii. 12). 3. Digression on the Apostolical mission. (1) The plainness and clearness of the apostolical service (chap. ii. 16-iv. 6). (2) The difficulties and supports of the Apostolical service (chap. iv. 7-v. 10). (3) St. Paul's motive for his service (chap. v. 11-vi. 10). 4. The arrival of Titus (continued from chap. ii. 16) (chap. vi. 11-13, vii. 2-16). 5. Digression on intercourse with heathens (chap. vi. 14-vii. 1). C. THE COLLECTION FOR THE CHURCHES IN JUDEA. 1. The example of the Macedonian churches (chap. viii. 1-15). 2. The mission of Titus (chap. viii. 16-24). 3. The spirit in which the collection is to be made (chap. ix. 1-15). D. THE ASSERTION OF HIS APOSTOLICAL AUTHORITY. 1. Assertion of his authority (chap. x. 1-6). 2. Digression on his boast of his claims. (1) The reality of his boast (chap. x. 7-18). (2) His boasting excused by his affection for the Corinthians (chap. xi. 1-15). (3) His boasting excused not by his power, but by his weakness (chap. xi. 16-xii. 10). E. CONCLUDING EXPLANATIONS, WARNINGS, AND SALUTATIONS (chap. xii. 11-xiii. 14). (*Dean Stanley.*)

VIII. THE EFFECT PRODUCED BY IT. This is not recorded. Acts xx. 2, 3, which tells us that St. Paul's long promised visit was at length paid, only says that "he came into Greece and there abode three months." When we consider the strong reaction in his favour as described by Titus in chap. vii., we cannot but think that the extraordinary "weight and power" of this Epistle, written expressly to take the favourable tide at its height, produced a deep impression, and this is confirmed by the mere duration of his sojourn at Corinth. It is more strongly corroborated by the fact that during his visit he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, in which many momentous topics received a calm, profound, sustained treatment, showing that he had recovered that rest of spirit and flesh of which he had recently been so sorely destitute. The collection also came to a happy issue, for he had said (1 Cor. xvi. 4), that if the amount subscribed "should be worthy of his going also," the Corinthian bearers of it should accompany him to Jerusalem, and we find (Rom. xvi. 26) that it was found worthy of his going. So far, the letter bore its proper fruits, but his original Jewish persecutors (Acts xviii. 6, 12, 13) were not likely to be mollified by chap. iii. 6-18. His Judaising adversaries also would naturally remain implacable after his polemic against them (chap. x. 1-xii. 18). We can imagine the malignant rage with which they would witness a three months' demolition of their satanic strongholds (chap. x. 4). But so long as he was in the bosom of the Church he was safe, and it was only on his departure that an unsuccessful attempt was

made to take his life (Acts xx. 3). If we look beyond the record of Scripture towards the end of the first century, we are again presented with a dark picture of the Corinthian community. (See the Epistle of Clement of Rome, chaps. iii. xxx.) Certainly a fresh race of men had sprung up, but it would seem that even an apostle must not expect the fruits of his labours to outlive the generation amidst which he has toiled. Perhaps no influence could have been lasting in so mixed and volatile a population. It was, however, a glorious achievement, if the much people which God had in that city (Acts xviii. 10) entered, under the Apostle's guidance, into their blessed rest. And the Epistle has become a possession of all men for all times; has done and will continue to do its Divine work, accomplishing that which God pleases, and prospering in that whereto he sent it (Isa. lv. 11), through the long march of all the ages. (*J. Waite, D.D.*)

IX. ITS GENUINENESS. Of this there has never been a moment's doubt even among critics who allow themselves the widest range in their attacks on the canon of New Testament writings. External evidence is in itself adequate. The Epistle is quoted by Irenæus, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. Testimony of this kind is, however, hardly needed. The Epistle speaks for itself. In its intense personality, its peculiarities of style, its manifold coincidences with the Acts and the other Epistles (especially 1 Cor., Rom., and Gal.), its vehement emotions, it may fairly be said to present phenomena beyond the attainment of any later writer, wishing to claim for what he wrote the authority of a great name. Pseudonymous authorship is, in this case, simply out of the question. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

X. THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH. Of this we know little. Within a few months Paul paid his promised visit, and was hospitably received by one of the chief members of the Church (Rom. xvi. 23). Titus and the unnamed brethren of chap. viii. 18, 22, probably Luke and Tychicus, had done their work effectually, and he could tell the Romans to whom he wrote of the collection for the saints which had been made in Achaia as well as in Macedonia (Rom. xv. 26). They apparently had so far gained the confidence of the Corinthians, that they did not think it necessary to choose any delegates of their own to watch over the funds (Acts xx. 4). The malignant enmity of the Jews, however, had not abated (Acts xx. 3), and he had to change his plans. After this we lose sight of the Church altogether, except for the glimpse given in 2 Tim. iv. 20, where we learn that after his first imprisonment, and on his return to his former labours, Erastus, who seems to have travelled with him, stopped at the city in which he held a municipal position of authority (Rom. xvi. 23). (*Ibid.*) The silence of history respecting the subsequent state of this Church seems, as far as it goes, of favourable augury. And the testimony of Clement (the "fellow-labourer" of St. Paul, Phil. iv. 3) later on (A.D. 95 *circ.*) confirms this interpretation of it. He speaks (evidently from his own personal experience) of the impression produced upon every stranger who visited Corinth by their exemplary conduct; and specifies particularly their possession of the virtues most opposite to their former faults. Thus he says that they were distinguished for the ripeness and soundness of their knowledge in contrast to the unsound and false pretence of knowledge for which they were rebuked by St. Paul. Again, he praises the pure and blameless lives of their women, which must therefore have been greatly changed since chap. xii. 21 was written. But especially he commends them for their entire freedom from faction and party spirit which had formerly been so conspicuous among their faults. Perhaps the picture which he draws of this golden age of Corinth may be too favourably coloured, as a contrast to the state of things which he deplored when he wrote. Yet he may believe it substantially true, and may therefore hope that some of the worst evils were permanently corrected; more particularly the impurity and licentiousness which had hitherto been the most flagrant of their vices. Their tendency to party spirit, however (so characteristic of the Greek temper), was not cured; on the contrary it blazed forth again with greater fury than ever, some years after the death of St. Paul. Their dissensions were the occasion of the letter of Clement, who wrote in the hope of appeasing a violent and "long continued schism" which had arisen (like their earlier divisions), from their being "puffed up in the cause of one against another" (1 Cor. iv. 6). He rebukes them for their "envy, strife, and party spirit"; accuses them of being "devoted to the cause of their party leaders rather than to the cause of God"; and declares that their divisions were "rending asunder the body of Christ," and "casting a stumbling-

block in the way of many." This is the last account which we have of this Church in the apostolic age; so that the curtain falls on a scene of unchristian strife, too much like that on which it rose. Yet though this besetting sin was still unsubdued, the character of the Church, as a whole, was much improved since the days when some of them denied the resurrection and others maintained their right to practise unchastity. (*Conybeare and Howson.*) Later on, about A.D. 135, the Church of Corinth was visited by Hegesippus, who found it faithful to the truth under its bishop Primus. Dionysius, who succeeded Primus, brought out all that was good in the Church, and bears testimony to its liberality in relieving the poverty of other churches, to the traditional liberality which it had in its turn experienced at the hand of the Roman churches. The teaching of chaps. viii. ix. had, it would seem, done its work effectually. He records the fact that the Epistle of Clement was read from time to time on the Lord's Day. A female disciple, named Chrysophora, apparently of the same type as Dorcas and Priscilla, was conspicuous both for her good works and her spiritual discernment. With this glimpse into the latest traceable influence of St. Paul's teaching, our survey of the history of the Church of Corinth may well close. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

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II. CORINTHIANS.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1, 2. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.—Paul to the Corinthians:—Note—I. THE BLENDING OF LOWLINESS AND AUTHORITY IN PAUL'S DESIGNATION OF HIMSELF. 1. He does not always bring his apostolical authority to mind at the beginning of his letters. In the loving letter to the Philippians he has no need to urge his authority. In Philemon friendship is uppermost. 2. "By the will of God" is at once an assertion of Divine authority, a declaration of independence, and a lowly disclaimer of individual merit. The weight he expected to be attached to his words was to be due entirely to their Divine origin. Never mind the cracked pipe through which the Divine breath makes music, but listen to the music. II. THE IDEAL OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER HERE SET FORTH. "Saints"—a word that has been woefully misapplied. The Church has given it as a special honour to a few, and decorated with it mainly the possessors of a false ideal of sanctity. The world uses it with a sarcastic intonation, as if it implied loud professions and small performances. 1. Saints are not people living in cloisters, but men and women immersed in the vulgar work of everyday life. The root idea of the word is not moral purity, but separation to God. Consecration to Him is the root from which the white flower of purity springs. We cannot purify ourselves, but we can yield ourselves to God, and the purity will come. 2. To thus devote ourselves is our solemn obligation, and unless we do we are not Christians. The true consecration is the surrender of the will, and its one motive is drawn from the love and devotion of Christ to us. All consecration rests on the faith of Christ's sacrifice. 3. And if, drawn by the great love of Christ, we give ourselves away to God in Him, then He gives Himself to us. III. THE APOSTOLIC WISH WHICH SETS FORTH THE HIGH IDEAL TO BE DESIRED BY CHURCHES AND INDIVIDUALS. 1. "Grace and peace" blend the Western and Eastern forms of salutation, and surpass both. All that the Greek meant by his "Grace," and all that the Hebrew meant by his "Peace"—the ideally happy condition which differing nations have placed in different blessings, and which all loving words have vainly wished for dear ones—is secured and conveyed to every poor soul who trusts in Christ. 2. Grace means—(1) Love in exercise to those who are below the lover or who deserve something else. (2) The gifts which such love bestows. (3) The effects of those gifts in the beauties of character and conduct developed in the receivers. So here are invoked the love and gentleness of the Father; and next the outcome of that love, which never visits the soul empty handed, in all varied spiritual gifts; and, as a last result, every beauty of heart, mind, and temper which can adorn the character and refine a man into the likeness of God. 3. Peace comes after grace. For tranquillity of soul we must go to God, and He gives it by giving us His love and its gifts. There must be first peace with God that there may be peace from God. Then, when we have been won from our alienation and enmity by the power of the Cross, and have learned to know that God is our Lover, Friend, and Father, we shall possess the peace of those whose hearts have found their home; the peace of spirits no longer at war within—conscience and choice tearing them asunder in their strife; the peace of obedience, which banishes the disturbance

of self-will; the peace of security shaken by no fears; the peace of a sure future across the brightness of which no shadows of sorrow nor mists of uncertainty can fall; the peace of a heart in amity with all mankind. So, living in peace, we shall lay ourselves down and die in peace, and enter "that country afar beyond the stars" where "grows the flower of peace." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The will of God* :—I. THE SUPREME LAW. "By the will of God." 1. God has a will. He is, therefore, an intelligent, free personality. His will explains the origin, sustenance, and order of the universe; His will is the force of all forces, and law of all laws.

2. God has a will in relation to individual men. He has a purpose in relation to every man's existence, mission, and conduct. His will in relation to moral beings is the standard of all conduct and the rule of all destiny. Love is its mainspring.

II. THE APOSTOLIC SPIRIT. 1. The apostolic spirit involves subjection to Christ. "An apostle of Jesus Christ." Christ is the moral Master, he the loyal servant. 2. The apostolic spirit is that of special love for the good. He calls Timothy his "brother," and towards "the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia," he glows with loving sympathy. Love for souls, deep, tender, overflowing, is the essential qualification for the ministry. III. THE CHIEF GOOD. 1. Here is the highest good. "Grace and peace." 2. Here is the highest good from the highest source. "From our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

(*Homilist.*) **Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth.**—*The Church which is at Corinth* :—Corinth is notable for its learning, wealth, and lasciviousness. I. THAT EVEN AMONGST THE MOST PROFANE AND UNLIKELIEST PEOPLE GOD MAY SOMETIMES GATHER A CHURCH TO HIMSELF. The reason why God may build His house of such crooked timber, and make His temple of such rough stones, may be to show the freeness of His grace and the efficacy of it. II. THAT A CHURCH MAY BE A TRUE CHURCH ALTHOUGH IT BE DEFILED WITH MANY CORRUPTIONS. As a godly man may be truly godly and yet subject to many failings, so a Church yet not perfect. This truth is worthy of note, because many, out of a tenderness and misguided zeal, may separate from a Church because of this; but a particular Christian is not to excommunicate a Church till God hath given a bill of divorce to it. 1. The soundness and purity of Churches admits of degrees. As one star doth excel another in glory, yet both are stars, so one Church may greatly transcend another in orthodoxy and purity, and yet both be Churches. 2. When we speak of a Church being God's true Church, though greatly corrupted, we must take heed of two extremes—(1) That of those who would have no reformation, though there be never so many disorders, but say, "It is prudence to let all things be." The apostle doth far otherwise to this Church; though he calls it the Church of God, yet his Epistle is full of sharp reproof. He is very zealous that they become a new lump—that they be made, as it were, a new Church. God takes notice, and is very angry with all these disorders and great neglect. (2) That of those who, because of the corruptions that are in a Church, are so far transported with misguided zeal as to take no notice of the truth of a Church. Some are apt so to attend to a true Church that they never matter the corruptions of it. Others, again, so eye the corruptions that they never regard the truth of it; but it is good to avoid both these extremes. 3. Though that Church be a true Church where we live, yet, if many corruptions do abound therein, we must take heed that we do not pollute ourselves thereby, or become partakers of any sin indulged amongst them. (*Anthony Burgess.*) **With all the saints.**—*Sainthood* :—To the constitution of a true saint there is—I. A SEPARATION. Not locally, but in regard of intimate friendship. II. A DEDICATION OF OURSELVES TO THE SERVICE OF GOD. III. AN INWARD QUALIFICATION. IV. A NEW CONVERSATION. The Christian carries himself even like to Him that "hath called him out of darkness into marvellous light." (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.**—*Why we should bless God* :—What good can we do to God in blessing of Him? He is blessed, though we bless Him not. Our blessing of Him—I. IS REQUIRED AS A DUTY, to make us more capable of His graces (Matt. xiii. 12). To him that useth that he hath to the glory of God shall be given more. The stream gives nothing to the fountain; the beam nothing to the sun, for it issues from it. Our very blessing of God is a blessing of His. It is from His grace that we can praise His grace; and we run still into a new debt when we have hearts enlarged to bless Him. II. TO OTHERS IT IS GOOD, for they are stirred up by it. God's goodness and mercy is enlarged in regard of the manifestation of it to others. III. YEA, **THUS GOOD COMES**

TO OUR SOULS. Besides the increase of grace, we shall find an increase of joy and comfort. 1. If we can work upon our hearts a disposition to see God's love, and to bless Him, we can never be uncomfortable, for then crosses are light. For, when we search for matter of praising God in any affliction, and when we see there is some mercy yet reserved that we are not consumed, God, when He hath thanks from us, gives us still more matter of thankfulness, and the more we thank Him the more we have matter of praise. And, that we may the better perform this holy duty, let us take notice of all God's blessings. Blessing of God springs immediately from an enlarged heart, but enlargement of heart is stirred up from apprehension. 2. Taking notice of them, let us forget not all His benefits (Psa. ciii. 2). Let us register them, keep diaries of His mercies. He renews His mercies every day, and we ought to renew our blessing of Him every day. We should labour to do here as we shall do when we are in heaven. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *The thankful heart discriminates mercies*:—If one should give me a dish of sand, and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my eyes, and search for them with my clumsy fingers, and be unable to detect them; but let me take a magnet, and sweep through it, and how would it draw to itself the most invisible particles by the mere power of attraction! The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day, and, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings; only the iron in God's sand is gold. (*O. W. Holmes.*) *The abundance of Divine consolation*:—I. OF BLESSING GOD UNDER THE AMIABLE CHARACTERS WHICH ARE HERE ASCRIBED TO HIM. The apostle blesseth God under the three following designations:—1. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, considered in this character and relation, ought, in a special manner, to be blessed. 2. The next title under which God is here blessed is, the Father of mercies. Mercy is the compassion and relief which is administered to those who are in misery. God is not said to be the Father of mercy, but of mercies, of all the mercies we need or can enjoy. Did we lose sight of all our mercies, we might find them again in God, who is the Father from whom they all proceed. Mercies of all kinds flow from Him—deliverance from evil, the enjoyment of God, pardon, sanctification, preservation. There is mercy in everything that befalls us: in health, in strength, in safety, in affliction, in recovery—nay, in every bereavement that we meet with. 3. The third designation under which God is blessed is, the God of all comfort. There is comfort in all the privileges peculiar to Christians, such as justification, adoption, and sanctification, and the blessings connected with them. There is comfort in the promises of the new covenant, in which the people of God are assured of His gracious presence, the assistance of His Spirit, and the enjoyment of His glory. But this is not all that is necessary that God may be the God of all comfort. We may have agreeable possessions, we may have the Word of God, which unfolds the grounds of comfort, and yet not be comforted, if the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, do not apply to our souls the consolations of His Word, and powerfully set them home upon our hearts. He can create comfort to us out of nothing, or out of what is most unlikely to yield it. He can bring meat out of the eater, sweet out of the bitter, joy out of sorrow, life out of death, and, what is more, He can make our greatest crosses our greatest comforts. II. Let us consider THE PARTICULAR GROUND MENTIONED IN THE TEXT ON ACCOUNT OF WHICH THE APOSTLE BLESSED HIM: "God comforteth us in all our tribulation." He doth not keep us from tribulation, but He comforteth us in it, which shows more of Divine power and goodness than wholly to preserve from it. This is the peculiar work of God alone. Who but He can restore the soul and speak peace to the conscience? What relief can outward enjoyments or human reasonings afford in the time of soul distress? The comforts He conveys are always suited to the condition of those on whom they are bestowed. In lesser afflictions fewer or smaller consolations suffice. Great comforts are given under great sufferings. Worldly men look to their outward enjoyments for comfort, whilst they overlook the mercy of God, from whence they all proceed. III. THE IMPORTANT END FOR WHICH DIVINE CONSOLATIONS ARE IMPARTED TO THE SAINTS—namely, "that they may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God." The consolations of God are neither small nor few, and can never be diminished, however great the number of those who share in them. God is pleased to comfort those who are in trouble by means of His people who themselves have been distressed. Various important purposes are served by this wise appointment. Hereby trial is made of our subjection to the Divine authority. Many are much distressed with heavy hearts whose pride makes them scorn the way of obtaining

comfort which God hath prescribed. In this way the hearts of the godly are knit together in love, and their mutual esteem is increased. Those who are comforted of God by means of their brethren are brought under strong obligations to endearing friendship and affectionate gratitude. Improve, then, all your experiences, for the benefit of your fellow-Christians. In this way, also, those who ought to comfort the distressed are well prepared for performing the work assigned them. Experience is an excellent instructor. Experience likewise gives great confidence to the speaker, and enables him to speak with more certainty and boldness than he could do without this advantage. Is God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort? Why, then, are some of you dejected, after all the comfortable things that you read in your Bibles and hear in sermons? Why, you go to the streams and neglect the fountain. Would you have comfort from God in all your tribulations? Consider attentively what are the particular maladies with which you are distressed. Think of your sins, which are the worst of all evils. Let none misapply this subject. Though strong consolation is provided for those who flee for refuge to Jesus Christ, there is no true comfort to those who go on in their sins. When we would comfort others, or enjoy comfort ourselves, let us begin with diligent examination, in order to discover their and our own spiritual state—if it be really such as will allow us to take comfort or to administer it to others. (*W. McCulloch.*)

The God of Christianity :—I. THE FATHER OF THE WORLD'S REDEEMER. II. THE SOURCE OF MAN'S MERCIES. The merciful Father. God in nature does not appear as the God of mercy and comfort for the lost. III. THE COMFORTER OF AFFLICTED SAINTS. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

God the Father of mercies :—When a man begets children, they are in his own likeness. God groups all the mercies of the universe into a great family of children, of which He is the head. Mercies tell us what God is. They are His children. He is the Father of them in all their forms, combinations, multiplications, derivations, offices. Mercies in their length and breadth, in their multitudes infinite, uncountable—these are God's offspring, and they represent their Father. Judgments are effects of God's power. Pains and penalties go forth from His hand. Mercies are God Himself. They are the issues of His heart. If He rears up a scheme of discipline and education which requires and justifies the application of pains and penalties for special purposes, the God that stands behind all special systems and all special administrations in His own interior nature pronounces himself "the Father of mercies." Mercies are not what He does so much as what He is. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

The God of comfort :—I. THIS WORLD IS NOT AN ORB BROKE LOOSE AND SNARLED WITH IMMEDICABLE EVILS. 1. If we would know what this world is coming to, we must not look too low. Have you never noticed, in summer days, when the sun stands at the very meridian height, how white and clear the light is—how all things are transparently clear? But let the sun droop till it shoots level beams along the surface of the earth, and those beams are caught and choked up with a thousand vapours, and the light grows thick and murky. And so, when men's eyes glance along the surface of the world, looking at moral questions, they look through the vapours which the world itself has generated, and cannot see clearly. Therefore it is that many men think this world is bound to wickedness, and that all philanthropic attempts are mere efforts of weakness and inexperience. And no man who does not take his inspirations from the nature of God can have right views of human life. No man can be a charitable man who does not believe that his fellow-men are depraved. And then, no man can be charitable with men who does not believe that it is the essential nature of God to cure, and not to condemn. God is Himself a vast medicine. And as long as God lives, and is what He is—"the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort"—so long this world is not going to rack and ruin. Let men despond as much as they please, the earth is not for ever to groan. 2. Work on, then! Not a tear that you drop to wash away any person's trouble, not a blow that you strike in imitation of the strokes of the Almighty arm, shall be forgotten. The world shall be redeemed, for our God's name is Mercy and Comfort. II. THERE ARE NO TROUBLES WHICH BEFALL OUR SUFFERING HEARTS FOR WHICH THERE IS NOT IN GOD A REMEDY, IF ONLY WE WISH TO RECEIVE IT. Now, there is victory for each true Christian heart over its troubles. 1. Not by disowning them. Every man's prayer to God is, "Lord, remove this thorn in the flesh." "My grace shall be sufficient for you." Then bear. 2. But how?—resignedly? Yes, if you cannot do any better. That is better than murmuring. But resignation is a negative thing. It is the consent of the soul to receive without rebellion. It is giving up a contest. 3. But is the disciple

better than the Master? Would you, if you could, reach forth your hand and take back one single sorrow that made Christ to you what He is? Is it not the power of Jesus to all eternity that He was the Sufferer, and that He bore suffering in such a way that He vanquished it? Now you are His followers; and will you follow Christ by slinking away from suffering? Do not seek it; but, if it comes, remember that no sorrow comes but with His knowledge. And what is trouble but that very influence that brings you nearer to the heart of God than prayers or hymns? But sorrows, to be of use, must be borne, as Christ's were, victoriously, carrying with them intimations and sacred prophecies to the heart of Hope that by them we shall be strengthened and ennobled. 4. How is it, brother? I do not ask you whether you like the cup which you are now drinking, but look back twenty years—at the time which seemed to you like midnight. Now it is all over, and it has wrought out its effect on you; and I ask you, Would you have removed the experience of that burden which you thought would crush you, but which you fought in such a way that you came out a strong man? What has made you so versatile, patient, broad, rich? God put pickaxes into you, though you did not like it. He dug wells of salvation in you. And you are what you are by the grace of God's providence. You were gold in the rock, and God played miner, and blasted you out of the rock; and then He played stamper, and crushed you; and then He played smelter, and melted you; and now you are gold free from the rock by the grace of God's severity to you. And as you look back upon those experiences, and see what they have done for you, and what you are now, you say, "I would not exchange what I learned from these things for all the world." What is the reason you have never learned to apply the same philosophy to the trouble of to-day? III. NO PERSON IS ORDAINED UNTIL HIS SORROWS PUT INTO HIS HANDS THE POWER OF COMFORTING OTHERS. Sorrow is apt to be very selfish and self-indulgent, but see how sorrow worked in the apostle. When the daughter is married, and goes from home, how often her heart returns! As time goes on, the daughter suffers from sickness, children are multiplied, and the mother comes and tarries in the family. The children are sick, there is trouble in the household; but the daughter says, "Mother is here." And she says, "My dear child, I have gone through it all," and while yet she is telling her story, strangely, as if exhaled, all these drops of trouble that have sprinkled on the child's heart have gone, and she is comforted. Why? Because the consolations by which the mother's heart was comforted have gone over and rested on the child's mind. Now, the apostle says, "When Christ comforts your grief He makes you mother to somebody else." I know some people who, when they have griefs, become mendicants, and go around with a hat in their hand, begging a penny of comfort from this one and that one. What does the apostle say? That when God comforts your griefs He ordains you to be a minister of comfort to others who are in trouble. (*Ibid.*) *The comfort of God*:—We are all engaged in the great conflict between right and wrong. To the Christian, often, and not unnaturally, either from the weariness of the struggle or the depressing sense of failure, there comes an overwhelming weight of sorrow. How is the soul to be supported? By "the comfort of God." It is that blessed truth which haunts the heart of St. Paul throughout the whole of this Epistle. Examine this question of comfort. I. CHRIST IS THE ONE MEDIATOR. IT IS THROUGH HIM THE COMFORT COMES. How? 1. From His loyalty to truth. There are those who attempt to soothe the conscience by making light of sin. Such cannot comfort. Sin is, in its essence, uneasy disturbance. "The wicked are like a troubled sea, they cannot rest." Man is too near God to find comfort in a lie. Our Master knew it. And how unflinchingly, minutely true His life was! How awful are His warnings of the consequences of persistent sin! And, therefore, how sweet His consolations! How severe His rebukes to the self-righteous, and therefore restless! Yet Mary Magdalene, with all her loads of guilt, lay down before Him and kissed His sacred feet, and felt the kindness of His comfort. As the Master, so the servant; as Christ, so His Church. Why do men so often hate her? Because she makes no compromises. She refuses to "daub with untempered mortar." Sin, she says, is always disastrous. Moral laws, she says, are constant. "As a man sows, so shall he reap." As real as sin, so real must be penitence. No short cuts; this is the one path to pardon. Truth is the path to comfort. Sin does matter. Turn from it—to the light of His countenance, to the sweetness of the comfort of God. 2. By infusing hope. Hope rests upon a promise and a fact. The fact is, that entire drama of tenderness and power which is summed up in the Passion of Christ. Dark and sad enough is the journey of life, but this is like the after-glow along the

battements of evening clouds, which promises, when night is passed, a brilliant morning; like the first note of the bird in winter that warbles of a coming spring, this lifts the immortal spirit above the pressure of the things of time, and enables the soul to appropriate to itself the good gifts of God. "Loved me, gave Himself for me"—there is supernatural hope. This invigorates the failing nature; it is "the comfort of God." 3. From the genuine living sympathy of Christ. The reality of that sympathy depends, of course, upon the perfection of His human nature, the power of it upon the truth of His Godhead. In several experiences our blessed Master has gained the necessary acquaintance with our needs. (1) None like Himself has known the exceeding horror of sin. Sooner or later every child of Adam knows that. But in the agony at Gethsemane, and in the dereliction on the Cross, pure human nature felt the whole force and fierceness of the assaults of evil. (2) He knows the reality and pain of temptation. "He suffered being tempted." (3) None more acutely than He felt the transitoriness of human happiness and human life. By all the quiet hours at Nazareth, at Bethany, &c., He knew the contrasting sadness of scattered friends and darkened days, and the keenness of the Cross. (4) He underwent the darkness and horror of the grave. Struggling soul, assaulted by fierce temptation; sin-laden soul, bowed down and fainting under a sense of failure; sorrowing soul, bewildered with a paralysis of trouble; dying soul, shrinking from the separation and the gloom of the grave, look up; He feels for thine anguish: look up; in that sympathy is comfort. II. HOW DOES THIS COMFORT, WHICH SPRINGS FROM HIS MIGHTY MEDIATION, COME HOME TO US? 1. From the sweetness of the grace of penitence. Sin—your sin—was rebellion. His love has penetrated thy soul; the tears of penitence have come. Sin was all self, penitence is all God. But at first, how sharp the sense of shame! Then He came—"God in the face of Jesus Christ." What was the cry? "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity," &c. It was pain, this penitence—searching, piercing; but what is this inner sense of joy? The presence of Jesus, the comfort of God. 2. From the consecration of sorrow. Sorrow is the fact of facts. Strange mystery; Christ has consecrated sorrow. He has made it the path to victory. "The Valley of Achor" becomes a "door of hope." 3. By the blessedness of prayer. To persevere in prayer is surely and at last to know the comfort of God. (*Canon Knox-Little.*)

Sacred comforts:—I. TRIBULATION IS A DISCIPLINE COMMON TO ALL. None can evade it; the richest man can neither buy himself off nor provide a substitute. 1. The discipline of tribulation is inevitable because we are imperfect. 2. Note some of the tribulations of earthly existence. (1) Disappointment in life. (2) Poverty. (3) Death. II. IN THE DISCIPLINE OF TRIBULATION GOD SHALL COMFORT ALL HIS PEOPLE WITH SUSTAINING GRACE. The medicine may be bitter, but it will give strength. (*W. Birch.*)

Comforted and comforting:—I. THE COMFORTABLE OCCUPATION. Blessing God. If a man under affliction blesses the Lord—1. It argues that his heart is not vanquished—(1) So as to gratify Satan by murmuring, (2) So as to kill his own soul with despair. 2. It prophesies that God will send to him speedy deliverances to call forth new praises. It is natural to lend more to a man when the interest on what he has is duly paid. Never did man bless God but sooner or later God blessed him. 3. It profits the believer above measure. (1) It takes the mind off from present trouble. (2) It lifts the heart to heavenly thoughts and considerations. (3) It gives a taste of heaven, for heaven largely consists in adoring and blessing God. (4) It destroys distress by bringing God upon the scene. 4. It is the Lord's due in whatsoever state we may be. II. THE COMFORTABLE TITLES. 1. A name of affinity, "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2. A name of gratitude, "The Father of mercies." 3. A name of hope, "The God of all comfort." 4. A name of discrimination, "Who comforteth us." The Lord has a special care for those who trust in Him. III. THE COMFORTABLE FACT. "The God of all comfort comforteth us in all our tribulation." 1. Personally. 2. Habitually. He has always been near to comfort us in all past time, never once leaving us alone. 3. Effectually. He has always been able to comfort us in all tribulation. No trial has baffled His skill. 4. Everlastingly. He will comfort us to the end, for He is "the God of all comfort," and He cannot change. Should we not be always happy since God always comforts us? IV. THE COMFORTABLE DESIGN. "That we may be able to comfort." 1. To make us comforters of others. The Lord aims at this: the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, trains us up to be comforters. There is great need for this holy service in this sin-smitten world. 2. To make us comforters on a large scale. "To comfort them which are in any trouble." We are to be conversant with all kinds of grief, and ready to sympathise with all

sufferers. 3. To make us experts in consolation—"able to comfort"; because of our own experience of Divine comfort. 4. To make us willing and sympathetic, so that we may, through personal experience, instinctively care for the state of others. Conclusion: 1. Let us now unite in special thanksgiving to the God of all comfort. 2. Let us drink in comfort from the Word of the Lord, and be ourselves happy in Christ Jesus. 3. Let us be on the watch to minister consolation to all tried ones. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Comforted to comfort*:—1. Look up. There is thy Father. But ere thou canst be like Him thou wilt need the file of the lapidary, the heat of the crucible, the bruising of the flail. 2. Look down. At the moment of thy conversation all the powers of darkness pledged themselves to obstruct thy way. 3. Look around. Thou art still in the world that crucified thy Lord. 4. Look within. In the constant strife between thy will and God's will, what can there be but affliction? When in affliction, mind three things. I. LOOK OUT FOR COMFORT. It will come—1. Certainly. Wherever the nettle grows there grows the dock-leaf. 2. Proportionately. God holds a pair of scales. This on the right, called AS, is for thine afflictions; this on the left, called SO, is for thy comforts. And the beam is always level. 3. Divinely. Shall we look to man? No, for Job found the best men of his time to be miserable comforters. Shall we look to angels? No; this needs a gentler touch than theirs. God comforteth those that are cast down. 4. Mediatly. Our consolation aboundeth through Christ. 5. Directly through the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter, whom the Saviour gives. 6. Various; sometimes by the coming of a beloved Titus, a bouquet, a letter, a promise, sometimes by God simply coming near. II. STORE UP COMFORT. 1. The world is full of comfortless hearts. Our God would comfort them through thee. But thou must be trained. 2. Dost thou wonder why thou dost suffer some special form of sorrow? Wait till ten years are passed. In that time thou wilt find some afflicted as thou art. When thou tellest them how thou hast suffered, and how thou hast been comforted, thou wilt learn why thou hast been afflicted. III. PASS ON THE COMFORT YOU RECEIVE. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) *The purpose and use of comfort*:—The desire for comfort may be a noble or a most ignoble wish. The nobleness of actions depends more upon the reasons why we do them than on the acts themselves. Paul gave to the comfort which God had given him its deepest and most unselfish reason, and so the fact of God's comforting him became the exaltation and the strengthening of his life. It does not matter what the special trouble was; the point is this—that Paul thanked God because the comfort which had come to him gave him the power to comfort other people. Now try to recall the joy and peace and thankfulness that have ever filled your heart when you became thoroughly sure that God had relieved or blessed you. But ask yourself, at the same time, "Did any such thought as Paul's come up first and foremost to my mind?" I. THE POWER OF PAUL OR OF ANY MAN TO REALISE THIS HIGH IDEA—1. Shows a clear understanding that it is really God who sends the help. If the recovery of your health or the saving of your fortune seems to you a piece of luck, then you may be meanly and miserably selfish about it. It is a light which you have struck out for yourself, and may burn in your own lantern. But if the light came down from God it is too big for you to keep to yourself. 2. Evinces genuine unselfishness and a true humility. Put these together into a nature, and you clear away those obstructions which, in so many men, stop God's mercies short, and absorb, as personal privileges, what they were meant to radiate as blessings to mankind. Who is the man whom we rejoice to see possessing wealth? It is the man who says, "God sent this," and, "I am not worthy of this; where are my brethren?" Who is the man who, receiving comfort from God, radiates it? It is the reverent, unselfish, humble man. The sunlight falls upon a clod, but lies as black as ever; but the sun touches a diamond, and the diamond almost chills itself as it sends out in radiance on every side the light that has fallen on it. So God helps one man bear his pain, and nobody but that one man is a whit the richer. God comes to another sufferer, and all around are comforted by the radiated comfort of that happy soul. 3. Will always be easier and more real to us in proportion as we dwell habitually upon the profounder and more spiritual of His mercies. If I am in the habit of thanking God mainly for food and clothes and house, it will not be easy for me to take them as if the final purpose of them was that I might be warm and well fed. But if what I thank Him for most is not that He gives me His gifts, but that He gives me Himself, then I cannot resist the tendency of that mercy to outgrow my life. A stream may leave its deposits in the pool it flows through, but the stream itself hurries on to other pools; and so God's gifts a soul may selfishly appropriate, but God Himself, the more truly a soul

possesses Him, the more truly it will long and try to share Him. Thus I have tried to picture the man who in the profoundest way accepts and values God's mercies. You see how clear his superiority is. The Pharisee says, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are," and evidently it is his difference from other men that he values most, and he means to keep himself different from other men as long as possible. The Christian says, "I thank Thee that Thou hast made me this, because it is a sign and may be made a means of bringing other men to the same help and joy." II. NOTE A FEW OF THE SPECIAL HELPS WHICH GOD GIVES TO MEN, and see how what I have been saying applies to each of them. 1. Take the comfort which God sends a man when he is in religious doubt. And that does not by any means always mean the filling of every darkness with perfect light. No doubt God does answer our questions for us sometimes if we will "walk in His ways." But he has had little experience of God who has not often felt how sometimes, with a deep doubt in the soul unsolved, the Father will fold about His doubting child a sense of Himself so self-witnessing that the child is content to carry his unanswered question, because of the unanswerable assurance of his Father which he has received. You are comforting your child just in that way every day. But, tell me, is it the gain of that one doubter only? Is no other questioner helped? Few men are aided by arguments compared with those to whom religion becomes a clear reality from the sight of some fellow-man who carries the life of God wherever he goes. 2. Take the way God proves to us that the soul is more than the body. In the breakage or decay of physical power He brings out spiritual richness and strength. This was something that St. Paul knew well (chap. iv. 16). A man who has been in the full whirl of prosperous business fails, and then for the first time he learns the joy of conscious integrity preserved through all temptations, and of daily trust in God for daily bread. A man who never knew an ache comes to a break in health, and then the soul within him stands strong in the midst of weakness, calm in the very centre of the turmoil and panic of the aching body. The temper of the fickle people changes, and the favourite of yesterday becomes the victim of to-day; but in his martyrdom for the first time he sees the full value of the truth he dies for, and thanks the flames that have lighted up its preciousness. Now, in all these cases, must it not be an element in the comfort which fills the sick room, or gathers about the martyr's stake, that by this revelation of the spiritual through the broken physical life other men may learn its value? 3. Take the comfort which God gives a man who has found out his sin and repented of it—forgiveness. We take too low a ground in pleading with the man living in sin. We tell him of his danger. We go higher than that: we tell him of the happiness of the life with God. But suppose we took a higher strain, and said, "Every time any man humbly takes God's forgiveness, that man becomes a new witness to men of how strong and good the Saviour is. And look, how they need Him! Not for yourself now, but for them, for Him, take His forgiveness and give up yourself inwardly and outwardly to Him." So used one grows to find men respond to the noblest motives who are deaf to a motive which is less noble. Be a new man in Christ for these men's sake. (*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*) *Man requiring, enjoying, and ministering Divine comforts* :—The passage presents to us man in three aspects—I. AS REQUIRING DIVINE COMFORT. This is implied in the words, "God of all comfort." There are troubles arising—1. From secular sources—broken plans, profitless efforts, worldly cares and anxieties. 2. From social sources—the disruption of social ties, the venom of social slander, the disappointments of social ingratitude and unfaithfulness. 3. From moral sources—sense of guilt, conflict of passions with conscience, terrible forebodings of the future. II. AS ENJOYING DIVINE COMFORT. The apostle speaks of himself and the Church at Corinth as being "comforted of God." God comforts His trusting people—1. By inspiring hope. What delightful promises does He make—promises suitable to every tribulation! (1) To those in secular tribulation He says, "Be careful for nothing," &c. (2) To those in social tribulation He says, "Cursed is the man that maketh flesh his arm," "Cursed is the man that trusteth not in the Lord." (3) To those in moral tribulation He says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." 2. By uniting their thoughts. Conflicting thoughts are the great troublers of the soul. God harmonises those thoughts by centring them on Himself. 3. By engrossing their love. Distracted affections are sources of distress. God centres the heart upon Himself, and man is kept in perfect peace. III. AS MINISTERING DIVINE COMFORT. "That we may be able to comfort," &c. And Paul felt thankful for the comforts received, not merely for his own sake, but the sake of others. His lan-

guage implies—1. That he gratefully administered comfort to others as the gift of God. 2. That he loyally administered comfort to others “according to the will of God.” “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith the Lord.” Conclusion: How suitable is the God of the gospel to the troubled condition of humanity. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The ministry of consolation:—I. CHRISTIANS HAVE MANY A SECRET, MAKING PAIN ENDURABLE AND TAKING THE STING FROM TROUBLE.* 1. Sorrow is fellowship with Christ, is a great self-revealer—of sin, of restoring mercy, of cleansing grace, of the tenderness of God. 2. But the text shows a new gain—a special grace. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted”; but “blessed,” also, “are they that be comforted, for they shall comfort others.” (1) When God comforts a man, the man’s speech is full of feeling, and listening to him is like listening to the voice of God. (2) One who has felt a wound knows where and how to touch one. In our inexperience we are too blunt or too shy, and hurt the sensibilities we would soothe: we lay bare when we should shroud, and cover up a wound we should try to purge. (3) “Comforted of God.” Who comforteth like Him? “He knoweth our frame,” &c. It is worth while to stand in need of God’s comforts and to experience them, if we may but acquire an aptitude like this. 3. There is no honour comparable with the gratitude and love bestowed on a consoler, and no satisfaction greater than the sense that we have carried comfort to a mourner. This was Christ’s honour, joy, mission. **II. PAUL’S TROUBLE WAS ONE IN CONNECTION WITH HIS MINISTRY, YET HE SPEAKS OF BEING PREPARED FOR ANY CASE NEEDING CONSOLATION.** The power to console lies not in our ability to use a particular formula that shall suit a particular want; it lies in our acquaintance with God and His ways and the quickness of our sympathies with men. No one whose heart is tender and whose faith is strong may be deterred from trying to console a sufferer because he has not experienced a like calamity. The experience which is so valuable in all contact with souls is a tone of spirit rather than a knowledge of details; and it is this which is God’s choice gift to those He comforts. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The design of Paul’s afflictions:—Notice—I. THE PARTICULAR AFFLICTION TO WHICH THE APOSTLE REFERS.* The whole paragraph speaks of his trials, but at ver. 8 we read of one in particular extremely severe. In many parts of Asia Minor Paul suffered persecution, but if to one place more than another the text refers, it is to Lystra (*Acts xiv. 8–20*). **II. THE COMFORT HE ENJOYED IN THIS OR IN ANY OTHER AFFLICTION TO WHICH HE MAY REFER.** Paul was comforted—1. By various occurrences under Providence. At Lystra, the scene of his terrific sufferings, sat a cripple who “had faith to be healed.” And did not the apostle rejoice to see that thus, wherever he went, there were those whom sovereign grace designed to bless? When a prisoner at Rome, “the things which happened to him fell out to the furtherance of the gospel.” In Macedonia God, who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted him by the coming of Titus. 2. By communion with his Lord. 3. By his hope of heaven. **III. THE HAPPY INFLUENCE OF PAUL’S TRIALS IN PROMOTING THE RELIGION OF HIS FELLOW-CHRISTIANS (vers. 4, 6).** In two ways the suffering and steadfastness of the apostle would benefit the Corinthians. 1. By his example they would be animated to encounter similar difficulties. 2. By his writings, full of Christian experience, they would derive all that instruction and appeal which an actual endurance of sorrow and support would be sure to imprint by his pen. **IV. THE GRATEFUL, ADORING SPIRIT WHICH THE GOODNESS OF GOD OCCASIONED IN HIM (ver. 3).** (*Isaac Taylor.*) Comfort does not mean mere pacification, lulling, the creation of a species of moral and spiritual atrophy: the comfort of God is the encouragement of God, the stimulus of the Most High applied to the human mind and the human heart. When God vivifies us He comforts us; instead of putting His fingers upon our eyelids and drawing them down over tired eyes and saying, “Now sleep a long sleep,” He sometimes gives us such an access of life that we cannot lie one moment longer; we spring forth as men who have a battle to fight and a victory to bring home. That access of life is the comfort of God, as well as that added sleep, that extra hour of slumber which is a tender benediction. Why was the apostle comforted, vivified, or encouraged? That he should be able to comfort them which are in trouble. Why does God give us money? To make use of it for the good of others. Why does God make a man very strong? That He may save a man who is very weak, by carrying his burden for him an hour or two now and then, so as to give the man some sense of holiday. Why does the Lord make one man very penetrating in mind, very complete in judgment, very serene and profound in counsel? Not that he may say, “Behold me!” but that he may sit in the gate and dispense the bounty of his soul to those who need all manner of aid, all ministries of love. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. Who comforteth us . . . that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.—*Divine comfort in tribulation*.—1. There is no tribulation either for the kind or degree of it, but God can and doth comfort His people therein, and God's comforts do far exceed all philosophical remedies, as much as the sun doth a glow-worm. 2. It is very useful to know what are these apples of comfort (Cant. 2-5), because many of God's children—(1) Are in a great manner ignorant of what foundations and sure grounds they have of comfort. They are like Elisha's servant, who, though there was a great host of angels to help him, yet did not see them. So that the Spirit of God not only illuminates us in the matter of duty, but also in matter of comfort. (2) Though they know many arguments of comfort, yet their memory faileth them, that in the very hour of their temptations they forget what comfortable supports they might make use of. So that it is good to preach of these principles of consolation, that thereby we may be remembrancers to you. 3. Come we then to lead you up into the mount of transfiguration, let us see, even in this life, what are the good things God hath prepared for those that love Him. And take this for a foundation, that God comforts through and by the Scriptures. I. ALL TRIBULATION IS PRECISELY DETERMINED BY GOD AS A FATHER OUT OF MUCH LOVE. 1. In regard of the beginning, the degree, and the continuance of it. Here is matter of comfort enough; here is more oil than we have vessels to receive (Matt. v.; Heb. xii. 9, 10). Now as winter and cold is necessary in its season as well as summer, and the night hath its use as well as the day, a time of tribulation is as necessary as a time of rest and quietness. 2. In regard to the time of deliverance from it. The tribulation shall not stay an hour longer than while it may do good to thee; He will not take one drop of blood more from thee than is necessary to prevent thy disease, or abate it (Rev. 2 10). Even as the artificer knoweth how long the gold must be in the fire to take away the dross, and will not suffer it to abide any longer. II. Another Scripture-cordial is FROM CHRIST, WITH ALL THE FULLNESS THAT IS IN HIM. Christ received by faith is able to make us gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles. He that hath this sun cannot be in the dark night. What makes Paul (Rom. viii.) to triumph in all manner of tribulations? Is not the foundation of all this Christ dead and Christ risen again? And if He hath given us Christ, how shall He not with Him give us all things? Thus the spiritual influence of Christ into the soul taketh away the bitterness of all troubles. III. Another Scripture discovery for comfort is TO PRESS AND COMMAND THE LIFE OF FAITH UPON GOD'S PROMISE. So that, whatsoever the principles of the world and sense do suggest, yet faith rectifieth all. That finds honey to come out of a dead lion, that can suck honey from a bitter herb. God's thoughts and ours are wholly different; only faith enableth us to know the mind of God; and where flesh is ready to say, God is casting off and utterly forsaking, there faith seeth Him drawing near. The disciples in a tempest thought they had seen a spirit, and were affrighted, but it was Christ. The promise of God and faith applying it, do bear up the soul, and make it rejoice in troubles (Heb. vi. 18). IV. ETERNAL GLORY IS TO BE POSSESSED AFTER THE TROUBLES (2 Cor. iv. 16, 17). (*A. Burgess.*) *Comforting others*.—Circumstances of life not infrequently become aids to the revelations of God to the soul. Most of us know how troubles have helped us in the translation of the Bible. I. OUR AFFLICTIONS AND COMFORTINGS ARE THE SOURCE OF OUR FITNESS FOR INFLUENCING OTHERS. 1. These together bring a peculiar kind of power. (1) How often the very tone of stricken ones has had its power upon us. They were not morbid; not talking always about their past griefs; but our spirits felt as we listened to them the hallowing influence of the passage through suffering. Compare their conversation with that of those whom God has but seldom and lightly smitten. Take those efforts which are made for the conversion of others; hear also the men of sanctified afflictions. They who have been brought to Christ without any great struggles seldom gain the power to aid the early seekings of others. (2) Take any endeavour to express sympathy with those who may now be suffering. The unstricken can find beautiful words, but the stricken can express unutterable things in silence. 2. Then it will but be reasonable to expect that if God has valuable influence for us to exert, He will need to bring us through troubles. The same truth shines out, even more clearly, from the life and Cross of Christ. "He is able to succour because in all points tempted." Should you not, then, bless God for sorrows that win you Christly powers to bless others? II. OUR AFFLICTIONS AND COMFORTINGS GAIN FOR US ALL THE POWER OF A NOBLE EXAMPLE. There is an unconscious as well as a conscious influence, forming an atmosphere, living in which men

insensibly grow better. Sometimes God's more suffering children become despondent because they can do so little actual work for Christ; but God has done some of His very best things by the example of suffering patience. 1. Estimate the moral influence of sanctified afflictions on men who are living with no sense of spiritual and eternal things. What touches these men? Do sermons? Alas! but faintly. Does Christian life around them? Alas! its witness is too feeble. Does their own part of human trouble? Only a little, for they accept it as their part of the common lot. But in the presence of a sanctified Christian sufferer many a worldly, thoughtless man has said in his heart, "I would gladly change places with him, if I could but know his heart peace." 2. Then estimate the influence exerted by such on doubting and imperfect Christians. For all of us the Christian life is difficult; it is easy for us all to fall into careless, unworthy living, and into doubt and despair. Now those who have passed under God's afflictions and comfortings have a higher life; they excite us all to try and reach up to it. 3. Then think of the power exerted by these sanctified sufferers on children. Religion is in this way set before the young as no mere theory, but the very noblest power to sanctify their life. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) *Affliction a school of comfort*:—1. If there is one point of character more than another which belonged to St. Paul it was his power of sympathy. He went through trials of every kind, and this was their issue. He knew how to persuade, for he knew where lay the perplexity; he knew how to console, for he knew the sorrow. His spirit was as some delicate instrument which, as the weather changed about him, accurately marked all its variations, and guided him what to do. "To the Jews he became as a Jew," &c. (chap. xi. 23-30). The same law was fulfilled not only in the case of Christ's servants, but even He Himself condescended to learn to strengthen man, by the experiencing of man's infirmities (Heb. ii. 17, 18, iv. 14, 15). 2. Now, in speaking of the benefits of suffering, we should never forget that by itself it has no power to make us more heavenly. It makes many men morose and selfish. The only sympathy it creates in many is the wish that others should suffer with them, not they with others. The devils are not incited by their own torments to any endeavour but that of making others devils also. It is only when grace is in the heart that anything outward or inward turns to a man's salvation. 3. And while affliction does not necessarily make us kind, and may even make us cruel, the want of affliction does not mend matters. There is a buoyancy and freshness of mind in those who have never suffered, which, beautiful as it is, is perhaps scarcely suitable and safe in sinful man. Pain and sorrow are the almost necessary medicines of the impetuosity of nature. Without these, men, like spoilt children, act as if they considered everything must give way to their own wishes and conveniences. 4. Such is worldly happiness and worldly trial; but God, while He chose the latter as the portion of His saints, sanctified it. He rescues them from the selfishness of worldly comfort without surrendering them to the selfishness of worldly pain. He brings them into pain, that they may be like Christ, and may be led to think of Him, not of themselves. When they mourn, they are more intimately in His presence than at any other time. Pain, anxiety, bereavement, distress, are to them His forerunners. He who has been long under the rod of God becomes God's possession (Lam. iii. 1, 2, 12). And they who see him gather around like Job's acquaintance, speaking no word to him, yet more reverently than if they did; looking at him with fear yet with confidence, as one who is under God's teaching and training for the work of consolation towards his brethren. Him they will seek when trouble comes on themselves; turning from all such as delighted them in their prosperity. 5. Surely this is a great blessing to be thus consecrated by affliction as a minister of God's mercies to the afflicted. Thus, instead of being the selfish creatures which we were by nature, grace, acting through suffering, tends to make us ready teachers and witnesses of Truth to all men. Time was when, even at the most necessary times, we found it difficult to speak of heaven to another; but now our affection is eloquent, and "out of the abundance of the heart our mouth speaketh." 6. Such was the high temper of mind instanced in our Lord and His apostles, and thereby impressed upon the Church. And for this we may thank God that the Church has never forgotten that we must all, "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." She has never forgotten that she was set apart for a comforter of the afflicted, and that to comfort well we must first be afflicted ourselves. Those who are set on their own ease most certainly are bad comforters of others; thus the rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, let Lazarus lie at his gate, and left him to be

“comforted” after this life by angels. As to comfort the poor and afflicted is the way to heaven, so to have affliction ourselves is the way to comfort them. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *Affliction* :—I. AS A SCHOOL OF COMFORT. Affliction and comfort—a remarkable connection of two apparent opposites, and yet how indissoluble! For heavenly, as distinguished from mere earthly gladness, is inseparable from suffering. It was so in the life of Christ; it was immediately after the temptation that angels came and ministered to Him; it was in His agony that the angel strengthened Him. And as in His life so in ours, these two are never separated, for the first earnest questions of personal and deep religion are ever born out of personal suffering. As if God had said, “In the sunshine thou canst not see Me; but when the sun is withdrawn the stars of heaven shall appear.” II. A SCHOOL OF ASSURANCE. 1. There is nothing so hard to force upon the soul as the conviction that life is a real, earnest, awful thing. Only see the butterfly life of pleasure men and women are living day by day, fitting from one enjoyment to another; living, working, spending, and exhausting themselves for nothing else but the seen and temporal and unreal. 2. Nothing is harder than to believe in God. When you are well, when hours are pleasant and friends abundant, it is an easy thing to speculate about God; but when sorrow comes, speculation will not do. It is like casting the lead from mere curiosity, when you have a sound strong ship in deep water. But when she is grinding on the rocks, then we sound for God. For God becomes a living God, a home, when once we feel that we are helpless and homeless in this world without Him. III. A SCHOOL OF SYMPATHY. 1. Some Christians are rough, hard, and rude: you cannot go to them for sympathy. They have not suffered. Tenderness is got by suffering. Would you be a Barnabas and give something beyond commonplace consolation to a wounded spirit? then “you must suffer being tempted.” 2. Now here we have a very peculiar source of consolation in suffering. The thought that the apostle’s suffering benefited others soothed him in his afflictions, and this is a consolation which is essentially Christian. Consider how the old Stoicism groped in the dark to solve the mystery of grief, telling you it must be, and that it benefits and perfects you. Yes, that is true enough. But Christianity says much more; it says, Your suffering blesses others; it gives them firmness. Here is the law of the Cross: “No man dieth to himself”; for his pain and loss is for others, and brings with it to others joy and gain. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*)

Ver 5. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ.—*The sufferings and the consolation* :—Our cross is not the same as Christ’s, yet we have a cross. Our sufferings are not the same as Christ’s, yet we have sufferings. The cross is like Christ’s, and the sufferings are like His, but yet not the same in kind or object. Yea there is a wide difference; for our trials have nothing to do with expiation. The meaning and use of trials. I. IT SHOWS GOD TO BE IN EARNEST WITH US. He does not let us alone. He takes great pains with our spiritual education and training. He is no careless Father. II. IT ASSURES US OF HIS LOVE. “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” III. IT DRAWS PRAYER TO US. IV. IT KNOTS US IN SYMPATHY TO THE WHOLE BODY. V. IT TEACHES US SYMPATHY WITH BRETHREN. VI. IT BRINGS US INTO A MOOD MORE RECEPTIVE OF BLESSING. It softens our hearts. VII. IT MAKES US PRIZE THE WORD. The Bible assumes a new aspect to us. All else darkens; but it brightens. VIII. IT SHUTS OUT THE WORLD. It all at once draws a curtain round us, and the world becomes invisible. IX. IT BIDS US LOOK UP. Set your affection on things above. X. IT TURNS OUR HOPE TO THE LORD’S GREAT COMING. (*A. Bonar.*) *Consolations of the sufferings of Christ* :—The quality and extent of suffering depends not so much on the exciting causes of it as upon the nature of the faculty which suffers. It is the power of suffering that is inherent in any faculty that measures suffering, and not the magnitude of the aggression which is made outwardly. For there are many who will stand up and have their name battered, as if they were but a target, almost without suffering, while there are others to whom the slightest disparagement is like a poisoned arrow, and rankles with exquisite suffering. A stroke of a pound weight upon a bell two inches in diameter will give forth a certain amount of sound. Let the bell be of one hundred pounds weight, and the same stroke of one pound will more than quadruple the amount of aerial vibration. Let the bell be increased to a thousand pounds, and the same stroke will make the reverberations vaster, and cause them to roll yet further. Let it be a five or ten thousand pound weight bell, and that

same stroke that made a tinkling on the small bell makes a roar on this large one. The very same quality that being struck in a small being produces a certain amount of susceptibility, being struck in a being that is infinite, produces an infinitely greater experience, for feeling increases in the ratio of being. The same suffering in a great nature is a thousandfold greater than it is in a small nature, because there is the vibration, as it were, of a mind so much greater given to the suffering. The chord in our souls is short and stubborn. The chord in the Divine soul is infinite; and its vibrations are immeasurably beyond any experience of our own. Sorrow in us is of the same kind as sorrow in Christ, and yet, as compared with the sorrow of Christ, human sorrow is but a mere puff. (H. W. Beecher.)

Consolation proportionate to spiritual sufferings:—I. THE SUFFERINGS TO BE EXPECTED. 1. Before we buckle on the Christian armour we ought to know what that service is which is expected of us. A recruiting sergeant often slips a shilling into the hand of some ignorant youth, and tells him that Her Majesty's service is a fine thing, that he has nothing to do but walk about in his flaming colours, and go straight on to glory. But the Christian sergeant never deceives like that. Christ Himself said, "Count the cost." He wished to have no disciple who was not prepared "to bear hardness as a good soldier." 2. But why must the Christian expect trouble? (1) Look upward. Thinkest thou it will be an easy thing for thy heart to become as pure as God is? Ask those bright spirits clad in white whence their victory came. Some of them will tell you they swam through seas of blood. (2) Turn thine eyes downward. Satan will always be at thee, for thine enemy, "like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." (3) Look around thee. Thou art in an enemy's country. (4) Look within thee. There is a little world in here, which is quite enough to give us trouble. Sin is there and self and unbelief. II. THE DISTINCTION TO BE NOTICED. Our sufferings are said to be the sufferings of Christ. Now, suffering itself is not an evidence of Christianity. There are many people who have troubles who are not children of God. A man is dishonest, and is put in jail for it; a man is a coward, and men hiss at him for it; a man is insincere, and therefore persons avoid him. Yet he says he is persecuted. Not at all; it serves him right. Take heed that your sufferings are the sufferings of Christ. It is only then that we may take comfort. What is meant by this? As Christ, the head, had a certain amount of suffering to endure, so the body must also have a certain weight laid upon it. Ours are the sufferings of Christ if we suffer for Christ's sake. If you are called to endure hardness for the sake of the truth, then those are the sufferings of Christ. And this ennobles us and makes us happy. It must have been some honour to the old soldier who stood by the Iron Duke in his battles to be able to say, "We fight under the good old Duke, who has won so many battles, and when he wins, part of the honour will be ours." I remember a story of a great commander who led his troops into a defile, and when there a large body of the enemy entirely surrounded him. He knew a battle was inevitable on the morning, he therefore went round to hear in what condition his soldiers' minds were. He came to one tent, and as he listened he heard a man say, "Our general is very brave, but he is very unwise this time; he has led us into a place where we are sure to be beaten; there are so many of the enemy and only so many of us." Then the commander drew aside a part of the tent and said, "How many do you count me for?" Now, Christian, how many do you count Christ for? He is all in all. III. A PROPORTION TO BE EXPERIENCED. As the sufferings of Christ abound in us so the consolations of Christ abound. God always keeps a pair of scales—in this side He puts His people's trials, and in that He puts their consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty, you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition, and *vice versâ*. Because—1. Trials make more room for consolation. There is nothing makes a man have a big heart like a great trial. 2. Trouble exercises our graces, and the very exercise of our graces tends to make us more comfortable and happy. Where showers fall most, there the grass is greenest. 3. Then we have the closest dealings with God. When the barn is full, man can live without God. But once take your gourds away, you want your God. Some people call troubles weights. Verily they are so. A ship that has large sails and a fair wind needs ballast. A gentleman once asked a friend concerning a beautiful horse of his feeding about in the pasture with a clog on its foot, "Why do you clog such a noble animal?" "Sir," said he, "I would a great deal sooner clog him than lose him; he is given to leap hedges." That is why God clogs His people. IV. A PERSON TO BE HONOURED.

Christians can rejoice in deep distress, but to whom shall the glory be given? Oh, to Jesus, for the text says it is all by Him. The Christian can rejoice, since Christ will never forsake him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Suffering and consolation* :—

1. It would be difficult to exaggerate how much suffering, patiently and heroically borne, contributed to the propagation of the Christian religion. All the apostles were martyrs, except St. John, and he was a martyr in will. 2. This Epistle is one which is marked by intense feeling. We see the different emotions of joy and sorrow, thankfulness and indignation, disappointment and confidence, distress and hope, breaking forth every here and there in this Second Letter to the Corinthians. The apostle is speaking in the text of troubles, afflictions, and persecutions which he himself had endured, to which he refers in verse 8. But he does not repine.

I. "THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ABOUND IN US." 1. First, notice what a very different view of suffering we find in the New Testament from that which was taken of old. The Jewish estimate was very narrow. We see from the Gospels that the Jew regarded suffering as retributive, but not as remedial or perfective. There are many reasons for interpreting the purposes of pain and affliction in a wider way. The sufferings of Job, "a perfect and an upright man," and the sufferings of the animal world, might have opened the eyes to the inadequacy of their theory. 2. The apostle says, "The sufferings of Christ abound in us." Is not Christ in glory? How can St. Paul speak still of His sufferings? The words have received three interpretations. One, the sufferings of Christ means our sufferings for Him. Another, by the sufferings of Christ is meant sufferings similar to those which He bore; and so the martyrs might all claim a special likeness to Him in their violent deaths. But the third interpretation seems more to the point. The sufferings of Christ mean His sufferings in us. Christ said, when Saul was persecuting His members, "Why persecutest thou Me?" So close is the union between the Head and the members, that Christ, as an old commentator asserts, was in a manner stoned in Stephen, beheaded in Paul, crucified in Peter, and burnt in St. Lawrence.

II. Now, "OUR CONSOLATION." 1. Our sufferings differ from Christ's, in that we have consolation which is apportioned to our trial. Christ suffered without solace. His Passion was endured amid what spiritual writers describe as "dryness of spirit." This, it need not be said, intensifies affliction (John xii. 27; Matt. xxvii. 46). 2. But with the Christian, if the sufferings "abound," the consolation "abounds" also. This accounts in part for the different spirit in which the martyrs faced death from that which the King of Martyrs displayed. 3. Christ purchased the consolation which is bestowed upon His members. The text runs, "Our consolation aboundeth by Christ," or, Revised Version, "through (*διὰ*) Christ." Through His death and passion, through His all-prevailing intercession, through the gift of the Spirit, and the grace of the sacraments—trial and persecution have been endured even with thankfulness and joy (James i. 2; Phil. iii. 10).

III. LESSONS. 1. To take a right view of suffering. 2. To realise the consolation as the gift of Christ, and as measured out in proportion to our day of trial. 3. Especially to seek this "consolation" from the Comforter, God the Holy Ghost—like the Churches of old, who walked "in the comfort of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ix. 31). (*Canon Hutchings, M.A.*)

How Christ comforteth those who suffer for Him :—I. AS OUR SUFFERINGS ARE FOR CHRIST, SO BY THE SAME CHRIST ARE OUR COMFORTS. Consider in what respects comforts may be said to abound by Christ. 1. Efficiently. He being the same with God, is therefore a God of all consolation, and as a Mediator He is sensible of our need, and therefore the more ready to comfort. Christ that wanted comfort Himself, and therefore had an angel sent to comfort Him, is thereby the more compassionate and willing to comfort us. Thus you may read Christ and God put together in this very act (2 Thess. ii. 16, 17). Christ, therefore, not only absolutely as God, but relatively as Mediator, is qualified with all fitness and fulness to communicate consolation; He is the fountain and head, as of grace, so of comfort.

2. Meritoriously. He hath merited at the hands of God our comfort. As by Christ the Spirit of God is given to the Church as a guide into all truth, and as the Sanctifier, so He is also the Comforter, who giveth every drop of consolation that any believer doth enjoy. 3. Objectively—*i. e.*, in Him, and from Him we take our comfort. As Christ is called "our righteousness," because in and through His righteousness we are accepted of in Him, so Christ is our comfort, because in Him we find matter of all joy (Phil. iii. 3).

II. HOW MANY WAYS CHRIST MAKES HIS COMFORTS TO ABOUND TO THOSE THAT SUFFER FOR HIM. 1. By persuading them of the goodness of the cause, why they suffer. 2. By forewarning of their sufferings.

All who will live godly must suffer tribulation. Christ hath done us no wrong, He hath told us what we must look for, it is no more than we expected. The fiery trial is not a strange thing. Surely this maketh way for much comfort, that we looked for afflictions beforehand; we prepared an ark against the deluge should come. 3. By informing us of His sovereignty and conquest over the world. If our enemies were equal or superior to Christ, then we might justly be left without comfort; but what Christ spake to His disciples belongs to all (John xiv. 18, xvi. 33). 4. By virtue of His prayer put up in that very behalf (John xvii. 13). 5. By instructing us of the good use and heavenly advantage all these tribulations shall turn unto. (1) Our spiritual and eternal good. This will winnow away our chaff, purge our dross, be a school wherein we shall learn more spiritual and Divine knowledge than ever before. Sufferings have taught more than vast libraries, or the best books can teach. (2) Our eternal glory. (*A. Burgess.*) *The sacred joy*:—These words fathom a depth of human experience which can only be touched by those who seek in the life of Christ the key to the mystery of pain. There is a suffering which is common to man, and there is in respect of such suffering consolation in God. But there is a suffering which belongs to life under its highest conditions and which the mere man of the world never tastes, but for which there is a Divine joy which is equally beyond his range. I. THE NATURE OF THE SUFFERING WHICH IS TO BE REGARDED AS A SHARING OF THE SUFFERING OF THE LORD. Among the elements which enter into it are—1. The spectacle of the misery of mankind. On earth Christ wept as He beheld it, and the Christian is also bound to feel the pressure of its burden. 2. The deadly nature of evil. We cannot cheat ourselves into the belief that it does not much matter, that God is good and will make it all right at last. Sin is to be looked at in the light of Calvary. That teaches how terrible it is to the eye of God, how deadly in the heart of man. 3. The resistance of the will of the flesh to the best efforts and influences; its determination to reject the things that heal and save. It was this that made Christ the Man of Sorrows (Luke xiii. 34). To see a man perish within reach of rescue is one of the most piteous of spectacles. Imagine, then, what the world must be to Christ as He says, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." This burden the disciple of Christ has ever pressing upon him as he fulfils his ministry in a scornful world. 4. The future eternal destiny. The thought pressed as a constant burden on the heart of Christ. It was this that drove Paul into barbarous lands, if he might save a soul from death. The fellowship of the Redeemer's tears is no unknown experience to the disciple. II. How our CONSOLATION ABOUNDETH IN CHRIST. If we are called to share the suffering, we are called also to share the consolation. There was a joy set before Christ for which He endured the Cross, &c.—the joy of a sure redemption of humanity. These are some of the elements of the joy. 1. The God of all power and might has taken up the burden and wills the redemption of the world. God has come forth in Christ to undertake in person the recovery of our race. In working and suffering for man we have the assurance that God is with us. We see Mammon or Moloch on the throne, but it cannot be for ever. With all the vantage strength of His Godhead, Christ is working at the problem of man's salvation. When we feel saddened by the burden of human misery let us rest on the thought, "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." 2. There is a joy in the fulfilment of a self-sacrificing ministry which is more like heavenly rapture than any other experience which is within our reach. Unselfish work, inspired by the love of Christ, is the soul's gymnastic culture. To sow the seed of the kingdom is the present joy of a lifetime. No man who has known it would part with it to be a crowned king. The certainty of the issue (Isa. lv. 10-13). (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*)

Ver. 6-11. And whether we be afflicted . . . or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.—*Personal sufferings*:—I. ARE OFTEN EXPERIENCED IN THE BEST OF ENTERPRISES (chap. xi. 23, 29). II. ARE EVER NECESSARY FOR THE RENDERING OF THE HIGHEST SERVICE TO MANKIND (ver 6). III. THEIR DETAILMENT PURELY FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS IS JUSTIFIABLE (ver. 8). IV. THEIR EXPERIENCE OFTEN PROVES A BLESSING TO THE SUFFERER. They seem to have done two things for Paul—1. To have transferred his trust in himself to God (ver. 9). 2. To have awakened the prayers of others on his behalf (ver. 11). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The peculiar afflictions of God's people*:—I. GOD SUFFERS HIS CHILDREN TO FALL INTO GREAT EXTREMITIES. 1. To try what

mettle they are made of. Light afflictions will not try them thoroughly, great ones will. What we are in great afflictions, we are indeed. 2. To try the sincerity of our estate, to make us known to the world and known to ourselves. A man knows not what a deal of looseness he hath in his heart, and what a deal of falseness, till we come to extremity. 3. To set an edge upon our desires and our prayers (Psa. cxxx. 1). 4. To exercise our faith and patience. 5. To perfect the work of mortification. 6. To prepare us for greater blessings. Humility doth empty the soul, and crosses do breed humility. The emptiness of the soul fits it for receipt. Why doth the husbandman rend his ground with the plough? Is it because he hath an ill mind to the ground? No. He means to sow good seed there, and he will not plough a whit longer than may serve to prepare the ground (Isa. xxviii. 24). So likewise the goldsmith, the best metal that he hath, he tempers it, he labours to consume the dross of it, and the longer it is in the fire the more pure it comes forth. 7. That we might set a price upon the comforts when they come. 8. Learn, then—(1) Not to pass a harsh, rigid censure upon ourselves or others for any great affliction or abasement in this world. (2) Not to build overmuch confidence on earthly things. II. AS GOD'S CHILDREN ARE BROUGHT TO THIS ESTATE, SO THEY ARE SENSIBLE OF IT. They are flesh and not steel (Job vi. 12). They are men and not stones. They are Christians and not Stoics. III. WE MAY TRIUMPH OVER DEATH BY FAITH AND GRACE. That we may not fear death overmuch, let us look upon it in the glass of the gospel as it is now in Christ, and meditate on the two terms, from whence and whither. What a blessed change it is if we be in Christ! (R. Sibbes, D.D.) But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.—*Death a sentence*:—Death is—I. A SENTENCE. 1. Universal. 2. Just. 3. Irrevocable. II. As a sentence IN MAN. "We have the sentence of death in ourselves." 1. The sentence of death is in man's body. It is born with him, and it continues to work within until the organisation falls back to its original dust. "The moment we begin to live we all begin to die." 2. The sentence of death is in man's mind. There it dwells as a dark thought spreading a gloom over the whole of his life. It haunts the memory, it terrifies the conscience. It is in us, we cannot get rid of it. No science can expel it from the body, no reason can argue it from the soul. III. As a sentence in man for USEFUL ENDS. What are the spiritual uses it is designed to answer? 1. Nontrust in self. "Not trust in ourselves." There is a self-reliance that is a duty. But there is a self-confidence that is sinful and ruinous. Now the sentence of death tends to check this. It makes man feel his frailty. Thank God for death, it keeps down the arrogant spirit of humanity. 2. Devout trust in God. "But in God that raiseth the dead." Man's well-being is essentially dependent upon trust in God. (*Homilist.*) *Sentence of death, the death of self-trust*:—1. We are justified in speaking about our own experience when it will be for the benefit of others. Especially is this the case with leaders in the Church such as Paul. As to our own experience of trial and delivering mercy, it is sent for our good, and we should endeavour to profit to the utmost by it; but it was never intended that it should end with our private benefit. We are bound to comfort others by the comfort wherewith the Lord hath comforted us. 2. The particular experience of which Paul speaks was a certain trial, or probably series of trials, which he endured in Asia. You know how he was stoned at Lystra, and how he was followed by his malicious countrymen from town to town. You recollect the uproar at Ephesus, and the constant danger to which Paul was exposed from perils of all kinds; but he appears to have been suffering at the same time grievous sickness of body, and the whole together caused very deep depression of mind. His tribulations abounded. Note—1. THE DISEASE—the tendency to trust in ourselves is—1. One to which all men are liable, for even Paul was in danger of it. Where a sharp preventive is used it is clear that a strong liability exists. I should have thought that Paul was the last man to be in this danger. Self-confidence he is always disclaiming. He looks upon his own righteousness as dross, and "By the grace of God," saith he, "I am what I am." It is plain, then, that no clearness of knowledge, no purity of intent, and no depth of experience can altogether kill the propensity to self-reliance. 2. Evil in all men, since it was evil in an apostle. Paul speaks of it as a fault which God in mercy prevented. At first sight it seems that there was somewhat in him whereof he might glory. What folly would be ours, then, if we became self-sufficient! If a lion's strength be insufficient, what can the dogs do? If the oak trembles, how can the brambles boast? 3. Highly injurious, since God Himself interposed to prevent His servant from falling into it by sending a

great trouble. Depend upon it, He is doing the same for us, since we have even greater need. Anything is better than vain-glory and self-esteem. 4. Very hard to cure; for to prevent it in Paul it was necessary for the Great Physician to go the length of making him feel the sentence of death in himself. II. THE TREATMENT. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves," which means that—1. He seemed to hear the verdict of death passed upon him by the conditions which surrounded him. So continually hounded by his malicious countrymen, &c., he felt certain that one day or other they would compass his destruction. The original conveys the idea, not only of a verdict from without, but of an answer of assent from within, a sort of presentiment that he was soon to die. And yet it was not so: he survived all the designs of the foe. We often feel a thousand deaths in fearing one. Into a low state of spirit was Paul brought, and this prevented his trusting in himself. The man who feels that he is about to die is no longer able to trust in himself. What earthly thing can help us when we are about to die? Paul felt as every dying Christian must, that he must commit his spirit unto Christ and watch for His appearing. 2. The sentence of death which he heard outside wrought within his soul a sense of entire helplessness. He was striving to fight for the kingdom of Christ, but he saw that he must be baffled if he had nothing to rely upon but himself. Paul's mind was so struck with death within himself that he could not stem the torrent, and would have drifted to despair had he not given himself up into the hands of grace Divine. III. THE CURE. It was sharp medicine, but it worked well with Paul. 1. He argued, If I die, what matters it? God can raise me from the dead. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." 2. He inferred, also, that if God could raise him from the dead He could preserve him from a violent death. Immortal is every believer till his work is done. 3. He argued yet further that if God can raise the dead He could take his fainting powers, over which the sentence of death has passed, and He could use them for His own purposes. (C. H. Spurgeon.) **Who delivered us from so great a death.—God's deliverances:—**1. God hath a time, as for all things, so for our deliverance. 2. God's time is the best time. He is the best discerner of opportunities. 3. This shall be when He hath wrought His work upon our souls, specially when He hath made us trust in Him. As here, when Paul had learned to trust in God, then He delivered him. (R. Sibbes, D.D.) **A great deliverance:—**First, we have here the terms of the deliverance, or the thing delivered from—"so great a death." For the evil itself—"death," and for the aggravation of it—"a great death." Chrysostom, together with some others, gives it in the plural number, so great deaths. And, indeed, there are more deaths than one which God does undertake to deliver His servants from, and from which He delivered St. Paul and his companions. First, from spiritual death, the death of sin; that is a very great death, not only as exposing to wrath and future condemnation, but likewise as disabling to the actions of grace and holiness, depriving us of that life of God which should be in us (Eph. iv. 18). And this death of sin is to be numbered among great deaths, and the deliverance from it reckoned among great deliverances. Secondly, eternal death, the death of wrath and condemnation, that is another great death also, and such as follows likewise upon the former without recovery from it. The third, and that which is here particularly aimed at, is temporal death, which is the least death of all. The greater aggravations we may take in these following particulars. First, from the nature and kind of it, a violent death, not a natural. This is a great death, and so consequently a great mercy to be delivered from it, to be kept from accidents. As for wicked men, it is threatened as a judgment upon them that a tempest shall steal them away (Job xxvii. 20). The second is, from the quality and manner of it, a painful death, not a gentle and easy. Death is unpleasing in itself; but when to this we shall add pain and torture, this makes it to be so much the more. This was that which the many of godly martyrs endured (Heb. xi. 35). Thirdly, take in another from the coming and proceeding of it—a sudden death and not an expected. Fourthly, from the time and season of it, when it is an hastened death, not a mature one (Eccles. vii. 17; Psa. lv. 23). It is said of bloody and deceitful men that they shall not live out half their days; for men not to live out half their days is reckoned in the catalogue of great deaths. Fifthly, the greatness of death has an aggravation of it from its latitude and extent. That is a great death which devout multitudes at once. And then what kind of "us" were they? Take in, secondly, the quality of persons, such as were especially useful—an apostle and the ministers of Christ; for these to be delivered from death, it was to be delivered from a great death. The

death of none is to be slighted, though never so mean; but the death of men who are eminent for their gifts and graces is much to be set by. Sixthly, a great death in regard of the proximity and nearness of the evil itself. It was, as it were, at the very next door. A great death, that is, indeed, a great danger, so some read the words. Lastly, a great death also in regard of the apprehensions of those which were in danger of it. That which is great in our thoughts, to us it is great. And so was this here to the Apostle Paul and his company, as we may see in the verse before the text, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves," that is, we gave ourselves for dead men. So great a death! Here is now the nature of thankfulness, to extend the mercies of God, and to make them as great as may be. The second particular is the preservation or deliverance itself, "And doth deliver," &c. And here again take notice of two things more. First, for the thing itself; this is that which we may here observe how ready God is to deliver His people from death, and from great death (Psa. lvii. 13, cxvi. 8, cxviii. 18). And so in like manner other of the saints. There are many gracious promises to this purpose, as Job v. 20, "He shall redeem thy soul from death." First, out of pity and compassion towards them. Look how much sweetness there is in life, so much mercy in preservation from death. Secondly, He has work for them to do, and some service which He requires from them. When we put ourselves out of service we put ourselves out of protection. When we lay ourselves aside as to our work, we do in a manner hasten our end, and ring our own passing bell. Thirdly, God does further delight to frustrate the attempts of enemies, and those that conspire the death of His servants, and for this cause will deliver them from it. We may in the second place look upon it in the reflection, as coming from the apostle, God had delivered him, and he did not now let it pass without notice. This is a duty, to take notice of those deliverances which God at any time has vouchsafed unto us. Thankfulness is the least which we can return upon God for deliverance. That God has delivered us, and from a great death. First, for the person delivering, it was God. Secondly, for the persons delivered, we may add also "us," it is we which are delivered. The deliverance of others has cause for joy. But when ourselves are interested in any deliverance, this should more work upon us. Thirdly, for the terms also of deliverance, "so great a death," so great as it is hard to declare how great it was. The second now follows, and that is the signification of a deliverance present, in these words, "And doth deliver, He that hath delivered, does deliver." It is very fitly put in the present tense, and also indefinitely, because God is never out of this work of deliverance of us. This may be made good according to a twofold explication. First, God does still deliver so far forth as He does confirm and make good His former deliverance. God, when He delivers His people, but He still pursues them with His deliverance further. As there is preventing and antecedent grace, so there is following and subsequent grace. And as there is the grace of conversion, so there is likewise the grace of confirmation. Thus, for example, when God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians at the Red Sea. What, did He only deliver them in that juncture of time? No, but even all the time after they did reap the fruit of that deliverance till they came to Canaan. Secondly, God does deliver, even after that He has delivered already. In renewing upon us the like mercies again, and in vouchsafing the same deliverances for kind as He has formerly done. So likewise for spiritual deliverances, God does deliver after deliverances. The efficacy of Christ's death is extended beyond the time of His sufferings to all following generations. The third and last is the prognostication of a deliverance to come, "In whom we trust also, that He will yet deliver us." We see this excellent gradation how the apostle proceeds from one thing to another, from time past to time present, and from time present to time to come. What we may observe from hence. That deliverances which are past are a very good ground for expecting of deliverances to come; or if ye will thus, God that has delivered hitherto He will likewise deliver again. This is the sweetest heavenly reasoning of the saints and servants of God, even to argue thus with themselves and to draw deductions of expectation from former experience. What God will do from what He has done, and that also upon weighty considerations. First, His ability and power. In men this is many times defective, so that we cannot so happily conclude of the one from the other, of future goodness from former, because their power and opportunity may be gone. And then further, here is an argument likewise from the greater to the less, He that has done the one He can do the other too; He that has delivered from so great a death He can much

more deliver from a smaller danger. Secondly, there is in God a perpetuity of affection too. "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lam. iii. 22). Thirdly, there is in God exactness and a desire to perfect His own work; now this He should not be able to do, if together with deliverances which are past He should not join deliverances to come. The improvement of it may be in a double way of application. First, for our own private and particular, we should learn from this present doctrine to treasure up unto ourselves ground of expectation of more from God in a way of deliverance and preservation, by considering what He has done for us heretofore in like exigencies. Thus the mariner or traveller by sea may reason, God has delivered me in such a storm and in such a tempest, I am now in the same lawful way and He will deliver me again. So likewise in the second place we may also carry it (as more pertinent to the occasion) to the Church and State in general, and reason so for that. He has delivered and does deliver, and we trust that He will yet deliver us. God does not do things all at once, but by time and degrees, He makes one thing a preparation to another, and a ground and argument for the expectation of it, and so as we may in a manner see His footsteps in it. (*Thomas Horton, D.D.*) *The tenses* :—The text—I. SUGGESTS THREE TRAINS OF THOUGHT. 1. Memory tells of deliverance in the past. From—(1) Violent death. (2) Our death in sin: "So great a death," indeed. (3) Fierce despair when under conviction. (4) Total overthrow when tempted by Satan. (5) Faintness under daily tribulation. (6) Destruction by slander and the like. The Lord has graciously delivered us hitherto. Let us express our gratitude. 2. Observation calls attention to present deliverance. By the good hand of the Lord we are at this time preserved from—(1) Unseen dangers to life. (2) The subtle assaults of Satan. (3) The rampant errors of the times. (4) Inbred sin and natural corruption. (5) The sentence of death within, and the greater danger of self-trust (ver. 9). Our present standing is wholly due to the grace of God, and, trusting in that grace, we may indulge a happy confidence. 3. Expectation looks out of the window upon the future. (1) Faith rests alone in God, "in whom we trust," and through Him she looks for future deliverance. (a) From all future common trials. (b) From coming losses and afflictions, and from sicknesses, which may be coming upon us. (c) From the infirmities and wants of age. (d) From the peculiar glooms of death. (2) This expectation makes us march on with cheerfulness. II. SUPPLIES THREE LINES OF ARGUMENT. That the Lord will preserve us to the end is most sure. We can say of Him, "In whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." 1. From the Lord's beginning to deliver we argue that He will yet deliver, for—(1) There was no reason in us for His beginning to love us. If His love arises out of His own nature it will continue. (2) He has obtained no fresh knowledge. He foreknew all our misbehaviours: hence there is no reason for casting us off. (3) The reason which moved Him at first is operating now, and none better can be required. 2. From the Lord's continuing to deliver we argue that He will yet deliver; for—(1) His deliverances have been so many. (2) They have displayed such wisdom and power. (3) They have come to us when we have been so unworthy. (4) They have continued in such an unbroken line. That we feel sure He will never leave nor forsake us. 3. From the Lord Himself—"In whom we trust": we argue that He will yet deliver; for—(1) He is as loving and strong now as aforesaid. (2) He will be the same in the future. (3) His purpose never changes, and it is to His glory to complete what He has begun. III. IS OPEN TO THREE INFERENCES. 1. That we shall always be so in danger as to need to be delivered; wherefore we are not high-minded, but fear. 2. Our constant need of God's own interposition. He alone has met our case in the past, and He only can meet it in the future; wherefore we would ever abide near our Lord. 3. That our whole life should be filled with the praise of God, who, for past, present, and future, is our Deliverer. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 11. Ye also helping together by prayer for us.—*Helping together* :—You have four girls; Mary does the work of the rest—such help is not good. All help is dangerous for any of us when there is absence of mutuality. I am not allowed to think of myself as in one of those boat excursions, where some sit idle at the stern while some one else rows. There is nothing healthy or wholesome unless we work together. I. WE MUST NOT HINDER. What a dreadful thing it is to read concerning the Pharisees, that they not only did not enter in themselves, but hindered those that were entering in. That may be done by ill-temper and by indifference. II. NERVE YOURSELF TO TRIUMPH OVER HINDRANCES. The river comes leaping on. Well,

you say you cannot get over that rock, it is so high! "Oh! yes," the river says, "I am going round that side." Your life and mine ought to mean conquest. III. IT IS PLEASANT TO HELP. But when you are "helping together" then the critics come. Look at Nehemiah's work. These are the things that test your strength! Go on with the work, helping together! IV. NOTE THE VARIETY OF WORK. There is a great deal to be said for the numerous ways in which we may help. V. THIS "HELPING TOGETHER" WILL BE REWARDED IN WAYS WE LITTLE THINK OF. VI. THE INFLUENCE OF WORK UPON THE WORKER. We are all disciplined by it. (*W. M. Statham.*) *Christians' prayers the minister's help*:—I. THE OBJECTS AT WHICH CHRISTIAN MINISTERS AIM. 1. The destruction of the empire of Satan. 2. To restore order and happiness to the world. 3. To bring glory to Christ. 4. To prepare souls for heaven. II. THE INFLUENCE WHICH YOUR PRAYERS WILL HAVE ON THEIR ATTAINMENT. They will—1. Awaken the attention of beholders. 2. Honour the Holy Spirit, who is the great agent in the success of the gospel. 3. Prepare the Church for its safe enjoyment of prosperity. 4. Fall in with the will of God, as made known to us in His Word. III. THE MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD ENGAGE YOU TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY. 1. It will tend to your own good. 2. There will be the use of other means to secure the good of the Church. He who prays as he ought will endeavour to live as he prays. 3. The great Lord of the Church hath set the example of prayer. 4. The Divine approbation it will surely receive. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *The power of prayer and the pleasure of praise*:—Although our apostle thus acknowledged God's hand alone in his deliverance, yet he did not undervalue the second causes. Having first praised the God of all comfort, he now remembers with gratitude the earnest prayers of the many loving intercessors. Let us—I. ACKNOWLEDGE THE POWER OF UNITED PRAYER. 1. God has been pleased to command us to pray, for prayer—(1) Glorifies God, by putting man in the humblest posture of worship. (2) Teaches us our unworthiness, which is no small blessing to such proud beings as we are. While it is an application to Divine wealth, it is a confession of human emptiness. (3) Apart from the answer which it brings, a great benefit to the Christian. As the runner gains strength for the race by daily exercise, so for the great race of life we acquire energy by the hallowed labour of prayer. 2. As many mercies are conveyed from heaven in the ship of prayer, so there are many choice and special favours which can only be brought to us by the fleets of united prayer. Many are the good things which God will give to His Elijahs and Daniels, but if two of you agree, &c., there is no limit to God's bountiful answers. Peter might never have been brought out of prison if it had not been that prayer was made without ceasing by all the Church for him. Pentecost might never have come if all the disciples had not been "with one accord in one place." Thus our gracious Lord sets forth His own esteem for the communion of saints. We cannot all preach, rule, or give gold and silver, but we can all contribute our prayers. 3. This united prayer should specially be made for the ministers of God. (1) Their position is most perilous. Satan knows if he can once smite one of these there will be a general confusion, for if the champion be dead then the people fly. On returning from Rotterdam, when we were crossing the bar at the mouth of the Maas, where by reason of a neap tide and a bad wind the navigation was exceedingly dangerous, orders were issued—"All hands on deck!" So the life of a minister is so perilous, that I may well cry—"All hands on deck"; every man to prayer. (2) A solemn weight of responsibility rests on them. The captain as we crossed that bar threw the lead himself into the sea; and when one asked why, he said, "At this point I dare not trust any man to heave the lead, for we have hardly six inches between our ship and the bottom." (3) Their preservation is one of the most important objects to the Church. You may lose a sailor from the ship, and that is very bad, but if the captain should be smitten, what is the vessel to do? (4) How much more is asked of them than of you. 4. I find that in the original the word for "helping together" implies very earnest work. Some people's prayers have no work in them. Melancthon derived great comfort from the information that certain poor weavers, woman and children, had met together to pray for the Reformation. It was not Luther only, but the thousands of poor persons who offered supplications, that made the Reformation what it was. II. EXCITE YOU TO PRAISE. 1. Praise should always follow answered prayer; the mist of earth's gratitude should rise as the sun of heaven's love warms the ground. Tongue-tied Christians are a sad dishonour to the Church. 2. United praise has a very special commendation, it is like music in concert. It is a volume of harmony. The praise of

one Christian is accepted before God like a grain of incense; but the praise of many is like a censer full of frankincense smoking up before the Lord. 3. As united prayer should be offered specially for ministers, so should united praise. We ought to praise God for good ministers—(1) That they live, for when they die much of their work dies with them. (2) For preserved character, for when a minister falls, what a disgrace it is! (3) If the minister be kept well supplied with goodly matter, and if he be kept sound. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 12. **For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.**—*The joy of a clear conscience*:—I. WHEN CHRISTIANS HAVE THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE IN THEIR FAVOUR. When it testifies—1. That they have done what is right. 2. That they have done right from right motives. II. THAT THIS TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE IN THEIR FAVOUR AFFORDS THEM GOOD GROUND TO REJOICE. Because it assures them—1. That they have internally, as well as externally, obeyed God. 2. That they have the approbation of God. 3. That they will sooner or later meet the approbation of all the world. 4. That they stand entitled to all the blessings of eternal life. III. IMPROVEMENT. If Christians have the testimony of their conscience in their favour, then—1. They may always know their gracious state. 2. They may always know their duty. 3. They live the happiest life of any men in the world. 4. They never need to be afraid to do their duty. 5. It as faithfully testifies against all their shortcomings and moral imperfections. 6. We may discover the great source of self-deception in sinners. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *The testimony of conscience*:—I. CONSCIENCE IS, PERHAPS, THE GREATEST POWER IN THE WORLD. It is an inward knowledge, which speaks either for or against the person in whom it resides. It witnesses not only to outward things, but also to inner ones; not only to our words and actions, but to our motives, thoughts, and feelings. Hence its immense power either to comfort or to distress. II. EVERY ONE WILL BE JUDGED ACCORDING TO HIS CONSCIENCE. III. HOW IS THE CONSCIENCE TO BE TRAINED? 1. Pray that it may be a right one in everything, and expect it in answer to your prayers. 2. Square it with the Bible. 3. Honour it; never trifle with it in the smallest thing. 4. Disobey whatever is against it, however pleasant, advantageous and popular. 5. Do not be afraid to take its comfort when it tells you that you are right. IV. HERE THEN ARE THE TWO QUESTIONS FOR OURSELVES, the two lines which conscience should take. 1. In worldly things, in all my dealings with my fellow-creatures, in my ways of spending my time, my expenses, amusements, family, servants, employers, &c. What must conscience say? Has it all been with a single eye? Has it been “in simplicity and godly sincerity”? 2. And in more decidedly religious points, what does conscience say? Have I been true to my Church, to my conscience, to my God? Have I loved God’s house? Is any one the better because I am a Christian? (1) A condemning conscience is a dark shade thrown over the life. How will my conscience condemn me on a dying bed? (2) But there is something worse than a condemning conscience—a silent conscience. It is God going away! (3) But for a condemning or a silent conscience there is a remedy. A conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The testimony of conscience*:—By this Paul does not mean faultlessness. “If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves.” He is not speaking of personal character but of ministry; and again not of the blamelessness of his ministry, but of its success. He had been straightforward in his ministry, and his worst enemies could be refuted if they said that he was insincere. Now this sincerity excluded—I. SUBTLE MANŒUVRING, ALL INDIRECT MODES OF TEACHING. II. ALL TEACHING UPON THE GROUND OF MERE AUTHORITY. Conclusion: This was the secret of the apostle’s wondrous power. It was because he had used no craft, nor any threat of authority, but stood simply on the truth, evident like the sunlight to all who had eyes to see, that thousands, go where he would, “acknowledged” what he taught. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Conscience and the inner life of man*:—I. WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE SOUL CONSCIENCE OBSERVES. This is implied in its testimony. II. WHATEVER IS GOOD IN THE SOUL CONSCIENCE APPROVES. III. WHATEVER IS JOYOUS IN THE SOUL CONSCIENCE OCCASIONS. “Our rejoicing is this.” (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **In simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God.**—*Christian simplicity*:—I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY AND OF FLESHLY WISDOM. 1. Christian simplicity. There are six things which we are to take for certain marks of it. (1) Veracity in our speech. (2) Honesty in our actions. (3) Purity in our intentions. (4) Uniformity of righteousness in our whole conversation. (5) Constancy in that way of universal righteousness to the

end. (6) An impartial regard to truth and right in causes depending between men and men. 2. The fleshly wisdom to which simplicity is here opposed. Of these wise of this world there are three sorts. (1) Those who will be under the restraints of religion so far as they think is in any respect requisite for their worldly welfare. (2) Those who will take more liberty in serving their worldly designs, only still with a care to be safe from the laws of men and the punishment they inflict. (3) Those who have their full swing, and allow themselves the utmost latitude of expedients for their ends, without any check from human laws at all. II. THE GREAT COMFORT AND JOY IT AFFORDS TO GOOD MEN, WHOSE CONSCIENCES DO WITNESS IT OF THEM. All the advantages that can be made in this world by fleshly wisdom are nothing comparable to the pleasure of simplicity and honesty, and to the joy that ariseth from the conscience of such virtue. 1. It sets a man above the opinion of the world. 2. It is a certain support to a man under all the adversity that befalls him in the world. 3. It gives him a comfortable prospect and good assurance when he is leaving the world. (*Archdeacon Clagett.*) *Handling sincerity as a sign of grace*:—That sincerity and uprightness of heart in our motives and ends is a sure and infallible sign of our being in the state of grace (1 John iii. 21, 22). I. For the opening of this point, LET US CONSIDER HOW UNSAFELY IT MAY BE PRESSED FOR A SIGN IN SOME PARTICULARS, AND THEN WHEREIN THE NATURE OF IT LIETH. 1. It is unwarrantably pressed when uprightness is urged to the exclusion of all respect unto any reward. 2. This sign of uprightness may be pressed unsafely when it is understood of such a perfect uprightness that hath no deceit or falsehood at all joined with it; but as other graces are but in part, we know in part, we love in part, so we are sincere and upright in part. Who can understand his error? We may abuse the sign of sincerity by going too low. (1) When we take sincerity for quietness of conscience that it doth not accuse. (2) When we limit sincerity to one particular fact, or to some passages only. (3) When we judge of sincerity by the immediate ends of actions, not at all attending to the principal and main, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." II. In the next place, let us consider WHAT THIS UPRIGHTNESS IS, AND SO WHEREIN IT IS A SIGN. 1. There is no sincerity but where there is a full and powerful change of the whole man by the grace of God. 2. Uprightness is a sign, and then acknowledged to be sincerity, when we do any good duty because God commands. 3. Uprightness is seen in the universality of obedience. Thus a blackamore, though he hath white teeth, yet cannot be called white, because it is in some respect only, so neither may a man be called sincere that hath only partial obedience. 4. Then is uprightness a true sign when the motives of all our actions are pure and heavenly; when all is done because of the glory of God, or for such motives that God's Word doth require. 5. Uprightness is when a man is very diligent and conscientious in internal duties or secret, to perform them, and in spiritual or heart-sins and secret lusts to avoid them. These things thus explained, observe that it is a sure and comfortable sign of grace, when a man is willing to have his soul and all within searched by God (Psa. xvii. 3). (1) Let us consider how God doth try, that so we may perceive our willingness therein. And the first way is by His Word, "Whatsoever doth manifest, and so reprove evil, is light" (Eph. v. 13). As by the light of the sunbeams we see the little motes and flies in the air, so by God's Word shining into our hearts we come to see many things sinful and unlawful which we did not perceive before. (2) A second way whereby God proveth is a powerful and soul-searching ministry. (3) The work of conscience within us, that also doth prove us. God hath set up a light within us, and when this is enlightened by the Word, then it makes a man's breast full of light. (4) God trieth us by the illuminations of His Spirit and strong convictions thereby. (5) God trieth when by His Providence we are put upon many duties and commands which it may be at other times did not concern us. Thus God examined Abraham by a command to offer up his only son Isaac. Thus God tried the young man who had great confidence in himself. The vessel's soundness is tried in the fire; the mariner's skill in a storm; the trees in a windy tempest. (6) And this is the fixed way of trial, viz., when God brings us under His chastisements. This manifesteth what metal we are of (1 Peter i. 7). As God useth these several ways to prove us, and the soul of a godly man is ready herein, so in these three cases especially doth a godly man give up himself to be examined. 1. In matters of doctrine. Although heresy may be merely in matter of conscience and opinion, yet for the most part carnal principles and motives are interwoven therewith. 2. In matter of received worship and traditional service of God. Although it be worship that can plead custom from prescription many years'

commendation of the universality of learned men; yet an heart truly sincere asireth to have all things examined and proved out of God's Word. 3. This is eminently discovered in matter of practice. III. In the next place let us consider WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF SUCH A GRACIOUS TEMPER IN THE HEART. 1. Where this is it doth not excuse or mitigate sin, but takes in with God against its own self. 2. Not resting upon generals, but particularly applying matters of duty. 3. A sincere heart loveth a godly reproof and those that give it. Use of examination. Here is a touchstone and trial for yourselves. Is there love of the light, or fear of the light; are you afraid of the Word of God, a soul-searching ministry, close and particular applications? Then suspect all is not sound within thee. (*A. Burgess.*) *Simplicity and sincerity*:—These words have the charm of life in them. They tell us how a man lived: and not in smooth circumstances in sunny weather, but when beset by enemies, difficulties and sorrows; and not in conspicuous places merely, but everywhere, and not for a short time, but always. Here is the kind of life which each one of us should endeavour after as his own. I. CONSCIENCE. 1. The supreme faculty, or something that has supreme place, in man's moral life. The moral life is higher than the intellectual, and the dignity of conscience is that it is the governing element in the moral life. 2. Every one knows what conscience is. Find one who knows that there is a right and a wrong, he knows that by his conscience. Conscience always uses the reason, as, indeed, the other powers, in forming its judgments. But the judgments formed are higher than the deliverances of reason. 3. Conscience is not infallible; but still it is supreme. It needs instruction, but still a man must act according to the light he has, while always seeking for more. It is the only clock that points to the moral time of day. It is the only shadow that falls on the sun-dial of life. The only barometer that gives true indication of the state of the moral atmosphere within. Go by it. Do not look up at the clock, &c., which rules another man's conscience. 4. A good conscience, like a good wife or husband, deserves only faithful loyalty "as long as ye both shall live." Indeed, moral death has come when conscience has no more testimony to give, or when its witness is systematically disobeyed. But the description of life and character in this passage is yet more pacific. Conscientiousness, after all, is a general quality. In order to know a man—what he is, and how he lives—we need information in particulars. Well, here is one of the particular qualities. II. SIMPLICITY—singleness of mind, purpose, character, life—the opposite of duplicity—doubleness in speech, behaviour, heart. 1. All who are much in the world know very well how full it is of this. Double-speaking—saying one thing and meaning another—using language to hide meaning, or, equivocally, in order to mislead. Double-dealing. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way then he boasteth." Double-seeming, too. What masks men wear! Sometimes glittering, sometimes sordid! A man comes rolling home in a carriage, and enters a magnificent house, and after entertaining a splendid company, goes into his own room, brings out his bank-book, and lays it, open, beside the claims upon him which that book shows no way to meet, and sits down there for a little, in misery, under the shadow of the ghastly fact that he is, in reality, a bankrupt. Take an instance on the other side. A man comes trudging home through wet streets, enters a plain house, moderately furnished, takes a simple ordinary meal, and then receives a friend or two. One of them in leaving asks a guinea for some charity. This plain, good man expresses good-will, but shakes his head saying, "You see I am in a very humble way; you must go to the rich." Then, by-and-bye, he too looks at his balance-sheet. This man is rolling in wealth, although without any of its outward signs. Yet he can thus hide himself from his own flesh. "Our rejoicing," if we are Christians, is this, the testimony of our conscience that "in simplicity" we live, not saying what we do not mean, nor seeming what we are not. 2. Most of all should we keep this pure simplicity in the religious sphere; avoiding, on the one hand, the high phraseology which expresses for more than we believe, feel, or indeed, really mean; and, on the other, the compromising silence, or brief and hesitating speech, which expresses less than we believe, and feel, and are. III. SINCERITY, which perhaps brings in no characteristically different element. They are almost as twin sisters. The word means, literally, translucence, clearness, of mind. When you look into a diamond you might say it is sincere! Or into a crystal well, or down to the depths of the calm and silent sea! Such is the sincerity of a devout soul. It is called, literally, "the sincerity of God," either because it is like His own, or because it comes directly from Him, and makes us partakers of the Divine nature. Now see what that is, and how it pervades—1. Nature. Does the sun ever stay his

shining? Or the gentler moon withhold her light? Do rivers ever run back to their sources, or tides begin to ebb at half-flood? Has there ever been a spring-time which went round the world to call out flower and leaf, which has not been followed by an autumn with more or less of fruit? Will wood sink? will iron swim? 2. Providence. Does God not rule the world, so that he who speaks the truth and does the right has always the best of it in the end? Yes; and in the middle also, and from the beginning. 3. The gospel, with its great revelation of love, its great donation of life, its power of redemption from sin, its promises of seasonable helps, and its grand, last promise of "eternal life." God is sincere in all. We cannot aim too high, or hope for too much. "If it were not so, He would have told us." He is sincere. Are there any to aver the contrary? Who has come to a throne of grace and been repulsed? Such is the sincerity of God; and it is of this very quality that His children partake when they live the life befitting them. They cannot but be sincere when they yield to His gracious nurture. IV. REJOICING. This kind of life is well adapted to make men glad. Remember, he who writes these words is often weighed down with great labours, suffers much persecution, is misjudged even by his friends. And yet here he retires into his own happy consciousness as into a fortress of peace and safety! And, indeed, no moral state could be imagined so strong, so safe as this. When he has a conscience which he "keeps," or rather which keeps him—when he lives a simple life—when he breathes in the sincerity of God—let him have no fear. V. But now we begin to long for another word that shall make THIS SECURITY WHOLESOME TO US, as well as deep and assured. For is there not some possibility that this profoundly conscious satisfaction in the possession of personal righteousness may come to have some tinge of "self-righteousness" in it? VI. The word is GRACE. "By the grace of God" we have so lived. Particularly "not by fleshly wisdom." No man can ever reach the heights of safety and purity and joy by that way. Yet that is the principle which multitudes of people are adopting for self-development. "The fleshly wisdom" is just "the wisdom of the world," with its watchings, and windings, and insincerities, with its soft speech, and fair appearance, and secret ways. Does any one think he can develop his nature, and do justice to his immortality by that? Oh, miserable mistake! Not with fleshly wisdom, "but by the grace of God"—by its cleansings, its kindlings, its renewings, its growth; by its whole drift and discipline we have "our conversation in the world." And because it is "the grace of God," those who take it, and trust in it, and put it to use, cannot fail in some measure to realise and embody, and cannot fail, ultimately, to perfect the fair ideal of Scriptural holiness. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *On sincerity*:—Another would have said, My rejoicing is this, the testimony of the world, that by my knowledge of its ways and adroit use of circumstances, I have succeeded in my favourite projects of amassing wealth, of increasing my power, of rising to a high elevation on the steeps of ambition. Sincerity is the virtue to which I would invite your special attention; as it is not only a moral virtue, but a distinguished evangelical grace, essential to the character of every just man, and of every disciple of Christ. Hence is it so strenuously enjoined in the sacred volume. Joshua exhorts the Israelities to "fear and serve the Lord in sincerity." This virtue is inseparable from the heart and mind of all who worship the Father in spirit and in truth. It is a radical principle in the constitution of every virtuous society—the soul of union, of co-operation, of friendship, of love, of piety, of devotion. Without it there is no morality, no religion. What then, let us inquire, is the nature of this virtue, and what are its requisitions? The term sincere, in its moral application, implies a clearness and transparency of character. But though the law of sincerity imperatively forbids all deception, it does not oblige us to lay our whole hearts open to the scrutiny of every curious eye, nor loudly to divulge every unseasonable truth which may occupy our minds. There can be no violation of sincerity in maintaining a proper reserve, provided such reserve does not lead our friend or neighbour to a wrong conclusion; to trust when he shall doubt, or to lay open his bosom when he shall cover it with triple mail. We are under no obligation to give offence, or provoke enmity. There are cases in which it would be extreme cruelty to divulge all we have heard or known of a neighbour's misfortunes or misconduct. Numberless are the deceptions which are practised every day by men upon men and by men on themselves. As to the latter, it is but too notorious with what ingenuity they disguise their vices, varnish them over till they assume the semblance of virtues, or amiable weaknesses. Not less numerous are the modes in which men practise insincerity towards others, by hypocrisy and falsehood, fraud and perjury.

Courtesy is a Christian virtue. It is not opposed to sincerity but to vulgarity. The insincerity of which we speak has the semblance of courtesy, but it is courtesy in excess. It is learned in the school of deceit, in the court of fashion. Custom, the continuator of many an evil practice, has given its sanction to a certain species of phraseology which is termed polite, and which, by general agreement, is understood to signify nothing; nevertheless, a regard for Christian sincerity should induce us to employ it with caution. There are also tricks and deceptions in certain transactions, which, by a similar convention, are supposed to be accompanied by no moral turpitude; nay, the dexterity with which they are conducted confers the highest praise on their agent. But is it not evident to every Christian man, that let such transactions receive whatever sanction they may from custom and the world, they are totally unauthorised by the Word of God, which is the Christian's standard of right and wrong? It has been maintained, in opposition to the godly sincerity of the apostle, that dissimulation may be lawfully practised for the establishment of some useful design—to promote a movement in politics, or confirm a doctrine in religion—and that if the end be laudable or beneficial, the means are indifferent. This opinion, founded as it is on ignorance and sin, has been productive of much evil. The impure fountain must send forth an impure stream. Even when the end in view is really to be desired, if vicious means be employed to effect it, they excite a just and natural suspicion that it has some ulterior object which is selfish. Moreover, how often are we mistaken in the nature of true good! How often is that which we contemplate as beautiful and lovely regarded by others as deformed and odious! They may foresee nothing but misery in the very project from which we anticipate happiness. Sincerity is the characteristic of a noble and magnanimous disposition, as much as its opposite vice is the indication of what is mean and ungenerous. A brave man disdains to hang out false colours, to take unfair advantage even of an enemy, to appear what he is not. As insincerity vitiates every virtue, it disappoints every hope; for it is written, "The hypocrite's hope shall perish, his trust shall be in a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure." The motives of a man's conduct often lie nearer the surface than he imagines, even when he deems them most profound; and hence it happens that almost every species of imposition is so easily detected. Such are the mischiefs of insincerity, its fallacy and insecurity, its suspicion and its punishment. The benefits of its opposite virtue, equally striking and numerous, are enhanced by the contrast. The sincere man is fearless and consistent. He dreads no scrutiny; he is under no apprehension of being caught in the snare of his own contradictions; he feels conscious that the more closely you inspect him, the stronger will grow your conviction of his integrity; so that, even from selfish motives, it would be wise always to act sincerely. Nothing is more abhorrent to the whole spirit of Christianity than every species of hypocrisy, whether in word, in deed, or in dumb show, from whatever motive it proceeds, or on whatsoever pretence it is practised. Hypocrisy is the most efficient agent of Antichrist, and it has done more injury to the cause of Christianity than the most decided open hostility. It works by saps, and effects its wicked purposes by manœuvring in the dark. The apostles of Christ, as became the disciples of such a master, equally with Him, condemn hypocrisy, and are earnest in their commendation of truth, honesty, candour, sincerity. They desire us to have respect to God in all our actions, and whatsoever we do, to do it heartily unto the Lord, and not as unto men. With sincerity the apostle conjoins simplicity, its natural associate. But of this virtue it may with good reason be observed that it is more the gift of nature than of education; one of those rare endowments which she bestows only on her favourites. Generally considered, it is a quality the most pleasing to a pure and uncorrupted taste in everything with which it can be connected. We admire it in architecture, in furniture, in dress, in manners, in literary composition, and hence the matchless beauty of the sacred Scriptures, which still continue to please and never pall by repetition. So far as simplicity is a moral virtue, excluding all sinister views and double-dealing, it is in every man's power, and it is every man's duty to acquire it. To the young I would more particularly recommend this virtue. In them we naturally expect to find openness and ingenuousness, and are cruelly disappointed when we discover any attempt at imposition or deceit. They are most unfavourable omens of their future worth and respectability. The distortion of the sapling grows inveterate in the tree, and a slight disease which a tiny remedy might remove becomes by neglect incurable. (*A. R. Beard.*) *On sincerity in religion*:—We all value sincerity in

religion, but many overlook that the only thing which can give value to this sincerity is—that we are sincere in true religion. To suppose a man sincere in a false system is only to suppose him lulled in insensibility, or hardened in obstinacy; it is to suppose him placed almost beyond the reach of conviction. What are the evidences of that sincerity—how a man may know himself to be really in earnest in his spiritual concerns? 1. The first thing that will enable us to answer in the affirmative is, that there is no compromising spirit in our religion; that we “render unto God the things that are God’s,” without, what I may call, the discount of the world; that we do not deliberately suffer “one jot or tittle of the law to pass unfulfilled.” This is a strong evidence of sincerity. Men who are in their hearts slaves to the world, and yet unable wholly to throw off the yoke of conscience, generally contrive to reconcile both, by constructing a system of religion for themselves, that they believe will pacify the one and enable them to retain their hold on the other—they contrive a religion consisting of external forms, but which has not the power to extort from them the sacrifice of one beloved lust. 2. Another and scarce an inferior proof is perseverance. There are few individuals who have not at some period of life felt religious impressions; there is not a libertine whom his vices have not sometimes terrified into partial reformation; but there is no permanence. 3. I add, that in my mind a strong evidence of sincerity in religion is, that it bears the test of solitude, and does not desert or upbraid us in the hour of lonely reflection. So universal are the workings of pride, prejudice, and error, that there is great need of distinguishing between the effects they produce on professors of religion, and the operation of very dissimilar causes, that end in producing the same effects. Thus passion will produce zeal in religion, of which the outward evidences will be as radiant as if the fire was kindled from heaven. Every passion and every vice may assume the disguise of an angel of light. But the system they defend, and the consequences they suggest, will not stand the test of solitude. 4. But the greatest proof of sincerity, that before which all others fade away, and without which, indeed, not one can be an admissible evidence, is the conformity of our lives to our principles. Other evidences may deceive us—but this never can. Not they who say unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of My Father. (*C. R. Maturin.*) When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? . . . that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? *Yea and nay men* (sermon to the young):—Let us—I. NOTE THE FACTS TO WHICH PAUL LINKS HIS SINGLENESS AND HONESTY OF PURPOSE. 1. Christ was not yea and nay. (1) In His personal character He was yea. He combined the gracefulness and flexibility of the willow and the strength of the oak, but He had no double-mindedness. He adapted Himself to the trembling sinner and the confident Pharisee, but He was one and the same notwithstanding. (2) So was and is His gospel. Adapted to all classes and conditions, it accommodates itself to none. It has not one set of doctrines for the favoured few and another for the world. 2. The promises of God. There is no vacillation about them. God means all He says, and He says what He means. 3. But what had these to do with the charge of trimming? The answer is in verses 21, 22. Paul’s character was modelled on the character of Christ: he had not acted according to the flesh, but according to the new nature formed by the Spirit of Christ. We have here a notable example of bringing the common things of life under the powers of the world to come. The apostle had planned a journey, and to change it might seem a small matter. But not so with Paul. His purposes were formed, and could only be changed under the eye of the Great Master. And he was so imbued with His Spirit, that he could not do otherwise. II. EXAMINE SOME VARIETIES OF YEA AND NAY MEN. 1. The wicked yea and nay men—the man who intentionally, and without regard to right or wrong, is now yea and now nay, as best suits his purpose. This man is a saint with saints, and a devil with devils. As a politician he is Whig or Tory, democrat or aristocrat, provided only he can attain his end. In religion, business, and social life he is all things unto all men in a bad sense. 2. The weak yea and nay man may not be at heart a bad man. He would not deliberately lie or drink or swear to be in keeping with his company; but within certain limits he is as variable as the wind. You never know when you have him. He is like the chameleon which has no colours of his own, but “borrows from his neighbour’s hue.” 3. The compound of these two. There are those in whom you find wickedness so combined that you cannot say whether the fool or the knave predominates—objects now of anger, now of pity. 4. There are also instances of yea-and-nayness in the lives of the most honest and courageous under temptation—Peter.

III. URGE THE CULTIVATION OF THE OPPOSITE CHARACTER. Be not yea and nay men—

1. In the morals of life and of business. You have just entered on life, will you surrender yourselves to the evil current or will you resist it? Yea-and-nayness may bring temporary success, but it spells ruin in the long run. 2. In the department of religion and faith. The question determined of old on Carmel should be determined by you now. Is your life to be godless or godly? 3. In the practical following out of your Christian principles. (*J. Kennedy, D.D.*) *Meaning what we say* (To young men):—Paul was misjudged as to his motives and consistency. It seems that he had intended to visit Corinth both on his way to Macedonia and on his return; but something that he thought of sufficient moment led him to change his mind, and his word was not kept. Backbiters put this down to caprice. This led Paul to state upon what principle he acted in this and in every case. I. WHEN WE SAY YES OR NO WE SHOULD MEAN IT. 1. Our words should be serious. Paul's earnest spirit dreaded a light tongue, and to be regarded as a frivolous man, not to say insincere, was more than he could bear. And it ought not to be a shackle on speech to have regard to the reality of things. Dr. Johnson could not endure the man who could not tell a story without exaggerating. And then in the work of life we should avoid a loose way of speaking—haphazard, questionable, plausible statements which, while appearing to be true, shade off into falsehood. Every word and action should go from the mint of conscience stamped with the King's image and superscription. 2. The apostle condemns "purposing according to the flesh," *i.e.*, according to some shifting principle of an evil nature. The apostle comes down hard upon all mental reservations, upon the amiable weakness which promises you anything and gives you nothing, as well as upon the craft which keeps while it pretends to give. He seems to have especially in view our tendency to please ourselves. If we say "yes" or "no" to avoid trouble, if we say anything out of expediency or self-seeking, or love of popularity, we rest on a carnal foundation and "purpose according to the flesh." Truth often puts us to terrible inconvenience, but a good man speaketh the truth in his heart, and will change not even though he has sworn to his hurt. II. WE OUGHT NOT TO HOLD TO OUR YEA AND NAY STUBBORNLY AND IN SPITE OF FRESH LIGHT FROM ABOVE. We may mean our word when we speak it, and purpose it in obedience to present knowledge of the will of God; but we may not affirm that we will keep it, come what will. "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." It was thus with Paul here and in Acts xvi. 6-9. In every case we should say, "If the Lord will." It is a sign of weakness and wickedness when any one sets himself upon his purpose, when God has warned him to forsake it. Take, *e.g.*, Jephthah and Saul (1 Sam. xiv. 24-33). Do not stick to your resolution when you see that God has a different one. What does it matter about your promising when the Lord orders something else? But you say, "If I don't abide by my word, what will be thought of it?" Why, you must take your chance, which, with God on your side, will not be a bad one. Conclusion: 1. If you act on these principles you will be honourable men in all the relations of life. 2. Is it not an insult to a Christian man whose yea is yea, &c., to be asked to swear it? 3. What would England be with a truth-loving and truth-speaking people? 4. Only remember that all must be rooted in a true gospel (ver. 20). (*J. P. Gledstone.*) *Purpose*:—A man's purpose of life should be like a river, which was born of a thousand little rills in the mountains; and when, at last, it has reached its manhood in the plain, though, if you watch it, you shall see little eddies that seem as if they had changed their minds, and were going back again to the mountains, yet all its mighty current flows, changeless, to the sea. If you build a dam across it, in a few hours it will go over it with a voice of victory. If tides check it at its mouth, it is only that, when they ebb, it can sweep on again to the ocean. So goes the Amazon or the Orinoco across a continent—never losing its way, or changing its direction for the thousand streams that fall into it on the right hand and on the left, but only using them to increase its force, and bearing them onward in its resistless channel. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, which was preached among you by us . . . was not yea and nay.*—*Hearers reminded of the theme of preachers*:—I. PAUL WAS A TEACHER, BUT HE TAUGHT IN ORDER TO LEAD MEN TO THE GREAT TEACHER. 1. This is peculiar to the Christian dispensation. The prophets preached, but their direct object, with the exception of their prophecies of the Messiah, was not to lead to another. This was the case, however, with John the Baptist. He preached, not concerning his own mission, but the coming Christ, for whom he made way. So Paul never set up for being a master, which Jesus had forbidden, but taught men to sit at the feet of God's Son.

2. As a teacher, Christ surpasses all who came before Him, or have followed Him—The treasures of wisdom and of knowledge are in Him; the Spirit without measure rests upon Him; He is the Truth. God had rent His heavens to say to men, "Hear Him." Paul echoed this. 3. And the true ministers of Christ imitate Paul. They do not bring before you some ancient sage or modern teacher; why should they exhibit the portrait when they can show you the original? And if any of you be not learning of Him, learn of Him now. II. PAUL WAS A MINISTER, AND HE MINISTERED TO BRING MEN INTO SYMPATHY WITH THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST. 1. He was no priest himself, except in the sense in which he taught that all Christians are priests. His doctrine was, that Christ had once in the end of the world put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 2. And this was the secret of his glorying in the Cross. Now, if "the Son of God, Jesus Christ," died merely as Stephen died, why should Paul glory in His death? 3. And God's true ministers follow Paul in this also. When men come to them acknowledging their sinfulness, and craving pardon and absolution, they say, "Go to God's High Priest, Christ Jesus." III. PAUL WAS A HERALD AND AN AMBASSADOR, AND HE PROCLAIMED THE SON OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST, TO BE KING OF KINGS. 1. He taught subjection to earthly sovereigns within a certain limit, but in religious matters he was subject to no human potentate: he came into collision even with Peter. We are all equal with reference to the Saviour—"one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." 2. Here again God's true ministers follow Paul. They say that the government is on Christ's shoulder, and that the Son of God is the fountain of law, and of all honour. Let us crown Him Lord of all—with our love, confidence, prayers, obedience, zeal and devotedness. Conclusion: 1. God's chief gift is His Son. He has given you many precious things, but there is no gift like that. 2. You are in the keeping of Christ. By trusting in Him you have committed yourselves to Him; He has charge of your body, soul, and spirit. From His hand you can never be plucked by any foe, because it is the hand of "the Son of God, Jesus Christ." 3. How is it that you do not love Jesus Christ and trust Him more? You do not read or think enough about Him. (S. Martin.) In Him was yea.—*In Him was yea*:—How much is included in the word *Yes*! Upon that word, waiting for it, what anxious hearts have hung! The soul cries for certainty and satisfaction, and—I. CHRIST SOLVES THE PROBLEM OF NATURE. We are perplexed by "the burden of the mystery" around us, and yearn for its solution. This yearning has borne witness and fruit in all ages. We see this especially in Hindooism—the religion of the natural man—God without character, consciousness, will. And Hindooism is making its converts among us. The myth system of Strauss, the pantheistic absolute of Hegel, the Pantheistic substance of Schelling, the idealisation of Fichte, all these systems have their disciples among us. Nature answers no questions, resolves no doubts; she meets the inquisitive intelligence of man; and when these two marry, they make a religion. But it is a religion without motives, and without safeguards. Now upon this state of mind Christ descends, and in Him is the Divine assurance. He says, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." In this personality God lifts the curtain from His eternity. "He" was and "is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." As light paints likenesses, so that I may have the express image of a person I have never seen, so Christ is the portrait of God. I know God is a person and a power, a conscience and a will, when I am able to believe in Jesus. There has come no answer from nature, or to nature; but He has come, and the true light shineth. II. CHRIST RECONCILES THE CONTRADICTIONS OF SCRIPTURE. How is it that in God is "no variableness nor shadow of turning," and yet He hears and answers prayer? How is it "the pure in heart see God, whom no man can see"? How is it that a "man is justified by faith," and yet "by grace"? How is it that God is omnipotent, and yet man is spoken to as free? Well, no doubt contradictions exist, but they are explained in Him. Contradictions may exist in God even as opposite parts exist in a circle, but it is the circle which explains. See men at work on opposite walls of a building, while it grows, opposite to each other they work; but the unity of the conception and the labour is beheld in the roof. I look on the doctrine of God's grace, and man's responsibility, they seem to be in conflict with each other; so the infinity and the eternal omnipotence of God, and the freedom and the power, and the volition of man; but these things become clearer to me as I see Jesus. Hence He is called the "corner-stone"; the corner-stone meets what otherwise would never meet, reconciles what could not be reconciled. III. JESUS GIVES THE YES TO YOUR MOST INTENSE QUESTIONS, AS OTHER MASTERS AND CONSOLERS CANNOT GIVE IT. That which is higher than I am, and which is satisfied, should

satisfy me. Christ's knowledge, experience, love, and sympathy, surely are greater than mine; He was satisfied, and this should satisfy me. This may be a low ground to occupy, but I can from this climb far higher. I am in sorrow; if I could feel that sorrow had any purpose or plan, I could bear it. I go to Him, and I say, "Lord, is there any plan in my pain?" and "in Him is yea." "The cup which My Father hath given, shall I not drink it?" But, ah! is there any life beyond this? Wast Thou satisfied? "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." "Because I live, ye shall live also." And salvation! may I hope, may I trust Thee? "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Conclusion: We read of the disciples, on one of the mornings after the resurrection, they saw Jesus standing on the shore, and knew not that it was Jesus; but at last they knew; so, after wading through seas, and fires, and fogs, may it be given to us to see Him. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *The Divine yea*:—The human heart cries out to God, and can be at rest alone when its mysterious questions meet the answering Yea! Religion is not imagination, it is revelation. All is still incertitude outside the Christ. I. THERE ARE FALSE CONCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE CHARACTER OF GOD. 1. For ages the world had worshipped gods and goddesses, whose ritual had made even vice a part of worship. The Pagan deities at the best were coarse and hard and cruel. Christ came and gave the true conception, "God is love." 2. If His lips are sealed concerning much that curiosity might like to know, His word is clear and convincing concerning all that we need to know. II. THERE WERE MISTAKEN EFFORTS AFTER A DIVINE LIFE. Men had been for ages trying their own philosophies of goodness! Multitudes had counted not health or home, life or beauty, dear to them, that they might escape the taint of evil, and rise through self-conquest up to God. But the ascetic economy of life did not work well. Repression only drives life into uncongenial and unhallowed channels. Is this earthly life from God? Are human interests Divine? Are love and marriage from God? Does He smile on innocent joys? How perfectly all this is answered in the Redeemer's life. "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world," &c. III. THERE WERE LONGINGS AFTER THE FULFILMENT OF DIVINE PROMISE. Would God indeed visit men and bless them? was the problem alike of philosopher and saint. But all the promises that traavailed in creation and history had their birth-hour in the advent of Christ; for all the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen. I want to know if God indeed is love?—if man is indeed made for immortality? Left to the profoundest students of philosophy, I am in a school of Yea and Nay. Now the materialist claims me as dust; now the poet permits me to make imagery out of an hereafter. It is only when I come into fellowship with Him who brought life and immortality to light that I can say, "In Him is Yea!" Concerning the Divine beneficence, God is love; and concerning immortality. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (*W. M. Statham.*) *The everlasting yea*:—This was Paul's answer to a charge of vacillation. Jesus Christ whom he preached was not changeful; how then could His apostle, so identified with His truth and with Himself, be changeful? It might seem to some a strange vindication, but not to those who felt in their inmost soul the Yea of Christ, and how completely Paul was absorbed in that. The very unexpectedness of the application gives it force. If there is such a connection between Jesus Christ, and adherence to a purpose as to a journey, how closely connected must the whole of a Christian's life be to Christ. Consider—I. THE FACT OF CHRIST'S ONENESS. This is a truth not of mere speculative interest. It has an immediate practical bearing upon our faith and confidence. The conviction, or the feeling of it alone, gives rest to our souls. And yet it is precisely here that Christ seems to some encompassed with difficulty. There are great contrasts in Christ. 1. He has a side of gloom and terror, like an Alpine precipice, or some gigantic black cloud hiding sun and sky, and portending terrible storm; and a side gentle and soft and sweet, like a garden that faces the sunny south full of beauty and richest fruits are floating with all delicate and balmy odours. Hear Him as He rolls out woe after woe like peals of thunder, and then follow Him as He showers blessings where He goes. And yet, was it not because He was so loving that He was so stern? Perfect love is opposed to all that is opposed to love. He was not Yea and Nay because He showed different sides to different things. Had He done otherwise there would have been a surrendering of truth and right, and therefore of love. (1) Are not nature and life full of unities which appear to be contraries? Light and darkness, cold and heat balance each other and conduce to one result. There is a negative and a positive pole in electricity, and it is by combination of two opposite tendencies that the planets are

kept in their steady course round the sun. (3) Look into the human heart and you will find the same principle in operation. Love and hatred are opposites, and yet they do not destroy unity if the soul loves what ought to be loved and hates what ought to be hated. Hope and fear are opposites, but are both necessary. Does not imagination need its opposite of common-sense to prevent it running riot, and nothing more needs the widening influence of imagination than strong common-sense. The character of Christ embraces the like contrasts, but the oneness shines forth all the more brightly from these apparent contradictions. 2. The like is to be said of another contrast that stands out in the life of Christ—that between His humility and His self-assertion. Both are prominent, and both are equally appropriate to the God-man. His humility was human, His self-assertion was Divine, and was part of the revelation which He had to give. His is a unity not formal or studied, but natural, resulting simply from what He was. It is a unity to be felt, as all unities must be, in contemplating the whole, and in realising the aim and meaning of the whole. II. THE WEALTH AND FULLNESS OF THE YEA THAT IS IN CHRIST. Thomas Carlyle speaks finely of the everlasting Yea which the soul of man needs for rest. Can we find anywhere a word so full of substance and welcome as Yes? Christ is the everlasting Yea—the one solid, complete and availing Yes to the soul of man. The everlasting Yea cannot be an abstract truth. No truth, however sublime, can give the heart rest. The everlasting Yea must be an infinite person, and yet one that can come close and near us; must be perfect, and yet His perfection genial and tender; must bring God to us, and bring our souls to rest in God, and there is none but Christ does this. 1. Christ is God's Yes to us. Men have doubted whether the world meant Yes or No. There are times when nature seems to say Yes—and other times when man can hear nothing but a fierce No. To a whole class of powerful writers there is no real blessing anywhere. Others find a struggle between the Yea and Nay, as if the goodness at work in the universe were not able to carry out its purposes on account of the opposing element. But Christ is God's unmistakable Yes. He showed by His miracles that all the powers of nature were wielded by love, and His life and death were the translating of the Divine Yes into intelligible speech, God is love. 2. Christ is God's Yes to us by being Yes to God for us. His obedience and death was the putting of a Yea in the room of our Nay. Sin is the saying No to God. It is denial of God's wisdom and love. It is distrust of God, negation of His claims and the setting up of our will in the place of His. Hell is the development of this No. In the nature which dishonoured God by saying No, Christ uttered a sublime, uniform, intense Yes, by action, and suffering, and speech. 3. The yea of positive truth is in Him. He affirms: you find little denial in His words. The beatitudes are the most solid of all utterances. The like depth and breadth of affirmation is in the utterances. "God is a Spirit," &c. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children," &c. What substance and wealth there is in His promises and invitations. And then think of the solid grandeur He gave to the word love. 4. Jesus Christ is Yes to all the deepest longings and highest aspirations of the heart. There is not any momentous question to which Jesus has not answered Yes. And this affirmation of Christ is uttered with clearness and certainty. On all central subjects His language is luminous, reiterated and emphatic. Conclusion: Have we taken Christ's Yea to God as our own? Do we accept it and rejoice in it, and present it to God? The proof and the outcome of this will be the utterance of Yea to God. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) *Christ's tone of decision*:—Why this tone of decision and clearness? Why this pomp of definiteness? Because the Lord Christ is not a speculator but a Saviour. When the lifeboat goes out it does not go out to reason with the drowning men but to lay hold of them. When the sea is sunny, when the air is a blessing, then boats may approach one another, and talk to one another more or less merrily and kindly, and as it were on equal terms; but when the wind is alive, when the sea and sky seem to have no dividing line, and death has opened its jaws to swallow up, as if in a bottomless pit, all its prey, then the lifeboat says, "We have not come out here to reason and to conjecture and to bandy opinions with you, but to seize you and save you." That is what Christ has come for. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver 20. For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.—*All the promises*:—I. THE DIGNITY OF THE PROMISES. They are "the promises of God." 1. They were each one made by Him according to the purpose of His own will. 2. They are links between His decrees and His acts;

being the voice of the decree, and the herald of the act. 3. They display the qualities of Him who uttered them. They are true, immutable, powerful, eternal, &c. 4. They remain in union with God. After the lapse of ages they are still His promises as much as when He first uttered them. 5. They are guaranteed by the character of God who spoke them. 6. They will glorify Him as He works out their fulfilment. II. THE RANGE OF THE PROMISES. "All the promises." It will be instructive to note the breadth of the promises by observing that—1. They are found both in the Old and New Testaments; from Genesis to Revelation, running through centuries of time. 2. They are of both sorts—conditional and unconditional: promises to certain works, and promises of an absolute order. 3. They are of all kinds of things—bodily and spiritual, personal and general, eternal and temporal. 4. They continue blessings to varied characters, such as—(1) The Penitent (Lev. xxvi. 40–42; Isa. lv. 7, lvii. 15; Jer. iii. 12, 13). (2) The Believing (John iii. 16, 18, vi. 47; Acts xvi. 31; 1 Pet. ii. 6). (3) The Serving (Ps. xxxvii. 3, ix. 40; Prov. iii. 9, 10; Acts x. 35). (4) The Praying (Isa. xlv. 11.; Lam. iii. 25; Matt. vi. 6; Psa. cxlv. 18). (5) The Obeying (Exod. xix. 5; Psa. cxix. 1–3; Isa. i. 19). (6) The Suffering (Matt. v. 10–12; Rom. viii. 17; 1 Pet. iv. 12–14). 5. They bring us the richest boons: pardon, justification, sanctification, instruction, preservation, &c. What a marvellous wealth lies in "all the promises"! III. THE STABILITY OF THE PROMISES. "All the promises in Him are yea, and in Him Amen." A Greek word "Yea," and a Hebrew word "Amen," are used to mark certainty, both to Gentile and Jew. 1. They are established beyond all doubt as being assuredly the mind and purpose of the eternal God. 2. They are confirmed beyond all alteration. The Lord hath said "Amen," and so must it be for ever. 3. Their stability is in Christ Jesus beyond all hazard; for He is—(1) The witness of the promise of God. (2) The surety of the covenant. (3) The sum and substance of all the promises. (4) The fulfilment of the promises, by His actual incarnation, His atoning death, His living plea, His ascension power, &c. (5) The security and guarantee of the promises, since all power is in His hand to fulfil them. IV. THE RESULT OF THE PROMISES. "The glory of God by us." By us, His ministers, and His believing people, the God of the promises is made glorious. We glorify—1. His condescending love in making the promise. 2. His power as we see Him keeping the promise. 3. Him by our faith, which honours His veracity, by expecting the boons which He has promised. 4. Him in our experience which proves the promise true. Conclusion: 1. Let us confidently rest in His sure word. 2. Let us plead the special promise applicable to the hour now passing. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The promises*:—1. A promise is the antithesis of a threat. The Bible abounds in both. 2. When God more apparently guided the courses of man personally, promises were made to individual men. To patriarchs, prophets, and apostles; and by such they were upborne through trial. But when this became impossible the promises were made applicable to whole nations and generations. 3. Thus the Word of God is filled with assurances of blessings as no other book is. Promises cover the whole period of human life. They meet us at our birth; they cluster about our childhood; they overhang our youth; they go in companies into manhood with us; they divide themselves into bands and stand at the door of every possible experience. Therefore there are promises of God to the ignorant, poor, oppressed, discouraged, &c.; to every affection, to every sphere of duty, to all perils and temptations. There are promises for joy, sorrow, victory, defeat, adversity, prosperity, &c. Old age has its garlands as full and fragrant as youth. All men, everywhere, and always—have their promises of God. 4. They belong to mankind. There have been periods when, for special and beneficent reasons, God's promises seemed to belong only to His own people. 5. And they are fresh with everlasting youth. The stars never wear out; the sun is not weary from the number of years. The heaven and the earth, however, shall pass away, but God's word shall not pass away. 6. Not one promise has ever been unfulfilled. There is not a witness in God's universe that can testify that he has leaned on a promise of God, and that God forgot to be gracious to him. I. WHAT ARE THE USES TO WHICH WE ARE INVITED TO PUT GOD'S PROMISES? 1. To make rude duties more attractive. It is affecting to see with what tenderness God has taken care of those that no one else cares for. How He goes down to the poor, and the ignorant, and the enslaved. How He goes down to those that can find no motive for right living in their ordinary experience, and says to them, "Be faithful, if not for the sake of your master, then for My sake." And once let us know that we are serving One that we love, and One that loves us, and love vanquishes

difficulty. 2. To fortify our faith. Duty is often surrounded by peril or hardship, and is often apparently without adequate result. It is needful, therefore, that there should be some promise which shall assure us that a perilous duty well performed will bring down upon us the Divine blessing. You are oftentimes brought into trials when it seems as though everything would be wrecked, and the world says, "Prudence": experience says, "Draw back"; policy says, "Change a little"; and expediency says, "Compromise"; but the Word of God, which is yea and amen, says, "He that will lose his life for a right principle shall save it." And in the end, when you come to count the wrecks along the shore, you will find those men who would save their lives by losing their principles are the men that have lost their lives. 3. To equalise the conditions of life. Men are of different calibre, and, owing to this, men follow Christ in different ways. Now, if a party of men are going to California assured that each shall be the possessor, in five years, of one million dollars, the differences between them are annihilated while they are going across. One may have twenty-five dollars in his pocket, another a hundred; one may have almost no conveniences, and another all that heart could wish; and yet, if they are assured that in five years they shall each have a million dollars, they do not care for these inequalities. And let the promises of God rest on the poor man's lot, and he forgets the inequalities of life. For that man who is ere long to be crowned in eternity cannot find the road there so hard that he will complain of it. 4. To redeem secular life from barrenness, and make it worth our while to continue faithful to the end. And while there are promises of God that run through our whole lower life, the promises grow broader and deeper as you go up to those spheres where a man is obliged to live by faith, and above the ordinary affairs of life. So the promises of God are in proportion to our exigencies. II. WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF USING THE PROMISES OF GOD? 1. We are ignorant of them. There is many a man that lives on his farm years and years without knowing the different growths that it produces. Many a man is buried within a yard of plants that, if their healing properties had been known, would have saved his life. Many a field is capable, if properly tilled, of producing fourfold as much as it is made to produce. God's Word is like such a field. There are promises in it that no man has ever tried to find. There are treasures of gold and silver in it that no man has taken the pains to dig for. There are medicines in it, for the want of a knowledge of which hundreds have died. 2. When men find them they do not know how to use them. Tea was first served in England as greens. The people rejected it, and thought it rather an imposition. When potatoes were first introduced into Ireland they were rejected there, because they did not know how to use them. And many and many a man rejects, or fails to profit by, the promises of God's Word, because he does not know how to gather them, and cook them, and use them. 3. We are afraid to venture upon using them. There is many and many a man that would be afraid to trust himself upon a single plank stretched across a deep chasm, though others had walked over on it often without accident. There is many a promise of God that is strong enough to carry men across the abyss of this life, but they do not dare to try it. In an emergency the promises of God are to many men what weapons of defence are to a man who does not know how to use them when he finds that he must fight for his life. 4. We wish the result without the fulfilment of the conditions attached. Many a child that is promised a vacation on condition that he will perform a certain amount of labour, would like the vacation, but does not like the condition on which it is promised. So many of the things promised we would like to steal, instead of working for them. 5. We do not appropriate them. The promise of "grace to help in time of need" comes to men thousands of times without benefiting them for this very reason. Many carry the promises as a miser carries bank bills, the face of which calls for countless treasures, but which he does not carry to the bank for presentation. Many a man holds bills for blessings of God, but does not present them. They enter upon a philosophical inquiry as to whether there is a presumptive argument in favour of prayer, and whether God will stop the laws of nature for our benefit, or so use them as to fulfil His promises to us. But the way to employ a promise of God is to comply with its conditions, and then wait for its fulfilment. 6. Many are afraid of presumption. Well, it may be presumptuous for you to go into a stranger's house without an invitation; but if a man has invited you to come and see him it is presumptuous for you not to take him at his word. And to be afraid to appropriate the promises of God is to charge Him falsely. 7. Many would like to take the promises of God, but they fear they

may be self-deceived. You may be, but God is not; and therefore you may rest upon the promises. 8. There are others that have a fear about their own unworthiness; which is as if a man should advertise that he would cure the infirmities of men free of expense, and a blind man should say, "I would go to this physician if I were not so blind." Therefore plead the promises because you are sinful; the nature of goodness is to relieve want, even though that want be founded on sin. 9. Much of the want of faith in the promises comes from a neglect on the part of Christians to bear witness to the fulfilment of those promises in their own experience. There are hundreds of men whose life God has made significant and memorable, and they have never uttered a word about it to those around them. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The promises, how they become ours:—* I. "BY US" AS MINISTERS—publishing, explaining, applying them. A promise is often like a box of ointment, very precious; but the fragrance does not fill the room till the preacher breaks it. Or it is like the water that was near Hagar, which she saw not till God opened her eyes and showed her the well. II. "BY US" AS BELIEVERS REALISING THE EXCELLENCY AND EFFICACY OF THEM IN OUR CHARACTER AND CONDUCT. It is when these promises are reduced to experience—when they are seen cleansing us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, making us partakers of the Divine nature, leading us to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, filling us with kindness and supporting us in trials—it is then they glorify God by us. (*W. Jay.*) *The promises of God:—*Note—I. THAT THEY ARE THE PROMISES OF GOD. Because they are His promises they are utterly incapable of any failure. "God is not a man that He should lie," &c. In our presumptuous readiness to liken the Almighty to ourselves, we may imagine instances in which Divine promises have failed to be accomplished. But—1. There may have been an incorrect apprehension as to the subject of the promise; and in the error cherished thereupon, something has been imagined and expected which has not been promised. The Jews misapprehended the meaning of prophecies concerning the Messiah. 2. There may have been some mistake or negligence on our part as to the condition on which the promise was suspended, and the circumstances under which it became actually due. 3. The time for its accomplishment may not be fully come. For the promises of God, though sure, are not in every instance designed for immediate fulfilment. II. THE TRUTH AND FAITHFULNESS OF THESE PROMISES AS RESULTING FROM THEIR CONNECTION WITH CHRIST. They are "in Him yea, and in Him Amen," as He is the great foundation of the promises. God sees in Him, as our once suffering but now exalted Mediator, an unchangeable and everlasting reason why all His other promises should be fulfilled. III. THEY ARE "TO THE GLORY OF GOD BY US." 1. In the very circumstance of their original annunciation. 2. As they constitute a new and separate manifestation of His own character and attributes. 3. As in that very act of faith by which those promises are accepted and become available, God is glorified in that particular, in reference to which His glory was, in the first instance of man's sin, insulted and invaded. 4. In the accomplishment of the promises. 5. As furnishing, to all who may be interested in it, an additional encouragement to exercise that faith, by means of which the God of the promises is glorified, and the result of which must be the reiterated accomplishment of the same promise. Conclusion: Learn—1. The true character of unbelief. It is—(1) Unreasonable. (2) Wicked. 2. The means by which alone the soul can rise to the exercise of that faith in the promises which is required as the condition of their accomplishment, and that it is only when, and in proportion as, we view them in their connection with Christ, that we can so believe them as to receive experimentally and savingly the benefit and comfort of them. (*Jonathan Crowther.*) *All God's promises Yea in Christ:—*God's promises are His declarations of what He is willing to do for men, and in the very nature of the case they are at once the limit and inspiration of our prayers. We are encouraged to ask all that God promises, and we must stop there. Christ Himself, then, is the measure of prayer to man; we can ask all that is in Him; we dare not ask anything that lies outside Him. How this should expand our prayers in some directions, and contract them in others! We can ask God to give us Christ's purity, simplicity, meekness, and gentleness, faithfulness and obedience, victory over the world. Have we ever measured these things? Have we ever put them into our prayers with any glimmering consciousness of their dimensions, any sense of the vastness of our request? Nay, we can ask Christ's glory, His resurrection life of splendour and incorruption—the image of the heavenly, God

has promised us all of these things, and far more; but has He promised all that we ask? Can we fix our eyes on His Son, as He lived our life in this world, and remembering that this, so far as this world is concerned, is the measure of promise, ask without any qualification that our course here may be free from every trouble? Had Christ no sorrow? Did He never meet with ingratitude? Was He never misunderstood? Was He never hungry, thirsty, weary? If all God's promises are summed up in Him—if He is everything God has to give—can we go boldly to the throne of grace, and pray to be exempted from what He had to bear, or to be richly provided with indulgencies which He never knew? What if all unanswered prayers might be defined as prayers for things not included in the promises—prayers that we might get what God did not get, or be spared from what He was not spared? The spirit of this passage, however, does not urge so much the definiteness as the compass and the certainty of the promises of God. There are "so many" that Paul could never enumerate them, and all of them are sure in Christ. And when our eyes are once opened on Him, does not He Himself become, as it were, inevitably the substance of our prayers? Is not our whole heart's desire, Oh, that I might win *Him*! Oh, that *He* might live in me, and make me what He is! Do we not feel that if God would give us His Son, all would be ours that we could take or He could give. (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

God's certainties and man's certitudes :— "Yea" and "amen" are in the A.V. nearly synonymous, and point substantially to the same thing—viz., that Christ is, as it were, the confirmation and seal of God's promises. But the R.V. indicates two different things by the "yea" and the "amen." The one is God's voice, the other is man's. When we listen to God speaking in Christ, our lips are, through Christ, opened to shout our assenting "Amen" to His great promises. Consider—1. GOD'S CERTAINTIES IN CHRIST. Of course the original reference is to the great promises given in the O.T.; but the principle is good on a wider field. In Christ—1. There is the certainty about God's heart. Everywhere else we have hopes, fears, guesses, inferences. Nothing will make us sure here but facts. We want to see love in operation if we are to be sure of it, and the only demonstration of the love of God is to witness it in actual working. And you get it where? On the Cross. "Herein is love, not that we loved God," &c. 2. In Him we have the certainty of pardon. Every deep heart-experience has felt the necessity of having clear knowledge about this. And the only message which answers to the needs of an awakened conscience is the old-fashioned message that Jesus Christ the Righteous has died for us sinful men. All other religions have felt after a clear doctrine of forgiveness, and all have failed to find it. Here is the Divine "Yea!" And on it alone we can suspend the whole weight of our soul's salvation. 3. We have in Christ Divine certainties in regard of life. We have in Him the absolutely perfect pattern to which we are to conform our whole doings. He stands the Law of our lives. We have certainties for life, in the matter of protection, guidance, supply of all necessity, and the like, garnered in Jesus Christ. For He not only conforms, but fulfils, the promises which God has made. Christ is protean, and becomes everything to each man that each man requires. And in some of those sunny islands of the Southern Pacific one tree supplies the people with all that they need for their simple wants, fruit for their food, leaves for their houses, staves, thread, needles, clothing, drink, everything—so Jesus Christ, this Tree of Life, is Himself the sum of all the promises, and, having Him, we have everything that we need. 4. In Christ we have the Divine certainties as to the future, over which, apart from Him, lie cloud and darkness. Here again a verbal revelation is not enough. We have enough of man's peradventures. What we want is that somebody shall cross the gulf and come back again. And so we get in the Resurrection of Christ the one fact on which men may safely rest their convictions of immortality.

II. MAN'S CERTAINTIES, WHICH ANSWER TO CHRIST'S CERTAINTIES. The latter are in Christ, the former are through Christ. The only fitting attitude for Christians in reference to these certainties is that of unhesitating affirmation and joyful assent. 1. There should be some kind of correspondence between the assurance with which we believe these great truths, and the firmness of the evidence upon which they rest. It is a poor compliment to God to come to His affirmations, and to answer with a hesitating "Amen." Build rock upon rock. Be certain of the certain things; for it is an insult to the certainty of the revelation when there is hesitation in the believer. The Christian verb is "we know," not "we hope, we calculate, we infer, we think," but "we know." 2. I need not speak about the blessedness of such a calm assurance, about the need

of it for power, for peace, for effort, for fixedness in the midst of a world and age of change. But I must point to the only path by which that certitude is attainable. "Through Him is the amen." He is the Door. The truths which He confirms are so inextricably intertwined with Himself that you cannot get them and put away Him. Christ's relation to Christ's gospel is not the relation of other teachers to their words. You may accept the words of a Plato, whatever you think of Plato. But you cannot separate Christ and His teaching in that fashion, and you must have Him if you are to get it. 3. If thus we keep near Him our faith will bring us the present experience and fulfilment of the promises, and we shall be sure of them because we have them already. And whilst men are asking, "Do we know anything about God? Is there such a thing as forgiveness?" &c., we can say, "One thing I know, Jesus Christ is my Saviour, and in Him I know God, and pardon, and duty, and sanctifying, and safety, and immortality; and whatever is dark, this, at least, is sun-clear." Get high enough up and you will be above the fog; and while the men down in it are squabbling as to whether there is anything outside the mist, you, from your sunny station, will see the far-off coasts, and haply catch some whiff of perfume from their shore, and see some glinting of a glory upon the shining turrets of "the city that hath foundations." So live near Jesus Christ, and, holding fast by His hand, you may lift up your joyful "Amen" to every one of God's "yeas"; and when the Voice from Heaven says "Yea!" our choral shout may go up, "Amen! Thou art the faithful and true witness." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 21, 22. Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.—*Establishing grace*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN NEEDS NOT ONLY CONVERTING BUT ESTABLISHING GRACE. He that hath begun any good work in us must perfect it. The weakest with this grace will stand, and the strongest without it will fall. 1. The life of a Christian is a perpetual dependent life. He not only lives by faith in his first conversion, but ever after. He depends upon God for protection and strength throughout his whole course. 2. A Christian, then, should set upon nothing in his own strength (1 Sam. ii. 9). God is all our sufficiency (Prov. iii. 6). What do we but make ourselves gods, when we set upon business without invocation and dependence? 3. Let God, therefore, have all the glory of our establishing, and depend on Him by prayer for the same. As all comes of His mere grace, so let all return to His mere glory (Psa. cxv. 1). II. BY WHAT MEANS MAY A CHRISTIAN OBTAIN THIS ESTABLISHING GRACE? Labour for fundamental graces. If the root be strengthened, the tree will stand fast. 1. Humiliation. The foundation of religion is very low. Every grace hath a mixture of humility, because they are all dependencies on God. 2. Dependence upon God, considering our own insufficiency. 3. Beg it earnestly of God. Our strength in Him is altogether by prayer. Bind Him, therefore, with His own promise; beseech Him to do unto thee according to His good word. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *Stability*:—I. THE NATURAL CHARACTER OF MAN WITH REGARD TO STABILITY, AS DRAWN FOR US IN THE SCRIPTURES. If you look throughout the Scriptures, you will find instability stamped upon it. The instability of the natural man easily discovers itself. His understanding is not capable of comprehending the things of God; the natural affections of men will not embrace the things of God. It follows, then, very obviously that, while neither the understanding nor the affections take hold of the things of God, men may put on religion for a time, but the corruption of their vitiated nature soon breaks out, and they put off the form of godliness with as much indifference as they put it on. Thus did Saul, who seeks the Lord in his difficulties, but when he receives no answer he turns aside to enchantments. But while man is thus unsteady in the pursuit of that which is good, how determined is he in an evil course, even when the pursuit of it brings labour and toil, he makes light of the difficulty, and presses forward (Isa. lvii. 10). Yet even in doing evil, man's fickleness betrays itself. As the sick man soon loathes one kind of drink, and calls for another, or when his symptoms are more aggravated, desires to be shifted from one couch to another, so the men of this world continually affect endless variety in their gratifications, finding no rest or satisfaction in any one of them. Let not any, therefore, who is stricken with a sense of his own shameful instability in everything good, draw back from closing with the terms of the gospel, and laying hold of the immovable rock of ages. It was for such Christ died, and such being

transformed by the renewing of their mind He at last fixes in the firmament of eternal glory. II. WHAT MEANS GOD HAS TAKEN TO CORRECT THE NATURAL CHARACTER OF MAN. He has ordained His own Son as the ground and pillar of a building which shall be immovable for ever. But when a man has closed with the Saviour, is he henceforth delivered from all tendency to the fickleness? Not so. Too speedily is he tempted to break his engagement with Him. The operation of the third person in the Godhead is necessary that the goodwill of God towards His people be not defeated. As the jeweller sets the precious diamonds to secure them, even so God by His Holy Spirit secures those who believe by firmly engrafting them into Christ. This operation of the Spirit is expressed in the text in three forms of speech. The first figure is that of anointing. Now the first communications of the Spirit, sweet and fragrant as they are known to be, are well represented by the pouring out of ointment; but as its sweet savour wastes after a time, another figure is employed to represent His continual influence, to show that the savour of this ointment is not lost—that of sealing (1 John ii. 27). There is something to express sweetness; there is something, moreover, to express perpetuity. It may be that your sweet experiences, which you felt, when first you were joined to the Lord, are greatly decayed; but God has given you something more fixed, He is sealing you with His Holy Spirit, and making more abiding impressions upon your souls. The visible impressions of holiness which are discernible in the servants of Christ, and more especially after a season of trial, when after having suffered for a while, they are established, strengthened, settled (1 Peter v. 10), are the broad seal by which they are known to be His. The apostle speaks here of another, a privy seal, "And hath given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (ver. 22). This is the inward testimony and pledge in the heart by which the children of God know that they have been adopted into His family. III. WHAT SHOULD BE THE RESULT OF THE APPLICATION OF THESE MEANS? If God's purpose of love to us in Christ be so immovably fixed, and so continually testified by the gifts of the anointing, sealing Spirit, the earnest of our inheritance, there ought to be a corresponding purpose of heart on our part to cleave to Him, there should be no halting between two opinions, no lukewarmness, but an entireness of devotion to Him (Col. ii. 6, 7; Heb. xiii. 9). Whatsoever labours of love you are engaged in turn not back, break not off from them lightly. (*H. Verschoyle.*) *The anointing which establishes:—* Notice—I. THE DEEP SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS. "Anointing" is the means of "establishing"—i.e., God confers steadfastness by bestowing the unction of His Spirit. 1. Notice how deep Paul digs in order to get a foundation for this common virtue. (1) From beginning to end of Scripture "anointing" is the symbol of the communication of the Spirit. Note the felicity of the emblem. Oil smoothes the surface, supple the limbs, is nutritive and illuminating, and is thus an appropriate emblem of the secret, silent, quickening, nourishing, enlightening influences of the Spirit. (2) And inasmuch as here this oil of the Divine Spirit is the true basis of Christian steadfastness, the anointing cannot be consecration to apostolic or other office, but must be the possession of all Christians. "Ye," says John, speaking to the whole democracy of the Christian Church, "have an unction from the Holy One." 2. This anointing is derived from, and parallel with, Christ's anointing. The "Christ" is the Anointed One. "He that establisheth us with you in the Anointed, and hath anointed us, is God." Does not this mean, "Each of you, if you are a Christian, is a Christ"? You, too, are God's Messiahs. On you the same Spirit rests in a measure which dwelt without measure in Him, and consequently you are bound to a prolongation of part of His function. Christians are prophets to make God known to men, priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and kings over themselves, and over a world which serves those that love God. 3. It is plain, therefore, how this Divine unction lies at the root of steadfastness. We talk a great deal about the gentleness of Christ; but we do not sufficiently mark the masculine features of the Christ who "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," and was followed by that wondering group, astonished at the rigidity of purpose that was stamped on His features. That Christ gives us His Spirit to make us inflexible in the pursuit of all that is lovely and of good report, like Himself. We are all too like aneroid barometers, that go up and down with every variation of a foot or two in the level; but if we have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us it will cut the bonds that bind us to the world, and give us a deeper love. The possession of the Spirit sets a man on an isolating stool, and all the currents that move round about him are powerless to reach him. If we have

that Spirit within us, it will give us an experience of the certitude and the sweetness of Christ's gospel, which will make it impossible to "cast away the confidence which has" such "recompense of reward." When storms are raging they lash light articles on deck to holdfasts. Let us lash ourselves to the abiding Christ, and we, too, shall abide. II. THE AIM OR PURPOSE OF THIS CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS. "He stablisheth us with you" into or "unto Christ." Our steadfastness, made possible by our possession of the Spirit, is steadfastness—1. In our relation to Jesus Christ. What Paul here means is—(1) A fixed conviction of the truth that He is the Christ, the Són of God, the Saviour of the world, and my Saviour. (2) In regard to Christ of our trust and love. He loves ever; we therefore should be steadfast in our answering love to Him. (3) Habitual obedience, which is always ready to do His will. So we answer Him "Yea!" with our "Amen!" and having an unchanging Christ to rest upon, rest upon Him unchanging. "Be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." 2. Such steadfastness has for its result a deeper penetration into Christ and a fuller possession of Him. The only way by which we can grow nearer to our Lord is by steadfastly keeping beside Him. You cannot get the spirit of a landscape unless you sit down and gaze, and let it soak into you. You cannot get to know a man until you live with him. "As the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me." III. THE VERY HUMBLE AND COMMONPLACE SPHERE IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS MANIFESTS ITSELF. It was nothing of more importance than that Paul had said he was going to Corinth and did not, on which he brings all this array of great principles to bear. The highest gifts of God's grace and the greatest truths of God's Word are meant to regulate the tiniest things in our daily life. It is no degradation to the lightning to have to carry messages. It is no profanation of the sun to gather its rays into a burning-glass to light a kitchen fire with. And it is no unworthy use of the Divine Spirit to say it will keep a man from precipitate decisions as to little things in life, and from changing about without a sufficient reason. If your religion does not influence the trifles, what is it going to influence? Our life is made up of trifles. If your religion does not influence the little things, it will never influence the big ones. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." 2. And you can do no good in the world without steadfastness. Unless a man can hold his own, and turn an obstinate negative to temptation, he will never come to any good at all, either in this life or in the next, and there is only one infallible way of doing it, and that is to let the "strong Son of God" live in you, and in Him to find your strength for resistance, for obedience, for submission. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Divine anointing* :—Messiah signifies "anointed." Our nature is enriched in Christ with all graces. "He is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows" that we might have a spring of grace in our own nature, for "of His fulness we receive grace for grace." I. WHAT ARE THOSE GRACES WHICH WE RECEIVE FROM CHRIST'S FULNESS? 1. The grace of favour and acceptance; for the same love that God bears to Christ, He bears to all His, though not in so high a degree. 2. The grace of sanctification, answerable to the grace of sanctification in Him. 3. The rich privileges and prerogatives that issue to persons sanctified. II. WHY IS IT CALLED HERE AN ANOINTING? Because, as the holy anointing (Exod. xxx. 31-33), was not to be applied to profane uses, so neither are the graces of the Spirit to be undervalued. III. WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES OF THIS OINTMENT? 1. It hath a cherishing power; it revives the drooping soul, and cheers a fainting spirit. 2. It hath a strengthening power. It makes our limbs vigorous. So doth grace fortify the soul. 3. Ointment doth excellently delight and refresh our spirits (John xii. 3). So grace is a wondrous sweet thing, and that which makes a man sweet is grace. This cures our spiritual distempers, beautifying the inner man, and making the whole frame of a Christian's carriage sweet and delectable—(1) To God, who loves the scent of His own grace, wheresoever He finds it. (2) To angels (Luke xv. 10). (3) To the Church. So far as a man is gracious, he improves his abilities to glorious uses. Grace is offensive to none but to wicked men. 4. An ointment consecrates persons to holy uses. Anointed persons are raised above the ordinary rank. The graces of God's Spirit elevate men above the condition of others with whom they live. (Psa. cv. 15). 5. An ointment is a royal liquor. So the graces of God's Spirit, where they are, will be uppermost, they will guide and govern all. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*)

Ver. 22. Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our

hearts.—*Sealing of the Spirit*.—What are we to understand by the sealing of the Spirit? It is that act of the Holy Spirit by which the work of grace is deepened in the heart of the believer, so that he has an increasing conviction of his acceptance in Jesus and his adoption into the family of God. 1. It is sometimes a sudden work of the Spirit. A soul may be so deeply sealed in conversion, may receive such a vivid impression of Divine grace, as it never afterwards loses. 2. But in most cases the sealing of the Spirit is a more gradual work. It is a work of time. There are, then, degrees, or progressive stages, of the Spirit's sealing. (1) The first impression is made in regeneration. This is often faint, and in numerous cases scarcely perceptible. The first impression is as much the work of the Spirit as any deeper one in after years. Let not the weak believer undervalue what God has done for him. (2) But a yet deeper impression of the seal is made when the believer is led more fully into the realisation of his sonship, when he attains to the blessed sense of the "adoption of children." Oh, what an impression is then left upon his heart, when all his legal fears are calmed, when all his slavish moanings are hushed! (3) In the process of sanctified affliction the soul often receives a fresh and a deep impress of the seal of the Spirit. The furnace works wonders for a believer. The hour of affliction is the hour of softening. Job bore this testimony: "He maketh my heart soft." Let it not, then, be forgotten that an afflicting time is often a sealing time. We would remark, in this connection of the subject, that the sealing of the Spirit does not always imply a rejoicing frame. It is not necessarily accompanied by great spiritual joy. I. IT IS THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF EVERY BELIEVER DILIGENTLY AND PRAYERFULLY TO SEEK THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT. He rests short of his great privilege if he slights or undervalues this blessing. Be not satisfied with the faint impression which you receive in conversion. In other words, rest not contented with a past experience. II. AGAIN, I REMARK, THIS BLESSING IS ONLY FOUND IN THE WAY OF GOD'S APPOINTMENT. He has ordained that prayer should be the great channel through which His covenant blessings should flow into the soul. (*O. Winslow, D.D.*) *The sealing of the Spirit*.—Christ is the first sealed (John vi. 27). God hath distinguished Him, and set a stamp upon Him to be the Messiah by the graces of the Spirit. Christ being sealed Himself, He sealed all that He did for our redemption with His blood, and hath added for the strengthening of our faith outward seals—the sacraments—to secure His love more firmly to us. But in this place another manner of sealing is to be understood. I. WHAT IS THE MANNER OF OUR SEALING BY THE SPIRIT? Sealing, we know, hath divers uses. 1. It imprints a likeness of him that seals. When the king's image is stamped upon the wax, everything in the wax answers to that in the seal. So the Spirit sets the stamp of Christ upon every true convert. There is no grace in Christ but there is the like in every Christian in some measure. 2. It distinguishes. Sealing is a stamp upon one thing among many. It distinguisheth Christians from others. 3. It serves for appropriation. Men seal those things that are their own. So God appropriates His own to show that He hath chosen them for Himself to delight in. 4. It serves to make things authentic, to give authority and excellency. The seal of the prince is the authority of the prince. This gives validity to things, answerable to the dignity and esteem of him that seals. II. WHAT IS THE STAMP THAT THE SPIRIT SEALS US WITHAL? III. HOW SHALL WE KNOW THAT THERE IS SUCH A SPIRITUAL SEALING IN US? (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *The seal and earnest of the Spirit*.—I. GOD HATH SEALED US BY HIS SPIRIT. Seals are employed—1. To authenticate a document or confirm it as genuine (1 Kings xxi. 8; Esther iii. 12). So by the Spirit the believer has the assurance that he is a genuine disciple of Christ (Rom. viii. 16). The Christian knows that the Holy Ghost has been exerting His agency within him when he perceives that the fruit of the Spirit has begun to make its appearance in him. 2. As a mark to distinguish property. We have something like it in the trade marks of the manufacturer, and in the broad arrow, which indicates that the thing so stamped is the property of the Government. In ancient times the servants, cattle, and goods of a rich man were distinguished by his seal. In like manner believers are recognised as the property of God by the seal of the Spirit. And, as sometimes a seal has an obverse and reverse side, so is it in the case of believers. On the hidden side, visible only to Jehovah, is—"The Lord knoweth them that are His"; on the other side, where all men may read it, there is—"Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." When the coinage of a country has worn thin and light, so that no one can see the image or superscription, it is called in, reminted, and sent forth anew, with a distinct impression from the original die. And so, when our Christian characters are rubbed

down by the abrasion of the world to such an extent that the image of the Lord in us has been well-nigh effaced, there is need to submit to the reminting of the Holy Spirit, that we may come forth anew and bear unmistakable witness to Christ's property in us. 3. As a means of security. Thus the stone laid at the mouth of the den into which Daniel was thrust was sealed with the king's signet, &c.; and when Jesus was laid in the grave the Jews made the sepulchre sure, "sealing the stone and setting a watch." In like manner believers are kept secure in the world by the seal of the Spirit. The reference here is not to God's almighty protection, nor to the ordering of His all-wise providence, but to the characteristics and habits which are acquired by the believer through the grace of the Holy Ghost. The Christian's graces are his armour also. Our security is perfect, and yet it is not without our own exertions, for it is effected by the constant manifestation by us of the qualities which are formed and fostered in us by the Holy Ghost. II. GOD HATH GIVEN US THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT. The term is borrowed from a custom in connection with the transfer of property, when the buyer received a small instalment at once as a sample of it, and as a pledge of full delivery. So, when the Spirit in our hearts is styled an earnest, we have implied—1. That the fruit of the Spirit which we here enjoy is the same in kind with the blessedness of heaven. 2. That the fruit of the Spirit is a pledge that the full inheritance of heaven shall yet be ours. "He who hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." This is not quite the same as the security suggested by the seal. That was the pledge that we should be kept for heaven; this is an assurance that heaven shall be ours. Conclusion: I come to-day as the spies came to Kadesh-barnea, with the Eshcol cluster of grapes as a sample of the products of the goodly land which they had been to see. Beware how ye receive our report. Remember what happened to the tribes when they refused to go up and possess the land, and "take heed lest ye fall after the same example of unbelief." (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The sealing Spirit*:—I. St. Paul reminds us of our peculiar obligation to the Spirit by pointing to ONE OF THE PRIMARY CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS WORK. "Sealed" by His indwelling witness, and that not for a favoured moment only, but "unto the day of redemption." This custom, on which the Bible metaphor rests, of sealing letter, decree, edict, or title of possession, came from the East, and is of obvious significance. It gives validity, assurance, legal effect to contract, declaration, or title-deed, and affirms proprietorship over the things upon which it is carried out. With the spread of education the personal signature comes to take the place of the old-fashioned seal. Some years ago a bundle of unsigned Bank of England notes was stolen. A note without that signature at the bottom, familiar to most of us, would be valueless. Religious life, endeavour, relationship, anticipation, borrow force and validity from the sealing of the Spirit. The intermediate position in the religious history of God's saved people into which Paul puts this act of sealing clearly indicates its nature and purport. Whilst a solitary believer slumbers in the sepulchre, Christ looks upon His inheritance as but incompletely redeemed. It is till Christ's power has wrought through its last redemptive cycle and undone the remotest disaster of sin that the Spirit seals us. "Sealed unto the day of redemption." II. This sealing by the Spirit implies THAT THE RECONCILIATION IN WHICH WE ARE SO DEEPLY INTERESTED IS MORE OR LESS SECRET AND UNSEEN. After long and anxious debate, the terms of peace between two belligerent powers are fixed. But, pending the formal ratification of the treaty, and possibly for some time after, the contending parties occupy the same positions on the field. You can scarcely predicate the cessation of hostilities from what meets the eye. But to the commanders on either side the message has passed along the wires, and the genuineness of the message is vouched for by the cypher in which it is sent. When the children begin to play about the homesteads, the peasants to till the hillsides, the nightingales to sing in the myrtle bush, the golden crops to sway in the warm winds, and the church bells to chime again through the valleys, there will be no need to prove the reality of the peace by the seal or official announcement of the fact. It will be then proved by every sight and sound and movement within the horizon. For the present our personal reconciliation to God is an unseen fact, and is only attested by the indwelling Spirit which seals us. The heritage has not been fully and finally released and redeemed. The law yet seems to rumble with ominous curses. Nature often seems hostile in the last degree. We are left under conditions that sometimes suggest that awful and hopeless war is still going on, and yet the peace has been secretly sealed and its conditions ratified. One day the last thunder will have rolled itself into silence, the last bolt have hurtled

through the air, the last hostile footstep be gone, and the stormless peace of eternity hide us in its sacred wings. The seal will then be needless. III. This sealing DECLARES THE RELATIONSHIP OF DIGNITY AND PRIVILEGE WE SUSTAIN BEFORE GOD. In Oriental life the seal is necessary to accredit a man to the office his master may have bestowed upon him. The messenger of the throne is recognised by the imperial seal he bears. When he has fulfilled his term of office, let him go back to the palace, stand amidst its fabulous splendours, and move to and fro beneath the eye of his imperial master, and there, at the centre of government once more, he will no longer need the seal, as a personal credential at least. His dignity is recognised and promptly acknowledged on all sides. The seal is indispensable when he has to cross the mountains or sail up unknown rivers, and go into districts where he must deal with semi-aliens. And it is whilst we pass as strangers and pilgrims through the earth that we need the seal which attests our true standing before God. Our majesty is obscured, our bodies are inglorious and subject to decay, and our garments torn and stained with travel. The world knows us not, as it knew not God's greatest Son. IV. This sealing marks out the believer as THE SUBJECT OF A SPECIFIC PROVIDENTIAL CARE. In this sense was it that circumcision stood to the Jews both for a sign and a seal. The rite proclaimed God's special proprietorship over the nation, and singled out its separate members for such defence, tender oversight, strenuous protection as a father exercises over the little ones of his family. V. THE SEAL IS A TOKEN OF PROPRIETORSHIP. You watch a ship as it is being loaded for a voyage, and amongst other cargo notice a number of boxes bearing a significant seal. These are not stowed away in the hold, like consignments of common goods, but are taken to some place where they will be constantly watched by the responsible officers of the ship. The chests are chests of sealed treasure. Should the ship spring a leak and be endangered, after the safety of the passengers has been provided for, these sealed chests will be the first things to be put into the lifeboats. The seal marks them out for special care and defence, and whatever human vigilance, foresight, and valour can do will be done to deliver them to the consignees. And so with that sealing of the Spirit affixed to sincere believers in Jesus Christ. They are subject to the same risks, vicissitudes, and temptations as other men; but all that God's power can do to help and deliver them shall be done. This special sealing marks out body and soul alike for God's special possession and guardianship. VI. This sealing goes on to mark out those who receive it as THE TYPES OF A PURE AND INCORRUPTIBLE LIFE. God seals us for our humbler vocation no less infallibly than He sealed the only-begotten Son. He is incapable of the folly of sending into a disloyal, suspicious, and sense-ridden world an unsealed servant and message-bearer. And by the holy fruit which appears in our lives, the world, if it be not altogether thoughtless and unteachable, will be compelled sooner or later to see that we are of God. The Holy Spirit is ever working a continuous transformation and ennoblement within us which is the distinctive mark of the children of the kingdom. When we shall have come to bear in our transfigured flesh the power and potency of all Divine qualities, this sealing will be needless. Till that day of perfect redemption dawns we cannot afford to despise this high signature. "Sealed unto the day of redemption"—sealed for our own assurance, and also for a witness to the world. (*T. G. Selby.*) *The seal and earnest*:—The three metaphors in this and ver. 21—"anointing," "sealing," and "giving the earnest"—1. All refer to the same subject—the Divine Spirit. 2. All refer to one and the same act. They are three aspects of one thing, just as a sunbeam might be regarded either as the source of warmth, or of light, or of chemical action. 3. All declare a universal prerogative of Christians. Every man that loves Christ has the Spirit in the measure of his faith. Note:—I. THE "SEAL" OF THE SPIRIT. A seal is impressed upon a recipient material, made soft by warmth, in order to leave there a copy of itself. 1. The effect of the Divine indwelling is to mould the recipient into the image of the Divine inhabitant. There is in the human spirit a capacity of receiving the image of God. His Spirit, entering into a heart, will there make that heart wise with its own wisdom, strong with its own strength, gentle with its own gentleness, holy with some purity of its own. 2. There are, however, characteristics which are not so much copies as correspondences—*i.e.*, just as what is convex in the seal is concave in the impression, and *vice versâ*, so, when that Spirit comes into our spirits, its promises will excite faith, its gifts will breed desire; yearning love will correspond to the love that longs to dispense, emptiness to abundance, prayers to promises; the cry, "Abba! Father!" to the word, "Thou art My Son." 3. Then, mark, the material is made capable

of receiving the stamp, because it is warmed and softened—*i.e.*, my faith must prepare my heart for the sanctifying indwelling of that Divine Spirit. God does not do with man as the coiner does with his blanks—put them cold into a press, and by violence from without stamp an image upon them; but He does as men do with a seal—warms the wax first, and then, with a gentle, firm touch, leaves the likeness there. 4. This aggregate of Christian character is the true sign that we belong to God, as the seal is the mark of ownership. I believe that Christian people ought to have a consciousness that they are God's children, for their own peace and rest and joy. But you cannot use that in demonstration to other people. The two things must go together. Be very sure that your happy consciousness that you are Christ's is verified to yourself and to others by a plain outward life of righteousness like the Lord's. Have you got that seal stamped upon your lives like the hall-mark that says, "This is genuine silver, and no plated Brummagem stuff"? And is it woven into the whole length of your being like the scarlet thread that is spun into every Admiralty cable as a sign that it is Crown property? 5. This sealing, which is thus the token of God's ownership, is also the pledge of security. A seal is stamped in order that there may be no tampering with what it seals—that it may be kept safe from thieves and violence. And our true guarantee that we shall come at last to heaven is present likeness to the indwelling Spirit. The seal is the pledge of security just because it is the mark of ownership. When, by God's Spirit dwelling in us, we are led to love the things that be fair, and to long after more, that is like God's hoisting His flag upon a newly-annexed territory. And is He going to be so careless in the preservation of His property as that He will allow it to slip away from Him? But no man has a right to rest on the assurance of God's saving him into the heavenly kingdom unless He is saving him at this moment from the devil and his own evil heart. II. THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT. 1. It is the guarantee of the inheritance. (1) The experiences of the Christian life here are plainly immortal. The resurrection of Christ is the external proof; the facts of the Christian life are the inward proofs of a future life. Howsoever much we may say we believe in a future life and in a heaven, we really grasp it in the proportion in which here we are living in direct contact with God. What have faith, love, fellowship with God, to do with death? They cannot be cut through with the stroke that destroys physical life, any more than you can divide a sunbeam with a sword. (2) All the results of the Divine Spirit's sealing of the soul manifestly tend towards completeness. The engine is clearly working only half-speed. Those powers in the Christian man can plainly do a great deal more than they ever have done here, and are meant to do a great deal more. The road evidently leads upwards, and round that sharp corner, where the black rocks come so near each other and our eyesight cannot travel, we may be sure it goes steadily up still to the top of the pass, until it reaches "the shining tablelands whereof our God Himself is Sun and Moon," and brings us all to the city set on a hill. 2. It is part of the whole. The truest and loftiest conception that we can form of heaven is the perfecting of the religious experience of earth. The shilling or two given to the servant of old when he was hired is of the same currency as the balance that he is to get when the year's work is done. You have but to take from the faith, love, obedience, communion of the highest of moments of the Christian life all their imperfections, multiply them to their superlative possibility, and stretch them out to absolute eternity, and you get heaven. So here is a gift offered for us all, a gift which our feebleness sorely needs, the offer of a reinforcement as real and as sure to bring victory as when, at Waterloo, the Prussian bugles blew, and the English commander knew that victory was sure. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Spirit as an earnest*.—I. WE ARE THE HEIRS OF A SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE. It is quite consistent with the present economy of mercy that we should enjoy some of this whilst on earth, and before we are put in full possession. Many things in the Divine purpose, and in the history of the world, preceded Christ's personal mediation, prepared the way for it, and passed over, through His work, in blessings upon our souls. We were originally members of a disinherited race. The inheritance under consideration was the rightful possession of our Lord as the Only-begotten of the Father. As to our interest in it, it lay under a forfeiture, and we were treated as aliens. It is also a merciful part of the plan that it should, at least for a time, be vested in Christ as trustee for us. In Eden, the inheritance of life was vested in the first man, who lost it to himself and all his posterity. God is our inheritance, and heaven is the place where most perfectly we shall enter upon its full and undisputed enjoyment. This is our estate; not ours for years merely, but for eternity.

It will then be subject neither to corruption nor violence. Heaven, with its freedom from sin, sickness, pain, the curse, and death, is ours in reversion. II. THE SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO US AS AN EARNEST OF THIS SPLENDID INHERITANCE. 1. It is supposed that the word and its use came to the Greeks from the Syrian and Phœnician merchants, just as the words "tariff" and "cargo" came to England from Spanish merchants. The technical sense of the word signifies the deposit paid by the purchaser on entering into an agreement for the purchase of anything. The identity of the deposit with the full payment is a very essential consideration in the force and use of the word. In many of the rural districts of Scotland, and possibly in other places, a shilling, such as pardon, life, or peace, is put into the hand of a servant when hired for a certain work as handsel-money, and as a pledge that when the whole work is done the whole wages shall be paid. Two things, therefore, seem to be included in the meaning of the word used: first, that it should be the same in kind as the fulness of which it is a part; and, secondly, representing our present state as Christians, it affirms the certainty of our privileges in this world and the next. As God Himself is said to be our inheritance—as we are said to have the inheritance in Christ—so the Holy Ghost is Himself the earnest of it in our hearts. It is not a work which He delegates to another; nor would it suffice to say that any one blessing, such as pardon, life, or peace, is the earnest of heaven—it is the Spirit Himself only. He is the earnest of heaven. 2. The earnest is thus part of our future inheritance, and identical in kind with it. An infant has a title to an inheritance which has descended from his deceased father; and though not legally, or in fact, in possession, except as under tutors and governors, certain advances are made from it to conduct his education, and in this way foretastes of it are given to him. As he passes through the family mansion, forests, and fields, and meets with the servants of the estate, he has in this walk, and in the loving respect of faithful dependents, an earnest of what he is speedily coming to; and we can imagine how his breast, as heir, would heave with excitement on the eve of possessing the inheritance. This experience of the earthly heir may help us, as an illustration, to understand our present enjoyment of "the firstfruits of the Spirit," which, upon the testimony of the apostle, we now have. To take the blessing, eternal life, it is obvious, from both our Lord's teaching and that of His apostles, that in all the essential elements of eternal life we are equal to "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23). We form part of the same family. Life in heaven is just our spiritual life here, excepting the amplification and elevation which death, as a freedom from the body and from the fretting power of sin, will confer upon us. Again, how vivid is the writer's conception of the likeness, and indeed identity, of the earnest to the whole in his view of the nearness of the believers on earth to heaven. "But ye are come unto Mount Sion" (Heb. xii. 22, 23). Portions of this inheritance are ministered to us in advance. True, it is but twilight yet with us. But as the sun is seen from the lofty Swiss mountains to throw forward on the distant peaks his rays, as skirmishers before an army, to announce his coming, so our present foretastes of heaven—the earnest of our inheritance, calm, intelligent faith in the Lord, love to Him and to His people, and our luminous hope cast as an anchor within the veil—testify that the day in which there shall be no night is at hand. All these experiences are pledges of our immediate admission into heaven when we die. 3. The earnest of the Spirit, which is thus a real part of the inheritance of heaven, is only a part of it. There is no principle or fixed rule by which we could define the proportion which it bears as a part to the whole. A handful of wheat offered by the farmer in the market as a sample to the purchaser of the entire crop, though identically the same, bears a very small proportion to the whole. We may safely infer that the earnest is less than the whole. The Spirit who Himself is the earnest, with all the grace and love which He is pleased to bestow upon our souls, is but a part. All the blessings of which God kindly thought and devised for us in eternity, which cost the Redeemer His life to secure and bestow as the efficient cause of our salvation, and which the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to reveal, are undoubtedly involved in this earnest. How stupendous a thought that something greater—and how much greater!—awaits us when we shall see God! It may be said that even here we have God, and what more can we have in heaven? But there He will be our God without any of the deductions made for our present imperfections and actual transgressions (1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 John iii. 2). (*A. Douglas McMillan.*)

Vers. 23, 24. I call God for a record . . . that to spare you I came not as yet to Corinth.—*Why Paul did not visit Corinth*:—His reasons were—I. ONE OF MERCY: to spare them pain (ver. 23)—to save them from the sharp censure their lax morality would have necessitated. It was no caprice, no fickleness, respecting St. Paul's character that—1. He was not one of those who love to be censors of the faults of others. There are social faultfinders, who are ever on the watch for error and who yet provide no remedy. Now all this was contrary to the spirit of St. Paul; he had that love "which thinketh no evil," &c. It pained him to inflict the censure which would give pain to others. 2. He was not one of those who love to rule. II. APPARENTLY A SELFISH ONE: to spare himself pain (chap. ii. 1 5). But if we look closely into it, it only sheds fresh light upon the unselfishness and delicacy of St. Paul's character. He desired to save himself pain, because it gave them pain. He desired joy for himself, because his joy was theirs. He will not separate himself from them for a moment. 1. It was not to pain them merely that he wrote, but because joy, deep and permanent, was impossible without pain; as the extraction of a thorn by a tender father gives a deeper joy in love to the child. 2. It was not to save himself pain merely that he did not come, but to save them that pain which would have given him pain. Here there is a canon for the difficult duty of blame. To blame is easy enough—with some it is all of a piece with the hardness of their temperament; but to do this delicately—how shall we learn that? I answer, Love! and then say what you will; men will bear anything if love be there. If not, all blame, however just, will miss its mark; and St. Paul showed this in ver. 4. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *A threefold theme*:—I. THE FULFILMENT OF A PROMISE ADJOURNED (ver. 24). II. AUTHORITY OVER THE FAITH OF OTHERS DISCLAIMED. "Not for that we have dominion over your faith." III. THE TRUE WORK OF A GOSPEL MINISTER. He is a helper, not a lord; a helper, not a substitute. A true minister is to help men—1. To think aright—*i.e.*, on the right subject, in the right way. 2. To feel aright—in relation to self, mankind, the universe, and God. 3. To believe aright. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Not for that we would have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.**—*Ministerial helpfulness* (Inaugural):—I. NEGATIVELY. "Not," &c. 1. This disclaimer, to some of us, is perhaps unexpectedly strong. Paul might well have said the opposite, and for other purposes did so, as an inspired apostle. But he seems to have been always sensible of the individual responsibility of others, which no other should assail or could share. He is grandly intolerant of falsehood and evil living, but none so respectful of individual liberty. 2. After this, is it not passing strange that any should arrogate the very thing which Paul here so anxiously disclaims—authority over human consciences? Every real successor of the apostle will say, "My soul, come not thou into their secret." Your souls are your own to-day when I first speak to you; they will be your own when I speak my last. II. POSITIVELY. "But," &c. Joy is to be taken here as the happy fruit of all Christian principles and affections, so that to be a "helper of joy" is to promote the whole moral perfection. 1. There is a great deal of intellectual hindrance to Christian decision and life. (1) A number of people "prove all things" without "holding fast to that which is good"—at least, they stir all things into doubt and difficulty, but cannot work their way to a solution. Here we may help. Great gospel facts are questioned, denied. What then? We who are set for "a defence of the gospel" go on asserting them as true, because, with unshaken faith, we believe them to be so. And the sight of our unmoved constancy has a reassuring effect. How can the battle be lost when we are seen advancing, well in rank, looking for victory? (2) The same kind of effect is produced on those who are prejudiced against doctrinal preaching. Hear doctrines explained by those who have really studied them, who put them in their proper relations and draw them out into practical duty, and the prejudice will melt away. 2. Life is to many a busy one, without leisure, ever on the move. From this we may see that God's day was never more needed or precious, and that the opportunity to both preacher and people is one of the great opportunities of life. Welcome to both should be the hour that brings them into the Divine presence and abates somewhat of the fever and stir of life. And if we can but be "helpers" during the week in preparing for this service, we shall reach our utmost ambition. 3. Then there is the continual shortcoming of the Christian life making the helpfulness of the ministry necessary and welcome. Go where we will, there is the same tale of infirmity, the failure to realise the ideal, which not seldom engenders despondency or despair. But we are helpers of your joy. We are sent to revive it, and to take means that it shall not

die. Whatever dark tales we hear we are to meet and overmatch by the glad tidings. No ruins of any life-plan but may yet be built up. "The weak may be as David, and David as an angel of the Lord." 4. Wherever we go we find troubles—if we seek for them; and it is worth while putting forth all our skill to find them. There is no scene, however distressful, in which we may not quietly yet confidently appear as "helpers of joy." Unlike the apostles of natural law, who command you to bow to the inevitable in the present and dismiss all hope for the future, we tell you that "all things work together for them that love God" and have fruitage in a blessed immortality. 5. The grave is not the end of all, but to each there is a grave. There can be no fellowship in the article of death, but on the brink we can tell some such things as will rob death of its terrors, and make it no more than a quiet passage into life. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

*Christian ministers helpers of their people's joy:—*I. THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGE—joy. 1. Its origin and nature. It is not the offspring of a fervid imagination, but the effect of a well-grounded conviction of the love of God. It has its root in faith: "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." And why? Because faith connects the believer with Jesus, who is all his salvation and all his desire. 2. This is the legitimate state of the Christian. Joy diffuses a beautiful and attractive lustre around every grace which ornaments the believer's character; it is the very atmosphere through which he should continually walk, proving that the ways of religion are "ways of pleasantness, and that "all her paths are peace." I know of nothing that recommends the gospel more than this; I know of no moral proof of its divinity more powerfully convincing than this. 3. Joy fits the believer for comforting and encouraging others. It was a great sin in those who were sent to take a survey of the Promised Land to return with an evil report. II. THE MINISTER'S OFFICE. "Helpers of joy," but not of salvation. Christ is the only Saviour; and He allows not of any helpers. But, though ministers are not helpers in the work of salvation, they are, as instruments, helpers in the application of it. Ministers act as helpers of joy—1. By unfolding the Word of God. The Bible contains glad tidings, which are calculated to rejoice the heart. 2. By expatiating on the love of Christ. Nothing can fill the soul with so much gladness as this. 3. By giving a just interpretation of present trials. 4. By praying to the Author of every grace and Giver of every privilege (*Rom. xv. 13.*) (*D. Bagot, B.D.*)

*Helpers of others' joy:—*I. AS RELIGIOUS PERSONS WE ARE HAPPY. There are various sources of this joy. 1. God Himself. "We joy in God." 2. God's works. (1) Their variety, order, beauty, and splendour. (2) Because they are His—a temple which He has made for Himself to be worshipped in. (3) On account of the figurative instruction which they convey. (4) As created and constituted for us to dwell in. 3. His providence. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice." (1) It is exercised over nations. By God "kings reign and princes decree judgment." We have joy in a nation's joy. When pestilence disappears, when there is an ample harvest, when there is reviving commerce, it is by God's providence, and as religious men we rejoice therein. (2) It bears personally upon ourselves. We can lie down upon the everlasting arms, and say, "The eternal God is my refuge." 4. All things that are common to humanity. (1) The joy of honourable marriage. (2) When affliction disappears and God turns for us our mourning into dancing. (3) In the common conditions of human life. Whatever may be the amount of human suffering, the amount of human happiness immensely preponderates. 5. Christ Jesus and His gospel. He came into the world in joy. The angels sang for joy at His nativity; He opened His ministry in joy—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," &c.; and He spake very often of His joy. We may have joy—(1) In the knowledge of Him. (2) In reconciliation by Him. (3) In justification through Him. 6. The Holy Ghost. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." There is joy in the gifts of the Spirit. Was not the day of Pentecost a day of joy? 7. The ordinances of the gospel. Happy on the Lord's day, in the reading of God's Word, in the preaching of the gospel, in Christian association and alliance. 8. The prospect of the life to come. "For the joy set before Christ He endured the Cross, despising the shame"; and you and I may have joy set before us in like manner. II. IT IS OUR DUTY TO ENHANCE EACH OTHER'S JOY. It is clear enough that we can promote each other's sin. We may help forward afflictions; we may do a good deal to make one another miserable. How can we augment one another's joy? 1. By expounding the principles of joy, as our Saviour did. He began His ministry with the beatitudes. Wherever He went there was joy. 2. By removing the causes of infelicity. What makes you unhappy? Is it sin? Go to God in penitence and

ask for remission, and you shall have it. Is it anxiety? "Be careful for nothing," &c. A sense of weakness and insufficiency? "My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength shall be perfected in weakness." 3. By reminding of the fact that our religion is a happy religion (Psa. cxviii.). "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs." 4. By being examples of this joy. We are contagious, or communicative, beings. "He that sympathises with me in my sorrow divides the stream and takes half of it away; he that sympathises with me in my gladness and my joy, lights his lamp from my lamp, takes nothing from me, only kindles a brighter light, only diffuses a wider blaze." 5. By seizing on the occasions and opportunities of joy, such as the Sabbath and the means of grace. 6. By inciting and stirring one another up to it. 7. By adverting often, as Christ and believers do, to that which is to come. (*J. Stratten.*) *Helpers of your joy*:—The points considerable in this clause are these: I. THAT JOY IS THE STATE PROPER TO CHRISTIANS. Either they do rejoice, or they should labour to come to it. God requires it at their hand as a duty (Phil. iv. 4). Consider—1. The ills they are freed from—sin, the wrath of God, the sting of death, &c. 2. The state that God brings them to by believing (Rom. xiv. 17). 3. Why should they labour to be in that state? (1) That God, who gives them such matter of joy, may have glory from them. Their life should be a perpetual thanksgiving to God; and how can man be thankful that is not joyful? (2) It makes⁽³⁾ him active in good when he is anointed with the oil of gladness (Rom. ix. 23).⁽³⁾ And then for suffering; we have many things to go through in this world. How shall a man suffer those things that are between him and heaven unless he labour to bring himself to this temper of joy? (⁴) And then for others—every man should labour to encourage them. We are all fellow-passengers in the way to heaven. Therefore, even to bring on others more cheerfully, we ought to labour to be in a state of joy. And if a Christian do not joy, it is not because he is a Christian, but because he is not a Christian enough. II. MINISTERS ARE HELPERS OF THIS BLESSED CONDITION. 1. By acquainting people with the ill estate they are in; for all sound comfort comes from the knowledge of our grief, and freedom from it. For they must plough before they sow, and the law must go before the gospel. The law shows the wound, but the gospel heals the wound. 2. By showing the remedy which is in Christ; then they open the riches of God's love in Christ, the sweet "box of ointment." Thus did St. Peter, after he had brought them to, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" point them to Jesus Christ. 3. By advice in cases of conscience what people should do. So their office is to remove all hindrances of spiritual joy. We know that light is a state of joy. The ministry of the gospel is light. Spiritual freedom makes people joyful. But the end of the ministry is to set people more and more at liberty. Victory is a state of joy. Now the ministers of God teach God's people how to fight God's battles, how to answer temptations, and at length how to triumph. 4. By forcing it as a duty upon them (Phil. iv. 4). They are as guides among the rest of the travellers, that encourage them in the way to heaven, "Come on, let us go cheerfully." 5. In death itself. The end of the ministry is to help joy, to help them to heaven by a joyful departure, drawing comfort out of the Word for this purpose. But you will say true Christians are oftentimes cast down by the ministry. If so, yet it is that they might joy (chap. vii. 8). We say of April that the showers of that month dispose the earth to flowers in the next; so tears and grief wrought in the heart by the ministry frame the soul to a joyful temper after. A physician comes, and he gives sharp and bitter purges; saith the patient, "I had thought you had come to make me better, and I am sicker now than I was before." But he bids him be content; all this is for your joyfulness of spirit after; you will be the better for it. III. MINISTERS ARE HELPERS OF JOY, AND BUT HELPERS. They do but propound matter of joy, grounds of joy from the Word of God; but it is the Spirit of God that doth rejoice the heart (John xvi. 5). (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *By faith ye stand*.—*The victory of faith*:—The Scriptures mention three sorts of faith—1. Simple credence, or bare assent. This is not the faith of the text, for the devils have it (James ii. 19). 2. Temporary conviction, which carries the soul to some short sallies in the course of godliness, but, having no firm fixation in the heart, comes to nothing. 3. A saving, effectual faith, which takes in both the former kinds and adds its own peculiar perfection. It is a durable, fixed disposition of holiness, immediately infused by God into the soul, whereby the soul is renewed and powerfully inclined to exert itself in the actions of a pious life. This is the faith by which "we stand." I. THE THING SUPPOSED—a person assaulted by an enemy (*cf.* chap. x. 4; Eph. vi. 12; Heb. xii. 4).

Now in every such combat there are to be considered—1. The persons engaged. Their enmity is almost as old as the world itself (Gen. iii. 15). The devil's hatred of us bears date with our very being, and is directed against us as men, but much more as believers. As soon as we enlist under the Captain of our salvation, He proclaims perpetual war. So a Christian's life is not a state of ease, but of incessant conflict with the devil. 2. The thing contended for: to cast them down—(1) From that sanctity of life which the regenerating Spirit has wrought them up to; for, having lost all holiness himself, the devil abhors it in others. He is "a murderer from the beginning," and he chiefly attempts the murder of souls by making them like himself. (2) From their interest in the Divine favour; and no wonder, since he finds it denied to himself. So he tries to sow enmity between God and the soul, and to embroil the whole creation in a war against heaven. 3. The ways and means by which it is carried on. (1) The devil's own immediate suggestions (John xiii. 27; Acts v. 3). (2) The infidelity of the human heart—a quality which does the devil's work most compendiously and effectually. (3) The alluring vanities of the world (James iv. 4). (4) Man's own lusts and corruptions. II. THE THING EXPRESSED—viz., that faith alone can give the victory in this contest. Consider—1. Man's natural estate void of the grace of faith. That this is deplorable enough is proved by the fact that, were not bare nature insufficient to work out its own recovery, the Divine grace would never have put itself to such an expense for its recovery. What forces can man rally against the workings of his own corruptions?—his imperfect good desires, resolutions, duties? Alas! nature will quickly break through such puny resistances. 2. The advantages and helps of faith. (1) Union with Christ. Christ, being to the soul like armour, only defends when He is close to it. (2) The assistance of the Spirit, without whom it is impossible for the soul to do anything in the way of duty, or to oppose sin with success (Rom. viii. 13; Phil. ii. 13). 3. The title to and power to effectually apply God's promises. The promises are weapons which the Spirit places in our hands, and faith is the spiritual hand into which they are put. (*R. South, D.D.*)

CHAPTER II.

VER. 2. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?—*Gladness for sadness*:—I. SELF-IMPROVEMENT IS PRECEDED BY DISSATISFACTION WITH SELF. This is true of all self-improvement. We find it so in education. And other things being equal, that child will learn most rapidly who is most sorry when it cannot master its task. The same statement applies to improvement in mechanical skill and in so-called ornate accomplishments. Certainly there is desire to excel, but that implies dissatisfaction with present attainments. The principle is equally applicable in the moral and spiritual sphere. In this sphere there can be no upward progress without repentance. Search for a new master in this realm presupposes dissatisfaction with the old. There is a discontent that is praiseworthy. A passing reference to the other side of the same truth will more clearly show this principle. And the other side is—He rarely makes any advancement who is opinionated, self-satisfied. Men have to be roused out of their contentment. II. THE "SORROW" OF THE PUPIL IS THE "GLADNESS" OF THE TEACHER—provided, of course, that the "sorrow" of the scholar be in connection with the teacher's special function. Failure, through waywardness to do right, always brings "sorrow" to the partially educated child. But as often as the child manifests "sorrow" at its failure, just as often is its mother made "glad." And the highest "gladness which the Christian teacher knows comes not through him who passes an eulogium upon his sermons, but from him whom the sermons have made "sorry" on account of sin. (*J. S. Swan.*)

Vers. 5-11. But if any have caused grief.—*The aim of Church discipline* is in the last resort the restoration of the fallen. The Church has, of course, an interest of its own to guard; it is bound to protest against all that is inconsistent with its

character; it is bound to expel scandals. But the Church's protest, its condemnation, its excommunication even, are not ends in themselves; they are means to that which is really an end in itself, a priceless good which justifies every extreme of moral severity, the winning again of the sinner through repentance. The judgment of the Church is the instrument of God's love, and the moment it is accepted in the sinful soul it begins to work as a redemptive force. The humiliation it inflicts is that which God exalts; the sorrow, that which He comforts. But when a scandal comes to light in a Christian congregation, what is the significance of that movement of feeling which inevitably takes place? In how many has it the character of goodness and of severity, of condemnation and compassion, of love and fear, of pity and shame, the only character that has any virtue in it, to tell for the sinner's recovery? If you ask nine people out of ten what a scandal is, they will tell you it is something that makes men talk; and the talk in nine cases out of ten will be malignant, affected, more interesting to the talkers than any story of virtue or piety—scandal itself, in short, far more truly than its theme. Does anybody imagine that gossip is one of the forces that awaken conscience, and work for the redemption of our fallen brethren? If this is all we can do, in the name of all that is Christian let us keep silence. Every word spoken about a brother's sin, that is not prompted by a Christian conscience, that does not vibrate with the love of a Christian heart is itself a sin against the mercy and the judgment of Christ. (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

Sufficient unto such a man is this punishment.—*Christian punishment and absolution*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF PUNISHMENT includes in it—1. The reformation of the offender (ver. 6). The ancient system of law sacrificed the individual to the society, and feeble philanthropy would sacrifice society to the individual, whereas Christianity would save both. 2. The purification of society. Sin committed with impunity corrupts the body of men to which the sinner belongs; and this purification is effected partly by example, and partly by removal of the evil. The discipline by which this removal was effected was excommunication, and at that time apostolic excommunication represented to the world God's system of punishment. 3. The expression of righteous indignation. For there is a right feeling in human nature which we call resentment, although in the worst natures it becomes malice. It existed in Christ Himself. Mark what follows from this. Man is the image of God: so there is something in God which corresponds with that which we call resentment, stripped, of course, of all selfishness or fury. So we must not explain away those words of Scripture, "the wrath of God," "God is angry with the wicked every day," "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven." These sayings contain a deep and an awful truth. If the wrath of God be only a figure, His love must be but a figure too. II. THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF ABSOLUTION. Forgiveness is one thing, absolution is another. Absolution is the authoritative declaration of forgiveness. When Christ said, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," He did not forgive him; he was forgiven already, but He declared his forgiveness. Now the case before us is a distinct instance of ecclesiastical absolution. St. Paul says, "I forgive." This is absolution; man's declaration of God's forgiveness—man speaking in God's stead. 1. Consider the use of absolution. It was to save from remorse, and is here considered as a "comfort." 2. This absolution was representative—(1) Of the forgiveness of God. St. Paul forgave the sinner "in the person," that is in the stead "of Christ." Thus, as the punishment of man is representative of the punishment and wrath of God, so the absolution of man is representative of the forgiveness of God. (2) Of the Christian congregation: "for your sakes." Every member, therefore, of that congregation was forgiving the sinner; it was his right to do so, and it was in his name that St. Paul spoke; nay, because each member had forgiven, St. Paul forgave. Absolution therefore is not a priestly prerogative. It belongs to man, and to the minister because he stands as the representative of purified humanity. Who does not know how the unforgivingness of society in branding men and women as outcasts makes their case hopeless? Men bind his sins—her crimes—on earth, and they remain bound. Now every man has this power individually. For years the thought of his deceit, and the dread of his brother, had weighed on Jacob's heart, and when Esau forgave him, it was as if he "had seen the face of God." When we treat the guilty with tenderness, hope rises in them towards God; their hearts say, "They love us; will not God forgive and love us too?" (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) **Ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.**—*Overmuch sorrow*:—I. WHEN SORROW IS OVERMUCH. It is notorious that overmuch sorrow for sin is not the ordinary case of the world.

1. When it is fed by a mistaken cause. If a man thinketh that a duty which is no duty, and then sorrow for omitting it, such sorrow is all too much, because it is undue, and caused by error. Many fearful Christians are troubled about food, clothes, thoughts, and words, thinking or fearing that all is sinful which is lawful, and that unavoidable infirmities are heinous sins. 2. When it hurteth and overwhelmeth nature itself, and destroyeth bodily health or understanding. God would not have us hurt our neighbour, nor have us destroy or hurt ourselves. II. HOW OVERMUCH SORROW DOTH SWALLOW A MAN UP. 1. It often overthroweth the sober use of reason, so that a man's judgment is corrupted by it. A man in anger, fear, or trouble thinks not of things as they are, but as his passions represent them. 2. It disableth a man to govern his thoughts, and ungoverned thoughts must needs be both sinful and very troublesome. You may almost as easily keep the leaves of trees in quietness and order in a blustering wind, as the thoughts of one in troubling passions. 3. It would swallow up faith itself, and greatly hindereth its exercise. 4. It yet more hindereth hope. 5. It swalloweth up all comfortable sense of the love of God, and thereby hindereth the soul from loving Him. And in this it is an adversary to the very life of holiness. 6. It is a false and injurious judge of all the word and works of God, and of all His mercies and corrections. Whatever such an one reads or hears, he thinks it all makes against him. 7. It is an enemy to thankfulness. 8. It is quite contrary to the joy in the Holy Ghost. Yea, and the peace in which God's kingdom much consisteth. 9. It is much contrary to the very tenor of the gospel, which is glad tidings of pardon and everlasting joy. 10. It greatly advantageth Satan, whose design is to describe God to us as like himself, who is a malicious enemy. 11. It unfits men for all profitable meditation. The more they muse, the more they are overwhelmed. And it turneth prayer into mere complaint, instead of child-like, believing supplications. 12. It is a distemper which maketh all sufferings more heavy. III. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF IT? 1. With very many it arises from distemper or weakness of the body, and by it the soul is greatly disabled to any comfortable sense. 2. But usually other causes go before this disease of melancholy. And one of the most common is sinful impatience, a want of sufficient submission to the will of God. 3. The guilt of some wilful sin; when conscience is convinced, yet the sin is beloved and yet feared. God's wrath doth terrify, yet not enough to lead to the overcoming of sin. 4. Ignorance and mistakes in matters which peace and comforts are concerned. (1) Ignorance of the tenor of the gospel. (2) Mistakes about the use of sorrow for sin, and about the nature of hardness of heart. (3) Ignorance of ourselves, not knowing the sincerity which God hath given us. (4) Failure to fetch comfort from bare probabilities, when we get not certainty. (5) Ignorance of other men, many think, by our preaching and writing, that we are much better than we are. (6) Unskilful teachers cause the perplexities of many. IV. WHAT IS THE CURE? 1. Look not on the sinful part of your troubles, either as better or worse than indeed it is. 2. Give not way to a habit of peevish impatience. 3. Set yourselves more diligently than ever to overcome the inordinate love of the world. 4. If you are not satisfied that God alone, Christ alone, heaven alone, is enough for you, as matter of felicity and full content, go, study the case better, and you may be convinced. 5. Study better how great a sin it is to set our own wills and desires in a discontented opposition to the wisdom, will, and providence of God, and to make our wills, instead of His, as gods to ourselves. 6. Study well how great a duty it is wholly to trust God, and our blessed Redeemer, both with soul and body, and all we have. 7. If you would not be swallowed up with sorrow, swallow not the baits of sinful pleasure. 8. But if none of the fore-mentioned sins cause your sorrows, but they come from the mere perplexities of your mind, I will lay down your proper remedies, and that is, the cure of that ignorance and those errors which cause your troubles. (1) Many are perplexed about controversies in religion. Directions: (a) See that you be true to the light and law of nature, which all mankind is obliged to observe. (b) As to God's supernatural revelation, hold to God's Word, the sacred Bible. (c) Yet use with thankfulness the help of men for the understanding and obeying the Word of God. (d) Take nothing as necessary to the being of Christianity, and to salvation which is not recorded in the Scripture, and hath not been held as necessary by all true Christians in every age and place. (e) Maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, with all true Christians, as such, and live in love in the communion of saints. (f) Never set a doubtful opinion against a certain truth or duty. (g) Faithfully serve Christ as far as you have attained, and be true to all the truth that

you know. (2) If your trouble be about your sins, or want of grace, and spiritual state, digest well these counsels. (a) God's goodness is equal to His greatness. (b) Christ hath come to save us. (c) The condition of pardon and life is that we believe Him, and willingly accept of the mercy which He freely giveth us. (d) The day of grace is never so past to any sinner but still he may have Christ and pardon if he will. (3) But if melancholy have got head, there must be, beside what is said, some other and proper remedies used. (a) Avoid your melancholy musings. (b) Let those thoughts which you have laid out on the most excellent things. The infinite goodness of God; the unmeasurable love of Christ; the unconceivable glory and joy which all the blessed have with Christ. (c) When you pray, resolve to spend most of your time in thanksgiving and praising God. 9. If further the sorrow proceed from some bodily disorder, as it often doth, the physician must take the place of the preacher. This sorrow must be treated by medicine and diet. (R. Baxter.)

Ver. 11. **Lest Satan should get an advantage of us : for we are not ignorant of his devices.**—*Satan's devices* :—We who “are called to be saints” are not ignorant of his devices. We know them, what they are, whence they come, and whither they lead. These are not matters of report or hearsay, but of personal knowledge. I. HIS DEVICES IN DISCIPLINE TOWARDS THE LAPSED. Their not being ignorant of his devices is assigned as a reason for the apostle's anxiety, “lest Satan should get an advantage of them.” He was fearful lest he should overreach them in the matter referred to. That was a case of discipline. A notorious scandal had gained currency that “one should have his father's wife.” The severe discipline had sufficed to produce the desired effect. Whatever might be the mind of “the many who inflicted” the censure, it would seem that there was a party among them unwilling to forgive the offence, remove the sentence, and restore the offender. To all of them the apostle says, “Ye ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” And this exhortation is enforced by his own example in the person and presence of Christ. “To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also : for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person or in the sight of Christ” vers. 6–10). By their excessive severity in continuing the censure it was possible that the spirit of such an one would give way to despondency or despair, would entertain hard thoughts of God, of the government of His Church, and “thus draw back into perdition.” In such a fatal issue the spirit would be lost to Christ and gained by Satan. On these accounts the apostle was anxious “lest Satan should gain an advantage of us : for we are not ignorant of his devices.” From this instructive case of primitive discipline it would appear that his devices to corrupt the Church of Christ, maintain a party spirit, and mar its unity, and prevent purity of communion were, and still are, these—no discipline, laxity of discipline, and partiality in discipline between rich and poor, master and servant, one party and another, on the one hand; and excessive severity of censure, disproportionate to the offence, and continued for too long a time, on the other. II. HIS DEVICES TO PREVENT THE SALVATION OF THE LOST. If such are his devices to keep within those who ought to be without, and to keep them without when they ought to be received again within the Church, what are his devices in keeping sinners from Christ and His salvation? His chief devices, his master-machinations to prevent sinners “from giving themselves to the Lord,” seem to be the four following. 1. No joy. There is no joy in Christ, no joy in His religion, no joy in His service, and no joy in His salvation. Christians go mourning without the sun. To become a Christian is to bid farewell to all joy, pleasure, and amusement for the life that now is. This device is specially intended for the merry-hearted. It will not stand examination. Try it by reason. Surely every one possessed of reason and speech will admit that the Maker of us all can make His creatures happy or miserable. For He is “the blessed, as well as the only wise God.” Happy in Himself, He is also the source of all happiness to His creatures. The very supposition is not less irrational than it is impious. Is the knowledge of God, who is good as well as blessed for ever; faith in God; trust in His providence and promises; the hope of eternal life likely—are such exercises to inspire sadness? Assuredly not. And whether are the benevolent affections of “peace on earth and goodwill toward men,” or malevolent affections toward God and men most fitted to give true and lasting joy? Try it by revelation. And what are its tidings? The gospel is not bad but good news from heaven to earth, from God to men. And is good news fitted to produce gladness or gloom,

joy or sorrow? Tried by Scripture, no joy in religion is seen and shown to be a lying device and a lying wonder of Satan. Try it by experience. Now on what does real joy or happiness depend? Not on worldly conditions or external circumstances, but on the state of the mind and heart. Well, "The good man shall be satisfied from himself"—not with himself but from himself—"out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." For what does he pray? "Rejoice the soul of Thy servant." "Are the consolations of God small with thee?" One thing is certain: the consolations of God are not small in their source, not small in the promise, and not small in themselves; and if they are small with thee, is there not a cause? It may be owing either—(1) To thy partial, defective, or erroneous views of the character or gospel of God; or (2) To the want, the weakness, or wavering of thy faith, under a fair and flaming profession; or (3) To some "secret thing with thee," to some secret duty neglected, some secret sin indulged; or (4) To thy constitutional temperament, moody and sickly, which depresses thy spirits, and diminishes thy consolations. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding. Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." 2. No haste. There is no haste for you to be found on the Lord's side, and be devoted to His service. For all this you have time enough, and to spare in the length of days that lie before you. In the meantime take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. This device is specially adapted for the young, the strong, the healthy, and aspiring in the outset of life. If No Joy fail with this class, No Haste, and no danger from delay, is more likely to take, as it falls in with the presumptuous spirit and procrastinating habits of fallen man. This device is second to none in danger, and in success with the sons of men. It is a most deceitful and destructive device of Satan. If it takes, Satan, in the majority of cases, has gained his end. By it unstable souls are beguiled from day to day to their eternal undoing and ruin. This device, even still less than the former, will not bear examination. For is it not the part of reason and wisdom, to give the first and most earnest heed to things of the greatest importance. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Now what time is secured to man for the business of salvation? "There is a time to be born and a time to die"; but what is the time to live? Who can tell? The commands of the Master accord with the dictates of reason, and the results of observation, in this matter. They are all in the present time, all personal, all pressing, and all supreme in obligation on all men. For the Saviour's commands are enforced by Scriptural "ensamples, written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world," or of the ages, "have come." What are they? Felix is a fitting type of many hearers under the preaching of the gospel. They are convinced, but they are not converted to Christ. Their convictions are stifled, it may be never to return. And does not the experience of unconverted sinners under the preaching of the gospel correspond more or less to these ensamples written for our warning? Do they not feel that every delay tends to make the ears dull of hearing the Word? 3. No danger. There is no danger of your losing your soul, or of coming short of the promised rest. This device is specially intended for the outwardly decent, the moral, the well-to-do sort of people. They are satisfied with themselves; are at peace with themselves, and at peace with the world; and they see and feel no danger from any other quarter. Such peace is delusive and short-lived. It is like the calm that precedes the storm. They admit that they are sinners, as all men are, not from any heartfelt conviction of its evil, but in extenuation of their guilt by its diffusion over all; but they have never been convinced of their own sinfulness so as to make them feel the urgent need of the Saviour. They love mammon more than mercy, their sins more than their souls, self more than the Saviour, and pleasure more than God. They are the friends of the world and the enemies of God. Satan thus gets an advantage over them, for they are ignorant of his devices. "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." 4. No hope. There is for you no hope of salvation. This is the last, chief device of Satan, but it is not the least. Terrors are increased by the vivid recollections of privileges misimproved; of opportunities lost. Well does Satan know that more sinners perish from despair than through presumption. Like all his other devices, this last is a lying device of Satan. For while there is life there is hope. (*Geo. Robson.*) *Advantage sought*.—1. That Church discipline is necessary. 2. That discipline should be extended to every member of the Church, whatever his worldly position. 3. That

Church discipline has its limits. I. THE EVIL POWER THAT SEEKS ADVANTAGE OVER US. The Bible has much to say of him, but nothing different from its teaching here. We are taught—1. Satan's names. 2. His condition. Reduced in estate, brought down by pride, &c. 3. His character. Unmixed evil. 5. His calling. He is pre-eminently the tempter. II. SOME OF THE MANY WAYS BY WHICH SATAN SEEKS AN ADVANTAGE. 1. He tempts with systematic subtlety. 2. He insinuates evil suggestions. 3. He makes use of men to tempt their fellow-men. 4. He conceals his designs, so as not to be perceived or suspected. 5. He avails himself of the advantages presented by the disposition and circumstances of those whom he tempts. The rich, the poor, the gay, the proud. III. THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH SHOULD FRUSTRATE THE DESIRED ADVANTAGE. We have no excuse for ignorance. A pious mother said to her well-instructed but ungodly son, "Well, Morgan, you are going straight to destruction, but you don't go there in the dark your mother has put the candle in your hand." What is the Bible, the preaching, and the religious meetings we have? There are only so many candles, warnings, like the red lights of danger, as well as the beacon lights of safety. (*D. Davis.*) *Satan's devices* :—There can be no greater evidence of men's degeneracy than that their minds are so easily imposed upon in matters of the greatest moment, and that by little arts of sophistry they are led into paths immediately destructive both of their nature and their happiness. Being therefore placed in such dangerous circumstances, nothing can be more prudent than that we should keep our discerning faculties wakeful, lest Satan should get an advantage of us. Note—I. SOME OF THE MORE SUCCESSFUL METHODS AND TRAINS OF TEMPTATION whereby the great enemy of souls is wont to blow up men's resolutions for a holy life. 1. By secret disbelief of the truth of things. 2. By making false representations of religion. (1) That its restraints are unjust and unreasonable. So religion is looked upon as a tyrannical encroachment upon the natural rights and privileges of mankind. (2) That the precepts of it are difficult, if not impossible. 3. By tempting men to place all religion in a few empty and external pretensions to piety, devoid of the inward life and spirit of religion. 4. By tempting them to such vices as have a shadow and resemblance of virtue. This crafty spirit knows very well that sin will never take in its own naked shape, and therefore dresses it up in a better garb, and calls it by another name. Pride never spreads its plumes with more success than when it is recommended as gentility, and a just valuing of ourselves according to our desert and quality. Many a man would never be betrayed into excesses did he not look upon it as an argument of a free, generous mind, and a piece of good fellowship. 5. By improving the influence of powerful and prevalent examples. Mankind is of a sociable and pliable temper, easily drawn aside when the multitude do evil. We are apt to look upon it as some kind of shelter and patronage to sin in company, and to act contrary to the company we are in is looked upon as a trespass against the laws of civility and good manners. II. THEREFORE IT CONCERNS US TO STAND CONTINUALLY UPON OUR GUARD, to preserve our consciences quick and tender, to be infinitely watchful, that our foot be not taken in any of those snares that are purposely laid to ruin us. It is no contemptible enemy that we have to deal with, nor the less to be feared because invisible, for by this means he maintains a nearer and more secret intercourse with the spirits of men. He is admirably acute to plant his engines, to make his batteries in the weakest part. But, alas! though men had no foreign enemy there is an enemy within their own breasts (James i. 14). Herein lies Satan's great advantage. He knows our strength is small, our propensions to sin impetuous, and how apt we are to be betrayed by our appetites and passions. 1. Let us, then, treasure up in our minds a great sense of God and of ourselves, let us suffer conscience freely to discharge its duty. Let us reverence the nobility of our natures, which are of a more Divine frame and temper than to be defiled. 2. Let all opportunities and occasions of vice be avoided with a quick and jealous care; a temptation is easier prevented than removed, when once it has thrust itself upon the sinner. 3. We should frequently review our lives, and call our actions to a severe and impartial examination that we may know what is their spring, tendency and consequence. 4. But above all we must solicit Heaven that God would enable us to defeat the subtleties of the tempter. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (*W. Cave, D.D.*) *Satan's temptations and the necessity of resisting them* :—I. Now the first trait in the character of Satan is DECEIT. It is evident sin originated in deceit (Gen. iii. 13; Rev. xii. 9). Hence arise those frequent monitions in the Word of God not to be deceived if we would not sin. II. The next device which the tempter exercises for the seduction of mankind is ENTICEMENT.

OR THE ENTANGLEMENT OF THE AFFECTIONS. No sooner is the mind drawn aside from the path of duty than the affections are instantly assailed and enticed to sin. Like the bait with which a fish is taken on the hook, so does Satan seek to allure men to their destruction. The days of this captivity will be heightened when he can insidiously prevail upon the imagination to entertain vain thoughts with secret complacency and delight. III. A third stratagem which the great seducer employs to get an advantage over us IS TO EXTENUATE THE GUILT OF SIN. IV. LET US INQUIRE HOW THIS DANGER IS TO BE AVOIDED, AND POINT OUT THE NECESSITY OF RESISTING THE CRAFTS AND ASSAULTS OF THE DEVIL. 1. In the whole course of your obedience attend minutely to the wisdom of Solomon, and "keep thy heart with all diligence." 2. Let this consideration animate us at all times to resist steadfastly in the faith, "knowing that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world." 3. For this purpose let us always bear in mind the example and sufferings of the blessed Jesus. 4. Let us, then, rejoice that we are called to serve under so good a leader, so solicitous for our success, so careful to promote it, and so ready "to help in time of need." 5. Finally, let us remember that in all our encounters with sin, the world, and the devil, we are but following the footsteps of the Captain of our salvation, and travelling to the attainment of the same glory, through the same rugged paths of sorrow and temptation. (*E. Brackenbury, B.A.*) *Satanæ stratagemata*:—Chabryas was wont to say that he was the best commander in war who best understood his enemies. I. First, OF THE CAUTION. Some render these words, Lest Satan should usurp upon you; and they give this reason, because, say they, Satan hath no right to any place; whosoever he getteth footing he is an intruder and usurper. Others read, Lest Satan circumvent us agreeably to the circumstances of the place and the practice of the devil. But why doth the apostle say, "Lest he get advantage of us"? Was St. Paul in any danger, or had Satan any design upon him? We may conceive that St. Paul joins himself with them, because he esteemed all those whom he begot to Christ by the gospel no other than his own children, and the father cannot but suffer in the loss of his child. The shepherd must needs be endamaged when any of his flock is diminished. St. Paul was further interested in this business, for the Corinthians had excommunicated this incestuous person by order from the apostle, and therefore if he had miscarried, Satan had made his advantage upon all: upon the incestuous person, whose soul he would have ruined; upon the Church, which he had maimed of a member. These were Satan's devices, which he could not carry so closely but that the apostle's vigilant eye descried them, for, saith he, "We are not ignorant of his devices." Did the householder know what night the thief would come to rob him, he would certainly guard his house; did the birds know a snare were laid for them, would they come near it? "Devices." Devices are subtle means to compass our ends, such as are tricks in gaming, fallacies in disputing, and stratagems in war; the enemy of our soul is full of them. 1. The first stratagem, policy, or device of Satan is to observe the natural constitution of every man's mind and body, and to fit his temptations thereunto. For he knoweth well that, as every plant thrives not in every soil, so neither every vice in every temper and complexion. As the mariner marks the wind, and accordingly hoisteth up or striketh sail, or as the cunning orator learneth which way the judge propendeth, and ever draweth him where he seeth him coming on, so the devil maketh perpetual use of the bent of our nature to help forward his temptations. 2. The second stratagem, policy, or device is to observe our natural abilities and endowments, and accommodate his temptations thereunto. 3. The third stratagem, policy, or device of Satan is to accommodate his temptation to men's outward estate, condition, and place, which much swayeth either way. 4. The fourth stratagem, policy, or device is to tempt us by method, beginning with questionable actions, thence proceeding to sins of infirmity, from them to wilful transgressions, after to heinous crimes, and last of all to obstinacy and final impenitency. No wool or cloth is dyed purple or scarlet at the first, but after divers tinctures at the last taketh that deepest dye. He that hastily turns the peg to wind up a treble to his pitch will sooner break the string than tune it, but if he strain it up by little and little, he bringeth it without danger to the height. 5. The fifth stratagem, policy, or device of Satan is to bring us from one extreme to another. 6. The sixth stratagem, policy, or device of Satan is to turn himself into an angel of light, and thereby to persuade the children of light that his suggestions are the motions of God's Holy Spirit. 7. The seventh stratagem, policy or device of Satan is to make advantage of time, not only by alluring every age to the peculiar vices

thereof, as children to idleness and vanity, youth to lust, perfect age and strength to violence and audacious attempts, old age to covetousness, and every one to the sins of the time, but making use of the present opportunity to thrust a man suddenly into the next sin. Instruct you how to employ his own engines, and turn his own ordinance upon himself. 1. First, doth Satan play the physiognomer, and observing our natural temper fit his temptations thereunto? Let us also make use of physiognomy, and take advantage of our natural inclinations to further the works of grace in us. If we find ourselves by nature timorous, let us endeavour to improve this fear into awful reverence; if audacious, to improve this boldness into spiritual confidence. 2. Secondly, doth Satan play the poet, and fit every player with a part that he is best able to act? Let us also make use of poetry, and observing our natural abilities of mind and body to fit our spiritual exercises accordingly. If we are endued with pregnancy of wit, to employ it in the study of heavenly mysteries; if with maturity of judgment, employ it in discerning between the true and false religion. 3. Thirdly, doth Satan play the politician, and inquire into every man's estate and condition of life, and accommodate his temptations thereunto? Let us also make use of policy, and by our outward estate better our inward, labouring for those graces which are most proper for our place and condition. If we are in authority, let us strive for gravity and integrity; if under the command of others, for obedience and faithfulness. 4. Fourthly, does Satan play the logician and tempt us by method? Let us also make use of logic, and observe method in the science of salvation. 5. Fifthly, doth Satan play the false pilot, and by persuading us to decline from a rock on the right hand, carry us so far the contrary way that we split our ship upon a rock on the left hand? Let us also make use of the art of navigation in our course to the fair havens in heaven. 6. Sixthly, doth Satan play the crafty merchant, and cheat us with counterfeit stones for jewels, with shows of virtues for true graces? Let us also imitate the wisdom of merchants, who will be perfect lapidaries before they deal in pearls and precious stones. Let us study the difference between true and seeming graces. 7. Lastly, doth Satan play the temporiser, and time all his suggestions? Let us also in a pious sense be time-servers, let us perform all holy duties in the fittest season. (*D. Featly, D.D.*)

Satan's devices :—I. TO DRAW THE BELIEVER INTO SIN. 1. He takes advantage of his peculiar temperament. Does he see David inclining to pride and vain confidence, he tempts him to number the people, well knowing the judgment that would follow (2 Chron. xxi. 1). Did Satan behold in Peter the fear of man? He instigates a maid to accuse him of being a follower of Christ, and thereby causes him to deny his Lord. Did he see in Lot too much leaning to the world? He takes advantage of it to make him linger in Sodom. Just so now. Satan knows our besetments. It may be irritability of temper, or over-sensitiveness, taking offence quickly at the slightest cause, or spiritual pride, or too much clinging to the world, &c. Of all these he takes advantage. 2. He chooses fitting instruments. He employed Eve to seduce Adam, and Job's wife to tempt the patriarch to "curse God and die." He will tempt a parent to do wrong in order to gratify the caprices of a favourite child; he will tempt a child to act contrary to the dictates of his conscience through fear of disobeying a parent; he will tempt a Christian to wound his conscience rather than offend another on whose support he may entirely depend. 3. He presents the same temptation under different forms. This was the device which he employed against the Saviour. He tempted Him personally and then by Peter. Foiled in his designs upon us he departs, but only until a feeling of security has stolen over us, then he creeps back again more wily than ever. II. TO KEEP BELIEVERS IN A SORROWFUL AND DOUBTING STATE. He does so—1. By making them look at their sins instead of away from them to Christ. 2. By inclining them to misinterpret God's providential dealings. 3. By making them confound faith with assurance. III. TO KEEP BELIEVERS FROM HOLY DUTIES. He does so—1. By presenting the world in a false light. 2. By suggesting a multitude of vain thoughts. 3. By striving to make them content with a low state of religion, instead of seeking higher degrees of personal holiness, "growing in grace," &c. (*A. W. Snape, M.A.*)

The devil's devices :—I. TO OCCUPY OUR MINDS WITH WORLDLY THINGS, SO THAT NO TIME MAY BE LEFT TO CARE FOR OUR SOULS. II. TO DISCOURAGE THOSE WHO SHOW ANY DISPOSITION TO DO RIGHT. III. TO MISREPRESENT RELIGION ITSELF. IV. TO MAKE USE OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF SCIENCE TO FURTHER HIS OWN PURPOSES. Hence the idea that there is no limit to human investigations; that the utterances of reason are supreme; that faith in the unseen is but the pitiable weakness of superstition and ignorance. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*)

Satan's devices :—The justice of God in suffering us to be

tempted is vindicated from the following considerations—that we are here in a state of disorder; that He has promised not to suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, and not only so, but to him that overcometh He will give a crown of life. As to the first question, what time of life? I answer, we must expect to be tempted by him, in some degree or other, all our lives long. Second, point out some of those devices which Satan generally makes use of at our first conversion, in order to get an advantage over us. 1. First device I shall mention, which Satan makes use of, is to drive us to despair. 2. A second device that Satan generally makes use of to get an advantage over young converts is to tempt them to presume or to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. 3. A third device I shall mention which Satan generally makes use of, “to get an advantage over us,” is, to tempt us to uneasiness and to have hard thoughts of God, when we are dead and barren in prayer. 4. Fourth device I am going to mention—his troubling you with blasphemous, profane, unbelieving thoughts, and sometimes to such a degree that they are as tormenting as the rack. 5. Fifth I shall mention, which is not the least, tempting us by our carnal friends and relations. 6. Sixth device, which is as dangerous as any of the former, by not tempting us at all, or, rather, by withdrawing himself for a while in order to come upon us at an hour when we think not of it. (*G. Whitfield, M.A.*) *Satan's devices* :—The important words in the text are of the same root—“Satan is very knowing, and always on the alert to get the better of us; but we are not without knowledge of his knowing ways.” It was Paul's acquaintance with the wiles of the devil which made him anxious to see the restoration of the penitent sinner duly carried through. I. A SCANDAL IN THE CHURCH GIVES THE DEVIL AN OPPORTUNITY. When a Christian falls into open sin it is a chance offered to the enemy which he is not slow to improve. He uses it to discredit the very name of Christ; to turn that which ought to be the symbol of the purest goodness into a synonym of hypocrisy. Christ has committed His honour to our keeping, and every lapse into vice gives Satan an advantage over Him. II. THE DEVIL FINDS HIS GAIN IN THE INCOMPETENCE OF THE CHURCH TO DEAL WITH EVIL IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. It is a fine thing for him if he can drive the convicted sinner to despair, and if he can prompt those who know little of God's love to implacability. If the disciples of Him who received sinners look askance on the lapsed and chill their hope of restoration, there will be joy over it, not in heaven but in hell. And not only this, but the opposite is a device of the devil of which we ought not to be ignorant. There is hardly a sin which some one has not an interest in extenuating. Even the incestuous person had his defenders who gloried in what he had done as an assertion of Christian liberty. The devil takes advantage of Church scandals to bribe and debauch men's consciences; indulgent words are spoken, which are not the voice of Christ's awful mercy, but of a miserable self-pity, and could any one imagine what would suit the devil better than the absolutely unfeeling but extremely interesting gossip which resounds over every exposure of sin? III. THE DEVIL FINDS HIS ADVANTAGE IN THE DISSENSIONS OF CHRISTIANS. What an opportunity he would have had in Corinth had strained relations continued between the apostle and the Church! What opportunities he has everywhere, when tempers are on edge, and every movement means friction, and every proposal rouses suspicion! The last prayer of Christ was that all His disciples might be one; to be one in Him is the final security against the devices of Satan. What a frightful commentary the history of the Church is on this prayer. It is giving ourselves away to the enemy, if we do not at all costs, “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

Vers. 12–17. Furthermore, when I came to Troas.—*The effect of the gospel ministry* :—I. THE WORK WHICH THE MINISTER UNDERTAKES. “I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel”; “God maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us”; “For we are not as many which corrupt the Word of God.” According, then, to the apostle, the minister's work consists in the faithful exposition of that Word which contains the knowledge of Christ's gospel. In nature we mark the footprints of the Creator, but God's Word gives us the marvellous embodiment of His providential and redemptive thoughts. II. THE INFLUENCE HE EXERTS (vers. 15, 16). Relationship increases responsibility. Who can define the responsibility of the parent? The teacher also assumes mighty responsibilities. III. THE SOURCE OF THE MINISTER'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR HIS WORK. “He causeth us to triumph in Christ.” (*T. Moir, M.A.*)

Vers. 14-16. Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.—*God's triumph and Paul's*.—The authorised translation at first sight strikes us as most suitable. Practically Paul had been engaged in a conflict with the Corinthians, and for a time it seemed not improbable that he might be beaten; but God caused him to triumph in Christ—*i.e.*, acting in Christ's interests, in matters in which Christ's name and honour were at stake, the victory, as always, had remained with him. But there can be little doubt that the Revisers were right in translating "leadeth us in triumph." The triumph is God's, not the apostle's. Paul is not the soldier who wins the battle and shouts for victory as he marches in the triumphal procession; he is the captive who is led in the conqueror's train, and in whom men see the trophy of the conqueror's power. When he says that God always leads him in triumph *in Christ*, the meaning is not perfectly obvious. He may intend to define, as it were, the area over which God's victory extends. In everything which is covered by the name and authority of Christ, God triumphantly asserts His power over the apostle. Or he may mean that it is through Christ that God's victorious power is put forth. These two meanings, of course, are not inconsistent, and practically they coincide. It cannot be denied, I think, if this is taken rigorously, that there is a certain air of irrelevance about it. It does not seem to be the purpose of the passage to say that God always triumphs over Paul and those for whom he speaks, or even that He always leads them in triumph. It is this feeling which mainly influences those who keep to A.V., and regard Paul as the victor. But the meaning of the original is not really open to doubt, and the semblance of the irrelevance disappears if we remember that we are dealing with a figure, and a figure which the apostle himself does not press. Of course, in an ordinary triumph, such as that of Claudius over Caractacus, of which Paul may easily have heard, the captives had no share in the victory; it was not only a victory over them, but against them. But when God wins a victory over man, and leads his captive in triumph, the captive too has an interest in what happens; it is the beginning of all triumphs, in any true sense, for him. If we apply this to the case before us, we shall see that the true meaning is not irrelevant. Paul had once been the enemy of God in Christ; he had fought against Him in his own soul, and in the Church which he persecuted and wasted. The battle had been long and strong, but not far from Damascus it had terminated in a mighty victory for God. There the mighty man fell, and the weapons of his warfare perished. His pride, his self-righteousness, his sense of superiority to others and of competence to attain to the righteousness of God, collapsed for ever, and he rose from the earth to be the slave of Jesus Christ. That was the beginning of God's triumph over him; from that hour God led him in triumph in Christ. But it was the beginning also of all that made the apostle's life itself a triumph—not a career of hopeless internal strife, such as it had been, but of unbroken Christian victory. So the only triumphs we can ever have, deserving the name, must begin with Christ's triumph over us. This is the one possible source of joy untroubled. We may be as selfish as we please, and as successful in our selfishness; we may distance all our rivals in the race for the world's prizes; we may appropriate and engross pleasure, wealth, knowledge, influence; and after all there will be one thing we must do without—the power and happiness of thanking God. No one will ever be able to thank God because he has succeeded in pleasing himself, be the mode of his self-pleasing as respectable as you will; and he who has not thanked God with a whole heart, without misgiving or reserve, does not know what joy is. Such thanksgiving and its joy have one condition: they rise up spontaneously in the soul when it allows God to triumph over it. When God appears in Christ, when, in the omnipotence of His love and purity and truth, He makes war on our pride and falsehood and lusts, and prevails against them, and brings us low, then we are admitted to the secret of this apparently perplexing passage; we know how natural it is to cry, "Thanks be unto God, who in His victory over us giveth us the victory! Thanks be to Him who always leadeth us in triumph!" It is out of an experience like this that Paul speaks; it is the key to his whole life, and it has been illustrated anew by what has just happened at Corinth. (*J. Denney, B.D.*) *The triumph of the Christian minister*.—The immediate occasion of St. Paul's expressing this sentiment was the glad tidings which he had received of the Church at Corinth, together with the door opened to him of the Lord at Troas. I. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S TRIUMPH. 1. The idea of a triumph implies that there has been a conquest achieved; surely the success of the gospel of Christ has now, as well as in the days of St. Paul, the best title to this

distinction. We have not now, indeed, like the apostles, to resist the authority of learning and rank, but we have still the ignorant and obdurate heart of man to conquer; we have still to cope with the love of the world, the dominion of passion, and the force of evil customs; we have still to subdue the pride and presumption of men, and to induce them to be saved by faith in the death and sacrifice of Christ. The drunkard is to be made sober, the unjust righteous. And is there no triumph in accomplishing this? 2. We admit, indeed, that to the eye of sense there appears no splendour in achieving these victories. 3. But still, to the eye of piety and faith, there was, amidst all, a triumph. The very external ignominy, sufferings, and infirmities of the apostle, contrasted with the effects of his preaching on the hearts and lives of men, would only the more illustrate the surprising victory of the grace of God. 4. And in cases of remarkable revivals of religion, when the Word of God runs more rapidly and is glorified, may not the language of the text be applied in a still more full and appropriate sense? Is not this a magnificent triumph? 5. This triumph is described in the text to be in Christ, and that because it is gained entirely by His grace. It is not natural reason or the power or skill of the minister which can change a single heart. 6. It is also in Him because it is gained by His doctrine, and by that only. It is not by enticing words of man's wisdom, but by plainly exhibiting the simple truths of redemption, that men are converted unto God. 7. It is likewise a triumph in Christ because it is effected by the means of God's appointment; not by force or persecution, but by a holy example and continual efforts and affectionate warnings and invitations addressed to the heart. 8. How superior is this triumph to every other! II. THE SPECIAL BLESSINGS WHICH THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER COMMUNICATES. "And maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." There is always a proportion in the Holy Scripture between the description and the importance of the thing described. No triumph, no glorying is spoken of, except the occasion justly demands it. Thus, wherever the spiritual triumph of the apostle advanced, the knowledge of Christ, like a reviving odour, was diffused around, and men were refreshed and invigorated. 1. The knowledge of Christ is the leading blessing which the gospel confers. Other truths may be necessary as introductory to it or consequent upon it, but Christ, as the Saviour of sinners, is the basis and the substance of Christian doctrine. 2. The knowledge of Christ, strictly taken, more immediately regards the Divine person and grace of Jesus Christ, His glory as the eternal, incommunicable Word, His incarnation for our redemption, His obedience, sufferings, and death. 3. But who can describe fitly the savour of this knowledge? The mystery of redemption is not a cold abstract truth, like a subtle question in metaphysics, an obscure point in chronology, or a probable fact in history. It is something infinitely greater and more interesting than all these. There is, therefore, a savour, a fragrance, an unction, so to speak, in the knowledge of Christ. These expressions imply something of delight and refreshment in the doctrine of the Saviour which it is difficult adequately to describe. As a proof of this, ask only the guilty and self-condemned penitent. He will tell you there was a savour in the knowledge of Christ which no words can express. Inquire, again, of the afflicted, tempted, and perplexed Christian. He will rejoice to acknowledge, because he will have deeply felt, its unspeakable blessedness. Or ask the expiring Christian, as he lies on the bed of death. The name of Christ is to such persons as a reviving fragrance to the faint. This language may be regarded as tinged with enthusiasm. We admit that the corrupt moral taste of men who have never so repented of sin as to abhor it, and therefore have never comprehended this doctrine aright, can find no sweetness or refreshment in it; but the holy and enlightened mind is not to be measured by the low, defective standard which is adapted to the sensual and immoral. Thus, in natural things, disease, it is true, may vitiate the organs, and the most exquisite perfumes may become in such cases offensive. III. THE GRATITUDE WHICH THE APOSTLE OFFERS TO GOD FOR THIS TRIUMPH. The language of the text is that of impassioned transport—"Now thanks be unto God," &c. God, in the dispensation of His grace, uses such instruments as may best illustrate His own glory. And, indeed, if the Roman conqueror in his triumph is said to have deposited his golden crown in the lap of Jupiter when he arrived at the Capitol, and to have dedicated to him a part of the spoils which he had won, much more should the apostle of Christ cast his crown at the feet of his gracious Saviour, and devote all his acquisitions to His honour. The moment the minister of Christ, unfaithful to his trust, begins to glory in himself, and to ascribe his success to the might of his own power, he may expect to be deserted by His Lord. In comparison with such a triumph he will think

nothing of his labours and anxieties. 1. Let us inquire, in the first place, whether we have indeed for ourselves obeyed the gospel of Christ. Have we considered the gospel in the manner in which the text represents it? Have we understood the triumph connected with it? Have we received the knowledge of Christ which it exhibits? 2. But, further, if, as I trust is the case with many of us, we have obeyed the gospel, let us inquire whether we are habitually acting agreeably to it. Are the effects of the victory evident? (*D. Wilson, M.A.*) *Gratitude presented*.—“Now thanks be to God.” These thanksgivings should be—1. Ardent. 2. Constant. 3. Practical. 4. Indispensable to our happiness. 5. These thanksgivings will be eternal. Hence these thanksgivings are—1. Spiritual. 2. Public. 3. Private. 4. Costly. 5. Fiducial. 6. And Scriptural and holy. (*T. B. Baker.*) *The triumphal procession of the Christ*.—The Revised Version correctly alters the translation into “Thanks be unto God, which always *leadeth us in triumph in Christ.*” Paul thinks of himself and of his coadjutors in Christian work as being conquered captives, made to follow their Conqueror and to swell His triumph. He is thankful to be so overcome. What was deepest degradation is to him supreme honour. “He maketh manifest”—that is, visible—the savour of His knowledge. From a heart kindled by the flame of the Divine love there will go up the odour of a holy life.

I. FIRST, THEN, LET US LOOK AT THAT THOUGHT OF ALL CHRISTIANS BEING IN THE TRUEST SENSE CONQUERED CAPTIVES, BOUND TO THE CHARIOT WHEELS OF ONE WHO HAS OVERCOME THEM. The image implies prior state of hostility and alienation. Paul is speaking about himself here; he says, “I was an enemy, and I have been conquered.” What sort of an enemy was he? Well, he says that before he became a Christian he lived a pure, virtuous, respectable life. He was a man. “as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” His conscience acquitted him of wrong, and yet he says, “Notwithstanding all that, I was an enemy.” Why? Because the retrospect let him see that his life was barren of the deepest faith and the purest love. That is the basis of the representation of my text. It suggests the wonderful struggle and victory of weaponless love. As was said about the first Christian emperor, so it may be said about the great Emperor in the heavens, “*In hoc signo vinces*” (“By this sign thou shalt conquer!”). For His only weapon is the Cross of His Son, and He fights only by the manifestation of infinite love, sacrifice, suffering, and pity. He conquers as the sun conquers the thick-ribbed ice by raying down its heat upon it, and melting it into sweet water. And what more does this first part of my text say to us? It tells us, too, of the true submission of the conquered captive. This picture of the triumph comes with a solemn appeal to every professing Christian. Think of these men, dragged at the conqueror’s chariot-wheels, abject, with their weapons broken, with their resistance quelled, chained, haled away from their own land, dependent for life or death on the caprice of the general that rode before them there. It is a picture of what you Christian men and women are bound to be if you believe that God in Christ has loved you. If we are thus won by infinite love, and not our own, but bought with a price, no conquered king, dragged at an emperor’s chariot-wheels, was ever half as absolutely bound to be his slave, and to live or die by his breath, as you are bound to your Master. II. Now we have here, as part of the ideal of the Christian life, THE CONQUERED CAPTIVES PARTAKING IN THE TRIUMPH OF THEIR GENERAL. Two groups made up the triumphal procession—the one that of the soldiers who had fought for, the other that of the prisoners who had fought against, the leader. And some commentators are inclined to believe that the apostle is here thinking of himself and his fellows as belonging to the conquering army, and not to the conquered enemy. But be that as it may, it suggests to us this thought—that they who are conquered foes become conquering allies. Or, to put it into other words, to be triumphed over by Christ is to triumph with Christ. We may illustrate that thought—that to be triumphed over by Christ is to triumph with Christ—by such considerations as these. This submission, abject and unconditional, extending to life and death, is but another name for liberty. The man who is absolutely dependent upon Jesus Christ is absolutely independent of everything and everybody besides, himself included. If you give yourselves up to Jesus Christ, in the measure in which you give yourselves up to Him you will be set at liberty from the worst of all slaveries—that is, the slavery of your own will and your own weakness, and your own tastes and fancies. You will be set at liberty from the dependence upon men, from thinking about their opinion. You will be set at liberty from your dependence upon externals, from feeling as if you could not live unless you had this, that, or the other person or thing. If you have Christ for your Master you

will be the masters of the world, and of time and sense and men and all besides; and so, being triumphed over by Him, you will share in His triumph. And, again, we may illustrate the same principle in yet another way. Such absolute submission of will and love is the highest honour of a man. It was a degradation to be dragged at the chariot-wheels of conquering general. But it is the highest ennobling of humanity that it shall lay itself down at Christ's feet, and let Him put His foot upon its neck. And the same thought may be yet further illustrated. That submission so unites us to our Lord that we share in all that belongs to Him, and thus partake in His triumph. III. Lastly, a further picture of the ideal of the Christian life is set before us here in the thought of THESE CONQUERED CAPTIVES BEING LED AS THE TROPHIES AND THE WITNESSES OF HIS OVERCOMING POWER. That idea is suggested by both halves of our verse. Both the emblem of the apostle as marching in the triumphal procession, and the emblem of the apostle as yielding from his burning heart the fragrant visible odour of the ascending incense, convey the same idea—viz., that one great purpose which Jesus Christ has in conquering men for Himself is that from them may go forth the witness of His power and the knowledge of His name. First, the fact that Jesus Christ, by His Cross and Passion, is able to conquer men's will, and to bind men's hearts to Him, is the highest proof of His power. It is an entirely unique thing in the history of the world. It stands as an unique fact in the history of the world that from Christ of Nazareth there rays out through all the ages the spiritual power which absolutely takes possession of men, dominates them, and turns them into His organs and instruments. Christ leads through the world the train of His captives, the evidence of His conquests. And then, further, let me remind you that out of this representation there comes a very solemn suggestion of duty for us Christian people. We are bound to live, setting forth whose we are, and what He has done for us. Still further, Paul's thanksgiving teaches us that we should be thankful for all opportunities of doing such work. So it comes to be a very solemn question for us—What part are we playing in that great triumphal procession? We are all of us marching at His chariot-wheels, whether we know it or not. But there were two sets of people in the old triumph. There were those who were conquered by force and unconquered in heart, and out of their eyes gleamed unquenchable malice and hatred, though their weapons were broken and their arms fettered. And there were those who, having yielded to become His soldiers, shared in His triumph and rejoiced in His rule. Which of the two parts of the procession do you belong to? The one live, the other perish. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The triumph of the gospel:—*

I. THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL BY THE APOSTLES. They were triumphs—1. Of truth over error. 2. Over persecution. 3. Over principles which dissocialised and oppressed society. I select one—selfishness. (1) See how this fatal principle operated among the heathen. Look at—(a) Their poor. They had no almshouses or asylums. (b) Their slaves, whose number was almost incredible. No laws were enacted for their protection, for they were hardly considered human beings. (c) Their religion—no precepts of forgiveness or charity. (2) Now look at the triumphs of Christianity over selfishness. (a) The first general collection among the Gentile churches was for the relief of poor strangers. And I need not dwell upon the many affectionate precepts of our religion. (b) As to slavery, Christianity teaches, "As ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." And so, when Onesimus was converted, the apostle exhorted Philemon to receive him, "not now as a slave, but as a brother beloved." (c) Look at Christian charity. "If thy brother sin against thee seven times," &c.; "In malice be ye children." 4. In the salvation of men. This was its noblest triumph; and in this it triumphed "in every place." (1) Over the ignorance and obduracy of men (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25). (2) Over their gloomy apprehensions of futurity. Christ came to "deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (3) Over their vices (1 Cor. vi. 9-11). (4) Over death itself. II. THE AGENCY BY WHICH THEY WERE EFFECTED. All is ascribed to a Divine agency, which was marked—1. In the selection of the instruments. It belongs to God to send forth His labourers, and this supposes selection. There was the bold simplicity of Peter, the soft persuasiveness of John, the fire of Stephen, the pointed, searching, epigrammatic turn of James, the ardour, learning, and strength of Paul. "I clear the ground," says Luther, "and Melancthon scatters the seed." The learning and moderation of Cranmer, the judgment of Ridley, and the popular eloquence, the searching wit, and the downright honesty of Latimer, admirably qualified them to co-operate. The ordinary ministry. There are sons of thunder and sons of consolation, &c.

2. In their personal experience. The gospel triumphed over the early ministers of Christ before they triumphed over the world. So necessary is personal experience that neither preacher nor people can understand the gospel efficiently without it. Who can know what true repentance is but by his own brokenness of heart? Who can know what faith is but by the personal possession and exercise of that principle? In the same manner only can any man understand the nature of a holy walk with God, of spiritual conflicts, and the renewal of the heart. Here, then, was the agency of God. "He hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation." 3. In the effects produced—the salvation of men; and we need only fix upon the salvation of one individual to prove the direct agency of God. III. THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH ALL THIS IS EFFECTED: the preaching of the gospel; the manifestation of the odour of the knowledge of Christ. Odours, much used in the east, revived the languid and refreshed the weary in those hot climates, and hence they afforded a natural and elegant figure to express whatever was grateful and reviving to the mind. What, then, was there in the knowledge of Christ to warrant this representation of it? 1. Its authority. That which has no authority from God is not religion, properly speaking; but here comes a religion from God, stamped and sealed as such, visibly, and in sight of all. Behold, then, the reason of its reviving and grateful odour to "the saved." Want they truth? It is here assured to them; for what is from God is light, and no darkness at all. Inquire they for the will of their Maker? Here He had prescribed it Himself. Feel they the need of an atonement? Here God Himself had provided the Lamb for a burnt-offering. Need they the comfort of promises? Here they were found proceeding from lips which could not lie. Inquire they after future being? The resurrection and ascension of Christ had deprived death of its sting, and brought life and immortality to light. 2. Its adaptation. There was nothing here but what the case of man required, and there was everything that it did require. (*R. Watson.*) *The triumph of the gospel:—*

I. GOSPEL SUCCESSSES SET FORTH UNDER THE IMAGE OF A TRIUMPH. Paul's eye was resting upon a great future of moral conquest; truth making victorious way against all the powers that could oppose its progress. In this light let us investigate the fitness of the apostle's allusion. 1. Was not the first planting of Christianity a great triumph? The religion which Christianity had to overthrow was sanctioned by antiquity, supported by power, defended by talent, nourished by rank and influence, and loved by its votaries, by reason of the sanction it gave to their crimes. Yet all this magnificent system crumbled into dust before the mighty power of the gospel. 2. The gospel triumphed over bigotry and persecution and pride. Ten persecutions wasted the infant Church, yet it spread further and wider for the mighty desolation. 3. The gospel was victorious over the selfishness, oppression, and all the social miseries of the heathen. The heathen lived only to themselves; of blessing and benefiting others they had not the slightest notion. 4. The gospel won its victories over the spiritual wretchedness of the heathen, over their gloomy apprehensions of futurity, over the wretched feeling of moral alienation. II. THE AGENCY BY WHICH THESE TRIUMPHS WERE ACHIEVED. 1. The originating cause is manifestly God Himself. Not "thanks" to ministers, that they preach so zealously; to the people, that they hear so willingly; but unto God, which hath put such a victorious energy into His Word. In nothing does the apostle's humility shine more beautifully than in this. And if we look at the nature of conversion we must see in it a Divine agency. We need not take the case of a continent or of a city; enough that we take the instance of one solitary soul. For what is the condition of that soul by nature? What are the moral requirements to be found in us before the gospel can triumph over our natural reluctance, and the savour of the knowledge of Christ be made manifest to our souls? Is it intellectual light only that a man wants? If it be, then Paul or Apollos were of themselves adequate to the task. But the unconverted soul wants changed affections; it wants to have its carnal enmity destroyed; it wants to have all its inborn antipathies transformed into the love of God; and all this is to be accomplished, "not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." 2. Though God is the sole and efficient cause of all missionary triumphs, He disdains not to employ under Him secondary and subordinate agencies. III. THE OUTWARD MEANS BY WHICH THESE GOSPEL TRIUMPHS ARE TO BE ACHIEVED. The image suggests how grateful it is to men once fainting under the apprehension of deserved condemnation, and weary with attempts to make a righteousness for themselves, to have their eyes opened to a knowledge of Christ and all the abounding consolation of His gospel. Once they

were blind, now they see; once they were under bondage and fear, now they have a good conscience; once they were "children of the wicked one," now are they "the sons of God." (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The course of truth*:—I. THE GLORIOUS PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL IN APOSTOLIC TIMES. 1. It was triumphant. The apostle did not find the hearts of men easy of access, so that he had but to enter and take possession. 2. It was intelligent. The apostles did not go forth demanding a blind and unquestioning acquiescence. The progress of the gospel was victory over darkness and ignorance; the victory, not of the secular sword, but of the sacred pen and the tongue of fire. 3. It was constant. "Always causeth us to triumph," "in every place." Sometimes it seemed doubtful which would win, truth or error; but it soon became decided that faith was the stronger, that more was with it than all that could be against it. 4. It was beneficent. The march of the army of King Jesus was not like the march of the conquering armies of Greece and Rome. II. THE GLORIOUS SECRET OF THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL IN APOSTOLIC TIMES. "Now thanks be unto God," &c. 1. The apostle acknowledged that God was the author of the progress. He felt it was with God that he had to do. 2. The apostle acknowledged that Christ was the agent of the progress. "Triumph in Christ." Jesus had been the agent in the great work of human redemption. 3. The apostle acknowledged that man was the instrument of the progress. "Causeth us to triumph"; "By us in every place." What a wonderful blending of workers—"God," "Christ," "us"—the union of Divine power and human instrumentality! Apostles did not originate the gospel, they received it. Let every Christian worker learn from this the source and secret of success in the work of the Lord. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The ministry of the gospel*:—I. THE ABSOLUTE OR REAL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL. 1. What anything is, is determined by what it is to God. Things are to us what we are to them. Light is most pleasant to the healthful eye, but nothing is more pernicious when it is diseased; food, in certain conditions of the body, will be as prejudicial as poison, and poison as beneficial as food. And there are who "call evil good and good evil," &c. And, similarly, God is to us what we are to Him. 2. In itself the gospel is God's spell, a message from God possessed of a charm. He that hath ears to hear it will be won by it; but "the wicked, who are like the deaf adder, will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely." In the gospel God appears in all the attractive attributes of His grace, that He may regain the alienated affections of His rebellious children. 3. It was not only declared by, but embodied in, Jesus, who was "set forth" to reveal the Father in His relations to a sinful world. Apart from Christ, man has no true knowledge of God, and is "without hope." In Christ God is personally manifested and personally present. His message in the gospel is embodied in His messenger. Christ not only proclaims, but is the gospel. "His name is as perfume poured forth"—the diffusion of "the sweet savour of the knowledge of God." 4. He is this because He is the manifestation of that which is the very soul of personality—Love. In the wide circumference of things God has gone forth in the division of His powers, but in Christ His deep central unity appears—His love. He who possesses the love of another possesses that other. "God is Love," and the gospel is its complete display. 5. The gospel also reveals the depth of love in its wisdom. There is nothing so wise as love. God is "the only wise God," because He is Love. The restoration of alienated man is the problem in the solution of which the love of God displays the marvellous resources of its wisdom. In the gospel the practical intelligence of the Divine love makes such a display of the Divine character that it appeals to all the influential motives operative on man's nature, so that, if he is not won by it, he is left "without excuse," and God is left to lament, "What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?" &c. "O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered," &c. 6. The gospel also taxes to the utmost the resources of the Divine love and wisdom combined. Love takes counsel of wisdom how to make the most effective appeal to the sinner's heart, and wisdom calls upon love for that winning display of the Divine goodness which looks upon the sinner with mercy whilst it exercises vengeance on his sin. It was with tears Christ pronounced the doom of Jerusalem. Mercy is that look of wisdom and love which pities where righteousness blames. 7. But the gospel is also the display of mercy in its deepest agony of effort! It is the Divine tragedy in which "the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep," in which sin is judged, condemned, and slain, and the sinner justified, liberated, and restored. (1) No wonder Paul felt the proclamation of its glad tidings to be the celebration of a triumph of God. The angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest," as the preface

to their song of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men." (2) And no wonder that preachers of this gospel "were unto God a sweet savour of Christ." What can be so pleasant to love as that of being made known? What so fragrant to God as the diffusion of the sweet mystery of the Cross, "to the intent that now unto principalities and powers," &c. And just as the scattered flowers, fragrant shrubs, and sweet incense breathed forth a perfume of sweet savour before the advancing ranks in the triumphal procession, irrespective of its effects on victor and vanquished, so, irrespective of its consequences with respect to those who hear the gospel, the ministry of its glad tidings is unto God the diffusion of a sweet savour. II. ITS CRITICAL INFLUENCE AS SEEN IN ITS OPPOSITE EFFECTS ON THOSE TO WHOM IT IS PREACHED. The gospel embodies the wisdom and power of the Divine love in their endeavour to meet the requirements of man's sin, and is in itself perfectly adapted as the chosen body of truth to radiate the influence of the Holy Spirit, to awaken the mind, arouse the conscience, subdue the heart, and reform the whole nature. In it God appeals to us by motives which He knows to be influential, which exercise a constraining power on the thoughts, affections, and will, and in which "He is mighty to save." 2. The effect, therefore, on those who listen to it must be great. We cannot come under the ministry of the gospel and remain the same as we were before we heard it. It either subdues or hardens, alienates or reconciles, kills or cures. What it may be to us is dependent on the disposition we exercise towards it. We bring to it what determines its effect. The gospel changes not; it is always, in itself considered, "the power of God unto salvation"; but its effects on us vary with our varying dispositions. To those who seek peace God is a "God of peace," but to those who strive with Him "He is a man of war." 3. "To the one we are the savour of life unto life." The ministry of the grace of God in Christ is the breathing forth of a spiritual essence fragrant with life. It has the power of life; of the sweetness, joy, beauty of life. 4. To the other the "savour of death unto death." Paul felt acutely that he could not be the minister of the word of life to men without increasing their responsibility. For in proportion to its quickening power of life in those who receive it does it work death in those who refuse to accept it. Just as the balmy, life-giving breezes of spring bring life to the constitutionally sound, but death to those radically diseased, so is it with the gospel. To some it is life to hear it, to others "death unto death"—the death of indifference to the death of obduracy; the death of ignorance and darkness to that of light and knowledge having become darkness; the death of hopelessness to that of despair. The height of privilege bestowed upon man in the offer of the gospel is antithetic to the depth of ignominy which its rejection involves. (*W. Pulsford, D.D.*) *The minister's manifesto* :—I. THE MINISTRY IN ITS RELATION TO GOD. 1. It is "of God." (1) As having been instituted by Him. (2) Because He called men specially to occupy it. 2. It is under the special inspection of God. "In the sight of God speak we in Christ." Feeling this, Paul was particularly careful—(1) Not to corrupt or adulterate the Word of God, to "make merchandise" of it—*i.e.*, to make it more marketable by a little politic admixture of things more to the taste of the people. (2) To be himself actuated in his work by the purest motives. "But as of sincerity." This sincerity applies to the preacher just as the incorruptibility applies to the gospel. Here, then, we have a pure preacher and a pure gospel. 3. It will be approved of God, whatever be its effects upon men (ver. 15). "Sweet savour" always indicates approval. This is the expression generally used to denote the acceptableness of an offering. II. THE DIFFERENT EFFECTS OF THIS MINISTRY UPON MEN (ver. 16). 1. To the saved—life. The savour of life means that which produces life and nurtures it. 2. To the lost or perishing—death (chap. iv. 3; 1 Pet. iii. 7, 8). There are certain conditions pertaining to certain men which convert the means of life into an instrument of death. The sun, which converts the generous soil into a fruitful garden, reduces the clay to the hardness of a stone. So is it morally, only with a great difference. The clay is not responsible, but men are responsible. One thing, then, is clear—no one will escape without some effects from the ministry. What is there more beautiful than the sunbeams? Yet there are some objects which can convert them into a consuming fire. So there are moral characters which transform the loving, life-giving gospel into an instrument of destruction; in short, cause the God of love to become to them a consuming fire. III. THE DEMAND OF THE MINISTRY UPON THE MINISTER. 1. The unspeakably solemn character of the results of the ministry demands the gravest and most prayerful thought, and the greatest anxiety for the salvation of souls. Note, for example, the surgeon when performing some critical surgical operation that might be for life or death to the patient. So

careful and deeply anxious is he that he will not operate except in association with others. The preaching of the gospel is an inexpressibly solemn operation that may affect men for weal or for woe to eternity. And, knowing this, how natural to ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" 2. But this sense of insufficiency ought not to be confounded with helplessness; on the contrary, it makes a minister all the more strenuous and unsparing in applying his entire energies to the work (Col. i. 29).

IV. THE MINISTRY'S ENCOURAGEMENTS AND SOURCE OF CONFIDENCE (ver. 14). Whatever be the difficulties of the work, however great our fears and deep our sense of insufficiency, over against them we have God assuring us the victory. Through God the gospel is always having the victory. Much as it has been opposed and persecuted, yet God has always caused it to triumph. (*A. J. Parry.*) **And maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place.**—*The savour of Divine knowledge*:—The expression was suggested by the figure of the triumph which was present to his mind in all its details. Incense smoked on every altar as the victors passed through the streets of Rome; the fragrant steam floated over the procession, a silent proclamation of victory and joy. So the knowledge of Christ, the apostle tells us, was a fragrant thing. True, he was not a free man, but Christ's captive. Necessity was laid upon him, but what a gracious necessity it was! "The love of Christ constraineth us." The Roman captives made manifest the knowledge of their conqueror; they declared to all his power; there was nothing in that knowledge to suggest the idea of fragrance. But as Paul moved through the world, all who had eyes to see saw in him, not only the power, but the sweetness of God's redeeming love. The mighty Victor made manifest through him, not only His might, but His charm; not only His greatness, but His grace. It was a good thing men felt to be subdued and led in triumph like Paul; it was to move in an atmosphere perfumed by the love of Christ, as the air around the Roman conqueror was perfumed with incense. "Savour," in connection with the "knowledge" of God in Christ, has its most direct application, of course, to preaching. When we proclaim the gospel, do we always succeed in manifesting it as a savour? Or is not the savour—the sweetness and charm of it—the very thing that is left out? We miss what is most characteristic in the knowledge of God if we miss this. We leave out the very element which makes the gospel evangelic, and gives it its power to subdue and enchain the souls of men. But, wherever Christ is leading a single soul in triumph, the fragrance of the gospel goes forth in proportion as His triumph is complete. There is sure to be that in the life which will reveal the graciousness, as well as the omnipotence, of the Saviour. And it is this virtue which God uses as His main witness, His chief instrument, to evangelise the world. In every relation of life it should tell. Nothing is so insuppressible, so pervasive, as fragrance. The lowliest life which Christ is really leading in triumph will speak infallibly and pervasively for Him. (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish.**—*Dissimilar effects of the same thing*:—Consider the totally different effects which the same thing has on different people. An act, simple in itself, will rouse the joys of one and the rage of another. A substance which is food to one man is poison to another. The same medicine which effects a cure in one case will in a similar case in another man aggravate the malady and enhance his sufferings. Look again at the effects of the tempest on creation. A large number of the existences on the globe are terrified. But the seals love above all the tempest, the roaring of the waves, the whistling of the wind, the mighty voice of the thunder, and the vivid flashings of the lightning. They delight to see, rolling along in a sombre sky, the great black clouds which predict torrents of rain. Then it is that they leave the sea in crowds and come and play about on the shore, in the midst of the fury of the elements. They are at home in the tempests. It is in these crises of nature that they give full play to all their faculties, and to all the activity of which they are capable. When the weather is fine and the rest of creation is full of enjoyment they fall asleep, and resign themselves lazily to the *dolce far niente*. (*Scientific Illustrations and Symbols.*) *The fragrance of Christian life*:—The life of every Christian should be like the fragrant breeze which, in tropical waters, tells the mariner, while still far out at sea, that the land from which it comes is a land of pleasant forests and gardens, where "the spices flow forth." It should testify, truthfully and clearly, of the sweetness and grace of heaven. (*R. Johnstone, LL.B.*) *Gospel a savour to God in them that perish.* Round about the very perdition of the impenitent there is a circle and influences

and associations that are acceptable to God. If you have lost a child by death, you know what a satisfaction it is to you to remember that all the medical skill that money could command was brought to bear, all that kind and unceasing ministrations of tenderness could do to save the precious life was done. Friends were hour by hour coming to the door ready to help, to sympathise, to pray; by and by thoughts of these things became a great solace to you, and you could bow yourself to the inevitable. Your life might have been shadowed to the very end, if there had been carelessness, neglect, indifference at any single point; if friends had been slow to help, advise, condole; if expedients for the salvation of the child could have been afterwards devised that you never thought of at the time. And so with God, as He looks upon the second death of those created in His own image. There is no sting of regretful reflection. The possible was done to its very last detail. All is quiet contentment and satisfaction. God did more than He had ever done for His universe before. The Son thought no sacrifice too great. The servants and disciples of the Son forgot all thoughts of self in their endeavours to save men. The perdition of the impenitent man is a terrible fact, but round about that fact there ever gather unselfish ministries and services upon which God looks with contentment, and which maintain the unbroken tenor of His blessedness. (*T. G. Selby.*) *God glorified in the preaching of the gospel*:—If you consult the Acts of the Apostles, you will perceive that St. Paul's course, as a preacher of Christianity, was very diversified; that in some places he rapidly formed a flourishing Church, while in others he encountered fierce persecution, or could make little or no impression on the reigning idolatry. It is very remarkable that, although defeat was thus mingled with success, the apostle could nevertheless break into the exclamation, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." You would think from his tone that he had only to enter a city and its idols trembled and falsehood gave place to truth. There is no great difficulty in understanding what St. Paul means when he describes himself and his fellow-labourers as being "unto God a sweetsavour of Christ." He alludes to a notion common among the heathen, that God was pleased with the smoke which ascended from the sacrifice burnt on His altars. Indeed, the Scriptures frequently speak of Jehovah in language borrowed from this prevalent opinion. Thus when the waters of the Deluge had subsided, and Noah standing on a baptized earth, had offered burnt-offerings of every clean beast and fowl, we read—"And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." When, therefore, St. Paul speaks of a "sweet savour of Christ," we should understand him as referring to the acceptableness of the sacrifice of Christ, and to its prevalence with God as a propitiatory offering. And when he speaks of preaching as being "unto God a sweet savour of Christ," he means that by setting forth the sacrifice and causing it to be known, he was instrumental in bringing to God more and more of that glory which arises from the sin-offering which He provided for the world. He knew that he preached the gospel to many who would perish, as well as to many who would be saved; but, nevertheless, he would not admit that in any case he preached in vain. He contended, on the contrary, that wherever the sacrifice of Christ was made known, there ascended fragrant incense unto God; that God obtained honour from the display of His attributes, whether men received or whether they rejected the Redeemer. Now, we may observe to you, of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it is a revelation of all which is most illustrious in God-head, and of all that as sinful creatures we are most concerned in ascertaining. It is a revelation of those attributes and properties of God which natural theology could but dimly conjecture, or which it could not at all satisfactorily combine. He would not allow that it could at all depend upon the reception with which the gospel may meet, whether or not God could be glorified by its publication. Why should it? Suppose it were the pleasure of the Almighty to give some new and striking exhibition of His existence and majesty to a people that had been indifferent to those previously and uniformly furnished; suppose that the vault of heaven were to be spangled with fresh characters of the handwriting of the everlasting God, far outshining in their brilliancy and beauty the already magnificent tracery of a thousand constellations, would not God have splendidly shown forth His being and His power? Would He not have given such a demonstration of His greatness as must triumphantly contribute to His own glory, even if the people for whose sake the overhead canopy had been thus gorgeously decked were to close their eyes against it. We read, that when God rested from the work of creation, He saw everything that He had made, and He

beheld that it was very good; and He surveyed His own work with unspeakable pleasure. He saw, He knew it to be good; and if no anthem of lofty gratulation had ascended to His throne from intelligent creatures, He would have reposed in majestic contentment in His vast performances, and have felt Himself so praised in His deeds, that neither angel nor man could break the mighty chorus. And why should we not hold the same in regard of the gospel? We may acknowledge or despise a manifestation of God; but this is the utmost we have in our power; we cannot obscure that manifestation; we cannot despoil it of one of its beams. But St. Paul wished to put his meaning somewhat more explicitly, and therefore he went on to speak of two separate classes, or to show with greater precision how his position held good in regard equally of the saved and the lost. To the one, saith he, "we are a savour of death unto death," to the other "a savour of life unto life." We do not think it necessary to speak at any length of the preacher as a "savour of life unto life," to those who flee at his warning from the wrath which is to come. But what are we to say to the preacher being "a savour of death unto death" to those who perish in their sins? It is implied in such saying, that the gospel did but in some way or another prove injurious—"a savour of death" unto those by whom it is heard and rejected; and, nevertheless, that this proclamation, even when thus injurious, brought glory to Christ, or contributed to the display of His perfections. Now, are these things so? Is the gospel indeed ever injurious to the hearer? and if injurious, can those who proclaim it be indeed unto God "a sweet savour of Christ"? Yes, the gospel may prove injurious to the hearer; but it cannot prove otherwise than glorious to its Author. You are not to think that the gospel can be a neutral thing, operating neither for evil nor for good. It is easy to come to regard that as an ordinary or unimportant thing, which is of such frequent occurrence, and to attach no solemn, no responsible character to these our weekly assemblings. But we have every warrant for asserting that the gospel which he is permitted to hear either improves a man or makes him worse, so that none of you can go away from God's house precisely what you were when you entered it. You have had a fresh call from God, and if you have again refused, you have made yourselves less accessible than ever to the message. There is a self-propagating power in all kinds of evil; and every resistance to God's Spirit, operating through the instrumentality of the Word, makes resistance easier. This is not the only case in which the gospel is "a savour of death unto death." It is so whenever men abuse Scripture doctrines, whenever they pervert them, whenever they wrest them to the giving encouragement to unrighteousness, or use them as an argument for procrastination. It was this view of the office of the preacher which extorted from the apostle those words, "Who is sufficient for these things?" We are sure that it ought to be perfectly overcoming to a man, to see himself with an office, in performing which he thus makes himself a witness against multitudes. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The two effects of the gospel:*—I. THE GOSPEL PRODUCES DIFFERENT EFFECTS. There is scarcely ever a good thing in the world of which some little evil is not the consequence. Let the sun pour down floods of light on the tropics, and the choicest fruits shall ripen, and the fairest flowers shall bloom, but who does not know that there the most venomous reptiles are also brought forth? So the gospel, although it is God's best gift. 1. The gospel is to some men "a savour of death unto death." (1) Many men are hardened in their sins by hearing it. Those who can dive deepest into sin, and have the most quiet consciences, are some who are to be found in God's own house. There are many who make even God's truth a stalking-horse for the devil, and abuse God's grace to palliate their sin. There is nothing more liable to lead men astray than a perverted gospel. A truth perverted is generally worse than a doctrine which all know to be false. (2) It will increase some men's damnation at the last great day. (a) Because men sin against greater light; and the light we have is an excellent measure of our guilt. What a Hottentot might do without a crime would be the greatest sin to me, because I am taught better. If he who is blind falls into the ditch we can pity him, but if a man with the light on his eye-balls dashes himself from the precipice and loses his own soul, is not pity out of the question? (b) It must increase your condemnation if you oppose the gospel. If God devises a scheme of mercy and man rises up against it, how great must be his sin! (3) It makes some men in this world more miserable than they would be. How happily could the libertine drive on his mad career, if he were not told, "The wages of sin is death, and after death the judgment!" The gospel is to others "a

savour of life unto life." (1) Here it confers spiritual life on the dead in trespasses and sins. (2) In heaven it issues in eternal life. II. THE MINISTER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS SUCCESS. He is responsible for what he preaches; he is accountable for his life and actions, but he is not responsible for other people. "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, as well in them that perish as in the saved." An ambassador is not responsible for the failure of his embassy of peace, nor a fisherman for the quantity of fish he catches, nor a sower for the harvest, but only for the faithful discharge of their respective duties. So the gospel minister is only responsible for the faithful delivery of his message, for the due lowering of the gospel net, for the industrious sowing of the gospel seed. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The opposite effects of the ministry of the gospel*:—In the language of the text we have a description of the very opposite effects of the ministry of the gospel, and of the consequences to which they lead. The same cloud which was dark to the Egyptians was bright to the Israelites. 1. As ministers, we are ordained to be unto God "a sweet savour of Christ," in duly administering His sacraments, faithfully preaching His gospel, and in exemplifying it in our conduct. 2. It is then, instrumentally, by our life and doctrine, that we must diffuse in our respective spheres of duty the savour of the knowledge of Christ. In doctrine we must show incorruptness, gravity, sincerity. 3. It is by our manner of life also that we must spread the savour of His name and truth among those who are within the sphere of our influence. (W. Chambers, D.D.) *The gospel ministry*:—I. ITS MANWARD ASPECT. Consider—1. Its vivifying influence. It produces new spiritual life in the souls of men. 2. Its deadly influence. There are principles which render it certain that the men who reject it will be injured by it. One is founded in eternal justice, and the other two in the moral constitution of man. (1) The greater the mercy abused the greater the condemnation. The Bible is full of this truth. "Unto whomsoever much is given," &c. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," &c. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin," &c. "And thou Capernaum," &c. "He that despised Moses' law," &c. (2) Man's susceptibility of virtuous impressions decreases in proportion to his resistance of them. (3) Man's moral suffering will always be increased in proportion to the consciousness he has that he once had the means of being happy. From these principles the gospel must prove "the savour of death unto death" to those who reject it. The hearing of the gospel puts a man on a new level in the universe. To have heard its accents is the most momentous fact in the history of man. Do you say you will hear it no more? But you have heard it. This is a fact which you will ever remember and feel. If the gospel does not save you, better you had never been born. II. ITS GODWARD ASPECT. In both cases, if we are true to it, "we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ." The true ministry is pleasing to God, whatever may be its results on humanity. If this be so, two inferences seem irresistible. 1. If the gospel ministry is in itself grateful to God, it must be in itself an institution for good, and for good exclusively. Never could an institution in itself calculated to deaden and destroy the soul of men be grateful to the heart of infinite love. (1) While the true gospel ministry saves by design, it destroys in spite of its design. That it is designed to save, who can doubt? "God so loved the world," &c. Men can, men do, pervert Divine things. Did God give steel to be brought into weapons for the destruction of human life? Did He give corn to be transmuted into a substance to drown the reason and to brutalise the man? No! But man, by his perverting power, turns God's blessings to an improper and pernicious use. So it is with the gospel. He wrests it to his own destruction. (2) The true gospel ministry saves by its inherent tendency; it injures in spite of that tendency. Is there anything in the doctrines, precepts, provisions, promises, and warnings, of the gospel adapted to destroy souls? Was the ocean made to injure man, because it has terrified many a mariner and engulfed many a barque? Was the sun created to injure man, because by leading to the discovery of the robber and the assassin, it has proved their ruin? Was food created to injure health, because by intemperance and gluttony, it has brought on disease and death? (3) That the gospel ministry saves by Divine agency; it destroys in spite of that agency. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." 2. If the gospel ministry is in itself grateful to God, it must be an institution from which a much larger amount of good than of evil will result. If greater evil resulted from it than good, I cannot believe that it would be grateful to infinite love. Remember—(1) That the rejection of the gospel does not make the hell of the rejector; it only modifies and aggravates it. As a sinner he would have found a hell, had the sound of the gospel never greeted his ears. (2) The restorative influence which the gospel ministry had already exerted upon the race. It has

swept from the world innumerable evils; it has planted institutions amongst us to mitigate human woe, abolish human oppression, heal human diseases, remove human ignorance, and correct human errors; and it has conducted millions to heaven. (3) That what the gospel has done is but a very small instalment of the good it is destined to achieve. It is to bless a nation in a day. There are millennial ages awaiting it, and in the coming centuries it will be found that the evil which the gospel ministry has occasioned is no more to be compared with the good which it will cause than the pain which the light of the sun gives to the few tender eyes, with the streams of blessedness it pours into every part of nature. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Savour of death or of life*.—In thought stand near those three crosses on Calvary, and see how near to each other are blessing and cursing. As you gaze on that sacred, awful scene, how plainly are revealed to you life and death. Now, wherever the gospel message is made known the effect will be the same as on Calvary—to some it will be the savour of life unto life, and to others the savour of death unto death. I. Let us look at THE TWO SIDES OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE. The word gospel we associate with all that is lovely, tender, merciful. Now, all this is quite true; but it is not the whole message. Honestly read your Bibles, and you will find that it makes known to you salvation and damnation—heaven and hell. The gospel message is, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” II. Now, consider THE DOUBLE WORKING OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE. The gift of God must be either accepted or rejected; there is no alternative. Thus was it in the days of the apostles; their preaching was either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. But there are some who would raise objections to the gospel because it is thus the savour of death as well as of life. Better, say they, not to preach the gospel at all. To them we reply, Because some abuse God’s greatest gift, would it be better that the gift had never been offered? Because fire sometimes destroys, would it be better that a fire never were kindled? (*Jas. Aitken.*) **Who is sufficient for these things?**—*Who is sufficient for these things?* (Inaugural Sermon)—1. St. Paul asked this question with a miraculous conversion in memory, with all the signs of a chiefest apostle in possession, with a crown of righteousness laid up for him in prospect. 2. That which weighed upon St. Paul was—(1) The recollection of the issues for immortal souls, of having the revelation of grace offered to them (vers. 15, 16). (2) The difficulty of fidelity (ver. 17). It would be easy, he says, to discharge this great office, if we might make traffic of the Word of God; if we might throw in here a grain of flattery, and there a scruple of indulgence; adapt it to the taste of the audience, or take counsel concerning it of the genius of the age. But to preach the gospel in its fourfold completeness—“as of sincerity,” “as of God,” “in the sight of God,” “in Christ”—this demands of the messenger that loftiest grace of an incorruptible fidelity. 3. It is easy to say, easier to think, that the first days of the gospel were more anxious than our own. We can understand how important, difficult, and perilous it was for the new faith to gain a hearing. And so men sympathise with the apostles as engaged in an enterprise disproportioned to their strength; but they have nothing but pity or ridicule for the ministers of to-day, especially if a minister should bewail his insufficiency, or recognise the need of Divine help to qualify him for his work. Thoughts such as these throw a very real stumbling-block in the way of the gospel. The minister himself has to dread their infection. “Against these things,” he has to ask himself, “who is sufficient?” 4. The difficulties which faced St. Paul were open and tangible. On the one side there was Jewish bigotry, and on the other side Greek speculation; here the charge of apostasy from ancestral sanctities, there of insubordination to existing authorities; here some definite risk of persecution, there some insidious corruption of gospel simplicity by Judaizing admixture or Alexandrian refinement. 5. But St. Paul was spared some experiences, belonging to an age not his. When he wrote 2 Tim. iii. 1, &c., he scarcely sounded the depths of our sea of trouble, and nowhere quite prepares us for those developments which are the phenomena of this latter part of our century, and which draw forth from our hearts half the cry of the text, viz.—(1) The restless reckless impatience of the old, even when the old is God’s truth; the insolent disdain of Christ’s ordinance of preaching, except in so far as the preacher will fling away his Bible, and prophesy out of his own spirit; the light bandying of sacred subjects at every social table; the choosing and rejecting amongst the plain sayings of Scripture, as though each particular revelation were an open question. (2) The schism of thought, where not of feeling, between the teachers of the Church and those who ought to be among the taught. (3) The opposite experience, the

surrender of all that is distinctive in the ministerial office, or the abandonment of all that is at first sight difficult in the Divine revelation. Not thus will the breach between clergy and laity be effectually healed—as though the Church's commission were a thing to be ashamed of, or as though the one object were to show men that the Bible contained nothing which they might not have known without it. (4) The timidity of the believing in the face of free thought and scientific discovery. I count it a great evil when true believers betray an uneasiness in the presence of true seekers. Truth and the truth can never really be at variance. Let not the evangelical doctrine ever fear lest the God of creation should betray it, or leave it naked to its enemies. Least of all let faith think that by hiding its head in the sand it can elude pursuit, or that by a clamorous outcry, "The gospel in danger," it can breathe either confidence into its troops or panic into its foes. Let us be brave, with a courage at once of man and of God. Conclusion: Men have said to me, in the prospect of this ministry—1. "You must be careful what you advance. Say nothing which is not sound in logic, whatever it be in rhetoric. Assume nothing—prove your points." Is the gospel itself to be, as between me and you, an open question? Am I bound, every time I mention the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Divinity of Christ, to prove each to you by some novel argument? Honestly do I say this to you, If that was what you wanted, I am not the man. If you believe not the gospel, I cannot hope to prove it to you. I am here, a steward of God's mysteries, to bring out to you from His storehouse something profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for discipline in righteousness. 2. "You will have a critical audience. Everything will be discussed. 'A fair field and no favour' will be the motto of your congregation." The caution falls chillingly upon the ear. I believe not one word of it. Not to judge the preacher, but to hear the Word; not to say "The sermon was long," but to say, "On this day God has provided me with a sweet solace of heavenly hope and spiritual communion; and now I depart, warmed, cheered, edified for another week's labour, and for the everlasting rest beyond"—this shall be the attitude of your ear and heart as you listen to the voice of your minister. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Difficulties of the pastoral office:*—I. I shall briefly survey SOME OF THE MANY AND IMPORTANT DUTIES OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE. Christ crucified, and salvation through Him; the law, as a school-master, to bring men to Christ; and exhorting the disciples of Jesus to adorn His doctrine ought to be our chief themes. A comprehensive knowledge of Christian faith and practice. Great skill is requisite to explain the sublime mysteries of our holy faith, to unfold their mutual connections and dependencies, and so to demonstrate their certainty, that the sincere lover of truth may be convinced, and even the captious silenced. Our task, however, would be comparatively easy were men lovers of truth and holiness. Add to all this that the genius, spiritual condition, and outward circumstances of our hearers are various; and a manner of address proper for some would be improper for others. But our services are not confined to the pulpit, or to closet preparation for it. It is one important branch of our work, to instruct and catechise the young and ignorant in the first principles of religion. Parochial visitation, if managed in a way easy to plan, I will not say easy to execute, would be equally useful. Reconciling differences is a work highly suitable to the character of ambassadors of the Prince of Peace. In private reproof, what zeal for God, and what tender compassion for perishing souls are needful to overcome that aversion every good-natured man must feel, to tell another he has done amiss. There is another duty incumbent on ministers as such, more difficult than any I have yet mentioned, and that is, to show themselves patterns of good works (Titus ii. 7). II. I shall now complete the argument by considering the TEMPTATIONS AND OPPOSITION WHICH MAY PROBABLY ARISE TO DIVERT US FROM THE RIGHT DISCHARGE OF THE DUTIES OF OUR OFFICE. Ministers, though bound to exemplary holiness, are men of like passions and infirmities with others, and equally exposed to be seduced by Satan, the world, and the flesh. But our chief danger arises from indwelling corruption. Our office obliges us to preach and pray on many occasions when our frames are dull and languid. Discouragement may have a fatal influence. Once more. As we grow older aversion to fatigue and love of ease grow upon us. Judge from the whole of what has been said, if the work of the ministry is so easy, as many, through ignorance or inadventency, are apt to imagine. (*R. Erskine, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God.—*Corrupting the Word of God:*—The expression has the idea of self-interest, and especially of

petty gain, at its basis. It means literally to sell in small quantities, to retail for profit. But it was specially applied to tavern keeping, and extended to cover all the devices by which the wine-sellers in ancient times deceived their customers. Then it was used figuratively as here; and Lucian speaks of philosophers as selling the sciences, and in most cases (*οἱ πολλοὶ* a curious parallel to St. Paul), like tavern keepers "blending, adulterating, and giving bad measure." There are two separable ideas here. One is that of men qualifying the gospel, infiltrating their own ideas into the Word of God, tempering its severity, or perhaps its goodness, veiling its inexorableness, dealing in compromise. The other is that all such proceedings are faithless and dishonest because some private interest underlies them. It need not be avarice, though it is as likely to be this as anything else. A man corrupts the Word of God, makes it the stock in trade of a paltry business of his own, in many other ways than by subordinating it to the need of a livelihood. When he exercises his calling as minister for the gratification of his vanity, or when he preaches not that awful message in which life and death are bound up, but himself, his cleverness, his learning, humour, fine voice or gestures, he does so. He makes the Word minister to him, instead of being a minister of the Word; and that is the essence of the sin. It is the same if ambition be his motive, if he preaches to win disciples to himself, to gain an ascendancy over souls, to become the head of a party which will bear the impress of his mind. (*J. Deuney, B.D.*) *The way to preach the gospel*:—I. WITH CONSCIOUS HONESTY. "As of sincerity" in direct antagonism to all duplicity and hypocrisy. No man can preach the gospel effectively who is not a true man—true to himself and to the doctrines he proclaims. He must be uninfluenced by prepossessions, by sectarian bias, by worldly interests or fame. No man can have this conscious honesty—1. Unless he preaches his own personal convictions of the gospel. Not the opinions of others, nor even his own opinions, but convictions self-formed, vital, and profound. 2. Unless his own convictions have been reached by impartial, earnest, and devout study. The man who thus preaches, preaches a fresh, living, mighty gospel. II. WITH CONSCIOUS DIVINITY. "Of God, in the sight of God," *i.e.*—1. From God. He must feel that he has a Divine commission. 2. Before God. "In the sight of God." He must feel that the God who hath sent him confronts him. This consciousness will make him—(1) Earnestly living. His soul will be all excitement. (2) Utterly fearless of man. III. WITH CONSCIOUS CHRISTLIKENESS. "In Christ." There are two senses in which we are said to be in another. 1. In their affections. Without poetry or figure we are in those, in the hearts of those who love us. The child is in the heart of the loving parent, &c. Thus all Christ's disciples are in His heart, in His affections. They live in Him. 2. In their character and spirit. Thus the admiring student lives in the character and spirit of his loved teacher, the admiring reader in the thoughts and genius of his favourite author, &c. This is the sense that is specially implied in the text. What is the spirit of Christ? It is that of supreme love to the Great Father and self-sacrificing love for humanity. (*D. Thomas D.D.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1-5. Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we . . . epistles of commendation?—*A pastor's claim*:—1. The voluntary relations of men are founded upon mutual confidence, and even those which are involuntary require reciprocal reliance. The parent who does not duly trust his children will soon ruin them, and the child who does not rely upon his parents will certainly become prodigal. Distrust in a master will make him a tyrant, and want of confidence in a servant will produce miserable eye-service. The suspicious prince is always cruel, and the distrustful subject is a revolutionist; and the functions of the ministry are nullified by distrust in the Churches and in the world. 2. This confidence is easily disturbed and soon destroyed. A whisper "on 'Change" against the credit of the successful merchant will sometimes gather force and sweep him into ruin. A question addressed in an incredulous tone to a master about the fidelity of an honest servant will make him watch that servant with an eagle's eye. In like manner may the confidence of the Churches of Christ in their chosen pastors

be impaired or crushed. Of the danger to which confidence in this case is exposed, these Epistles to the Corinthians afford illustration. Note—I. THE GROUNDS OF A CHRISTIAN PASTOR'S CLAIM UPON THE CONFIDENCE OF THE CHURCHES. 1. There is a peculiar writing on the tablet of the Christian's soul. The old covenant was engraven upon slabs of stone, but the new covenant is written upon the sensitive and everlasting tablet of the heart. On this is written the good news that God so loved the world and spared not His own Son. There is other writing. Science writes. But science, beautiful writer though she be, and wise and useful, cannot write about the highest subjects, nor can she reach by her pen the fairest tablets of the human soul. 2. The writing on the tablets of the true Christian's soul is effected for Christ by the Holy Spirit. 3. In writing, the Spirit employs men—pastors and teachers—as pens. 4. Those upon whose hearts Christ has written are Christ's chief means of communicating with the outlying world. In plain language, the works of the true pastor bear witness of him, and establish his claim to loving confidence. We ask, then, firm and loving confidence for the proved ministers of Christ. To require this from their own converts is to ask a small thing. To no creature on earth or in heaven is a man so largely indebted as to the instrument of his conversion. But say that you have no such personal obligations to the true ministers of Christ, they may claim confidence for their work's sake. Give us your confidence for your own sake, for without it we cannot minister to your profit; for your children's sake, for, if they detect distrust, in vain do we try to help you bring them up; for our work's sake among the ungodly. I do not say that we cannot work without it, but I do say that we can work more hopefully with it. II. THE GROUND OF A PASTOR'S OWN CONFIDENCE WITH RESPECT TO HIS WORK. 1. The confidence of any worker with respect to his work is essential to his success. The basis of such confidence may be either his own independent resources or the help which he obtains from those stronger than himself. The latter is the foundation of the confidence of Christ's ministers. Their sufficiency is of God. To say God is sufficient is only like saying God is God, but to declare our sufficiency is of God is to exhibit a spiritual fact which among the children of men is exceedingly rare. This is not to sit talking of the Almighty God, but to walk leaning upon God's arm, and to work, God working with us. This is to take such advantage of the Divine resources as this special work demands. Without this, a man may be scholarly, eloquent, and popular, but in the sight of God he must be a failure. The work of the true pastor can only be done as God would have it be done, as our sufficiency is of God. 2. Why, then, are we not filled with the fulness of God? It may be that we prefer the cistern to the fountain, and that we cleave to it after it has become leaky, and it may be because of our many false gods. One thing is certain—we are always half mad about something which, however good, is not God. The organisations and associations, better psalmody, more ornate architecture, a denominational press, wealth, are the false gods after which we too often have gone a-whoring. Why are we not filled with the fulness of God? It may be that we do not sufficiently recognise the mediation of Jesus Christ and the ministry of the Holy Ghost; it may be because our sins have separated us from God. One thing is certain—we could do our work with God if everything external and circumstantial which now we have were taken clean away. The first preachers and teachers had none of our appliances, and yet succeeded, because their sufficiency was of God. 3. And now let me entreat you to commend your pastors in ceaseless prayer to the help of God. 4. Our sufficiency is also yours. (*S. Martin, D.D.*) **Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.—Sacred penmanship** :—"Self-praise is no recommendation," and the "sounding of one's own trumpet" is not to be applauded. False teachers had entered into the Corinthian Church, and they had found it necessary to have letters of recommendation, but Paul needed no such introduction. Truth and righteousness recommend themselves in the work they accomplish. Our translation admits of another rendering—namely, "Ye are our epistles written in your hearts," and this would imply that Paul had been enabled to pencil something in the hearts of others which could be read by all men; and it is with this idea I shall deal in speaking about sacred penmanship. I. OBSERVE THE REQUISITES FOR WRITING. The accessories must be provided, however, for a letter to be written, and let us briefly notice these—pen, ink, and paper. 1. In the third verse we have the pen: "Forasmuch as ye are declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us." Here is the instrument in the hand of God. The Church was divided, for one said, "I am of Paul," another, "I am of Cephas"; but these good men were only the pens whereby God, through His Spirit, had written upon the fleshy tables of their

hearts. Among these instruments there must ever be a variety. The rough and rude can, however, be made to write well. Paul, though he was not eloquent of speech, but somewhat blunt, had power to get hold of men's hearts, and he wrote upon them, with dark, indelible lines, great truths. Apollos could speak with eloquence of diction, and finely pencil the Scripture, so that the Jews were mightily convinced that Jesus was the Christ. John was another such instrument. Soft in love, sketching in poetry the wonderful revelations he had of "the better land," he would win hearts for Jesus. 2. Then there must be the ink. The sacred fluid is the Spirit of God. "Written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." The mysterious influence that flows through us is not of earthly manufacture. 3. The next requisite is the paper. It is not written upon stone, but "in fleshy tables of the heart." A soft heart best absorbs the ink, a living tablet best retains impressions. Lord, write first in us, and then make us as the "pen of the ready writer," to make our mark on others. II. THE READERS OF THE WRITING. "Known and read of all men." The writing is real—no fiction, for the author is Christ. We are the autograph letters of our Lord, and bear His signature. The writing is clear, for we are "manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ." Now, this document is a public one. Believers are the library for the world; they are a Christian literature; each saint is a volume to expound the grace of God. "Known and read of all men." We may consider the readers of this writing to be of three classes—

1. The intelligent. Many are real students of Christian character, desirous of gaining knowledge for their own good in spiritual attainments.
2. Then there are the interested readers—our friends who like to see if we make progress in Divine things. The "first series" of Christian experiences are interesting, and are studied with deep anxiety by those who love young converts.
3. The last class I have called the inquisitive. They only peruse to find fault. Ours must be so correct an epistle that fault-finders shall find it difficult to gratify their morbid taste. The schoolmaster says to his boys, "Be sure you dot your i's and cross your t's"; and we too must be mindful of little things. (*Charles Spurgeon.*) *Paul's testimonials: their publicity*.—The conversion and new life of the Corinthians were Paul's certificate as an apostle. They were a certificate, he says, known and read by all men. Often there is a certain awkwardness in the presenting of credentials. It embarrasses a man when he has to put his hand into his heart pocket, and take out his character, and submit it for inspection. Paul was saved this embarrassment. There was a fine unsought publicity about his testimonials. Everybody knew what the Corinthians had been; everybody knew what they were; and the man to whom the change was due needed no other recommendation to a Christian society. (*J. Denney, B.D.*) *Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ.*—*Soul literature*.—Christianity written on the soul is Christianity—I. IN THE MOST LEGIBLE FORM. II. IN THE MOST CONVINCING FORM. Books have been written on the evidences of Christianity; but one life permeated by the Christian spirit furnishes an argument that baffles all controversy. III. IN THE MOST PERSUASIVE FORM. There is a magnetism in gospel truth embodied which you seek for in vain in any written work. When the "Word is made flesh" it is made "mighty through God." IV. IN THE MOST ENDURING FORM. The tablet is imperishable. Paper will moulder, institutions will dissolve, marble or brass are corruptible. V. IN THE DIVINEST FORM. The hand can inscribe it on parchment or stone, but only God can write it on the heart. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The epistle of Christ*.—I. THE DESIGNATION OF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. 1. An epistle is a fact of production. No epistle is self-produced. It must have a writer, Nor is it a creation; all the elements existed before. So with the epistle of Christ. 2. An epistle is a production of intelligence. An epistle must have a direct intelligent end, must be worth reading and knowing. 3. A letter is the expression of the thoughts and purposes of the writer. So Christians are the transcript of Christ's design, morally impressed with the counterpart of His principles and character as their Exemplar. 4. A letter is a medium of communication. So what is communicated to Christians must be communicated by them to others. It must be communicated as it is; it must not be obliterated or shown partially. II. THE WRITING AGENT, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THE EPISTLE IS COMPOSED. "The Spirit of the living God," &c., who—1. Works according to His own plan. 2. By the use of suitable means, and according to established laws. The act is not a thing done in some rare instances, but in the heart of all good people. 3. By the concurrence and co-operation of man himself—the object of His work. Man is an agent of his own culture and all which belongs to him in life. He is also the agent of his own

salvation. If he neglects his work, no one can do it for him. III. THE INSTRUMENTAL MEANS "ministered by us." The ministry of the gospel—1. Brings the materials of truth and salvation to men. 2. Prepares also the pages of the soul to receive true impressions and the blessings offered in the gospel. There are stains to be erased, misconceptions to be corrected, habits and prejudices to be destroyed, before clear and true writing can be made. 3. Brings the human soul and Divine truth face to face, so by Divine light and love a photographic image is printed upon the whole soul. Whilst it is a Divine power it is a Divine art, printing upon the human heart and life a true image and right language. 4. Perpetuates the means of truth and right life. IV. THE TABLET OF RECORD, "the fleshy tables of the heart." As the heart is the centre of our natural life, it is also, in a moral sense, the centre and base of our spiritual life. 1. The work of God in the heart is carried on quietly and secretly, but is powerful in its results, like the forces of God in nature. What more secret than thought, love, faith? but what more powerful and clear in their results? The letter is secret in the writing, but known in the reading. 2. Though unseen to sense, it is nevertheless a matter of consciousness to the subject of it. 3. It is a process which purifies and develops human affection. The end is to make the heart better and larger. 4. It is a process intended to govern the springs of human life. Mankind is governed through its heart. It is a happy and high state when the sentiment of the heart is one with reason. 5. Whatever is good and happy, if written on the heart, is an immediate source of life and comfort. 6. It is a thing to be highly estimated and remembered. When we wish to gain esteem, we try to reach the heart; when we desire not to be forgotten, we try to print our name on the tablet of the heart. (*T. Hughes.*) *The epistle of Christ:—I. THE CHRISTIAN IS AN EPISTLE OF CHRIST.* 1. Its writer. "Christ." 2. Its purport. Christ has blotted out "guilty" and written in "no condemnation." He has erased "earthly" and supplied "heavenly." Licentiousness has given place to purity, profanity to prayerfulness, selfishness to love, &c. We judge of the authorship of an epistle, not merely by the penmanship and signature, which a clever forger might imitate, but also by its contents. A hypocrite, a false professor, is like a forged letter. 3. Its design. To convey the mind of Christ to men. Men may refuse to listen to the gospel, but they cannot ignore the testimony of a consistent Christian life. II. THE RESPONSIBILITY DEVOLVING ON THE CHRISTIAN AS AN EPISTLE OF CHRIST. 1. As a letter is written for the purpose of being seen, a Christian should let his Christianity be visible. We do not write letters merely for the sake of writing them, but that they may be read. So, if Christians do not let their Christianity be seen in their lives, they defeat one chief end which Christ had in view in making them what they are. Those who are Christians in name only are in no sense of the term epistles of Christ; it were vain to exhort such to let what Christ has written in them be seen by men, for they have nothing to show. 2. A letter being written for the purpose of being read should be legible. A letter may be so written that it is impossible to make out the writer's meaning. Such a letter may be worse than useless, for, owing to its illegibility, it may convey a wrong meaning. When the letters of men are illegible it is the fault of the writers, but this is not the case with Christ's epistles. He never writes illegibly. The fault lies on the side of the epistles themselves. Note one or two things which render writing illegible. (1) Indistinctness of character. One word may be mistaken for another, and thus the whole meaning of a sentence may be altered. And Christians may be illegible as epistles of Christ through the wavering, unsteady character imparted to the writing that is in them by their want of decision for Christ and their compromises with the world. What we want is boldness on the part of Christians in testifying for Christ in their everyday lives. (2) Blots. Perhaps the most important word in a sentence is completely hidden by a blot. Alas! in how many cases is the testimony of a Christian for Christ made of none effect by the unsightly blot of some gross inconsistency, some dark sin, which the eye of the world rests continually on, and refuses to see anything else. 3. A letter is written that it may be understood. What prevents letters from being intelligible? (1) Omissions. Were the little word "not," e.g., left out, the meaning of a sentence would be entirely reversed. In like manner, the lack of one essential Christian grace—charity, e.g.—if it do not render the character of a Christian unintelligible, makes it less easily understood. (2) Contradictions. We cannot possibly make out the meaning if one sentence says one thing and the next the opposite. And how can men understand our testimony for Christ if we have one kind of conduct for the Church and another for the world? (*J. Bogue, M.A.*) *Epistles of Christ:—I.*

THE EPISTLE. 1. How it is written. (1) The apostle does not speak of a vague oral tradition, or of shifting impressions, but of a written epistle. The material on which this epistle is written is the heart of man. Not merely in his understanding, for he may know what is right and yet not do it; not merely in his conscience, for he may acknowledge his duty, yet neglect it; but in his heart, that it may be his desire and his delight, the very law and tendency of his being. (2) Like the pages of this book when they came from the hands of the manufacturer, the mind of man by nature is a perfect blank in regard to Christ, or rather like the material from which these pages were manufactured—filthy rags, foul, tattered, and discoloured. To become an epistle of Christ it must be prepared and written on. It must be purified, and characters traced on it. 2. Its contents. Christ is its grand and all-pervading theme. Observe—(1) Paul did not say of all the disciples, “Ye are epistles of Christ,” but, “Ye are *the* epistle of Christ.” Collectively you constitute the one epistle, just as there are many copies of the Bible in many foreign languages, but only one Bible. Different as the Laplander and the Indian may be, yet, when taught by the Spirit, they testify the same things of Christ. (2) Nor did Paul say of any individual, “Thou art *the* epistle of Christ.” As there are many imperfect or mutilated MSS. of the Bible, and as in all there are errors of the pen or the translator, so also there are imperfect and unfinished copies of the epistle of Christ. And as it is only by collating and comparing many versions that we can say, “This is the Word of God,” so also we must collate and compare many Christians ere we can say, “This is the *epistle*, the image, of Christ.” 3. Its purpose. (1) The salvation of those in whose hearts it is written. (2) To recommend Christ to men. As samples of His work, you will be either letters of commendation or of condemnation to Him. II. HOW WE MAY SO USE THIS EPISTLE THAT IT MAY SERVE THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT WAS WRITTEN. We may commend Christ—1. With our lips. Our conversation may be an epistle to make known His praises. The circulation of the epistle written with ink—the printed Bible—is our duty. Even so it is our duty to publish the living epistle. It was intended to be an open letter, known and read of all men. How many are there with whom we daily associate who never read the written Bible, the only hope of whose salvation is that they may read or hear the living epistle! By our silence we conceal that epistle from them, and leave them to perish. 2. By our lives. It is in vain that we speak of Christ with our lips if our lives belie our words. Our actions, like a pen full of ink, trace certain characters, leave certain impressions on the mind and memory of those who see them. In beholding our actions, have men been led to say of us, “These men have been with Jesus”? 3. By our character. A man’s outward manner may be in direct opposition to his inward character. To be true epistles of Christ we must reflect His image, not in word only, or in action, but in our dispositions and desires. (*W. Grant.*) *Epistles of Christ.*—From the example of the Master Paul had acquired the habit of gliding softly and quickly from a common object of nature to the deep things of grace. The practice of asking and obtaining certificates seems to have been introduced at a very early period into the Christian Church, and already some abuses had crept in along with it. We gather from this epistle that some very well recommended missionaries had been spoiling Paul’s work at Corinth. Virtually challenged to exhibit his own certificates, he boldly appeals to those who had been converted through his ministry, and now he glides into a greater thing—Christians are an epistle of Christ. Regarding these epistles, consider—I. THE MATERIAL WRITTEN ON. 1. Many different substances have been employed in writing; but one feature is common to all—in their natural state they are not fit to be used as writing materials. They must undergo a process of preparation. Even the primitive material of stone must be polished ere the engraving begin. The reeds, and leaves, and skins, too, which were used by the ancients, all needed preparation. So with modern paper, of which rags are the raw material. These are torn into small pieces, washed, cast into a new form, and become a “new creature.” A similar process takes place in the preparation of the material for an epistle of Christ. You might as well try to write upon the rubbish from which paper is made as to impress legible evidence for the truth and divinity of the gospel on the life of one who is still “of the earth, earthy.” 2. The paper manufacturer is not nice in the choice of his materials. The clean cannot be serviceable without passing through the process, and the unclean can be made serviceable with it. Let no man think he can go into heaven because he is good; but neither let any one fear he will be kept out of it because he is evil. II. THE WRITING. It is not Christianity printed in the creed, but Christ written in the heart.

A person's character may be gathered from his letters. How eagerly the public read those of a great man printed after his death! Our Lord left no letters, yet He has not left Himself without a witness. When He desires to let the world know what He is, He points to Christians. Nay, when He would have the Father to behold His glory, He refers Him to the saved: "I am glorified in them." A Christian merchant goes to India or China. He sells manufactured goods; he buys silk and tea. But all the time he is a living epistle, sent by Christ to the heathen. A Christian boy becomes an apprentice, and is now, therefore, a letter from the Lord to all his shopmates. III. THE WRITER. "The Spirit of the living God." Some writings are easily rubbed off by rough usage or with age. Only fast colours are truly valuable. The flowers and figures painted upon porcelain are burned in, and therefore cannot be blotted out. No writing on a human spirit is certainly durable except that which the Spirit of God lays on. In conversion there is a sort of furnace through which the new-born pass. In the widespread religious activity of the day some marks are made on the people—not made by the Spirit of God—shown by the event to have been only marks on the surface made by some passing fear or nervous sympathy. IV. THE PEN. In photography it is the sun that makes the portrait; yet a human hand prepares the plate and adjusts the lens. A similar place is assigned to the ministry of men in the work of the Spirit. Printing nowadays is done by machines which work with a strength and regularity and silence that are enough to strike an onlooker with dismay. Yet even there a watchful human eye and alert human hand are needed to introduce the paper into the proper place. Agents are needed even under the ministry of the Spirit—needed to watch for souls. V. THE READERS. 1. The writing is not sealed or locked up in a desk, but exposed all the day to public view. Some who look on the letters are enemies, and some are friends. If an alien see Christ represented in a Christian, he may thereby be turned from darkness to light; but, if he see sin, self, and the world, he will probably be more hardened in his unbelief. Those who already know and love the truth are glad when they read it clearly written in a neighbour's life, are grieved when they see a false image of the Lord held up before the eyes of men. 2. Many readers, however, fail to see the meaning of the plainest letters. None so blind as those who will not see. Considering how defective most readers are either in will or skill, or both, the living epistles should be written in characters both large and fair. Some MSS. are so defectively written that none but experts can decipher them. Skilled and practised men can piece them together, and gather the sense where, to ordinary eyes, only unconnected scrawls appear. Benevolent ingenuity has produced a kind of writing that even the blind can read. Such should be the writing of Christ's mind on a Christian's conversation. It should be raised in characters so large that even the blind, who cannot see, may be compelled, by contact with Christians, to feel that Christ is passing by. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Epistles of Christ: imperfect and spurious*:—The Bible is God's book for the world, only it shuts it. But the world will read you. Masters, your servants read you; servants, your masters read you; so will parents children, &c. Do they read in you what they ought to read? A Christian should be a Bible alive. Never mind though a man has not learned his letters; he will be able to read you fast enough. All men can read justice, mercy, and truth, or the opposite of them. 1. One day a thought flashed into my mind that I did not want to lose, and, having no paper at hand except a letter from a friend, I just wrote between the lines of it; and when I had done that the fancy struck me to read through the writing as it stood, one line of my friends and one of my own, and you cannot think what nonsense it was! Ah! there are some characters like that. I dare not say there was nothing about them that Christ had written, but they have sadly allowed the devil and the world to underline them; there is no coherency or consistency in them. 2. I remember, when I was a little boy at school, if I by any chance managed to make the smallest blot, as sure as I took the book up to my master, the first thing he looked at was the blot; and, as sure as I took it home, the first thing anybody looked at was the blot. My letters may have been made very gracefully, but nobody said a word about them; but everybody said something about the blot. Ah! I have known some people very good on the whole, but they have had sad blots—blots of temper, vanity, and worldliness. The sun himself is looked at more during the few minutes he has a black-spot on his face than on all the days of the year besides. The world has an eagle glance for your spots, and if you have a spot on your character people will look more at it than at all the beautiful things that are there. 3. I got a letter one day which had been sent to a committee. For the life of them they could not

read it, and they sent it to me to try to make it out. It was a difficult task, and when I had made out the words I could scarcely make out the sense. It was a letter, but a very unintelligible one. I have known some characters like that, and if I preached to such I should have to take the text, "I stand in doubt of you." These are not like the epistles spoken of in the text, "known and read of all men." Endeavour to keep clear of such a character that nobody can tell what list to put you in: avoid being so quaint and difficult that nobody can tell what to make of you. May it be said of you, as it was said as I passed the door of a godly man who had lately died, "If ever there was a Christian, that man was one." 4. I remember, just before I left my last circuit, that I looked over a great number of old letters, some of which, at the time I received them, were so precious that I put them away to preserve them, and several of these had become so creased and dirty and illegible that I was obliged to throw them into the fire, though once they were so precious to me. I should not like that any of you who had been real letters of Christ's own writing should become so careless and worldly that the writing became marred. I should not like that you should get into such a cold, backsliding state that all the beautiful letters that once were put upon you should become illegible, and that at the last Christ should say, "Cast them into the fire." 5. I was once in an assize court where a man was being tried for forgery. The individual whose writing, it was suspected, had been imitated, was dead, and so a large letter-book, full of what was known to be the writing of the deceased, was produced in court, to test the alleged forgery by it. If you are letters of Christ you will resemble His writing. The very name Christian implies that you profess to have Christ's name written upon you. But it is no use to profess to be Christ's epistle if you are not like Him. Suppose I picked up a letter which professed on the face of it to be a letter from Jesus Christ, but recommended this congregation to be worldly-minded, to love gold, to be fretful and peevish, and to be guilty of evil-speaking and slander. Of course I should know that it was no letter from Jesus Christ. I wonder whether all present who profess to be Christ's epistles ever do that which Christ would not put His name to? Are you genuine letters? A friend of mine went to the bank to pay in some money. Amongst it there was a ten-pound note. The clerk looked at it carefully, and then stamped "Forged" right across it. What a sad thing it would be if any of you who profess to be epistles of Christ now should at the last be disowned of Him, and He should say, "You are none of Mine—forged!" (S. Coley.)

Living epistles of Christ:—I. "AN EPISTLE OF CHRIST" IS THE TITLE OF EVERY BELIEVER. In the N.T. Epistles we have the promised further revelation of Christ. We call them for convenience the epistles of Paul, or of Peter, &c.; but they are the epistles of Christ, from and concerning Him. So believers are a revelation of the Redeemer to the world; and as these apostolic letters carried light wherever they went, so the world is to read on the Christian the mind and grace of Jesus. 1. Christ's work will necessarily witness to Him. The world cannot look on any true servant of Christ without receiving an impression of the Master. 2. Christ's purpose concerning the world requires that every Christian be an epistle of Christ. With multitudes the gospel will be powerless until its truth is proved by its effects. 3. Christ's love to His people affords this usefulness to all of them. For to help others to Him is to enter into the joy of our Lord, and He would deprive none of His beloved of that. One of the Florentine princes commanded Michael Angelo to fashion a statue from the drifted snow before his palace, and the great artist, ignoring the scorn, wrought at the task as though he chiselled the enduring marble; and when it began to melt at the sun's touch, and the contemptuous prince laughed at what he thought the vanity of the toil, the sculptor solaced himself with the reflection, "The thought I threw into that snow shall stir this gazing people when their gaze is done." Our common tasks are fleeting, yet we may throw a piety into them whose memory will abide for good with those that saw it to distant years.

II. THINK OF CHRIST WRITING THIS EPISTLE. 1. There must be the erasure of the old writing. In ancient monasteries the monks would take old parchments, and, removing the writing they bore, write sacred truth on them instead; so it happened that, where before men read annals of conquest, or heathen laws, or pagan blasphemies, then they read the Word of God. Till the old heathen writing on us be removed, there is no room for the new, nor would it stand much chance of being seen. So Christ removes it. We cannot; no human skill can cleanse the blotted page of an evil character. 2. There must be the impression of His will on the character by fellowship with Him. In fellowship with Christ a subtle influence is exerted on us which must leave its mark; we

cannot be with Him without acquiring a hatred of sin, without His peace possessing us, without our love and courage being inflamed, which must show themselves when we pass out to men again. 3. When He has done that there may remain the bringing out of some of His deepest writings by fire. For as great secrets have been written on that prepared surface which conceals the writing till it is exposed to heat, and then line after line of unsuspected story appears, so some of Christ's most sacred messages only steal out in the lives of His people in the hour of trial. The chamber of Christian sorrow has many a time been the place of Divine revelation. III. Then, surely, HAVING WRITTEN HIS EPISTLE, HE SENDS IT. To write a letter without sending it were vain. The Bible is God's letter to the world; we may think of His people as supplementary letters to individuals. 1. Then He will see it comes to them. This is the meaning of many of His providential dealings with us. 2. We may expect Him to call their attention to us whom He means us to reach. He will not suffer that to be unread which He has written; His Spirit works with His providence, and turns men's eyes where He would have them look. 3. And that shows God's special mercy to some. When they have failed to read the Bible He has given them, He is so earnest for their redemption that He sends a letter to themselves. IV. HE WHO WRITES AND SENDS THEM WAITS THE ANSWER! (C. New.) *Living epistles* :—This is one of those felicitous turns of expression which show the true genius; the sudden availing one's self of an adversary's argument against himself. "Ask for my letter of commendation? Well, who has such a letter as I can show? Ye are our epistle." Demosthenes uttered nothing finer than this, or so convincing. I. IN WHAT RESPECTS MAY MEN RESEMBLE AN EPISTLE, KNOWN AND READ OF ALL? 1. The prime characteristic of a letter is its containing the mind of the writer. Can Christians represent the mind of Christ, as a letter contains your mind? (1) A perfect Church is not needed for this; for the Corinthian community, like a defaced epistle, was blotted with serious imperfections. Still their general conduct could exhibit such an approximation to the Spirit of Christ that the apostle could afford to spread it open before all men, asking them to read and know it. It is not, therefore, our infirmities and sins which disqualify us from being epistles of Christ. A good writer can, when pressed, write on very unpromising material. It is not the kind of paper, but the writing, which men are anxious to see. (2) The great difficulty with us all is the obstinate restlessness which keeps us from being written upon. But where this is overcome, and we present ourselves to the Lord, He will write His will concerning us so legibly that all shall acknowledge the finger of God—like the Pharisees, who "took knowledge of Peter and John, that they had been with Jesus." 2. When our Lord said, "I call you not servants but friends," He implied that they would be an epistle, the contents of which would command their intelligent sympathy. Not like a letter-carrier, who knows nothing of what he carries, but like a friend charged with a message of reconciliation in which he is warmly interested. 3. The great requisite of the epistle which we are considering is that it be manifestly from a living Writer. There are good letters whose authors are dead. Valuable; you keep them as curiosities. The religious life may present a faultless epistle of this kind—an evident regard to the will of Christ, but not to a living will. A conscientious executorship, but it is fulfilling the wishes of the dead! The life shows what Christ was, not what He is; what He said, not what He says. But we want to show letters of Christ to-day. How different your manner when you bring me a letter on pressing business, and when you open a cabinet and produce a letter of Milton's! Now the former letter on business is what we want. Can I be the manifest epistle to others of a living Saviour? I know whether a man speaks to me as an antiquarian or as a believer, whether he comes to me with good news or to amuse me with information. You all know the difference between a lecture on Christianity and faith in a personal Redeemer; between a lecture on fire-escapes and making use of one when the house is burning. Let us speak, then, less of Christianity and more of Christ. Let Him show in us what He is. All sacrifice, all self-denial for His sake, is a most legible epistle of Christ. You know whether any one is repeating a lesson or speaking from his heart; whether he talks about business, or art, or science as from books or from experience or affection. Thus we shall show the hardly dry letter of Christ to men, or we shall show an old dry parchment-copy, as we live day by day under the eye of our Lord and dwell in fellowship with Him by prayer and duty. II. THE RECOMMENDATION OF THINGS AND PERSONS CONTAINED IN THESE LIVING EPISTLES. "Ye are our epistle." Your conduct serves as a letter of commendation—yea, better than a thousand! "Ye are my

Book some
 noted from

which one

letter written in my heart." "We can prove this man to have been sent of God; our lives show what God has wrought through him. Receive him." Every Christian, every Church, is intended to be a letter of commendation. Certainly a minister is highly honoured with a good letter of introduction of this kind. An ignorant or wicked man hears a minister preaching the gospel. He says, "Why should I listen to that man? What recommends him to my confidence?" Now it is a great thing for him to read of holiness, purity, and love in the people who are associated with that minister. On the other hand, every inconsistent hearer cripples the minister, and resembles one of those Bellerophon's letters, where a person carries a letter of introduction containing a caution to beware of him. He is a public refutation of the preacher. He is a letter containing, "Do not believe a word he says." Conclusion: 1. The apostle does not say that the individual Christian is an epistle of Christ, but they are collectively declared to be so. Each is a word or sentence; all make up the letter. Sentences which are unmeaning, often in their connection make a grand meaning. Christ often makes great use of one person, as He often uses one word or verse to console or teach. But the force of that word depends very much on its being known to be part of an inspired book. Let us all try together to form "the epistle of Christ." 2. Let people see and read the whole. Do not our passions, our selfishness, our indolence make us withhold it? Let us not incur the great sin of preventing poor sinners from seeing their Friend's own handwriting! Who can tell the effect it might have upon them? 3. But for this end we must all be in our place, like the separate words of a letter; one word blotted or missing often makes a great difference to the meaning. Keep the end of Church life in view; not comfort, but the exhibition of the letter. (*B. Kent, M.A.*)

The living epistle:—A letter implies—

I. AN ABSENT PERSON WHO SENDS IT; for in the actual presence of friend with friend letters become unnecessary. Now Christ is for a time absent, having gone into the heavens. In His absence He does not forget the world, but communicates with it by letters written on the hearts of His saints.

II. A PERSON OR PERSONS TO WHOM IT IS SENT. There is no class to whom Christ's message is not addressed. It may be a message of warning to the unconverted, of caution to the careless, of guidance to the perplexed, of comfort to the saddened, of hope to the desponding. Shall we not take care that it is a full letter that Christ sends by us, written all over, and rich in instruction and encouragement? Shall we not see that it is a well-written and legible letter? Let the life, the character, the conduct, all be so plain and consistent that none shall doubt whose we are, and to whose grace we bear witness.

III. MESSAGES. What are those which should be read in the heart and life of a Christian? 1. The freedom of the Saviour's love towards a sinner. The characters of converted men, and their histories before they were converted, may be infinitely various. But they are all alike in that they are sinners, and sinners saved, and all of grace, from the first moment of solemn conviction till the time that they found peace. Would we see Christ's love to the sinner and His power to save?—Look at them. May it not be with many of them, as with St. Paul, that for this cause they obtained mercy, that in them first Christ Jesus might show forth a pattern of all long-suffering? Would we know that the love of Christ is free as the air we breathe, and broad as universal man? Would we know that there is no sin so deep as to be beyond the merits of the atonement, no spiritual ruin so absolute as to be beyond the power of grace? Learn it all here in these saved sinners; read the message of the Saviour in these loving epistles of Christ, "written with the Spirit of the living God." 2. The sufficiency of Divine grace—the power of the Spirit of Christ to regenerate the heart, and to turn the proud and stubborn will to God. What the strength of sin is we know in our personal experience only too well; but we never really know till we know it by experience, just as a man may gaze long on a swollen river as it rolls its full waters towards the cataract below, and yet may never know its fatal strength till he is himself upon the current, vainly struggling with all his might to stem the fatal force which is hurrying him onwards to his death. I fancy that there are none, not excepting the most reckless of men, without some experience of the power of evil over them. Where, then, shall be your hope but in the Spirit of God? But how shalt thou know that the unseen Spirit is willing to help thee, or, if willing, competent to make thee a conqueror? Why, here is the epistle of Christ to assure thee of it. Look at this saved man. The whole course of his nature is changed, and flows towards God. He now loves what once he hated, hates what once he loved. He was once just like thyself.

3. The certainty of the promises and the deep inward peace and joy which are the inheritance of the children of God. Who

has ever heard a Christian man say that he was disappointed in Christ, or did not find Him the precious and perfect Saviour he had believed Him to be? Ask the man of the world if he will find happiness in excitement, in wealth, in honour and ambition, and he will frankly tell you, with a sigh, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." (*Canon Garbett.*) *The postal system in its beneficent and religious aspect:—*An "epistle" is a letter. "Epistle" is a word formed from the Greek; "letter" from the Latin. "Epistle" does not occur in the English Old Testament; there is always "letter," or (quite as often and quite as correctly), in the plural form, "letters." "An epistle of Christ," then, is "a letter of (from) Christ." We do not possess any letter of Jesus Christ's. There was a spurious correspondence, known to the early Church, between Christ and a prince of Mesopotamia, who applied to Him for help in sickness, but it was a forgery. Indeed, by the nature of the case it must have been so, for there were no Christians in Mesopotamia till Christ Himself was gone back to heaven. The nearest approach to an actual epistle of Christ is found in the addresses to the seven Churches in the Book of Revelation. The text was suggested to me by the occasion. We are welcoming this afternoon to the mother church of the diocese a large company of men whose every-day life connects them with the postal service of the country. It seems natural to inquire whether there is anything about your work in the Bible. There is more about it there than you might suppose. A Concordance will present a somewhat full record under the heads of Epistle, Letter, and Letters. Many of the entries are sad and sorrowful ones. The first (I think) of all is that fatal letter of King David to his unworthy confidant, Joab, about Uriah. See there what a letter may have in it—a cruel and treacherous edict of murder. And the next in order is like it. It is the letter of the wicked queen Jezebel to the elders of Jezreel about Naboth. But let it just show us what you may be carrying in that sacred budget of the daily letters. Let it give an element of awe, of solemnity, to the daily ministration. There may be corruption in that bundle, and you may be innocent of it. Soon after we come to the threatening letter of Sennacherib. Momentous issues hang upon that daily stamping, sorting, delivering. Issues, not all of evil—some of eternal good, to give an expected, a blessed end. Three centuries ago there was no post-office in England. Why, indeed, should there be, when so few people could write? People dwelt apart, managed their own little dwellings, cared not for news of their country's welfare or their country's relations with foreign countries, bought and sold in their own little hamlets. London and Edinburgh were a week apart as to tidings of battles or revolutions. Thus the world vegetated, thus the world slept. I will bid you to think but of three of the departments of life to which you, in the exercise of a laborious and often depressing service, minister. 1. Think of it in its business aspect. What would happen if that daily sorting and stamping and carrying were but for one day intermitted? Why, the wheels of the world would be stopped by its stoppage. 2. Think of it in its family aspect. Communications passing week by week between the home and the schoolboy son, or the servant son, or the sailor or soldier son, or the colonist son, or the exile son for fault or no fault of his. You, you are ministering to these sweetest and most beautiful instincts of nature as you tread your weary round. 3. Its business aspect and its family aspect. Has not your work yet one more—its religious, its Christian, its Christlike aspect? Oh, the influence breathed by letters upon solitary, straying, tempted lives! I do not think it is always the religious letter—strictly so called and ostentatiously so labelled—which does this work of works. No; there are letters—from mother, from sister, from brother, from friend—which even name not the name of God, and yet do Him service in the heart's heart of the receiver. I need not here warn any one against corrupting by letters. "A curious thought strikes me," Dr. Johnson said, a century and more ago, to his biographer—"a curious thought strikes me—we shall receive no letters in the grave." Yes, this is one of the thoughts which make the state beyond death so bare and blank to our conception. "No letters?" Then no information (is it so?) as to the state of the survivors—their health and wealth, their prosperity or adversity, their marriages and deaths, their joys and sorrows, their falls and risings again. "We shall receive no letters in the grave." Then let us so live as not to miss them. Let us have a life quite within and above, quite independent of, and extraneous to, the life of earth and time. Let us have so read and so written our letters, while we can, as to have no remorse for them in the world beyond death. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *An epistle of Christ:—*A missionary in India was so feeble mentally that he could not learn the language. After some years he asked to be recalled, frankly saying that he had

not sufficient intellect for the work. A dozen missionaries, however, petitioned his Board not to grant his request, saying that his goodness gave him a wider influence among the heathen than any other missionary at the station. A convert, when asked, "What is it to be a Christian?" replied, "It is to be like Mr. —," naming the good missionary. He was kept in India. He never preached a sermon, but when he died hundreds of heathen, as well as many Christians, mourned him, and testified to his holy life and character. (*S. S. Chronicle.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **Not that we are sufficient of ourselves . . . our sufficiency is of God.**—*The sufficiency of God*:—The all-sufficiency of God is the essence of all Christian experience; it has been the support of the faithful in all ages of the Church; it gives strength to patience, solidity to hope, constancy to endurance, nerve and vitality to effort. I. THE NATURE OF THIS SUFFICIENCY. The sufficiency of God may be considered either as proper or communicative. By His proper sufficiency we mean that He is self-existent, self-sufficient, independently happy. It is, however, of the sufficiency of God in relation to His creatures that we have now to speak. He is sufficient—1. For the preservation of the universe. "The heavens were made by Him, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." And as nothing earthly has within it the power to sustain itself, He upholdeth all things by the word of His power. Reason refers all this to the operation of second causes; piety looks through the complications of the mechanism to the hand that formed it. The whole universe is one vast laboratory of benevolent art, over every department of which Deity presides; a sanctuary, every part of which Deity inhabits—a circle, whose circumference is unfathomed, but whose every section is filled with God. 2. For the preservation and for the perpetuity of the gospel plan is the salvation and ultimate happiness of every individual believer. (1) Christianity is not to be viewed by us merely as a moral system; it is a course of Divine operations. We are not to regard it as a mere statement of doctrine, we must remember the Divine agency by which it is always conducted and inspired. Human eloquence and reasoning are persuasive and powerful things; they can charm a Herod, make a Felix tremble; but they can do no more. Inanimate truth can produce no abiding change. Pardon and sanctification are not the necessary consequences of statement of doctrine. Scripture cannot produce them. But let the Spirit animate it, and it has the power of God. Hearers who sit under the ministration of the truth without the Spirit may be likened to a man standing upon the brow of a hill, which commands the prospect of an extensive landscape. The varied beauties of field and dell are before him, but there is one drawback—the man is blind. So the truth is in the Bible, but the man has no eyes to see it. Prevailing truth is not of the letter, but of the Spirit (ver. 6). (2) There will be considerable difficulties about the mode of procedure. Man is a moral agent, and God has endowed him with talents, and invested him with an immense delegation of power in the distribution of those talents, in the exercise of that power. He has got such a respect for the will that He has placed within us, that He will never force an entrance. He will do everything else. But notwithstanding opposition, the gospel shall triumph. We can conceive of no enemies more powerful than those it has already vanquished. God is with the gospel—that is the great secret of its success. She does not trust in her inherent energy; she does not trust in her exquisite adaptation to the wants of men; she does not trust in the indefatigable and self-denying labours of her ministers. God is with the gospel, and under His guidance she shall march triumphantly forward reclaiming the world unto herself. And, oh, what a comfortable doctrine is this! If this gospel is thus to be conducted from step to step in its progressive march to triumph, I shall share, surely, in its succours and salvation by the way. It guarantees individual salvation and individual defence. Thy sufficiency is of God. What frightens thee—affliction? God is thy health. Persecution? God is thy crown. Perplexity? God is thy counsel. Death? God is thine everlasting life. Only trust in God, and all shall be well; life shall glide thee into death, and death shall glide thee into heaven. II. THE AUTHORITY WHICH BELIEVERS HAVE TO EXPECT THIS SUFFICIENCY FOR THEMSELVES. We have a right to expect it, because it is found and promised in the Bible. It is not my Bible, your Bible, it is common property, it belongs to the universal Church. 1. Listen, "Thus saith the Lord, who created thee, O Jacob, and formed thee, O Israel; fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name." Now think of all this, believers, past, present, and future, and then

come and hear God saying, "I have called thee by thy name," to every one out of that mass; "Thou art not lost in the crowd. Thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; through the rivers—deeper than the waters—they shall not overflow thee," &c. "The Lord God is a sun and a shield," light and defence; we do not want much more in our passage. "He will give grace and glory"; and if any of you are so perversely clever that you can think of some blessing that is not wrapped up either in grace or glory, "No good thing shall He withhold from them that walk uprightly." 2. Are you still dissatisfied? God condescends to expostulate with you upon your unbelief. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speaketh, O Israel, My way is hidden from the Lord?" How often have you said that! Are you still distrustful? Then ponder Scripture examples—Abraham on Moriah, Israel at the Red Sea, Nehemiah building the wall. 3. But you are not satisfied yet. You say, "Those are all instances taken from the Old Testament times." Well, come into common life. In that house a man is dying. He is a Christian, and knowing whom he has believed, he is not afraid to die. But the thought that he will leave his family without a protector pressed upon his spirit somewhat, and when you look at him there is a shade of sadness upon his countenance. But you gaze awhile, and you see that shade is chased away by a smile. What has wrought the change? What! why, a ministering angel whispered him, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive." You call the next morning; the widow is sitting in sorrow. But she too is a Christian, and flies to the Christian refuge, and her eye traces these comfortable words, "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name." (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*)

God the sufficiency of man:—Self-confidence is the great outstanding feature of the natural character. Almost all its words and actions bear this impress—"I am sufficient of myself." You will wait in vain for any recognition of the hand of God. But the self-sufficiency of fallen man is perhaps most strikingly displayed in the way in which he deals with those truths which affect the salvation of his soul and his hopes for eternity. He has his own notions of God's character and law and arrangements, and has adopted a plan of his own, which he imagines suits his case better than the one which Infinite Wisdom has appointed. Thus, self-sufficient is every one who has not been enlightened by the Spirit of God. But how different is it with Paul in the passage before us! I. And I remark in the first place THAT OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD IN RESPECT TO OUR TEMPORAL BLESSINGS AND EVERYDAY MERCIES. We are wholly indebted to Him for the past, and wholly dependent on Him for the future. Have we a comfortable home to live in, and does not peace reign in our household? These blessings are of the Lord's bestowing. Nor should we imagine that our sufficiency in temporal blessing is less of God in ordinary circumstances than in extraordinary occasions. II. But I remark secondly THAT OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD IN RESPECT TO OUR SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES. 1. In respect of justifying righteousness. We are not sufficient to work out a righteousness for ourselves. 2. Our sufficiency for holiness is of God. Old principles must be forsaken, and new ones adopted. Old habits must be given up and new ones formed. New tastes are to be cultivated and new desires cherished. But are we able to perform these duties of ourselves? Assuredly not. But what then? Does our inability excuse unbelief, impenitence, or indolence? No, verily; for while we are without strength in ourselves, there is strength in God if we will take hold of it. 3. Our sufficiency is of God in respect of usefulness. (*J. G. Dalgliesh.*)

Ver. 6. **Who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament.**—*An able minister of the New Testament*:—Two things are implied. I. First, GIFTS—natural endowments. A minister of the New Testament ought to have intellectual qualifications. II. But now, in the second place, there are SPIRITUAL QUALITIES which are higher, more wonderful, and even more essential. One would rather have a feeble intellect with a pure and devout heart than the brightest intellect without these glorifications of the soul. What are these spiritual qualities which unite to make an able minister of the New Testament? 1. First and most manifest is that which Paul himself indicates in the account of his own mission. The man who is to preach so as to move men's hearts must preach out of the depth of the faith that is in his own heart; he must be a man of faith. How can a man preach the New Testament unless he believes it? 2. Yet, again, a man who would be an able minister of the New Testament must be one who is emphatically true. What a mighty force is the man to whom, as we listen, our secret heart says, "We know

that he believes and feels all that." The transparency of truth is one of the grandest qualifications for a New Testament preacher. 3. Yet, again, another qualification for such work is courage. If he sees error he must point it out, even though he may wound some in doing it; if he sees fashionable folly and sins drawing men away from the simplicity that is in Christ, he must expose them. 4. And then, finally, an able minister of the New Testament will think only of Christ and not of himself. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*) **For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.**—*The "letter" and the "spirit" in the ministry of Christianity.*—1. The New Testament means God's revelation through Christ, in contradistinction to His revelation through Moses. Though both are admitted to be "glorious," the latter is shown to be "more glorious"; for the one is the dispensation of "righteousness," the other of "condemnation"; the one is permanent, the other is "done away"; the one so opens the spiritual faculties that the mind can look at it "with open face," the other through the prejudices of the Jewish people was concealed by a "veil." 2. This Christianity is the grand subject of all true ministry. (1) Not naturalism. Had man retained his primitive innocence nature would have been his grand text. But since the Fall men cannot reach the spiritual significance of nature, and if they could, it would not meet their spiritual exigencies. (2) Not Judaism. Judaism, it is true, came to meet man's fallen condition; it worked on for centuries and rendered high services. But it had its day, and is no more; it is "done away." **NOTE**—I. **THE TWOFOLD MINISTRY.** I do not think that Mosaism and Christianity are here contrasted. It would scarcely be fair to denominate Judaism a "letter." There was spirit in every part; think of the revelations of Sinai and of the prophets. Christianity itself has "letter" and "spirit." If it had no "letter," it would be unrevealed, and if it had "letter" only, it would be empty jargon. All essences, principles, spirits, are invisible, they are only revealed through letters or forms. The spirit of a nation expresses itself in its institutions; the spirit of the creation expresses itself in its phenomena; the spirit of Jesus in His wonderful biography. The text therefore refers to two methods of teaching Christianity. 1. The technical. The technical teachers are—(1) The verbalists, who deal mainly in terminologies. In the Corinthian Church, there were those who thought much of the "words of man's wisdom." (2) The theorists. I underrate not the importance of systematising the ideas we derive from the Bible; but he who exalts his system of thought, and makes it a standard of truth, is a minister of the "letter." Can a nutshell contain the Atlantic? (3) The Ritualists. Men must have ritualism of some kind. What is logic but the ritualism of thought? What is art but the ritualism of beauty? What is rhetorical imagery but the ritualism of ideas? Civilisation is but the ritualising of the thoughts of ages. But when the religious teacher regards rites, signs, and symbols as some mystic media of saving grace, he is a minister of the "letter." 2. The spiritual. To be a minister of the spirit is not to neglect the letter. The material universe is a "letter." Letter is the key that lets you into the great empire of spiritual realities. To be a minister of the spirit is to be more alive to the grace than the grammar, the substances than the symbols of the book. A minister of the "spirit" requires—(1) A comprehensive knowledge of the whole Scriptures. To reach the spirit of Christianity it will not do to study isolated passages, or live in detached portions. We must compare "spiritual things with spiritual," and, by a just induction, reach its universal truths. Can you get botany from a few flowers, or astronomy from a few stars, or geology from a few fossils? No more can you get the spirit of Christianity from a few isolated texts. (2) A practical sympathy with the spirit of Christ. We must have love to understand love. The faculty of interpreting the Bible is of the heart rather than the intellect. Christianity must be in us, not merely as a system of ideas, but as a life, if we would extend its empire. II. **THE TWOFOLD RESULTS.** 1. The result of the technical ministry of Christianity. (1) The verbalist "kills." "Words are the counters of wise men, but the money of fools." Words in religion, when they are taken for things, kill inquiry, freedom, sensibility, earnestness, enthusiasm, moral manhood. (2) The theorist kills. The Jews formulated a theory of the Messiah; He did not answer to their theory; so they rejected Him. Souls cannot feed upon our dogmas. The smallest seed requires all the elements of nature to feed on and grow to perfection; and can souls live and grow on the few dogmas of an antiquated creed? (3) The Ritualist kills. The ceremonial Church has ever been a dead Church. "Letter teaching" reduced the Jewish people to a "valley of dry bones." 2. The result of the spiritual ministry of Christianity. "It giveth life." "It is the Spirit,"

said Christ, "that quickeneth," &c. He who in his teaching and life brings out most of the spirit of the gospel will be most successful in giving life to souls. His ministry will be like the breath of spring, quickening all it touches into life. Such a ministry was that of Peter's on the day of Pentecost. Words, theories, rites, to him were nothing. Divine facts and their spirit were the all in all of his discourse, and dead souls bounded into life as he spoke. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *Ministry of the letter and of the spirit*:—I. THE MINISTRY OF THE LETTER. 1. The ministry of Moses was a formal ministry. It was his business to teach maxims and not principles; rules for ceremonials, and not a spirit of life. Thus, e.g., truth is a principle springing out of an inward life; but Moses only gave the rule: "Thou shalt not forswear thyself," and so he who simply avoided perjury kept the letter of the law. Love is a principle; but Moses said simply, "Thou shalt not kill, nor steal, nor injure." Meekness and subduedness before God—these are of the spirit; but Moses merely commanded fasts. Unworldliness arises from a spiritual life; but Moses only said, "Be separate—circumcise yourselves." It was in consequence of the superiority of the teaching of principles over a mere teaching of maxims that the ministry of the letter was considered as nothing. (1) Because of its transitoriness—"it was to be done away with." All formal truth is transient. No maxim is intended to last for ever. No ceremony, however glorious, can be eternal. Thus when Christ came, instead of saying, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself," He said; "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay"; and instead of saying, "Thou shalt not say, Fool, or Raca," Christ gave the principle of love. (2) Because it killed; partly because, being rigorous in its enactments, it condemned for any non-fulfilment (ver. 9). "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy." And partly it killed, because technicalities and multiplicities of observance necessarily deaden spiritual life. It was said by Burke that "no man comprehends less of the majesty of the English constitution than the *Nisi Prius* lawyer, who is always dealing with technicalities and precedents." In the same way none were so dead to the glory of the law of God as the Scribes, who were always discussing its petty minutæ. Could anything dull the vigour of obedience more than frittering it away in anxieties about the mode and degree of fasting? Could aught chill love more than the question, "How often shall my brother offend and I forgive him"? Or could anything break devotion more into fragments than multiplied changes of posture? 2. Now observe: No blame was attributable to Moses for teaching thus. St. Paul calls it a "glorious ministry"; and it was surrounded with outward demonstrations. Maxims, rules, and ceremonies have truth in them; Moses taught truth so far as the Israelites could bear it; not in substance, but in shadows; not principles by themselves, but principles by rules, to the end of which the Church of Israel could not as yet see. A veil was before the lawgiver's face. These rules were to hint and lead up to a spirit, whose brightness would have only dazzled the Israelites into blindness then. II. THE MINISTRY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. 1. It was a "spiritual" ministry. The apostles were "ministers of the spirit," of that truth which underlies all forms of the law. Christ is the spirit of the law, for He is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And St. Paul's ministry was freedom from the letter—conversion to the spirit of the law. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. 2. It was a "life-giving" ministry. (1) Note the meaning of the word. It is like a new life to know that God will not burnt-offering, but rather desires to find the spirit of one who says, "Lo! I come to do Thy will." It is new life to know that to love God and man is the sum of existence. It is new life to know that "God be merciful to me a sinner!" is a truer prayer in God's ears than elaborate liturgies and long ceremonials. (2) Christ was the spirit of the law, and He gave, and still gives, the gift of life (ver. 18). A living character is impressed upon us: we are as the mirror which reflects back a likeness, only it does not pass away from us: for Christ is not a mere example, but the life of the world, and the Christian is not a mere copy, but a living image of the living God. He is "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 3. Now such a ministry—a ministry which endeavours to reach the life of things—the apostle calls—(1) An able—that is, a powerful—ministry. He names it thus, even amidst an apparent want of success. (2) A bold ministry. "We use great plainness of speech." Ours should be a ministry whose very life is outspokenness and free fearlessness, which scorns to take a *via media* because it is safe, which shrinks from the weakness of a mere cautiousness, but which exults even in failure, if the truth has been spoken, with a joyful confidence. (F. W. Robertson, M.A.) *Letter and spirit*:—I. THE

RELATION BETWEEN LETTER AND SPIRIT. 1. A letter is a sign of a certain sound; an integral part of a word, with no meaning out of a word; and if one should occupy himself with any one letter, even all the letters in succession, and never form the word, he misses the purport for which the letters exist. On the other hand, if you take away the letters of a word, thinking them nothing, you find yourself at last without the word. The vocable is gone, and what comes of the meaning? 2. Everything that God has made has a letter and a spirit. The sun, stars, flowers, brooks, and the great sea itself are letters. And God has taken care to keep us from looking at these things as only letters. He has surrounded them with a certain glory which is continually reminding us that they are intended to be formed into words and sentences to express great truths regarding God. What idea would infinitude convey to me unless I had the picture in the great vault of heaven or the wide sea? Yet there are some who go through the world and recognise only one letter and another. To them a tree is only a tree, the sea only a body of water, and the sky a great concave in which the stars appear to be. Others perceive a connection between the different facts. Others go farther and observe law. Others, however, see the grand truth which the whole was made to teach regarding the character of God and His will, and the natural and moral history of man. He only sees the spirit who sees this. 3. As opposed to spirit, then, the letter means—(1) Outwardness. He who confines himself to form, whether as to the world, the Bible, worship or conduct, is a man of the letter. The Pharisees were such, and failed utterly to see the spirit, and lost all wish for it. All O. T. worshippers who saw nothing in the ceremonial higher than the ceremony; those who imagine that a mere outward observance of God's laws is all; those who think their presence in the church, or their bodily communicating at the Lord's table is all that is required, all belong to the letter. Extreme partisans of the spirit are perhaps not more exempt from this danger than others. The cry for spirit may be a phrase by which painfully solid things are made nebulous, and little left strong and certain but self. The last degradation of the word is reached when it indicates a superfine way of making things that are too real—thin, hazy, and uncertain. (2) Isolation. (a) Take a letter of a word and place it out by itself. It was more than a letter while in the word, but now it is only letter. So with a word taken out of a sentence, a sentence out of a paragraph or a passage out of a book. The meaning of each separate part is that which is intended to be expressed by the whole. (b) This holds in the book of nature. Take a tree, *e.g.* Can it be understood without reference to air and light and soil? But its meaning is visible when placed in the general economy of nature. So it is with the stream that runs down the hillside, the bird that sports in the air, &c. There is no object so small that you can grasp it by itself. For the understanding of a blade of grass you require a knowledge of all the sciences. (c) The principle holds, too, as to the Bible. No word, or phrase, or chapter of it has its true meaning looked at apart from the rest. The spirit of the Bible is the meaning of the whole Bible. The spirit of Christianity is its grand central idea and purpose of bringing men to God's likeness and fellowship, and glorifying God in the salvation of men. In this gospel there are many parts, and all are needed, but all have only one end and aim, and that one end and aim is the spirit; and if the separate parts are taken away from this one end and aim, they become letter. Hence, if any one part is contemplated habitually apart from the great aim, it becomes letter. If a man take up any promise, commandment, doctrine, or ceremony, and think of it as if it were the be all and the end all, he is making it letter. Any attribute of God by itself is letter, for God's attributes are not separate existences, but each is in reference to all. It is doubtless to guard us against this ever-pressing danger that the Word of God mixes up ideas in a way almost unparalleled in human literature. Doctrines are intertwined with duties, and so blended with facts that it is often a task of difficulty to sunder them and look at one by itself. 4. The way to reach the spirit is not by destroying or making light of the letter—or any letter. It is by the letter and all the letters that we reach the spirit; and our concern ought to be to know what is genuine letter, and to keep every letter in constant connection with the central spirit. Suppose a scholar spend his time on the mere words of his lesson, without trying to grasp the meaning, would the remedy be to erase the words? Or because some might dwell exclusively on pictures in the book, meant to illustrate the text, and never think of the meaning—would that be a good reason for taking out the pictures? And yet this minimising process forms nearly the whole plan of many for getting at spirit. Their recipe is short and simple—

destroy the letter. Let them apply this to the study of human institutions, to the study of botany or astronomy, and see what wealth of insight into law and principle will accrue. Do the millions of stars, the multiplicity of herbs and flowers, seem intended for such a formula? 5. All the letters of a word are, or ought to be, needful to the word. Sometimes the only difference between two words that mean very different things is found in one letter. And no letter, nor any number of letters, will ever be anything without the grand spirit of the whole; but no letter, however trivial it look, is poor with the spirit in it. The greatest truths shine in a single rite or word when filled with the spirit of the whole, as the laws of light and gravitation are shown in a single drop of dew. The little creek, so insignificant and even unseemly when the sea has ebbed, is a fine sight when it is filled and brimming with the swelling tide. That is the water of the great sea that floods it, and there, too, great ships that have crossed the ocean can float. II. THE OPPOSITE INFLUENCES OF LETTER AND SPIRIT. 1. "The letter killeth," not, of course, in virtue of its being letter, for God made the letter, which was never intended by Him to kill, but to give life by leading to the spirit. But—(1) Letter kills when men take it as the whole and never go beyond it, or when they are so much occupied about it as to have no thought for the spirit. Thus, the very grandeur of the material universe leads some men to rest in it. Many are so occupied with the arrangements and laws of nature that they never think of its spirit. And many more are so engrossed in the material business of the world that they seldom think of any significance in it at all. Some are killed by the beauty of the letter, some by the wonderful shape and order of the letters, others by the immediate utility they find in the letter. Do not imagine that it is only the letter of God's Word that kills; the letter of His works kills also. And the letter of other books often kills men mentally. When men read without thinking, or for amusement, or for the sake of reading, or, worst of all, of being able to say that they have read; they will certainly by and by have the capacity of thought dwarfed or quite killed out. It is known even that men have been intellectually killed by a liberal education. The faculties are so gorged with facts and words, which remain only facts and words, that they never play spontaneously and naturally again. So, men are killed by the letter in a far more serious sense when they look merely to the beauty of the Bible, or when they dwell on some other external aspects of it, or when they lose themselves in forms and ceremonies and outward observances. Sometimes they cherish hostility to the truths that dare to seem to rival their favourite doctrines, or come in the least competition with them. Whenever men arrive at this they are in process of being killed. (2) The abundance of letter kills. It is well known how dangerous to the spirit a multitude of ceremonies is. And a great number of doctrines marked off with minute logic, and pressed upon the soul, has the like effect. (3) The letter kills with certainty when formally installed in room of the spirit, as it was in our Lord's time. The Jews, as a whole, clung so fondly to the letter that they hated the spirit. (4) The letter kills by being made hostile to the spirit through disproportion and caricature, as when the doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty is so held as to be in actual opposition to the grand revelation that God "willeth not that any should perish," &c. If God is love, what can His Sovereignty mean, but the reign of love? The letter kills, when the doctrine of justification by faith is so held as to clash with the imperative and absolute obligation on all to obey always all the commandments of God. 2. The spirit gives life. (1) It alone mingles with our spirits. This is the great reason. We live on meaning, not on form or husks. And it is not any partial sense, but the central idea of the whole that sustains. The Spirit of God does not use the mere outward observance, but the drift or object of it. (2) The spirit of the Bible gives life, for the spirit is Christ. "The Lord is that spirit." The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the Bible; and the spirit of the Bible gives life, because when one imbibes the spirit of the Bible he embraces Christ. Let our idea of Christ be drawn from all parts of the Bible, and let the idea of Christ in turn illuminate and vivify all; thus only, and thus surely, shall we escape from the letter that killeth to the spirit that giveth life. (3) The spirit gives life by awakening love to God, which is life. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) *The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life:—* The text teaches—**I. THE POWERLESSNESS OF DIVINE COMMANDS ALONE TO PRODUCE OBEDIENCE.** This does not prove any imperfection in the law, which, being Divine, is perfect. The failure of obedience is due to the imperfection of human nature, which does not yield to the obligation. The conscience, indeed, is on the law's side,

but such is the strength of the lower nature that the man is hurried by animal impulse to sin. 1. Then one of two things happens. Either the habitual failure of the conscience produces habitual wretchedness, in a consciousness of powerlessness against evil, which may well be named death, or the law becomes the occasion of sin. The appearance of prohibition provokes the lower nature and irritates it to impatience of restraint. Now the consciousness of sin renders the man reckless, and to get rid of the uneasiness, the rider is thrown. When conscience thus loses dominion and ceases resistance, the man is given over to the licence of self-will and undergoes moral death. 2. On the other hand, the Spirit which characterises Christianity has a quickening power. The Spirit of Christ quickens—(1) By means of a perfect and most moving instance of obedience. In the Old Testament we do not meet with any such instance. Christ not only obeyed the law as it was intended to be obeyed, but opened it in a new and sublimer meaning, so that the imitation of Him is a new command. His example is presented in a form most intimate and intelligible, and it is the example of One who, in His very obedience, binds us to Himself by the tie of the tenderest and mightiest gratitude. And then, since Christ is God, and the revelation of the Father, the gratitude which He inspires becomes Divine love, and throws its full strength into obedience to the Divine commands. (2) By a secret influence on the heart. He is the Creator, and His noblest creative work is the moral regeneration of the human soul. He renders the heart perceptive of the beauty of Christ's character, and sensitive of the proper impressions. Thus our higher nature receives an incalculable increase of power. Conscience is re-enthroned and governs, but the law is obeyed not so much because it is obligatory, as because it is loved. II. THE INTELLECTUAL DEFICIENCY AND MISCHIEVOUSNESS OF MERE WRITING AS A MEANS OF INSTRUCTION. 1. As a vehicle of meaning, writing is immeasurably inferior to a living presence. The correspondence of distant friends is but a poor comfort in their separation. It is often obscure, and is liable to misunderstanding. If the writing in question is holy writing, the evil arising from ignorance or misunderstanding is augmented. To receive a falsehood as God's word is intellectual and moral death. Spiritual death is sometimes the effect of the letter of theological system. Technical terms are regarded by many with a reverence as great as are the words of Scripture. There are congregations to whom a man may preach with living eloquence the very truths which kindled the zeal of St. Paul and St. John, but his audience, not hearing the familiar dialect, are deaf to the music, blind to the glory, and dead to the spirit of the discourse. 2. Knowledge of the author, and sympathy with him, is indispensable to the understanding of his writings. Unless we had something in common with writers, not a line of the literature of the world would be intelligible. By the human nature, common to all ages, we understand the writings of Greece and Rome; but a higher than the spirit of man is necessary to the reading of Holy Scripture, even the living Spirit of truth and holiness, by whom it is inspired. (*Homilist.*) *The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life*:—I. THE LETTER, OR THE LAW, KILLETH, because—1. It denounceth death. 2. It can only convince and condemn. 3. It awakens the sense of sin and helplessness. 4. It excites sin and cannot either justify or sanctify. II. THE SPIRIT, OR THE GOSPEL, GIVETH LIFE, because—1. It declares the way of life. It reveals a righteousness which delivers us from the law and frees us from the sentence of condemnation. 2. It is that through which the Spirit is communicated as a source of life. Instead of a mere outward exhibition of truth and duty, it is a law written on the heart. It is a life-giving power. 3. The state of mind which it produces is life and peace. The Spirit is the source of eternal life. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life*:—By the letter is meant the moral law. Note—I. HOW AND WHY THE LETTER KILLS. 1. By its manifestation of that disruption which lay concealed under the happy outflow of young and brimming life. That strong energy, which is the core of our human nature, is brought up sharp by a relentless voice that refuses it its unhindered joy. It clashes against the obstinate resistance which bars its road with its terrible negative, "Thou shalt not covet"; and, in the recoil from that clashing, it knows itself to be subject to a divided mastery. It knows itself to be capable of violent variance with God, to be somehow spoilt, disordered, corrupt. The unity of sound organic health has suffered rupture. It has in it the evidences of a disorganisation and a dissolution, which is death. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." 2. And the law not only declared sin to be there, but it also provoked the sin, which fretted at its checks, into a more abundant and domineering

extravagance. "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Curiosity, imagination, vanity, impulsiveness—all are set astir to overleap the barrier, to defeat the obstacle that so sharply traverses its instinctive inclinations. "The law entered that offence might abound," and where offence abounded, death reigned, for the end of sin is death. 3. And the letter killed also by convicting. Over against the very men whom it irritated into revolt it stood as a judgment which could not be gainsaid nor denied. And they knew the sting of its terrible truth. Its wrath unnerved them, and its presence confounded. They were shut up within the prison-house of a criminal doom, and that justly. It killed, and this by God's own intention. "Yea, sin, that it might appear sin, worked death by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Better far that the secret poison should be brought out into violent action. Its sickness, its pain—these are, after all, proofs of capacity to struggle; these are methods of liberation. The body is releasing itself from disease through these bitter experiences; and let, then, the letter kill. Let death dig in its fangs. Let the doom deepen and darken. So only shall at the last the spirit of the resurrection quicken. II. Through sin the letter slew, and what is more, THERE WAS NO HOPE OF RELIEF OR ESCAPE THROUGH MAN'S SPIRITUAL ADVANCE, FOR THE HIGHER THE LAW THE SHARPER ITS SWORD OF JUDGMENT. As man's apprehension grew more spiritual, the discovery of his fall become more desperate. The law slew because it was just and pure and holy, and the quickened spiritual instincts would but learn the touch of a more biting terror; so that when at the last hour of that old covenant there stood upon the earth a Jew greater than Moses or Abraham, who accepted the hereditary law and promulgated it anew, with all the infinite and delicate subtlety which the mind of One who was one with the Giver of the law could convey into its edicts, so that it comprehended the entire man in its grip, why, such a gospel, if that Sermon of the Mount had been all, would have struck the very chill of the last death into the despairing soul, who listened and learned that not one jot or tittle of that law could fail. The sermon that some lightly affect to be the whole gospel of Christ would be by itself but a message of doom. III. MAN LIES THERE DEAD BEFORE HIS GOD—DEAD, UNTIL—WHAT IS IT, THIS SWEET AND SECRET CHANGE? What is it, this breaking and stirring within his bones, as when the force of the spring pricks and works within the wintry trunks of dry and naked trees? As he lies stung and despairing, there is a change, there is an arrival. Far, far within, deeper than his deepest sin, behind the most secret workings of his bad and broken will, there is a breaking and a stir, there is a motion and a quiver and a gleam, there is a check and a pause in his decay, a quickening is felt as of live flame. What is it? He cannot tell; only he knows that something is there and at work, strong and fresh and young; and as it pushes and presses and makes way, a sense of blessing steals into his veins, and peace is upon his hunted soul, and the sweet soundness of health creeps over his bruises and his sores: and he who has faith just suffers all the strange change to pass over him and to work its goodwill, as he lies there, feeding on its blessedness, wondering at its goodness, sending up his heart in silent breaths of unutterable thanks. So it is come. St. Paul saw those lame and impotent men rise and leap and sing at the coming of the new force, under the handlings of the new ministry; and, so seeing, he knew the full meaning of the Lord's promise that the Spirit should come, and that every one born of the Spirit should be even as the Spirit. And the essence of the change is this—that God, Who in His manifestation of the letter stood there over against man, has now passed over on to the side of the men whom His appeal has overwhelmed. He, the good Father, is bending over the sinner, and entering within his human spirit by the power of His own Holy Spirit, is inspiring him with His own breath. God Himself in us fulfils His own demands on us. God Himself moves over to our side to satisfy the urgency of His own will and word. In Him we do what we do, and we are not afraid, though the Son of God has come "not to destroy that law, but to fulfil it"—yea, even though from us is required a righteousness exceeding that of Scribe and Pharisee. We are not afraid for "the Spirit giveth life." God has come over to our side, but He has not ceased to stand over there against us. There He still stands as of old, and His demands are the same; still it is true as ever that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The revelation of the letter of the moral law holds good for us as much as for the Jew; and it is because that letter inevitably holds good that God has Himself entered within us, and striven for its fulfilment. (*Canon Scott-Holland.*)

Vers. 7-11. But if the ministration of death . . . was glorious.—*The peculiar glory of the gospel*.—I. THAT CONTRASTED WITH THE LAW AS “THE MINISTRATION OF CONDEMNATION” THE GOSPEL “IS THE MINISTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.” That the law was “the ministration of condemnation” will require little proof. The very glory which attended the publication of it struck terror into the beholders. Its unequivocal language was, “the soul that sinneth it shall die” (Exod. xix. 16; Heb. xii. 21; Ezek. xviii. 4, 20; Deut. xxvii. 28; Gal. iii. 10). Against this awful alternative the Mosaic dispensation provided no effectual resource (Heb. x. 4). But herein is the incomparable glory of the gospel displayed: it is, “the ministration of righteousness.” Not as some have most erroneously represented it, a remedial law; neither as others would call it, a less rigorous dispensation, relaxing our obligations to duty. And hence we are led to notice what may be regarded as the peculiar glory of the gospel, that it discovers to us a way in which sin may be pardoned, and yet sinners be saved. The gospel alone reveals a righteousness sufficient for this purpose. The gospel is also the ministration of righteousness, because it enjoins and secures the practice of righteousness among men. II. THAT CONTRASTED WITH THE LAW AS THE MINISTRATION OF DEATH, THE GOSPEL IS THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT. The Christian as contrasted with the Jewish dispensation may be called the “ministration of the Spirit,” not only on account of its more spiritual nature, and as containing the spirit and substance of ancient rites and figures, but chiefly because it is distinguished by the clearer revelation of the Divine Spirit, and the more abundant communications of His influence to the children of men. Let us, then, attend to the surpassing glory of the gospel in this view. We have already seen that the law, which is the ministration of death, made no effectual provision for the justification of transgressors; and as little did it provide for their sanctification. All precepts, and threatenings, and promises, were insufficient for this purpose, without the quickening and renewing influence of the Holy Ghost. How refulgent, then, the glory of the gospel, when we consider that the Spirit, of whom it testifies, is Himself the eternal Jehovah! Under the ministration of the Spirit, how marvellous the success which attended the preaching of the apostles, amidst the combined opposition of earth and hell! Still farther, under the ministration of the Spirit the Church has been preserved in succeeding ages, since the apostles’ days to the present time. Finally, under the ministration of the Spirit, and by His benign influence, the Church throughout succeeding generations shall become gradually more enlightened, and sanctified, and enlarged. Is such, then, the glory of the gospel? 1. What an unspeakable honour is conferred upon those who are allowed to be the ministers of it! 2. Again, is such the glory of the gospel; how inestimable is your privilege? The Lord has not dealt so with every people. Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear, what many prophets and righteous men desired to see and to hear but were not permitted. 3. Still farther, is such the glory of the gospel? Let its ministers learn to be more and more faithful and earnest in declaring and recommending it. 4. Let me beseech you who attend on our ministrations to consider, that in proportion to the glory of the gospel must be the condemnation of those who do not esteem and improve it. 5. Once more, is the gospel the ministration of the Spirit? Let us all be solicitous to experience His saving influence on our own souls; and let us be earnest also for the communications of His grace to others. (*D. Dickson.*) *The ministrations of law and gospel*.—I. THE LAW WAS A MINISTRATION OF DEATH, BUT NEVERTHELESS IT WAS GLORIOUS. 1. There must ever enter into our thought on matters of religion continued reference to the unchangeableness of God. If we were setting ourselves to scrutinise the arrangements of a finite, and therefore changeable agent; if we found that at one time he had given a law to his inferiors which worked out their death, and that afterwards he had sent forth another law which allowed of their life, we might conclude that he had, in the first instance, been making an experiment, and that, warned by its failure, he had turned himself to a new course of treatment. But we must not so reason in regard of God. He knew perfectly well when He issued the law that it would prove a ministration of death. And if the law and the gospel had been altogether detached, there would have existed great cause for marvel at God’s appointing a ministration of death. But when it is remembered that the law was introductory to the gospel, so that the covenant of works literally made way for the covenant of grace, all surprise ought to vanish. From the earliest moment of human apostasy, God’s dealing with the fallen had always reference to the work of atonement. Though by itself the law was a ministration of death, yet those who live under it were not necessarily left to die. Know we not that whilst this legal

dispensation was in the fulness of its strength, there passed many an Israelite into the kingdom of heaven? We carry you to the scenes of temple-worship, and bid you learn from the emblematical announcement of redemption that no man died because living under the ministration of death; but that, even whilst the moral law was unrepealed, as a covenant it could weigh no one down to perdition who looked onward to the long-promised sacrifice. 2. But while the Divine goodness in the appointment of a ministration of death is thus vindicated, the law was actually a ministration of death. Could man, with all his industry, obey truly the moral law? If not, then the ministration of the law must have been a ministration of death, seeing, that if it cannot be fulfilled, it must unavoidably condemn. You shall take the Crucifixion as an answer to all questioning on the law being aught else than a ministration of death. Why, if man had a capacity for working out by his own strivings obedience to the law, and he could win to himself a crown of glory—why did Divinity throw itself into humanity, and achieve, through the wondrous coalition, the mastery over death, and Satan, and hell? 2. Though the law was thus a ministration of death, it was nevertheless glorious. It was mainly as a consequence of its own perfection that the law proved a minister of death. Had the law been a defective law, constructed so as to be adapted to the weakness of the parties on whom it was imposed, and not to the attributes of Him from whom it proceeded, it is altogether supposable that the result might not have been the condemnation of mankind. But if a law had been constructed which man could have obeyed, would it have been glorious? You tell me, in the fact of its being a practical and saving law, and allowing the wretched to work out deliverance from their wretchedness. Then it is glory that the law should make loop-holes for offenders, in case of being a rampart against offences; while the whole of the universe must have been shaken at God's overlooking of sin. We say not, it was glory that man should perish; but we do say it was glorious that the moral law was the transcript of the Divine mind.

II. THE GOSPEL AS THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT; AND AS, THEREFORE, FAR EXCEEDING THE LAW IN ITS GLORY. 1. The ministration of the Spirit is set in antithesis to the ministration of death. The great work which Christ effected was the procurement of life to those who were dead in trespasses and sins. We are legally dead—because born under the sentence of eternal condemnation—and we are morally dead, because insensible to our condition; and, if insensible, totally unable to reanimate ourselves. The legal death the Mediator may be said to have annihilated, for He bore our sins in His own body on the tree; and the moral death—for the destruction of this He made the amplest provision, procuring for us, by the merits of His passion, the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. 2. The gospel in its every department is a ministration of righteousness, and therefore of spiritual life. It is the mightiest display of God's righteousness. Where has God equally shown His hatred of sin, His settled determination to wring its punishment from the impenitent? It is a system, moreover, whose grand feature is the application to man of the righteousness of Christ; "Christ is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," and therefore is He our life. And this gospel, moreover, while displaying a perfect righteousness which must be wrought for us, insists peremptorily on a righteousness which must be wrought in us by God's Spirit—the ministration of the Spirit thus making our own holiness, though it can obtain nothing in the way of merit, indispensably necessary in the way of preparation. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The dispensations of the law and gospel compared*:—I. THE LAW WAS GLORIOUS. 1. The perfection of the moral law was a favourite subject with the saints of old (Neh. ix. 13; Psa. xix. 7). But this glory, as regards God, made it to man, if he rested in it, the ministration of condemnation. It set before men a perfect rule of conduct, and therefore required more than fallen man could fulfil. Yet it pronounced a curse upon all who did not perfectly answer to its demands (Gal. iii. 10; Rom. iii. 19, 20, vii. 9–11). 2. But the ceremonial law is also glorious, not in itself, but as it borrowed light from the gospel and prefigured it. Whereas the moral law doomed all under it to death, the ceremonial law gave them some faint indications of mercy. The ceremonial law, then, must be greatly inferior to the gospel, inasmuch as Christ is the substance of all its types and shadows. Since He is come it has lost its glory. It is chiefly useful to show the necessity of atonement. II. WHEREIN CONSISTS THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL? 1. It is a republication of the moral law; therefore, what glory the law has the gospel has likewise. But it possesses far higher glory, inasmuch as it is the ministration of righteousness. As the law denounces all who rest upon it as a covenant of works to death, so the gospel, by its gift of righteousness, conveys life to all who receive it in

faith. The law shows the holiness of God, and is therefore glorious, but the gospel shows the holiness, justice, and mercy of God in an inconceivable degree by the very method in which it freely dispenses righteousness, and therefore it is transcendently glorious. 2. It is superior to the law, as it is the ministration of the Spirit, who is the life and soul of the whole system. We may descant about the righteousness of Christ, and the demands of the perfect law, but we never could have attained to that righteousness unless the Spirit of God had been likewise bestowed, to write these truths in our hearts, and to bring home these doctrines with power. Conclusion: 1. As regards the law—(1) Do not neglect it by taking up your own rule of life, such as the customs of men and worldly maxims afford. The law of God is the only rule of duty (Matt. xix. 17), and is still our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. (2) Do not abuse it by looking to be saved by your own obedience to its commands. 2. As regards the gospel—(1) Do not neglect it. It is God's method of saving sinners; His mercy now flows in this one channel; if you seek His mercy in any other way, you will find yourselves in an evil case (Thess. i. 8). (2) Do not abuse it. Remember that while Christ came to provide forgiveness, He came also "to purify to Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." (*H. J. Hastings, M.A.*)

The two ministrations :—Why should the law be described as "the ministration of death" or "the ministration of condemnation"? Are not the terms unnecessarily harsh? Do they not suggest a false idea of the dignity of law? My first object is to defend a negative answer to this inquiry. The very fact of penal law being established presupposes either power or disposition to do that which is wrong. The simplest of illustrations shall bring the meaning of the assertion, that law defines and limits liberty, within the comprehension of a child. For a length of time you have been in the habit of regarding certain fields as common property; again and again you have struck your course across them to shorten or vary a journey. The idea that you were trespassing never occurred to you. So far as you knew there was no law whatever in the case. In process of time, however, the proprietor determines to assert his right to his own land. With this end in view he gives public intimation that all persons found upon his property will be dealt with as trespassers. He proclaims a law. He sets up in his field a ministration of condemnation. From that hour the whole question of your liberty undergoes a fundamental change. Yet, why should the law be designated "the ministration of condemnation" and "the ministration of death"? When the law is based on rectitude, what possible relation can it sustain to death or condemnation? All punishment stands on the plane of death. Death, absolutely so called, is the ultimate penalty; but the very gentlest blow, nay, the very shadow of a frown, is death in incipency; that is to say, it belongs to the kingdom of death, and not in any sense to the kingdom of life; death is in the penalty as truly as the plant is in the seed. That law is correctly designated "the ministration of condemnation," and "the ministration of death," may be shown by another simple illustration. Let me suppose that as heads of houses you had not for a long time felt the necessity of requiring all the members of your households to be at home by a fixed hour. In the working of your family life, however, you find it necessary to determine an hour at which every child shall be with you. To that effect you proclaim your law. In process of events, I further suppose, one of your children is a mile off when the well-known hour strikes. What is the consequence in his own experience? He hears stroke after stroke without alarm, until, alas! the legal hour is pealed off. How that stroke shakes him! how reproachful the shivering tone! A week before he could have heard the same hour strike, and nothing would have alarmed him. He now feels that the law is "the ministration of condemnation." He says, "I am late; I should have been at home; my father's eye will reprove me; I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known irregularity in time, except the law had said, Thou shalt be punctual." Take the world's first case of law. There was law in the Edenic life. There was a "Thou shalt not" in the programme of the world's first experience of manhood, and over it fell the shadow of threatened death. Liberty was made liberty by law. Up to the very moment of touching the forbidden fruit, Adam knew not what was meant by the "ministration of condemnation"; but the moment after, how vast his knowledge! The law said nothing to Adam of "condemnation" until he had broken it. So long as he kept the law he knew nothing of death, except by observation. Fools are they who cavil because Adam did not physically expire. Is death a question of frozen marrow? Every man knows the killing power of sin. In darkness you have done some deed of

iniquity. Your heart condemns you. When you come forward to the light, you feel yourself dead, your moral vitality is gone. Another inquiry is now suggested. Under circumstances so appalling, how can "the ministration of condemnation" be said to be "glory"?—for that is the royal word of the text. I answer, the glory is not in the condemnation and the death, except in the immediate connection with the law. That there is glory in law is open to decisive demonstration. The establishment of law implies authority on the part of the lawgiver. Law is the declared will of the superior. How is it amongst ourselves? Does the servant give law to the master, or the master to the servant? By whose authority is the table of regulations put up in all your great hives of industry? I repeat, then, that law implies authority on the part of the lawgiver. Carry these illustrations forward to the case argued in the text, then the "glory" will at once kindle upon us, and, like the children of Israel, we shall need the protecting veil. Recall the dread days of Sinai. Almighty God alights, and the mountain shudders at His presence. Every utterance of the eternal mind must have its own peculiar glory; alike the utterance designed to produce physical results and the utterance intended to operate in the moral kingdom: each shines with a glory distinctively its own, and in proportion as the moral is superior to the physical, so does the glory of the one exceed the glory of the other. When, therefore, I contemplate the dread issue of an infraction of God's law, I can understand the apostle when he calls that law "the ministration of condemnation"; and as I further contemplate the sublime purpose of that law, I can understand how, upon such a "ministration," there shone a "glory" which must have beamed from heaven! The gospel is described as "the ministration of righteousness," and is affirmed to "exceed in glory." In giving the law, God did not accommodate Himself to human weakness by imposing easy or elastic conditions and regulations. He declared that which was absolute in rectitude. The law rendered supremely important service to man if it did nothing more than bring him to the consciousness that he was powerless to fulfil requirements so holy. The law showed him the height to which he must ascend, and he trembled, and owned his weakness. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." The law was not designed to give life. It had but a schoolmaster's work to do. There was an epoch of law; there is now an epoch of faith. Faith is younger than law; hence, "before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up into the faith which should afterwards be revealed." As the law was antecedent to faith, so also it stands in perfect contrast; "the one being "the ministration of condemnation," the other "the ministration of righteousness." Yet what is meant by asserting that the law was antecedent to the gospel? I mean antecedent merely in the order of open manifestation. The promise that Christ should come into the world takes precedence of all other promises. The Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world. Love is from everlasting, law is but of yesterday; law is for a season, love is for ever; law is a transient flame, love an eternal orb. Sublime beyond full comprehension is the fact that the gospel is "the ministration of righteousness." Those who exercise repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are not merely pardoned; that would be much—infinite more, indeed, than the law could ever do—but they are made righteous, they are cleansed, they are sanctified, they are transformed into the image of God. Law had no blood in its iron hand to apply to the depraved and guilty nature of man. It is impossible that law could forgive, law only can condemn. Here is the moral contrast in all its breadth. The law is weak, the gospel is mighty; the law touches the outer man, the gospel penetrates the heart. The ministration of righteousness exceeds the ministration of condemnation "in glory." This is in strict harmony with God's general method of government. He never goes from the greater to the less, but ever from the less to the greater. We thought nothing could exceed the splendour of Sinai, yet it was eclipsed by the transcendent magnificence of Calvary. The law was veiled under types and shadows, but the Son of God has been crucified before our eyes. The exceeding glory of the gospel, then, is seen in this, that while it comes to condemn sin, it also comes to destroy its power, and save those whom it has brought into bondage. The gospel has no word of pity for sin, or of extenuation for error, but it melts with infinite compassion as it yearns over the sinner. The law never had a loving word for the transgressor—it was stern, inflexible, rigorous. Some are endeavouring to reach heaven through obedience to the law. Are you wiser than God? Is the atonement a mistake? A man passes from one "ministration" to another, and so is brought nearer and nearer to God, we should remind our-

selves that the advancing ages multiply our responsibilities. We cannot live under the "exceeding glory" without incurring proportionate obligations. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Divine revelation more glorious in Christ than in Moses*:—Note three facts in the context—1. The infinite Father has made a special revelation to man. This is a fact answering to the *à priori* reasonings and intuitions of humanity. 2. That this special revelation has mainly come through two great general sources—Moses and Christ. 3. That while the essence of the revelation is the same, the forms differ, and the forms it assumes through Christ are most "glorious." I. THIS SPECIAL REVELATION AS IT CAME THROUGH MOSES WAS GLORIOUS. Note—1. The wonderful display of Divinity attending the expression of it on Mount Sinai. The apostle seems to have had an eye to this in his reference to the supernatural brightness that rested on "the face of Moses" (Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30). What wonderful things did Moses hear and see during the forty days he was up on that mountain! What overwhelming display of glory there must have been when from His hand went a "fiery law"! (Exod. xix., xx.; Heb. xii. 18–22). 2. The magnificence of its religious scenes and celebrations. The temple, how splendid in its architecture, materials, and furniture! The priesthood, how imposing in their costume and their services! The psalmody, how sublime! &c. "Glorious things are spoken of the city of the living God." 3. The stupendous miracles that stand in connection with it. The wilderness was the theatre of great wonders. 4. The splendid intellects which were employed in connection with it. The philosophy of Solomon, the poetry of David, the eloquence of Isaiah, the imagery of Ezekiel, the strains of Jeremiah, &c. Divine revelation, as it stands in connection with Moses, is associated with the most brilliant of human geniuses. II. THIS SPECIAL REVELATION IS MORE GLORIOUS AS IT APPEARS IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST. 1. The Christian form of Divine revelation is more adapted to give life than the Mosaic. Compare the effect of the words of the revelation as it came from Christ, addressed by Peter on the day of Pentecost, to the moral effect of the preaching of any of the prophets under the law, and you will find that the one may justly be called a "ministration of death" as compared with the other. 2. The Christian form of Divine revelation is more emphatically spirit than the Mosaic. It is called here "the ministration of the spirit." There was much spirit in the Mosaic; but Christianity throbs through every sentence with the eternal spirit of truth. Then, too, the smaller amount of the spirit in the Mosaic was so overlaid with ceremony that it was almost buried out of sight; whereas the greater amount of the spirit of truth in connection with Christianity is stripped almost entirely of ceremony. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are all. 3. The Christian form of Divine revelation is more restorative than the Mosaic. The apostle speaks of one as the ministration of "condemnation," and the other, that of "righteousness." The Mosaic revelation had an aspect of terrible severity. Contrast the "curses" of Moses (Deut. xxvii. 15–26) with the beatitudes of Christ (Matt. v. 3–12). 4. The Christian form of Divine revelation is more lasting than the Mosaic. Christianity is the final revelation of God to our world. Conclusion: The subject serves—1. To expose the absurdity of making Moses the interpreter of Christ. 2. To show the wrongness of going to Moses to support opinions you cannot get from Christ. 3. To reveal the immense responsibility of men living in gospel times. 4. To indicate the serious position of a true minister. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The glory of the gospel*:—Note—I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE LAW. 1. "The ministration of condemnation." 2. "The ministration of death." Its sentence is a death sentence. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Now from the execution of this sentence the law provides no resource. Sacrifices for sin, it is true, were provided under the Mosaic dispensation; but they were merely typical of that great sacrifice for sin, which was to form a part of another and more glorious dispensation. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE GOSPEL. 1. It is the "ministration of righteousness," because it provides for the believing sinner a complete satisfaction for the offences he has committed against the law of God, and an obedience perfectly commensurate with its demands, and so saves him from condemnation and death. 2. It is "the ministration of Spirit," because of the great outpouring of the Spirit with which it commenced, and the abundant communication of the same Spirit with which it has ever since been attended. III. THE SUPERIOR GLORY OF THE GOSPEL ABOVE THAT OF THE LAW. The Jewish dispensation was glorious. It had a glorious Author. Its object was glorious, viz., to unfold the infinite justice, purity, and majesty of God. It was published in a glorious manner. But, notwithstanding all this, the glory of the law sinks into nothing when compared with the gospel.

The names which are here applied to the law and the gospel show us at once the propriety of this language. But the superior glory of the gospel may be made clear by other considerations. 1. It offers greater blessings to man than were offered by the law. The Mosaic dispensation had a reference principally to the present life, and most of its promises were temporal promises. The gospel places within our reach a share of that very joy which satisfies the Redeemer for "the travail of His soul." 2. It offers these blessings more extensively. The promises of the law were confined to one nation, and even of this nation it was but a little remnant that inherited the spiritual benefits of the dispensation under which they lived. The blessings of the gospel, on the contrary, are thrown open to all the world. 3. It has a greater influence on the hearts of men. The law had no power to touch the heart, and to cause men to love and obey it. The gospel, on the contrary, was no sooner published than it made glorious changes in the characters and lives of multitudes who embraced it. 4. It has a glory which will last for ever. 5. It is a brighter display of the Divine law. Conclusion: 1. How honourable an office is that of a minister of Christ! 2. How great is the privilege which we enjoy in living under the dispensation of the gospel! 3. How great a debt of gratitude and praise does every Christian owe to his crucified Lord! 4. How unwise are they who hope for pardon and salvation on the ground of their partial obedience to the law of God! 5. How ignorant are they of the gospel of Christ who make the influence of the Spirit the object of their scorn! 6. How anxiously should every hearer of the gospel desire that it may be made the ministration of the Spirit to himself, that he may experience its softening and purifying influence in his own heart! (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

The glory of the gospel:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION. 1. Sensuous. 2. Stationary. 3. Artificial. 4. Transitory. 5. Shadowy. 6. Dangerous. II. THE EXCELLENT GLORY OF THE GOSPEL. 1. Spiritual. 2. Progressive. 3. Intrinsic. 4. Immortal. 5. Luminous. 6. Inviting. (*W. W. Wythe.*)

The gospel is—I. A MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT. It was foretold that it should be so. "The days come when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel," &c. Then, respecting Him who is the head of the new dispensation, His holy body was the immediate product of the Holy Ghost, at His baptism "the Holy Spirit like a dove descended upon Him," His ministry was conducted by the power of the Spirit, He spake to the apostles of the Holy Ghost, and the last thing He said to them on earth was, that "they should wait for the promise of the Spirit." On the day of Pentecost it was fulfilled. And whatever light and grace and purity there has been in the Church from that day to this has been by the same influence and power. What, then, was the ministry of Moses, compared with that economy at the head of which appeared Jesus Christ with this great title—"He that baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire"? II. A MINISTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. III. A MINISTRATION OF LIFE. The first Adam was made a living soul, the second a quickening spirit. We were dead in trespasses and sins, but we are said to be "quickened." "Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." IV. A MINISTRY OF PLAINNESS (vers. 12, 13), that is, clearness of manifestation—not the obscurity of a type—not the difficulty of a prediction. All the gospel is as plain as language can make it. And having the light and plainness of the instruction of the N.T., the writers speak with confidence; they say, "We know whom we have believed," &c. V. A DISPENSATION THAT IS TO ABIDE. "Of the increase of His government there shall be no end." (*J. Stratten.*)

How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?—*The ministration of the Spirit*:—Who does not yearn over the long-lost joys of his boyhood—the light heart, the game, the holiday, and the prize? And yet we think manhood a nobler thing even with the wrinkles on its brow. Who does not long for the simple faith of his early years? Yet those who have gone through the agonies of honest doubt know that the faith which can survive such a test is worth more than that which never suffered a pang. The springing corn with its emerald glow of fresh young life is glorious; but the rich harvest is rather glorious. A scaffolding is sometimes a thing of beauty, but the building which it surrounds deprives it of permanent interest. There is a disposition to praise the good old times; yet no man of competent mind can say that the times of limited education, restricted commerce, slow transit and spiritual despotism were better than these. There is, however, and always has been this conservative tendency, and the Church has never been freed from it. Even in the days of Paul there were Gentile Christians whose very Christ had come to them so dressed up in Jewish garments that they were anxious to retain as much as possible of the older dispensation. So Paul had to reassert here the spiritual nature of the gospel he had been the first to

proclaim at Corinth. In order to understand the ministration of the Spirit—I. **CONTRAST SPIRIT WITH BODY.**—1. If we see several things united to each other by some secret bond, and subserving some secret purpose, we speak of them as a body, and that purpose as their uniting spirit. So a company of individuals instinct with a common idea are spoken of as bodies of men, and their common object as the spirit which actuates them. This arises, doubtless, from our consciousness that we are ourselves compounds of many parts over which a presiding spirit rules. Paul often speaks of the Church under this image—it is the Body of Christ inhabited by His Spirit. 2. Under the old dispensation a similar body grew up, and the religion of Moses, Samuel and Solomon, might be termed a ministration of the body. It consisted of innumerable regulations for the external management of the individual and the community. But the prejudices of the Jews led them to suppose that the body was of more consequence than the spirit; and directly the body considers itself the chief end of existence, the spirit is impaired. The man who sinks into such a condition becomes a morbid valetudinarian, a slave of his poor body; the institution thus perverted becomes obstructive of the end that called it into existence; and the Church that does so quenches the Spirit of God. When the Spirit works upon us we can never rest satisfied with the most careful attention to the most venerable rubric, but shall be moved to live a Divine life. 3. We have many institutions and societies, the body of which has sprung into existence under the direction of the Spirit. In proportion as they are imbued with that Spirit, they are parts of His scheme of mercy for a ruined world. But if we in our vanity make our own sanctuary or schools, organisations, church principles, &c., ends rather than means we deplete them of all their power. II. **CONTRAST THE SPIRIT WITH THE LETTER.** 1. Take any word—of what does it consist? Of a few strokes in themselves, utterly unmeaning. Pronounce the word? It is a sound having no meaning in itself. You and others agree to represent certain ideas by that word; but there is no necessary connection between the word and the meaning; for the same word may convey ideas utterly dissimilar to different people or nations. Thus though the letter has great value, it is transitory, accidental, liable to change; but the thing connoted, or the spirit conveyed may have an undying worth. 2. We speak of the letter and the spirit of a law or a testament. The one may be observed while the other is violated. Often has the letter of the Divine law been kept, while its spirit has been trifled with, and *vice versâ*. A Divine spirit penetrated the rules of the O.T. dispensation; the spirit of that covenant has been ministered afresh in the gospel, but the letter in which it has been conveyed by Moses and Christ has widely differed. (1) At one time the nation and government of Israel was the form in which God's love and providence were made known to the world; but now the holy nation is found wherever hearts beat with childlike love to God. (2) So the spirit of sacrifice was seen in the thank and burnt-offerings; but while the mode of expressing this is changed the spirit is not lost. (3) The idea of holiness—separation to Divine use—was traced out in a marvellous detail, which has been for the most part superseded; yet the gospel puts holiness on an even higher elevation, exhibits it to our view in an embodiment of its loftiest perfection, and assures us that the same Spirit that was given to Christ is sent forth into our hearts. III. **THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH, *i.e.*, the dwelling in us of a living Christ, overpowering both the lower and more cultivated passions by Christlike and heavenly longings—the quickening of our whole spiritual being and alliance with God Himself.** Now we must not forget that the ministration of the flesh, *i.e.*, all that man has been able to achieve unaided by the Divine Spirit, has been in some respects glorious. There is an appalling grandeur in the efforts of men. The daring of Prometheus, the wisdom of Confucius, the conscience of Socrates, the mental affluence of Aristotle, the insight of Plato, the self-sacrifice of Buddha—still all this has no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth. The spirit soars into a region where the flesh in its most refined form cannot penetrate; it deals with problems that science cannot solve, and induces in human nature a new series of forces transcending reason, satisfying conscience, glorifying God. IV. **THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE MINISTRATION OF DEATH AND THAT OF THE SPIRIT.** 1. The ministration of the body was a ministration of that which is perishable and must die, and hence it is a ministration of death. The ministration of the flesh is a ministration of that which has no real vitality in it, and hence it, too, is a ministration of death. The ministration of the letter of the law was a ministration of threatening and destruction. But the ministration of the Spirit is eternal. 2. The whole of the ministration of death had a glory of its own. The Lord of life employed it to teach mankind

lessons of life and happiness; but as sunrise is more glorious than the sublimity of the midnight storm, and the dawnspring than the dazzle of the lightning, and the smile of spring than the magnificence of iceberg or desert mirage, so does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory all the ministration of death. (*H. R. Reynolds, D.D.*)

Vers. 9-11. **For if the ministration of condemnation be glory.**—*Condemnation and righteousness* here replace death and life, because it is through condemnation that man becomes the prey of death; and the grace which reigns in him to eternal life reigns through righteousness (Rom. v. 21). The contrast of these two words is very significant for Paul's conception of the gospel: it shows how essential to and fundamental in his idea of righteousness is the thought of acquittal or acceptance with God. Man is sinful, under God's condemnation; and he cannot conceive a gospel which does not announce, at the very outset, the removal of that condemnation, and a declaration in the sinner's favour. Mere pardon may be a meagre conception, but it is that without which no other Christian conception can exist for a moment. That which lies at the bottom of the new covenant, and supports all its promises and hopes is this, "I will forgive their iniquities," &c. Of course, righteousness is more than pardon; it is not exhausted when we say that it is the opposite of condemnation; but unless we feel that the very nerve of it lies in the removal of condemnation, we shall never understand the N.T. tone in speaking of it. It is this which explains the joyous rebound of the apostle's spirit whenever he encounters the subject: he remembers the black cloud, and now there is clear shining. He cannot exaggerate the contrast, nor the greater glory of the new state. The stars are bright till the moon rises; the moon herself reigns in heaven till her splendour pales before the sun; but when the sun shines in his strength there is no other glory in the sky. All the glories of the old covenant have vanished for Paul in the light which shines from the Cross and from the throne of Christ. (*J. Denney, B.D.*) *The glory of the gospel*:—Our estimate of any object is considerably enhanced by comparing it with others of inferior excellence. The size and capacity of the vessel which we say is the largest afloat are by an inexperienced eye more clearly discernible when she is seen in company with one of much smaller dimensions. By such comparison, however, we do nothing more than determine the relative value or properties of an object. Christ, for example, in asserting of Himself that, in respect of wisdom, He was greater than Solomon, instead of wishing us to depreciate the attainments of that illustrious king, intended us to consider him as by far the wisest of uninspired men; and our estimate of the wisdom of the one depends upon our acknowledgment of the great wisdom of the other. Paul says of the gospel, that it is a "better testament, a more glorious dispensation than the Mosaic"; but, in so expressing himself, he does not seek to lessen the worth, or to deny the Divine authority of the legal economy. I. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN OVER THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION WILL BE APPARENT IF WE CONSIDER THE PERSONS BY WHOM THEY WERE RESPECTIVELY INTRODUCED. In tracing the origin of the Jewish economy we are led to ascribe its authorship to God. But although God may thus, in strict propriety of speech, be said to be the founder of the Old Testament dispensation, yet instrumentally may we assign this honour unto Moses. Moses was but a man, but Christ was God; the one was only a servant, the other was a Son over His own house. The fact of the incarnation gives a glory to the gospel which never could be claimed for the law. How important must that system have been in the estimation of the Infinite Godhead which demanded that the second person in the Trinity should be the immediate agent in publishing it to the world. Moses was not without his faults. No blemish attaches to Christ's character. Moses could teach the law of God, and institute His ordinances, but he could not enforce the one nor render the other available to salvation. Christ's words are spirit and life. The unequalled glory of Jesus must be diffused over His gospel. II. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN OVER THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION IS EVINCED BY THE CHARACTER OF ITS REVELATIONS. However suited the institutions of Moses were to the time at which they were appointed, they are in their nature, and in the benefits which they procured, greatly inferior to those of Christ. The most precious truths were deposited under obscure symbols; the most imperative acts of worship were performed in expensive rites and burdensome ceremonials. Christianity, as a light from heaven, has brushed away the veil which concealed those things which man's interests required should be clearly unfolded. She comes to us in the form of mercy, and speaks in words of the tenderest compassion. The darkness is past,

and the true light now shineth. Turn, too, to the intolerable yoke of ceremonies which marked the Mosaic dispensation, as compared with the easy yoke of Jesus—how burdensome the one, how light and gentle the other! III. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN OVER THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION IS APPARENT FROM THE MORE EXTENSIVE DIFFUSION OF ITS BLESSING. The religion of Moses was exclusively the religion of the Jews. It was intended not for the whole world, but only for one nation. Very different, however, is it with regard to the gospel. Devised and published for the exclusive benefit of none, but aiming at the happiness of universal man, its field is the world. Adjusted to the peculiarities of none, it seeks the salvation of all. As the acorn cast into the soil becomes the giant oak, so the gospel, originally small as a grain of mustard seed, is now the wide-spreading tree. Nor is its extension yet completed. IV. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN OVER THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION IS EVIDENT FROM ITS PERPETUITY. (*J. Jeffrey.*) For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.—*The pre-eminence of the gospel above the law*:—1. Now, first, as to the knowledge of God, His nature and attributes; that there is a God, that there is but one God of infinite justice, wisdom, and goodness, the supreme governor of the world, and a gracious rewarder of those that seek Him, is absolutely necessary to be known by all who would attain eternal life. And it cannot be doubted but that the faithful from the beginning of the world had this knowledge of God; but men had not so certain, so clear a knowledge of these things before the coming of Christ as we have now under the gospel. The doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity may perhaps be discerned in the writings of Moses and the prophets; but it is so legibly written in the writings of the apostles that there is no need of learning to discover it. The believers under the law were persuaded that all things were governed by an all-wise and all-powerful being; and yet the most enlightened of them were at a loss to account for the justice of Divine providence in suffering the wicked to prosper, and the righteous to be afflicted; but every common Christian is able to solve this difficulty by the help of what he hath learned from the gospel. Thus doth it appear that the knowledge which the Jews had of the nature and attributes of God was very short of ours. 2. And as the gospel gives us a more distinct account of the origin and demerit of sin than the law doth, so also doth it furnish us with a brighter discovery of the methods whereby the guilt of it is atoned. And, indeed, it would be no way to our advantage to be informed so fully of the malignity of our disease if we were not also instructed by what remedies it is to be cured. Such a manifestation as this of the mystery of our redemption was proper, after it was actually wrought; but so clear a knowledge of it was neither necessary nor expedient before it was effected. 3. And as we Christians have clearer notions of the expiation of sin than had the Jews, so by consequence must our assurances of our being justified, or having our sins pardoned, be stronger than were theirs. 4. And as the assurances given to us of this inheritance are greater than were afforded to the Jews, so, lastly, is the inheritance itself much more plainly revealed to us in the gospel than it was under the law. Thus have I given you a summary account of some of those great advantages which we enjoy under the dispensation of the gospel, above those which were held forth to the Jews under the economy of Moses. Great reason we have to thank God for these glorious privileges. (*Bp. Smalridge.*) *The superior glory of the Christian over the Mosaic economy*:—I. THE GLORY OF THE MOSAIC ECONOMY. Its design was to maintain among the Israelites the knowledge of the one living and true God, and to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. The glory of the dispensation consisted in its establishing these two great ends. That glory appears—1. In the purity of the principles which it inculcates. At the period of its promulgation the whole world had apostatised from the worship of the Most High; and idolatry led to the most ferocious cruelty, and sanctioned the basest pollutions. Now, it was the glory of the Mosaic economy that it opposed all this. 2. In the typical significance of the rites and ceremonies it appointed. It is Christ who holds the key of these types, and reveals all their fulness and significance. At the same time the pious Israelite could penetrate through these adumbrations and see their spiritual intention. 3. In the illustrious support it received from the attestation of miracles, and from the successive statements of inspired prophets. II. THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION IS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE LAW. 1. In the clearness of the revelation given by it as to those truths which are most important to salvation. We have seen that the Mosaic dispensation was typical. It taught the first elements, but not religion itself, in the plenitude and lucidness of its discoveries. 2. In the spirituality of its nature. The religion of the Jews was national; there was but one temple, and that

was at Jerusalem. The blessings bestowed on that people were mostly temporal. But this state of things no longer exists. Place is nothing in the estimation of God, and all the blessings of the gospel are spiritual. 3. In its universality. The Jewish system excluded from its benefits those who were not the children of Israel, but in the gospel none are excluded. 4. In its perpetuity. (*W. H. Murch.*) *The permanent elements of faith*:—1. Our lives are full of fever and restlessness. In truth is quietness, and God only never changes. It is not simply that we and our works are passing; we might bear better all that if it were not for the changes which shake our beliefs. 2. But none of us have ever seen greater changes than Paul. The law seemed to him permanent: the sun might have been darkened, but the glory of Israel was for ever. Yet in a few short years and he is thinking of that glory as something which is done away, and seems to have gained a faith which soared above these passing things. He forgets to mourn over the glory which passeth away as his eye gladdens with the sight of a glory which excelleth. In all religion there are transient forms, and there are permanent elements. I. Note THE SEVERAL SUCCESSIVE STEPS BY WHICH A CANDID MIND MAY COME TO SOME CERTAINTY IN THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS TO BE BELIEVED AND LOVED. 1. We reach assurance in faith only as we find for ourselves the way up to Christ as the supreme authority of faith. We may approach the Divine Man—(1) Through the constitutional wants and capacities of our own souls. Our hearts are such echoes of Divinity that we should listen in expectation for the voice from above to speak again. Given the first man, Adam, and it is in order to expect the second Man, the Lord from heaven. Christ is the only perfect fulfilment of human nature; and we do need Him. (2) Through the world which seems to have been made for a Christ to come. The direction of the creation from the beginning has been ever to something higher and diviner. At first there was matter and motion; then worlds and life; then instinct, and life rising to self-consciousness; then reasoning, and thoughts of the spirit searching beyond the stars; and what wonder then if we see, standing at the end of it all, One in the form of man, yet having the glory of the Father's person. One who finishes the whole creation, as, in His own person, He binds it to the throne of God. (3) Through history, where we come upon increasing signs of a leading and gathering of events according to some higher law. Take the books of Moses, and compare them with contemporaneous traditions and beliefs! The Bible grows, according to some higher law, and for some perfect fruit to come, just as a plant which springs up from the ground feels the impulsion of something above the ordinary forces of the soil and the gravitation of the earth in which it strikes its roots. Follow this growth until you come to the age of its great prophecies, and you will find it more difficult still to explain it as a merely human product. When you reach the age of Isaiah, you see that all this growth is after a Messianic law. It is for a Christ to come. That is the law of the type of the whole dispensation. So we come to the gospels, and the presence of Jesus Himself. Nature and history have pointed towards Him that should come; and when He stands among men, declaring that in Him the law and the prophets are fulfilled, He is His own witness. He stands in the centre where all lights converge. Having this record of the Son of God on earth, it is easy to add the confession—never man was born as this Man; never man rose from the dead, and ascended, as this Man. 2. We have found the Messiah; now how can we come down from Him to the present, so that we may know, for surety, amid the world's changes and confusions, that we have His mind? (1) Many men saw and heard and knew Jesus of Nazareth. They told others what they had seen and heard. Then many began to write out their knowledge of Jesus. The same power which prepared the world for, and led prophecy up to, secured a fitting representation of the Christ. (2) Under the law of the Spirit of Christ there were gathered up the writings of apostolic men. These men were fitted both by their personal position with Jesus, and by the special working in them of the power of the Holy Ghost, to be to us authorities for Jesus, and the first interpreters of the mind of Christ. We believe, accordingly, that this written Scripture is our supreme authority. (3) We must receive something of His Spirit ourselves. We must read His words, and understand these authorities for Christ, in the spirit of Christ. The Bible is a gift of God to the spiritual mind of the Church. We live in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. II. CHRIST, THE SCRIPTURES, AND THE CHRISTLIKE HEART, ARE THE MEANS GIVEN TO MEN OF KNOWING THE ABIDING REALITIES, the true God and eternal life. And this is precisely what John said in chap. xxi. 20, "We know that the Son of God is come"; that was the disciple's positive knowledge of the historic Christ, "and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is

true"; that was the disciple's spiritual discernment of Jesus; "And we are in Him that is true"; that is the full and final security of Christian faith and truth. III. NOTE THE DIRECT BEARINGS OF ALL THIS UPON PRESENT THINGS. 1. A child once said to me, "Perhaps I shall not believe when I am a man all the things which you believe." Surprised for a moment, I reflected, Why, if it be true to itself and its God, should it not grow in its day beyond us in knowledge of Divine truth? I revere the fathers; but some things which they held belonged to the glory which was passing, not to the more excellent glory of that which remained. This, accordingly, has one application to parents who are sometimes troubled by the new questions which their children are asking. 2. The surface of religious life is now rippled with breezes of discussion, and one duty seems urgent. We should live and abide, as much as possible, with our own hearts in those truths which to us are most real and vital. For our own quietness and inner truth of faith we need to look away from this present, and to cherish in our thoughts those elementary Christian truths which belong to the heart of the Christian faith in all the ages. And these are not passing away. (1) The belief in God is not—how can it?—from the soul of man who is God's child. But from all our questionings we are learning, perhaps never before so deeply, what those old Hebrew words mean—the living God! (2) Again, men are disusing expressions of belief once common concerning the atoning work of Christ; and some say, So passes the glory of the Cross. Not so. The glory of the Cross can never pass, because it is the eternal glory of the love of God. Still upon our lips, although in simpler words of human love and need, you will hear the song of the ages, "Worthy the Lamb that was slain." God's Spirit is bringing closer home to our hearts the need there was for such sufferings as Christ's in the forgiveness of the sin of the world. (3) Again, there seems to have fallen over our pulpits a great silence upon the subject of the judgment-day. Perhaps God has seen fit to make this silence that our confused echoes of Jesus' gospel might die away, and men listen again with hushed hearts to His eternal words. We had to cease repeating the father's sermons upon sinners in the hand of God, at which once indeed the souls of men trembled, but by which now they are not moved, in order that we might begin to preach again, according to the warnings of our own hearts, the fearful wickedness and doom of a soul flying with wilful selfishness into the face of the glory of the loving, Christian God. (4) Neither are the motives to repentance and a godly life passing from us. The more we learn of our own evil nature, and our own weakness and need of being put and kept right, the more reason have we for the humble prayer of the heart for the forgiveness of sins, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. (*Newman Smyth, D.D.*) *The glory of the gospel*:—The gospel is pre-eminently glorious, because it continues without change, and affords blessings in perpetuity to all who are willing to receive them. This perpetuity and unchangeableness are not the mere results of arbitrary power; but belong to it as a system suited in its nature to bless man at all times, and in all stages of his existence. It possesses the character of Him whose name is love and who never changes. Systems of religion, it is said, have risen up and had their day. Why may not this be the case with Christianity? The answer is easy. Because Christianity differs, in many material points, from every other form of religion. 1. It addresses itself directly to reason and conscience. 2. It puts no inordinate value on outward observances. 3. It not only disclaims fanaticism and superstition, but affords the only real security against those desolating evils. 4. It lays no restraints the design of which is not clearly benevolent. 5. The great founder of this religion has made all the duties which grow out of man's various relations a part of His system. As long as there are husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbours, &c., so long Christianity will be adapted to the circumstances of man. But it also institutes new relations. It makes, indeed, the human race all one family, offers to all one Saviour, and encourages all to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." Thus, then, there is no other religion like Christianity. So the passing away of dissimilar systems affords no presumption that this, which differs from them all, will also pass away. Because the places of sand and seaweed on the shore are changed by every rising tide, it does not therefore follow that the solid rocks will be removed. I. CHRISTIANITY IS ADAPTED TO ALL CLIMATES, PERIODS, CONDITIONS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE, AND PRODUCES, WHEREVER IT PREVAILS, THE SAME EFFECTS. It has in every age secured converts among—1. All races. 2. Every variety of human character. 3. All classes and ranks. II. THE GOSPEL IS ADAPTED TO ALL PARTS OF MAN'S INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL NATURE. 1. It applies the strongest stimulus to the human mind, and gives the widest range to human thoughts. 2.

Mark its treatment of man's affections and passions. (1) Take love. Its ordinary effects, when supremely fixed on worldly objects, are too well known. It is the religion of the Bible only, which turns it at once on objects worthy to be loved by rational and immortal beings. (2) Take hope, the mainspring of the soul. How important it is that man should have his hopes wisely directed. But in this case all human wisdom has utterly failed. Men have hoped for things unattainable, or for things which, when attained, have disappointed their expectations. But the gospel fastens the hopes of man on infinity and eternity, and gives for their warrant the sure promise of Jehovah, and the redeeming love of the Saviour. (3) Take the desire of pleasure. Here is one of the most fearful dangers to which human nature is exposed. The religion of Christ gives to the Christian pleasure without pollution. It allows everything which is not injurious, and adds joys which flow from the everlasting fountain of joy in heaven. III. THE BENEFICENT AND WISE ADAPTATION OF THIS RELIGION TO THE NATURE OF MAN IS APPARENT FROM ITS OPERATION ON HIS CONSCIENCE. 1. Conscience, from want of proper discipline and exercise, may be inert and feeble. Hence it is of unspeakable importance that we should have access to truth, which has power to awaken the slumberer within us. The Bible has that power, and it has been exerted times without number. It strikes on the heart of the sinner, even "when dead in trespasses and sins," and sends a thrill of powerful feeling through his whole soul. 2. By the communication of knowledge respecting our Creator, our relation and obligations to Him, and to one another, our conscience is most wisely directed. 3. No religion knows what to do with the guilty and troubled conscience, but the religion of the gospel. IV. THE GOSPEL IS WONDERFULLY ADAPTED TO THE NATURE OF MAN, BECAUSE THE UNLIMITED REACH OF ITS TRUTHS IS SUITED TO THE PROGRESS OF OUR INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL FACULTIES. Such is the nature of man, that when he has attained an object, and ascertained its extent, and found just what it can do for him, he is at once disgusted. But the truths of Christianity are ever enlarging before the mind of the believer. The same is true in regard to the Christian's progress in holiness. Notice in conclusion some special blessings conferred by the gospel. 1. It confers upon individuals an elevation of character otherwise unattainable. 2. It gives to domestic life its choicest blessings. (1) By making marriage a Divine institution. (2) By determining the relative situation of husband and wife, parent and children. 3. It bestows its peculiar blessings on social life. Purifying all its fountains, and producing that gentleness and meekness, those "kind designs to serve and please," which give the highest charms and the most enchanting graces to social intercourse. 4. It confers inestimable benefits on man in the relations of civil life. Complete civil and political liberty never can be enjoyed by any people without the influences of pure Christianity. In the most celebrated republics of the heathen world there was nothing like the degree of true, rational, well-balanced, and well-secured freedom, which is now the birthright of the people of this country. 4. It affords the only security for the preservation of the dearest right of a freeman—his religious liberty. (J. H. Rice.)

Vers. 12-18. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.—*The duty of outspokenness on religious questions*:—True religion is very simple and very deep. As simple as this statement, "God is good"; as deep as life and death. But it has ever been hard for men to receive religion in all its simplicity and in all its depth. They want something they can touch and handle, something to fill the imagination, something with many colours to attract the eye. And human teachers have ever been ready to adapt themselves to this craving, and have put their teaching into a shape in which they thought it most likely to be received. And yet it is sometimes the part of the Christian minister, in following the example of Christ and of St. Paul, to "use great plainness of speech": to tell the people, not what they most wish or expect to hear, not what is most in accordance with their previous ideas and prejudices, but what he himself thinks and knows, what he has found in his own experience to be of lasting value, or, in Scriptural language, the truth which he believes that he has heard of God. St. Paul made the greatest effort that was ever made by any one, excepting only Christ, to bring men to receive a spiritual religion. He strove to show to the Jew that God in Christ was the Father of all men, and not of the Jew only; that righteousness meant not the mere outward performance of certain acts, but a right attitude of the heart towards God. And we read in this Epistle to the Corinthians that this teaching of St. Paul was "to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness." Now, why was this? Let us try to imagine how they must have felt in listening to him. Let us imagine the

Jew being told that the law of Moses was abolished and done away, that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin; that the Passover, the commemoration of the great deliverance that had first made the Jews a nation, was only a type and a shadow which was vanishing; that the peculiar people must no longer think that Jehovah had any special regard for them, but must learn to embrace the Gentiles, who for half their lives had been polluting themselves with abominations of idols. Was this, the Jewish objector might say—was this, indeed, to stand upon the ancient paths and to restore the desolations of many generations? Was it not rather to remove the landmarks, to tear up the foundations? Such then was the nature of the offence which the teaching of St. Paul gave to the Jew. Let us now turn and ask what impression it was likely to produce upon the Gentiles. I think I hear one of them crying, "What will this babler say? And are we not to worship the sun going forth as a giant to run his course, nor the moon walking in brightness, nor the earth, nor the glorious heaven that smiles on us with pure radiance in the daytime and gazes on us with a thousand eyes at night? The Diana of the Ephesians, the Jupiter of Lystris or of Athens, these are to be nothing to us. Those are no gods, you tell us, that are made with hands. Would you take from them the only stay, the only consolation which they have amid the miseries of their feeble life, and offer them instead an unseen God, to be comprehended only with the mind! Take heed that you are not destroying what you cannot restore." Now St. Paul was not the first nor the last who in teaching a spiritual religion, in trying to open a way between the soul of man and the Spirit of God, had won for himself amongst the people of his own time the name of a goddess and irreligious man. Isaiah is heard proclaiming in the name of God, "Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth, they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. Bring no more vain oblations. Cease to do evil, learn to do well: seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." And Ezekiel is heard to cry, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of his father. The soul that sinneth, it shall die." But Isaiah fell a victim to the idolatrous fanaticism of his countrymen, and of Ezekiel the people said, "Doth he not speak parables?" And so all the Hebrew prophets, one by one, bore witness equally against the formalism and idolatry of the people, and were rejected equally. And what of Christ Himself? Was He not put to death for blasphemy: because He had said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," and because He told the Chief Priests that "The hour was coming when the Son of Man should sit on the right hand of Power"? We need not fear, then, or be discouraged, if it should be found that in some matters either of doctrine or of custom and tradition there is still a veil upon the people's heart which clouds for them the perfect vision of the righteousness and goodness, the justice and mercy, of Almighty God: nor should the Christian teacher, who thinks he sees it is so, shrink from trying to remove the veil: if he may hope thereby to bring the minds of his countrymen nearer to a pure and spiritual religion. Least of all is he to be deterred by the imputation of impiety, or of infidelity and atheism, which has been shared by all religious teachers who have had anything to tell mankind, including Christ Himself. But still the unveiling of Divine truth to human apprehensions must be a gradual process, and is not to be completed in this life, and the same St. Paul who says, "That we all, beholding with open face the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory," had already said to this same Corinthian Church, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I also am known." (*Prof. Lewis Campbell.*) **But their minds were blinded.**—*Moral insensibility of sinners*:—I. ITS FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATION. This moral blindness is—1. Criminal—the result of a sinful course. 2. Dangerous—a most alarming moral disease. 3. Temporary—the heart must one day be quickened. II. ITS UNIVERSAL SYMPTOMS. Want of spiritual—1. Understanding. 2. Perception. A thick haze of sin hides the spiritual from the soul's eye. III. ITS GRAND DISCOVERY. Man's awful moral insensibility is seen in—1. His opposition. 2. His indifference to the gospel. But yet this will be done away in Christ. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **But even unto this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts.**—*Veils*:—How is it that the number of those who believe the gospel is so small compared with the number of those who do not believe in it? Our nation has had the gospel in it more or less now for the space of one thousand six hundred years. Week by week the gospel has been expounded and enforced by all sorts of agencies, yet in no town is there one-half of the population found within the walls of Christian sanctu-

aries, and there are few congregations in which the unbelievers do not outnumber the believers. How is this? We propose to look at the answer to this question as given by St. Paul. The veil is on the heart. The vision of an object may be rendered impossible in either of two ways at least. There is a mountain that rears its majestic head to the sky; you may spend weeks in its neighbourhood, and yet never see it once. It may be shrouded in mist. The veil is then on the mountain. Or, the mountain may be still unseen, for the eye may be covered with thick films. The veil is then on the eye. This latter case is the one which fitly illustrates the language of the apostle, "The veil is upon the heart, not upon Moses; he is read, but he is not understood; the veil is upon the heart." Let us look at a few of the veils which are on the hearts of men now.

I. THE VEIL OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY OR NATURAL CORRUPTION. No one surely will say that even the best man we know would reflect credit upon his Creator, had he been made exactly as he now is, with so many sinful tendencies in him. Nor do I see how any thoughtful man can maintain the theory which affirms that we all came into the world with a clean, pure soul, and which accounts for what we are, entirely upon the principle of the influence of circumstances and education. How any one who has had to deal with children can maintain such a theory passes my comprehension. It may sound a very plausible principle. "Teach men the truth, and they will believe it; teach men the right, and they will do it." But does any one seriously believe that ignorance explains all the wickedness of the world? Ignorance of what? Ignorance that it is wickedness? Is it so, then, that man is now doing wrong with the consciousness that it is wrong? To say that men would not drink if they knew better is to trifle. They do know better. Where, then, is the veil in such a case which prevents their reformation? It is not over the consequences of their sin. It can only be upon their heart. The vice is indulged because it is loved. And what is true of this vice is true also of man's general alienation from what is good. The carnal mind is enmity against God, &c.

II. THE VEIL OF CONCEIT OR INTELLECTUAL PRIDE. This is closely connected with the one we have just considered. It is, in fact, one of its folds. There is a peril in our times arising from the almost exclusive attention which is being directed to the study of the wonders of external nature. It is obvious that the fascinations of scientific investigation may blind the mind to the claims of higher truth, which depends for its understanding on qualities of heart rather than of intellect. The mathematician may dwell so long in the region of figures and formulas that he may never dream of a world in which they play no part whatever. The chemist may so busy himself among acids, and alkalies, and crucibles, and retorts that he may deign no thought to anything which he cannot fuse or analyse. The Bible introduces the philosopher into a world which is all but entirely new. It does not require his calculus, or his crucible, or his battery, or his microscope. Its truths are different from any that can be reached by these processes of investigation. What can they tell us about sin? The Bible does not create sin, it finds it. It deals not only with sin as a fact, but guilt as a feeling. This, too, is not created by the Bible. The Bible deals with the idea of a nobler life. Even this idea it did not wholly create. It deals with death, and with death in its moral aspects, and with eternity. The Bible tells us of the incarnation, and of the Cross, and of the resurrection. Now the reason of man could tell us nothing of these things apart from the Bible. That profound mysteries are mingled up with this revelation is admitted. But it surely is not for the human intellect to proudly turn away from it on this account. How many doors of nature it has knocked at? how many subtle forces it has sought to seize, and see in their inmost essence, but in vain? Does it hear and obey the voice which nature utters, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further"? and does it resent such a limitation in the domain of the Divine Word? Then it becomes not the reason which is reverent, but the reason which is proud. It will not accept the truth on which the light shines full, because there is truth which lies in darkness. But where in this case is the veil? The veil is on the heart.

III. THE VEIL OF PREJUDICE AND TRADITION. There are few vices of the mind which are more common and invincible. What a fearful amount of evidence a prejudice can resist! Now prejudice often assumes the form of holding fast to a traditional faith. This was the very case with the Jews, who held fast not to the true Moses, but to the Moses as he had been represented to them by their authoritative teachers. Had they listened to the true Moses, they would have been prepared to welcome Christ. But when Moses was read in their hearing, or by themselves, he was read, not through a clear medium as when one sees objects through the pure air by the light of the sun, but he was read through a jaundiced eye and a medium

which distorted him. They brought their conceptions with them, and made their own Moses in a large degree. They were like men who consult the oracle, and tell the oracle what shall be his response, or who speak in an echoing vault, and find their voice returned to them. Things are to us in great measure what we are to them. And if we bring prejudice or a traditional faith with us, a faith, I mean, which we have not ourselves tested and proved, and which does not live within us and support our life, then we need not expect to see the truth. Let us have a better reason for our faith than that we have always held it, or that our father held it. It was because the Jews had no better reason that they called Christ Beelzebub—that they crucified Him: and that even to the days of Paul, yes, and even down to our own days when Moses is read, the veil is on their eyes. IV. THE VEIL OF LUST, SELF-INTEREST, OR ANY OTHER SIN WHICH HAS ACQUIRED A MASTERY OVER THE HEART AND LIFE. There is nothing that can so darken the eye of the soul as a sin, and hence no man who is addicted to sin can see so clearly as the man whose soul is pure whether in fact or in aspiration. Who is sanguine in his endeavours to persuade a man to relinquish a traffic, however mischievous, provided only it brings in ample gains? He sees no evil in the traffic, why should he? He compels no one to buy; and they may buy as little as they choose. Besides, if he did not sell some one else would. Thus he reasons, but those arguments did not lead him to begin the traffic, or to continue in it. They never occur to him except when he is put on his defence. The one abiding and omnipotent motive is that the trade is lucrative. This is the veil which is before his eyes, and which no amount of light will suffice to penetrate. Conclusion: Will you submit to this blinding process? Or, will you cry to the Great Healer, and say to Him, "Lord, that I may receive my sight"? The veil, you will remember, cannot remain for ever. The hand of death will tear it away; but the light which then will fall upon your eyes will not be the light of salvation, but that which discovers to you, when too late, the blessedness which you have bartered for the pleasures of a day. (*E. Mellor, D.D.*) *Truth unveiled*:—The apostle in the text contrasts the state of believing Christians with that of the unbelieving Jews, for the former, all with open face, behold the glory of the Lord. Now the language here employed admits of some latitude of interpretation. The word "open" means unveiled, and this shows that a contrast is intended. And the phrase may either be rendered "with open face," alluding to the face of the beholders, or "in an open face," referring to the face of Christ, as contrasted with that of Moses. For at the sixth verse of the next chapter the apostle expressly says that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." If, then, we understand the words in the former sense, the spiritually enlightened Christian is contrasted with the carnal and prejudiced Jew. But if we understand the words in the latter sense, the objects contrasted are the Christian and Mosaic dispensations, implying that the beholders have now the advantage, externally, of a far more glorious revelation. Christ did not put a veil on His face like Moses, but openly reflected the glory of the Lord. Now, in whichever sense the words ought to be grammatically explained, we apprehend that both ideas are included in the view of the apostle. He obviously means, that however it was in former times, and however it might be still with blinded, unbelieving Jews, both the veil of Moses and the veil of the heart were now taken away in reference to the Christian believer. There was no longer an obstructing medium interposed between them and the sublime truths of redemption. The light fell at once upon the eyes of their understanding and the object of their contemplation, and nothing tended any longer either to obscure it or to intercept its progress. There was neither a diseased organ of vision in the beholder nor a concealed object. I. In the first place, IT BECOMES US TO REFLECT, WITH UNFEIGNED GRATITUDE TO GOD, ON THE PECULIAR ADVANTAGES OF OUR OWN EXTERNAL SITUATION IN REGARD TO THE MEANS OF GRACE. There are many heathen nations in the world who have never enjoyed the light of Divine truth in any degree. And how obscurely was it possessed even by the ancient Israelites! Yes, the way of salvation is now patent and plain. The glory of the Lord, the excellent glory of His Divine mercy and love, as seen in the whole series of His dispensations, and reflected from the word of His grace, is now placed fully in our view. II. BUT IT BECOMES US TO CONSIDER THE STATE OF OUR OWN HEARTS IN REFERENCE TO THE PRIVILEGES WE ENJOY. In our day there is no veil upon the truth, but is there none upon our own minds? Do we now distinguish that glory of the Lord which emanates from the plan of redemption? Do we discern the moral beauty, and feel the blessed influence of the doctrines of grace? If so, then the

internal veil has surely been removed from our hearts. But if not, let us remember that the fault is our own, and that the blindness is in ourselves, for the glory of the Lord has been openly revealed. And if we discern it not the veil must be still upon our hearts. This was the case with many among the Jews even after Christ had come, And, alas! how many among professing Christians in the present day have the same veil upon their hearts. For otherwise, how shall we account for the dimness of their perception in discerning the real nature and bearings of Divine truth? Why do they not see sin in all its native deformity and soul-ruining consequences? Why do they not see the beauty and excellency of holiness, and the pure and spiritual happiness with which holiness is connected? Why do they not recognise the claims of God upon the devoted affection? Or why do they not feel and acknowledge the unspeakable obligations under which they are laid to the infinite love and grace of the Redeemer? Why do they not see the magnitude of the gospel salvation, and the aggravated guilt and infatuation of neglecting it? And why do they form such erroneous, unworthy, and unscriptural conceptions of that salvation? Were it only a cloud of ignorance which overshadowed their understandings, it might easily be dispelled, and could not long remain with all the abundant means of instruction they enjoy. But, alas! it is a dark cloud, not of ignorance merely, but of prejudice. It is the influence of pride, stirring up the enmity of the carnal mind against the humiliating doctrines of the gospel; it is the cherished indulgence of some favourite sin; it is the inveterate love of this present evil world. But it is the peculiar privilege of the true believer to behold the glory of the Lord with open face in the mirror of the gospel. Savingly taught by the Holy Spirit, he has been delivered from his native ignorance and unbelief; he has obtained the gift of spiritual discernment, and he beholds wondrous things out of the Divine law. He sees a majesty and a glory in the Scriptures, a high importance and excellency in spiritual subjects, to which he was originally blind. (*R. Brydon.*)

Our study of God's truth must be with the heart:—1. In this passage the intellectual blindness of the Jews is traced up to the wrong state of their hearts. Indeed, even without this statement we could have gathered as much. The miracles of our Lord, and the close agreement of His career with prophecy, must have carried the convictions of the Jews by force, had there not been a predisposition in the heart not to believe. As soon, therefore, as this predisposition shall be removed, they shall forthwith be convinced, and “the veil shall be taken away.” 2. Men are well aware that the understanding is liable to be prejudiced by the heart. “Love,” they say, “is blind.” We should exclude from the trial of a man's cause both his friends and his foes, because we account strong sympathies or antipathies prejudicial to the judgment. But the proverb extends to our judgment of things. The mind of man—the faculty by which he discerns truth—may be compared to an eye placed above a fuming caldron, which can see nothing clearly, because the vapours intercept the vision. The heart is the caldron, and sends up the vapours which distort the view. Now in seeking to reform human nature, the philosophers of antiquity either did not notice this fact, or did not see how the difficulty which it presents could be surmounted. At all events, by way of persuading men to virtue, they made their appeal to the understanding, and sought to carry their point to convincing the mind. As far as the understanding went, nothing could be more effective than such a method. But what if men do not, as notoriously they do not, conclude moral questions affecting themselves, on the mere verdict of the understanding? What if they set the will on the judgment-seat? Unless you can rectify the will and its prepossessions, you only argue before a corrupted judge, and in the sentence the argument goes for nothing. 3. Christianity, in seeking to reform mankind, makes its first appeal to the affections, which are the springs of the will, and through them clears and rectifies the understanding. What may be said to have been the main scope of our Lord's teaching? This—“God so loved the world,” &c. Was not the apostolic exhortation only a prolonging of the echoes of the Saviour's voice: “We pray you . . . be ye reconciled to God”? Now the facts of the life and sufferings and teaching of Christ are the implements with which Christianity works. Let any one read the gospel records with thorough simplicity, and he cannot fail to be touched by them in a salutary way, especially by the concluding part of the great story. 4. But not only did Christianity commence with an appeal to the hearts of men; but this is the order which grace observes in its work on each individual soul. The Scripture says, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” Justifying faith is not a mere intellectual conviction of the truth; but an operation of the heart, and by consequence of the will, involving a movement of the affections

towards Christ in trust or love. And every forward step in Christian life must be made on the same principle as the first. It is quite as true to say, "with the heart man is edified," as it is to say, "with the heart man believeth." Now let us develop this truth, that edification is through the heart, and not through the mind.

I. TESTIMONY IS BORNE TO IT BY THE UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIANS. What is that impalpable something, which if an inferior sermon has, it succeeds in doing good, but if a superior sermon lacks, it fails of doing good? We call it "unction"—a fervent way of throwing out Divine truth, corresponding with the fervent character of that truth. Unction would be no merit at all, but the reverse, if the gospel were to be received by the intellect rather than the affections. But men know that the gospel is designed to meet their sympathies; and if it should be presented to them in such a manner as not to do this, they feel that it is wronged and misrepresented.

II. OWING TO OUR NOT PERCEIVING THIS TRUTH, RELIGIOUS EXERCISES ARE SOMETIMES TAKEN TO BE EDIFYING WHICH ARE NOT SO. Shall I say that much of our ordinary reading of Holy Scripture comes under this head? that it often resolves itself into a mental exertion, and that not of a very high order? What a misuse of terms is there in the phraseology so often applied to things got by rote, of which we say that they are "learned by heart"! So far from being learned by heart, such things are often not even learned by mind, for sometimes they are most deficiently understood; and the very utmost that can be said in favour of such learning is that it lodges truth in the memory, which may expand and serve a good purpose at some future time. Has our study of Scripture given any bias to the will in the path of holiness? Has it at all stimulated the affections to the love of God, or of our neighbour? Has it nerved us against temptation? supported us under trial? prompted a prayer? or stirred in us a holy ambition? By these and the like questions must its influence upon the heart be tested; and unless it has had some influence upon the heart, there has been no edification in it.

III. LET OUR STUDIES TURN MORE AND MORE ON THAT WHICH IS THE CORE AND CENTRE OF THE BIBLE. The Bible is a revelation of God; and the core and centre of God's revelation is Christ crucified. (Dean Goulburn.) Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.—*The shining of Moses' face*:—When Moses spoke of old to their fathers, the veil was upon his face; but now when he is read to them, the veil is upon their hearts. In old time it was God's doing; the Scriptures were made obscure for a time on purpose, the types and prophecies could not be understood till their fulfilment: but it is now the Jews' own doing; it is their own perverseness, refusing to see Christ in their Scriptures. Thus St. Paul speaks; thinking, most likely, as in many other places, of his own history, and of God's dealings with him in particular. You know, in his early days, he was a sort of figure and type of the whole Jewish nation, in his great and bitter enmity to Jesus Christ. His face was not towards the Lord. When he read the law he saw only the outward sign; he knew nothing as yet of its end and hidden meaning. But our Saviour, in compassion to his well-meaning but blind zeal, called to him from heaven and touched his heart by His grace. When St. Paul's heart had thus turned to the Lord, then the scales fell from his eyes; then he saw the purpose and drift of the ceremonies and sacrifices, the temple and tabernacle, the crown on David's head, and the anointing oil on Aaron's. And here we must observe well what "knowing Christ," and "turning to Him," mean in such places as these. It was not simply knowing that there was such a person, attending to what they heard and saw of Him; "turning to Him," means turning to His Cross, taking it up and following Him. When a person had done this sincerely, he would find quite a new light break in upon places in the Old Testament, which before he had no true knowledge of. He would learn what was meant by a lamb without spot or blemish. Again, he would understand the meaning of circumcision; how it marked men as belonging to Him. He would see why the people were fed with manna, to signify the true bread from heaven. He would understand why the tabernacle and temple had two parts, the holy place and the most holy, and why the most holy can only be entered once a year, and then not without blood. But does this saying apply to Jews only, and to the reading of the Old Testament only? or is it so, that we also, though we have been Christians many years, may have a veil upon our hearts, and that, in the reading of the New Testament as well as the Old, of the gospel as well as of the law, of St. Paul and the epistles as well as of Moses and the prophets? Surely it may be our case too; after all that has been done for us, we may but too easily, if we will, yet go on in stumbling and in ignorance. Is it not too plain that very many of us come often to hear God's Holy Word; we are present at the reading of chapter

after chapter, and yet we make no real improvement in our knowledge of holy things? And the cure for this must be the same as in the other case. When a man turns unto the Lord, that is, unto Christ, then the veil is taken away. Then a new light and an unaccustomed glory will break out and shine round our Bibles and in our Churches, and we shall begin to feel something of what the holy patriarch felt when he cried out, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not." But, as I said, to obtain this blessing, to see so much of heaven on earth, a person must turn habitually to the Lord. And what is "turning to the Lord"? I will answer in the words of an ancient writer. "The better to know what it is to be turned to the Lord, let us first state what it is to be turned away from Him. Every person who, while the words of the law are in reading, is occupied with matters of ordinary talk, is turned away from the Lord. Every one who, whilst the Bible is reading, is indulging thoughts of worldly business, of money, of gain, he too is turned away. Every one who is pressed with cares about his possessions, who strains himself eagerly after wealth, who longs after worldly glory and the honours of this life, every such person likewise is turned away." Who follows Divine meditations with as much zeal and labour as human? and how then dare we complain of our ignorance of that which we never tried to learn? Then again he reproves them for their carelessness about what is read in Church, and says of those who talk during the service, that "when the Holy Scriptures are read, not only a veil, but even a partition, if one may call it so, and a wall, is upon their hearts." The veil, he says, of the sense is the sound of the words; but not even so much as this comes to them, who either stay away from the solemn assemblies, or come there and behave inattentively. Thus you see what strict attention "turning to the Lord" was then supposed to require. Now merely to attend may seem to some a simple thing enough: but those who have tried know it to be no small effort. But then we must well observe what else is implied in that turning to the Lord which the apostle mentions as the condition of the veil being withdrawn. Attention by itself is not enough; children we see will sometimes attend to their lessons in order to be rewarded; or out of a sort of curiosity, just to know what is said; it must be accompanied by prayer, and must be itself of the nature of prayer. Christian obedience is a great condition of all the promises we have heard. Without this, turning to the Lord is but a mockery, and it is vain to think of the veil being taken away. And, finally, as Moses at our Lord's transfiguration saw that in course of real accomplishment, which in shadow God had showed him in Mount Sinai long before—saw the skirts of the glory of God, the Incarnate Son glorified, and partook himself in His brightness; so shall it be one day with all who faithfully turn to Christ; and in the meantime His Spirit is with them to change them, unknown to themselves (for Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone), after the one image, from glory to glory. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to the Tracts for the Times.*)

Ver. 17. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.—*Christ the Spirit of Christianity*:—I. NOTE THE GREAT PRINCIPLES IN THE TEXT. 1. Christianity is a spirit. (1) There is a "letter" and a "spirit" in everything. These two things are quite distinct. The letter may be changed, the spirit may be unchangeable. The same spirit may require for its expression to different minds different letters. The spirit may not only cease to be represented, but may be positively misrepresented, by its form. Christ, *e.g.*, enjoined the washing of one another's feet where washing the feet was a common service; but we smile at the professed obedience to this precept every year of his holiness of Rome. (2) The Old Testament was a letter in which there was a spirit. The very idea of a letter supposes that something is written. And, further, that spirit, so far as it went, was the same as in the gospel; the law represented the same ideas and sentiments as the gospel, but in a different way, and with different results, so as to justify the calling of one a "letter" and the other a "spirit." The first, though not without spirit, had more letter in it; and the second, though not without letter, has more spirit in it. Christianity is like a book for men, which assumes many things that children must have in most explicit statement. It is more suggestive than explanatory, trusts more to conscience than to argument, and appeals more to reason than to rule. Its doctrines are principles, not propositions; its institutions are grand outlines, not precise ceremonies; its laws are moral sentiments, not minute directions. 2. Christ is the Spirit of Christianity. (1) The fact of there being a revelation at all is owing to Christ. But for Him the beginning of sin would have been the end of humanity. But God had, in anticipation of the fall, devised a

plan of redemption. Forfeited life was continued because of Christ. Whatever was done was for Him. The great events of past times were preparatory to Him. Prophets spoke of Him, kings ruled for Him, priests typified Him. According to Christ's contemplated work men were treated. But if the law was through Christ as its grand reason, how much more is the gospel! For now He is not the secret but the revealed agent of God's providence. What was done before was done because of Him, what is done now is done directly by Him. He realised the conceptions expressed by Judaism, made its figures facts, its predictions history.

(2) Christ is the Spirit of Christianity, as He is the personal representation of its truths. The gospel is Christ. It shines in Him as in a mirror, it lives in Him as in a body. Is God the prime idea of all religion? "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." Is the moral character of God as important as His existence? Behold "the image of the invisible God" as "He goes about doing good." Is reunion with God the great need of humanity? It is consummated in the Incarnation. Do we want law? "Walk even as He walked." Do we die? "Christ, the firstfruits of them that slept." Are we sighing for immortality? "This is the eternal life." (3) The Holy Spirit, by whom spiritual blessings are conveyed, is emphatically the Spirit of Christ. This Spirit, the closest and most quickening contact of God with our souls, is the fruit of the reconciliation with God effected by Christ. That effected, Christ went to heaven that He might give us this "other Comforter, even the Spirit of truth."

3. Christ, as the Spirit of Christianity, is the Spirit of liberty." The genius of a spiritual life is to be free. "The law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." The more spiritual men are, the less do they require external regulations; and one of the most striking features of Christianity is its comparative freedom from such. It is a "law of liberty," in the sense of leaving us at liberty upon many points; moral excellence is its requirement, not ceremonial exactness. Its law is summed up by love to God and man. You do not need to fetter a loving child with the rules you lay upon a hireling. The gospel is spiritual in its form, because it is spiritual in its power. In the following verse a sublime truth is set before us. The liberty of the gospel is holiness. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death": only the Spirit can do this. The letter may keep sin down, but the spirit turns it out. The letter may make us afraid to do it, the spirit makes us dislike to have it. And is not that liberty, when we are free to serve God in the gospel of His Son, free to have access to Him with the spirit of adoption, free to run the way of His commandments, because "enlarged in heart"? He is the slave whose will is in fetters; and nothing but the Spirit, the Lord, can set that free.

II. THE SUBJECT IS FRUITFUL IN REFLECTIONS AND ADMONITIONS. 1. The text is one of a large class which intimate and require the divinity of Christ. The place assigned to Christ in the scheme and providence of God is such that only on the supposition of His Divine nature can it be understood and explained. Destroy Him, take Him away, and you do not merely violate the language, but annihilate the very life of God's covenant. If Christianity be what we are accustomed to regard it, He who is its Spirit, in the way and for the reasons which itself explains, can be no other than the "true God and eternal life."

2. We see the greatness of the privileges with which, as Christians, we have been favoured, and the source of their derivation. The apostles do employ language severely depreciating in its tone, when contrasting previous economies with our own. "Darkness," "flesh," "letter," "bondage," "the world," are set against "light," "spirit," "grace," "liberty," and "the kingdom of God" and "of heaven." And the reason of our being so blessed is to be found in Christ. Shall we not be grateful? And shall not gratitude express itself in holiness? "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," and the great worth of this position is in the facilities for sanctification which it affords.

3. Let us give to the personal element in Christianity its proper place and power. In the apostles' writings there was an indestructible connection of every principle of the gospel with the personal Christ. Everything was "in Him." Christ was Christianity. He is "the Truth," "the Way," "the Life," the "peace," "hope," and "resurrection" of men; He is their "wisdom," "righteousness," "sanctification," and "redemption." Religion is not merely a contemplation of truth, or a doing of morality; it is fellowship with God and with His Son. We are to love Christ, not spiritual beauty; to believe in Christ, not spiritual truth; to live to Christ, not spiritual excellence.

4. Our subject instructs and encourages us in connection with the diffusion of our religion through the earth. The gospel is a spirit. Well, indeed, might we despond, when contemplating the powers of dark-

ness, if we could not associate with our religion the attributes of spirit. But, said Christ, "the words that I speak unto you are spirit and life." And our subject also teaches charity. Can there be any heart unaffected by the promise of "liberty," in its highest state and completest measure, is before us? Can you dwell upon the hard bondage of the souls of men, both in civilised and uncivilised conditions, and not long to "preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound"? (*A. J. Morris.*) *Liberty of the spiritual life*:—The heavenly life imparted is liberty and truth and peace; it is the removal of bondage and darkness and pain. So far from being a mechanical constraint, as some would represent, it is the removal of the iron chain with which guilt had bound the sinner. It acts like an army of liberation to a down-trodden country, like the warm breath of spring to the frost-fettered tree. For the entrance of true life or living truth into man's soul must be liberty, not bondage. (*A. Bonar.*) *The spirit of liberty*:—1. It is remarkable that, when our Lord expounded in the synagogue of Nazareth, He chose a passage of which two-fifths related to "liberty." Between that passage and my text there is a singular connection. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," &c. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." I. WE ARE ALL OF US SO CONSTITUTED THAT THERE MUST BE A CERTAIN SENSE OF FREEDOM TO MAKE A PLAY OF THE AFFECTIONS. 1. Satan knew this quite well when he destroyed the loving allegiance of our first parents by introducing first into their minds the thought of bondage. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" And so the poison had worked. "You are not free." In catching at a fictitious freedom the first Adam lost the true. The second Adam made Himself a "servant of servants," that He might restore to us a greater freedom than Adam lost. 2. But still the same enemy is always trying to spoil our paradises by making us deny our freedom. He has two ways of doing this. Sometimes he gives us a sense of bondage, which keeps us back from peace, and therefore holiness. Sometimes he gives us an idea of imaginary "liberty," of which the real effect is that it leaves us the slave of a sentiment or of a passion. 3. Some persons are afraid of "liberty," lest it should run into "licentiousness." But I do not find in the whole Bible that we are warned against too much "liberty." In fact, it is almost always those who have felt themselves too shut up who break out into lawlessness of conduct. Just as the stopped river, bursting its barrier, runs into the more violent stream. II. THAT YOU SHOULD "STAND FAST IN THE LIBERTY WHEREWITH CHRIST MAKES HIS PEOPLE FREE," UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR REAL "LIBERTY" IS. 1. "By and by," somebody says, "when I have believed and prayed a little more, and lived a little more religiously, then I hope God will forgive me." So every night he has to consider whether he is yet good enough to justify the hope that he is a child of God; and the consequence is that man prays with no "liberty." But, all the while, what is the fact? God *does* love him. All he wants is to take facts as facts. It needs but one act of realisation, and every promise of the Bible belongs to that man. This done, see the difference. He feels himself a child of God through God's own grace, and his "liberated" mind leaps to the God who has loved him. Now the right spring is put into the machinery of his breast. He works in the freedom of a certainty. And from that date that man's real sanctification begins. 2. There are many whose minds are continually recurring to old sins. They have prayed over them again and again, but still they cannot take their thoughts off them. But the freeman of the Lord knows the meaning of those words—"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." All he feels he has to do is to bring his daily sins to that Fountain where he has washed all the sins of his former life. And do not you see that that man will go with a lightened feeling? 3. See the nature of that man's forgiveness. To obey the command of any one we love is pleasant, but to obey because it will please him, though he has not commanded it, is much happier. The spirit of the law is always better than the law. Deuteronomy is better than Leviticus. Now this is the exact state of a Christian. He has studied the commands till he has reached to the spirit of the commands. He has gathered "the mind of God," and he follows that. A command prescribes, and whatever prescribes circumscribes, and is so far painful. But the will of God is an unlimited thing, and therefore it is unlimiting. (1) And when man, free because "the Son has made him free," goes to read his Bible, like a man who has got the free range of all its pastures, to cull flowers wherever he likes, he is free to all the promises that are there, for he has "the mind of Christ." (2) Or hear him in prayer. How close it is! How boldly he puts in his claim! (3) The fear of death never hurts that man. Why? Because

his death is over. (4) And, because he is so very free, you will find there is a large-heartedness and a very charitable judgment in that man. He lives above party. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The liberty of the Spirit*:—How much is made of earthly liberty—the shadow of true freedom. How true it is that, whilst many men “profess to give liberty to others, they themselves are the slaves of corruption.” Men are content to be slaves within who would be very indignant at any attempt to make them slaves without. The apostle, speaking of the bondage of the law, said that, when the heart of the Jew shall turn to the Lord, then, and not till then, shall they come to the true freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is—**I. LIBERTY FROM CONDEMNATION.** If a man is under sentence of death he cannot find liberty. He may forget his imprisonment in mirth and feasting, but it is not the less real because he forgets it. The morning will come when he will be dragged off to his fearful doom. We are under the sentence of God’s broken law. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” How beautiful, then, the language of the apostle! (Rom. viii. 1). **II. LIBERTY FROM LAW.** The law knows nothing of mercy and forgiveness, nor does it afford the least help to holiness. Its command is, “Do this, and live; break this in the least, and die.” Therefore, “by the deeds of the law” shall no man have peace with God. But “what the law could not do,” &c. (Rom. viii. 2-4). **III. LIBERTY TO OBEY.** Many think they are free, and that they will do as they like; but they do not like to do what they ought to like, and therefore they are slaves after all. The way in which a man may convince himself of his slavery is to try to be what he ought to be. He can do nothing of himself, and he must be brought to feel that he can do no good thing without God. But what the flesh cannot do the Spirit will enable him to do. “It is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure”; therefore “work out your own salvation,” &c. **IV. LIBERTY TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.** A man can do battle with his corrupt nature, he can win the victory over the principalities and powers of darkness, and his sword is a sword of liberty. The drunkard becomes sober, the impure chaste, the vindictive forgiving, by the power of the Spirit of God. **V. LIBERTY OF ACCESS TO GOD.** The one true and living way is open, but it cannot be discerned except a man has it revealed to him by the Spirit of God. Through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. **VI. LIBERTY OF HOLY BOLDNESS AND FORTITUDE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.** (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *The freedom of the Spirit*:—1. To possess the Lord Jesus Christ is to possess the Holy Ghost, who is the minister and guardian of Christ’s presence in the soul. The apostle’s conclusion is that those who are converted to Jesus have escaped from the veil which darkened the spiritual intelligence of Israel. The converting Spirit is the source of positive illumination; but, before He enlightens thus, He must give freedom from the veil of prejudice which denies to Jewish thought the exercise of any real insight into the deeper sense of Scripture. That sense is seized by the Christian student of the ancient law, because in the Church of Christ he possesses the Spirit; and “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” 2. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ because He is sent by Christ, and for the purpose of endowing us with Christ’s nature and mind. His presence does not supersede that of Christ: He co-operates in, He does not work apart from, the mediatorial work of Christ. To possess the Holy Spirit is to possess Christ; to have lost the one is to have lost the other. Accordingly our Lord speaks of the gift of Pentecost as if it were His own second coming (John xiv. 18). And, after telling the Romans that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His,” St. Paul adds, “Now if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.” Here Christ’s “being in” the Christian, and the Christian’s “having the Spirit of Christ,” are equivalent terms. 3. Freedom is not an occasional largess of the Divine Spirit; it is not merely a reward for high services or conspicuous devotion. It is the very atmosphere of His presence. Wherever He really is, there is also freedom. He does not merely strike off the fetters of some narrow national prejudice, or of some antiquated ceremonialism. His mission is not to bestow an external, political, social freedom. For no political or social emancipation can give real liberty to an enslaved soul. And no tyranny of the state or of society can enslave a soul that has been really freed. At His bidding the inmost soul of man has free play. He gives freedom from error for the reason, freedom from constraint for the affections, freedom for the will from the tyranny of sinful and human wills. 4. The natural images which are used to set forth the presence and working of the Holy Spirit are suggestive of this freedom. The Dove, which pictures His gentle movement on the soul and in the Church, suggests also the power of rising at will above the dead level of the soil into a

higher region where it is at rest. The "cloven tongue like as of fire" is at once light and heat; and light and heat imply ideas of the most unrestricted freedom. "The wind" blowing "where it listeth"; the well of water in the soul, springing up, like a perpetual fountain, unto everlasting life—such are our Lord's own chosen symbols of the Pentecostal gift. All these figures prepare us for the language of the apostles when they are tracing the results of the great Pentecostal gift. With St. James, the Christian, no less than the Jew, has to obey a law, but the Christian law is "a law of liberty." With St. Paul, the Church is the Jerusalem which is "free"; in contrast with the bondwoman the Christian is to stand fast in a liberty with which Christ has freed him; he is "made free from sin, and become the servant of righteousness." St. Paul compares "the glorious liberty of the children of God" with the "bondage of corruption"; he contrasts the "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which gives us Christians our freedom, with the enslaving "law of sin and death." According to St. Paul, the Christian slave is essentially free, even while he still wears his chain (1 Cor. vii. 22). Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is—I. MENTAL LIBERTY. 1. From the first God has consecrated liberty of thought by withdrawing thought from the control of society. Society protects our persons and goods, and passes judgment upon our words and actions; but it cannot force the sanctuary of our thought. And the Spirit comes not to suspend, but to recognise, to carry forward, to expand, and to fertilise almost indefinitely the thought of man. He has vindicated for human thought the liberty of its expression against imperial tyranny and official superstition. The blood of the martyrs witnessed to the truth that, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is mental liberty. 2. In the judgment of an influential school dogma is the enemy of religious freedom. But what is dogma? The term belongs to the language of civilians; it is applied to the imperial edicts. It also finds a home in the language of philosophy; and the philosophers who denounce the dogmatic statements of the gospel are hardly consistent when they are elaborating their own theories. Dogma is essential Christian truth thrown by authority into a form which admits of its permanently passing into the understanding and being treasured by the heart of the people. For dogma is an active protest against those sentimental theories which empty revelation of all positive value. Dogma proclaims that revelation does mean something, and what. Accordingly dogma is to be found no less truly in the volume of the New Testament than in Fathers and Councils. It is specially embodied in our Lord's later discourses, in the sermons of His apostles, in the epistles of St. Paul. The Divine Spirit, speaking through the clear utterances of Scripture, is the real author of essential dogma; and we know that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 3. But is not dogma, as a matter of fact, a restraint upon thought? Unquestionably. But there is a notion of liberty which is impossible. Surely a being is free when he moves without difficulty in the sphere which is assigned to him by his natural constitution. If he can only travel beyond his sphere with the certainty of destroying himself, it is not an unreasonable tax upon his liberty whereby he is confined within the barrier that secures his safety. Now truth is originally the native element of human thought; and Christian dogma prescribes the direction and limits of truth concerning God and His relations to man. (1) Certainly the physical world does not teach us that obedience to law is fatal to freedom. The heavens would cease to "declare the glory of God" if the astronomers were to destroy those invariable forces which confine the movement of the swiftest stars to their fixed orbits. And when man himself proceeds to claim that empire which God has given him over the world of nature, he finds his energies bounded and controlled by law in every direction. We men can transport ourselves to and fro on the surface of this earth. But if in an attempt to reach the skies we should succeed in mounting to a region where animal life is impossible, we know that death would be the result of our success. Meanwhile our aeronauts, and even our Alpine climbers, do not "complain of the tyranny of the air." (2) So it is in the world of thought. Look at those axioms which form the basis of the freest and most exact science known to the human mind. We cannot demonstrate them, we cannot reject them; but the submissive glance by which reason accepts them is no unworthy figure of the action of faith. Faith also submits, it is true; but her submission to dogma is the guarantee at once of her rightful freedom and of her enduring power. (3) So submission to revealed truth involves a certain limitation of intellectual licence. To believe the dogma that God exists is inconsistent with a liberty to deny His existence. But such liberty is, in the judgment of faith, parallel to that of denying the existence of the sun or of the atmosphere. To com-

plain of the Creed as an interference with liberty is to imitate the savage who had to walk across London at night, and who remarked that the lamp-posts were an obstruction to traffic. 4. They only can suppose that Christian dogma is the antagonist of intellectual freedom whose misery it is to disbelieve. For dogma stimulates and provokes thought—sustains it at an elevation which, without it, is impossible. It is a scaffolding by which we climb into a higher atmosphere. It leaves us free to hold converse with God, to learn to know Him. We can speak of Him and to Him, freely and affectionately, within the ample limits of a dogmatic definition. Besides this, dogma sheds, from its home in the heart of revelation, an interest on all surrounding branches of knowledge. God is everywhere, and to have a fixed belief in Him is to have a perpetual interest in all that reflects Him. What composition can be more dogmatic than the *Te Deum*? Yet it stimulates unbounded spiritual movement. The soul finds that the sublime truths which it adores do not for one moment fetter the freedom of its movement. II. MORAL LIBERTY. 1. There is no such thing as freedom from moral slavery, except for the soul which has laid hold on a fixed objective truth. But when, at the breath of the Divine Spirit upon the soul, heaven is opened to the eye of faith, and man looks up from his misery and his weakness to the everlasting Christ upon His throne; when that glorious series of truths, which begins with the Incarnation, and which ends with the perpetual intercession, is really grasped by the soul as certain—then assuredly freedom is possible. It is possible, for the Son has taken flesh, and died, and risen again, and interceded with the Father, and given us His Spirit and His sacraments, expressly that we might enjoy it. 2. But, then, we are to be enfranchised on the condition of submission. Submission! you say—is not this slavery? No; obedience is the school of freedom. In obeying God you escape all the tyrannies which would fain rob you of your liberty. In obeying God you are emancipated from the cruel yet petty despotisms which enslave, sooner or later, all rebel wills. As in the material world all expansion is proportioned to the compression which precedes it, so in the moral world the will acts with a force which is measured by its power of self-control. 3. As loyal citizens of that kingdom of the Spirit which is also the kingdom of the Incarnation, you may be really free. “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Political liberty is a blessing; liberty of thought is a blessing. But the greatest blessing is liberty of the conscience and the will. It is freedom from a sense of sin when all is known to have been pardoned through the atoning blood; freedom from a slavish fear of our Father in heaven when conscience is offered to His unerring eye by that penitent love which fixes its eye upon the Crucified; freedom from current prejudice and false human opinion when the soul gazes by intuitive faith upon the actual truth; freedom from the depressing yoke of weak health or narrow circumstances, since the soul cannot be crushed which rests consciously upon the everlasting arms; freedom from that haunting fear of death which holds those who think really upon death at all, “all their lifetime subject to bondage,” unless they are His true friends and clients who by the sharpness of His own death has led the way and “opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.” It is freedom in time, but also, and beyond, freedom in eternity. In that blessed world, in the unclouded presence of the emancipator, the brand of slavery is inconceivable. In that world there is indeed a perpetual service; yet, since it is the service of love made perfect, it is only and by necessity the service of the free. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Spiritual Liberty*.—Liberty is the birthright of every man. But where do you find liberty unaccompanied by religion? This land is the home of liberty, not so much because of our institutions as because the Spirit of the Lord is here—the spirit of true and hearty religion. But the liberty of the text is an infinitely greater and better one, and one which Christian men alone enjoy. He is the free man whom the truth makes free. Without the Spirit of the Lord, in a free country, ye may still be bondsmen; and where there are no serfs in body, ye may be slaves in soul. Note—I. WHAT WE ARE FREED FROM. 1. The bondage of sin. Of all slavery there is none more horrible than this. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me” from it? But the Christian is free. 2. The penalty of sin—eternal death. 3. The guilt of sin. 4. The dominion of sin. Profane men glory in free living and free thinking. Free living! Let the slave hold up his fetters and jingle them, and say, “This is music, and I am free.” A sinner without grace attempting to reform himself is like Sisypheus rolling the stone up hill, which always comes down with greater force. A man without grace attempting to save himself is engaged in as hopeless a task as the daughters of Danaus, when they attempted to fill a vast vessel with bottomless

buckets. He has a bow without a string, a sword without a blade, a gun without powder. 5. Slavish fear of law. Many people are honest because they are afraid of the policeman. Many are sober because they are afraid of the eye of the public. If a man be destitute of the grace of God, his works are only works of slavery; he feels forced to do them. But now, Christian, "Love makes your willing feet in swift obedience move." We are free from the law that we may obey it better. 6. The fear of death. I recollect a good old woman, who said, "Afraid to die, sir! I have dipped my foot in Jordan every morning before breakfast for the last fifty years, and do you think I am afraid to die now?" A good Welsh lady, when she lay a-dying, was visited by her minister, who said to her, "Sister, are you sinking?" But, rising a little in the bed, she said, "Sinking! Sinking! Did you ever know a sinner sink through a rock? If I had been standing on the sand I might sink; but, thank God! I am on the Rock of Ages, and there is no sinking there." II. WHAT WE ARE FREE TO. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and that liberty gives us certain rights and privileges. 1. To heaven's charter. Heaven's Magna Charta is the Bible, and you are free to it—to all its doctrines, promises, &c. You are free to all that is in the Bible. It is the bank of heaven: you may draw from it as much as you please without let or hindrance. 2. To the throne of grace. It is the privilege of Englishmen that they can always send a petition to Parliament; and it is the privilege of a believer that he can always send a petition to the throne of God. It signifies nothing what, where, or under what circumstances I am. 3. To enter into the city. I am not a freeman of London, which is doubtless a great privilege, but I am a freeman of a better city. Now some of you have obtained the freedom of the city, but you won't take it up. Don't remain outside the Church any longer, for you have a right to come in. 4. To heaven. When a Christian dies he knows the password that can make the gates wide open fly; he has the white stone whereby he shall be known as a ransomed one, and that shall pass him at the barrier. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Signs of spiritual liberty*:—Wheresoever the Spirit of God is, there is—I. A LIBERTY OF HOLINESS, TO FREE US FROM THE DOMINION OF SIN (Luke i. 75). As children can give a bird leave to fly so it be in a string to pull it back again, so Satan hath men in a string if they live in sin. The beast that runs away with a cord about him is caught by the cord again; so, having Satan's cords about us, he can pull us in when he lists. From this we are freed by the Spirit. II. A BLESSED FREEDOM AND AN ENLARGEMENT OF HEART TO DUTIES. God's people are a voluntary people. Those that are under grace are "anointed by the Spirit" (Psa. lxxxix. 20), and that spiritual anointment makes them nimble. Otherwise spiritual duties are as opposite to flesh and blood as fire and water. When we are drawn, therefore, to duties, as a bear to a stake, for fear, or out of custom, with extrinsical motives, and not from a new nature, this is not from the Spirit. For the liberty of the Spirit is when actions come off naturally, without any extrinsical motive. A child needs not extrinsical motives to please his father. So there is a new nature in those that have the Spirit of God to stir them up to duty, though God's motives may help as the sweet encouragements and rewards. But the principle is to do things naturally. Artificial things move from a principle without them, therefore they are artificial. Clocks and such things have weights that stir all the wheels they go by, and that move them; so it is with an artificial Christian. He moves with weights without him; he hath not an inward principle of the Spirit to make things natural to him. III. COURAGE AGAINST ALL OPPOSITION WHATSOEVER, JOINED WITH LIGHT AND STRENGTH OF FAITH, BREAKING THROUGH ALL OPPOSITIONS. Opposition to a spiritual man adds but courage and strength to him to resist. In Acts iv. 23, *seq.*, when they had the Spirit of God, they encountered opposition; and the more they were opposed, the more they grew. They were cast in prison, and rejoiced; and the more they were imprisoned, the more courageous they were still. There is no setting against this wind, no quenching of this fire, by any human power. See how the Spirit triumphed in the martyrs. The Spirit of God is a victorious Spirit (Rom. viii. 33, 34; Acts vi. 10, 15). IV. BOLDNESS WITH GOD HIMSELF, otherwise a "consuming fire." For the Spirit of Christ goes through the mediation of Christ to God. That familiar boldness whereby we cry, "Abba, Father," comes from sons. This comes from the Spirit. If we be sons, then we have the Spirit, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*)

Ver 18. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.—*Mirrors of Christ*:—1. We should substitute

"reflecting" for "beholding." Christians are represented not as persons looking into a mirror, but as themselves the mirrors. They who uncover their souls to the influence of Christ reflect His glory, and by continuing to do so they attain to that glory. It is as if by some process the image of a person who gazes into a mirror should not be merely reflected for the moment, but permanently stamped upon it.

2. Recall the incident which suggested the figure. When Moses came down from the Mount his countenance shone so as to dazzle beholders; he acted, as it were, like a mirror to the glory of God. But Moses knew that the reflection would pass away, and therefore he put on a veil, that the people "might not see the end of it." Had they done so they might have supposed that God had retired from him, and that no more authority belonged to him, and therefore Moses put on the veil; but when he returned to receive new communications from God he met God with unveiled face. But, says Paul, the wrong-headedness of the Jews is perpetuating this veil. When the O. T. is read, there is a veil preventing them from seeing the end of the glory of Moses in Christ; they think the glory still abides in Moses. But when they return, as Moses used to return, to the Lord, they will lay aside the veil as he did, and then the glory of the Lord shall shine upon, and be reflected by, them. This reflection will not fade away, but increase from one glory to another—to perfect resemblance to the original. This is a glory not skin-deep like that of Moses, but penetrating the character and changing our inmost nature into Christ's image.

3. The idea, then, is that they who are much in Christ's presence become mirrors to Him, reflecting more and more permanently His image until they themselves perfectly resemble Him. This assertion rests on the well-known law that a reflected image tends in many circumstances to become fixed. Your eye, *e.g.*, is a mirror which retains for a little the image it has been reflecting. Let the sun shine upon it, and wherever you look for a time you will still see the sun. The child who grows up with a parent he respects unconsciously reflects a thousand of his attitudes, looks, and ways, which gradually become the child's own. We are all of us, to a great extent, made by the company we keep. There is a natural readiness in us all to reflect and respond to the emotions expressed in our presence. If another person laughs, we can scarcely refrain from laughing; if we see a man in pain, our face reflects what is passing in him. And so every one who associates with Christ finds that to some extent he reflects His glory. It is His image which always reawakens in us a response to what is good and right. It is He who saves us from becoming altogether a reflection of a world lying in wickedness, from being formed by our own evil-heartedness, and from persuading ourselves we may live as we list. His own patient lips seem to say, "Follow Me; be in this world as I was in it." Our duty, then, if we would be transformed into the image of Christ, is plain.

I. WE MUST ASSOCIATE WITH HIM. Even one thought of Him does some good, but we must learn to abide with Him. It is by a series of impressions that His image becomes fixed in us. As soon as we cease to be conscious of Christ we cease to reflect Him, just as when an object passes from before a mirror, the reflection simultaneously goes with it. Besides, we are exposed to objects the most destructive to Christ's image in us. As often as our hearts are exposed to some tempting thing and respond to it, it is that reflection which is seen in us, mingled often with the fading reflection of Christ; the two images forming together a monstrous representation.

II. WE MUST BE CAREFUL TO TURN FULLY ROUND TO CHRIST. The mirror must be set quite square to that which it is to reflect. In many positions you can see many other images in a mirror without seeing yourself. And so, unless we give our full front, our direct, straightforward, whole attention to Christ, He may see in us, not His own image at all, but the images of things abhorrent to Him. The man who is not wholly satisfied in Christ, who has aims or purposes that Christ will not fulfil for him, is not wholly turned towards Christ. The man who, while he prays to Christ, is keeping one eye open towards the world, is a mirror set obliquely; so that he reflects not Christ at all, but other things which are making him the man he is.

III. WE MUST STAND IN HIS PRESENCE WITH OPEN, UNVEILED FACE. We may wear a veil in the world, refusing to reflect it; but when we return to the Lord we must uncover our face. A covered mirror reflects nothing. Others find Christ in the reading of the Word, in prayer, in the services of His house, in a number of little providences—in fact everywhere, because their eyes are unveiled. We may read the very same word and wonder at their emotion; we may pass through the same circumstances and be quite unconscious of Christ; we may be at the communion table side by side with one who is radiant with the glory of Christ and yet an impalpable veil between us and him

may hide all this from us. And our danger is that we let the dust gather upon us till we see and reflect no ray of that glory. We do nothing to brush off the dust, but let Him pass by and leave no more mark on us than if He had not been present. This veil is not like a slight dimness occasioned by moisture on a mirror, which the warm presence of Christ will itself dry up; it is rather an incrustation that has grown out from our own hearts, thickly covering them and making them thoroughly impervious to the light of Heaven. The heart is overlaid with worldly ambitions; with fleshly appetites; with schemes of self-advancement. All these, and everything which has no sympathy with what is spiritual and Christ-like, must be removed, and the mirror must be kept clean, if there is to be any reflection. In some persons you might be tempted to say that the mischief is produced not so much by a veil on the mirror as by a lack of quicksilver behind it. There is no solid backing to the character, no material for the truth to work upon, or there is no energetic thinking, no diligent, painstaking spiritual culture.

Conclusion: 1. Observe the perfectness of this mode of sanctification. It is perfect—(1) In its end; it is likeness to Christ in which it terminates. And as often as you set yourself before Christ, and in presence of His perfect character begin to feel the blemishes in your own, you forget the points of resemblance, and feel that you cannot rest until the likeness is perfect. And so the Christian goes from glory to glory, from one reflection of Christ's image to another, until perfection is attained. (2) In its method. It extends to the whole character at once. When a sculptor is cutting out a bust, or a painter filling in a likeness, one feature may be pretty nearly finished while the rest are undiscernible; but when a person stands before a mirror the whole face is at once reflected. And in sanctification the same law holds good. Many of us take the wrong method; we hammer and chisel away at ourselves to produce some resemblance to Christ in one feature or another; but the result is that either in a day or two we quite forget what grace we were trying to develop; or, succeeding somewhat, we find that our character as a whole is more provokingly unlike Christ than ever. Consider how this appears in the moulding men undergo in society. You know in what class of society a man has been brought up, not by his accent, bearing, conversation, or look alone, but by all these together. The society a man moves in impresses on all he does and is a certain style and manner and tone. So the only effectual way of becoming like Christ in all points is to be much in His society.

2. Some of us lament that there is so little we can do for Christ. But we can all reflect Him, and by reflecting Him we shall certainly extend the knowledge of Him on earth. Many who do not look at Him, look at you. As in a mirror persons (looking into it from the side) see the reflections of objects which are themselves invisible, so persons will see in you an image of what they do not directly see, which will cause them to wonder, and turn to study for themselves the substantial figure which produces it.

3. The mirror cannot produce an image of that which has no reality. And as little can any man produce in himself and of himself the character of Christ. (*M. Dods, D.D.*) *The gospel the reflective mirror of the glory of the Lord*:—I. WE MUST EXPLAIN THE OBJECT OF VISION. "The glory of the Lord." Every discovery which the Lord has made of Himself to His rational creatures is for the manifestation of His own glory. The works of creation were intended to show forth His glory. In process of time the Divine Being gave a more complete revelation of His glory, by the ministry of Moses, to a nation whom He had ordained to be the repository of His truth.

II. THE REFLECTIVE MEDIUM. A glass or mirror. Divine revelation is a mirror in which we perceive, and from which is reflected, the glory of the Lord. The ministration of the Spirit exceeds in glory the ministration of death and condemnation, inasmuch as—1. Its discoveries are more satisfactory. 2. The miracles by which they were attested were more benevolent. 3. The grace of the latter is more abundant than that of the former. By grace here we mean the bestowment of spiritual life and salvation to the souls of sinful men. If we look at the general character of the Israelitish nation, from the time of Moses to the coming of Christ, we shall perceive but little manifestation of genuine piety towards God. But how abundant was the grace when Christ appeared, "in the fulness of time," "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself!" Then Jews and Gentiles received the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in so copious a manner as to fulfil the beautiful predictions of the prophet: "Until the Spirit be poured on us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." III. THE DISTINCTNESS OF ITS PERCEPTION. "With open" or "unveiled face." IV. THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THIS

VISION. "Changed from glory to glory." Thus faith in Divine revelation is a holy perception of the mind, by which the glory of God in Christ is discovered, and this discovery has a powerful reaction upon the soul, and as the object is more distinctly perceived, the progressive sanctification of good men is advanced till they possess the perfect image of their Lord. V. THE DIVINE AGENT BY WHICH THIS IS EFFECTED. "The Spirit of the Lord," or "the Lord the Spirit." 1. Here the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit are asserted. 2. None but a Divine Being could accomplish His work. The Spirit of God creates the soul of every converted man anew. In improvement of the subject we have been considering I shall make only two observations. 1. How great is your privilege, and how awful your responsibility! 2. The Christian has to leave reflective mirrors for the full vision of the Saviour's glory. (*W. Jones.*) *Mirrors of Christ*:—I. IN EVERY REFLECTOR THERE MUST BE AN EXPOSURE OF ITSELF TO THE SUN, SO THAT THE LIGHT MAY FALL UPON IT. So if we would reflect the glories of God, we must make a full presentation of ourselves to God. How many of us fail to shine just because of some spiritual obliquity of aim and purpose! II. A REFLECTOR CAN ONLY ANSWER ITS PURPOSE WHEN THERE IS NOTHING INTERPOSED BETWEEN IT AND THE SOURCE OF LIGHT. We need to have our face unveiled in order to receive the light as well as to reflect it. The introduction of some substance renders the reflector useless. Now observe, the sun is very seldom eclipsed, but when that is so the world itself is in no way accountable; another orb is interposed between the earth and the sun. Even so the Christian's light may sometimes be eclipsed, not because of any fault of ours, but for some wise purpose which God has in view. But it is otherwise with self-caused darkness. The sun, while seldom eclipsed, is frequently beclouded, and by clouds which are due to exhalations arising from the earth. Alas! how many Christians live under a clouded sky, for which they have only to thank themselves. 1. Here is one who lives under the ominous thunder-cloud of care. 2. Here is another who dwells in the fog of earthly-mindedness. 3. Here is yet another who is wrapped round in the cold mist of doubts and fears, steaming up from the restless sea of human experiences. III. IF A MIRROR IS TO REFLECT IT MUST BE KEPT CLEAN. I saw an ancient mirror of polished steel in an old baronial hall. There it was, in just as good condition as when fair ladies saw their faces reflected in it in the days of the Plantagenets. But its preservation in the damp atmosphere of Cornwall was due to the fact that generation after generation of servants had always kept it clean. Just think how one small spot of rust in all these hundreds of years would have marred that surface for ever. Oh, Christian, no wonder that thou hast lost thy reflecting power. Thou hast been careless about little things; but nothing can be smaller than the dust which robs the mirror of its reflecting power. Or perhaps thou hast allowed the rust spots of evil habits to spoil thy surface. Let us see to it that we keep the mirror bright and unsullied! The most virulent corrosive acid can do but little harm to the surface of polished steel, if wiped off the moment it falls; but let it remain, and very soon an irreparable mischief is done. Even so you may be overtaken even in a very serious fault; but when it has been promptly confessed and put away, the truth is realised: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light," &c. IV. NOTE THE WAY IN WHICH THE ANCIENT MIRRORS WERE FORMED. The metal had to be smoothed and polished by friction. 1. And are we not God's workmanship in this respect, and does He not employ our trying experiences here just to induce this end? 2. The mirror needs to be polished by a skilled hand; and as long as we are in God's hands, He can, and will, polish us for Himself. But when we take ourselves out of His hands, and only see chance or circumstances or stern old mother Nature, in our experiences, these clumsy operators only scratch the surface, which needs to be polished. V. But there comes a point when the figure breaks down, for THE MIRROR ALWAYS REMAINS A MIRROR—dark itself, however much light it may reflect. BUT IT IS OTHERWISE WITH THE TRUE CHRISTIAN. 1. The light not only falls on but enters into him, and becomes part of himself. The true Christian is not only a light-giver—he is light. "Now are ye light in the Lord." The Christian who puts a veil on his face because he does not care to give, will find that he is also precluded by his veil from receiving; but he who both receives and gives will also find that he keeps. 2. And that which he keeps proves within him a transforming power by which he is changed from glory into glory. Thank God for our capacity of change. There are some who seem to be proud of never changing. 3. We are familiar with the idea that God is to be glorified in each fresh stage of spiritual experience, but are we

equally familiar with the thought that each fresh acquisition that faith lays hold of brings new glory with it to him by whom the acquisition is made? From glory unto glory. (1) Is it not glory when first the sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, hears Christ say, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"? (2) Time passes on, and the soul cries again "Glory to God!" as he makes the discovery that the redemption of Christ entitles him to be free indeed from the tyrant power of sin. (3) Time flies on, and still we change. "Glory to God!" cries the working Christian, as he presents his body a living sacrifice, and feels the living fire descend and consecrate the offering. "Glory to thee, My child," the Saviour still seems to answer; "thou art a worker together with Me; thy labour is not in vain in Me thy Lord." (4) Still we change. "Glory to God!" cries the advancing saint, as he sees the prize of his high calling, and presses towards it. "Glory to thee, my child," is still the Saviour's response; "as thou hast borne the image of the earthly, so shalt thou bear the image of the heavenly, and shalt thou bear the image of the heavenly. (5) Thus we press on from glory unto glory until it is all glory. "Glory to God!" exclaims the triumphant soul as he enters the eternal home. "Glory to thee, my child!" still seems the answer, as Christ bids His faithful follower share His throne. Oh, may we thus reflect His glory for ever! (*W. Hay-Aitken, M.A.*) *The transforming influence of faith:*—I. THE CONTEMPLATION OF CHRIST. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." 1. The object beheld. "The glory of the Lord," "He is the Lord of all"—of all men, of all creatures, of all things. He is the rightful Proprietor of the universe. The primary meaning of glory is brightness, splendour; and the secondary meaning is excellence displayed, according to its subject, and the nature of the object to which it is ascribed. In which of these senses is glory here ascribed to the Lord Christ? In the latter, not in the former sense. It is not the glory of His might, nor the glory of His majesty, nor even the glory of His miracles, of which His personal disciples were eye-witnesses; but the glory of His moral perfections. God is "glorious in holiness," and "the glory of the Lord" is His moral excellence, comprised and displayed in all His moral attributes. The former are displayed in His works; the latter shine brightest in His Word. In a word, the glory of the Lord was the manifestation of His Divine philanthropy—"of the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men." 2. The medium in which His glory is beheld. "Beholding as in a glass," or rather, as in a mirror. What, then, is the mirror which receives the image, and reflects back on the eye of the beholders, the glory of the Lord? What, but the gospel of Christ. And Christ is at once the Author, the subject, and the sum of the gospel. It derives all the glory it possesses and reflects, from the glory of the Lord. It receives its being, its name, its character, and its efficacy from Him. It originates nothing; all that it is, all that it says, and all that it does, is from Him, about Him, and for Him. And the image of Him which the gospel receives as the image of the invisible God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, it reflects back as from a burnished mirror, in all its lineaments, and fulness, and glory, and distinctness. The glory of the gospel of Christ, as a mirror, contrasts strikingly with the law as "a shadow of things to come." The good things to come were seen by the Old Testament saints in the types and ceremonies of the law. The view was dim as well as distant; indistinct, uncertain, and unsatisfying. But the sight of the glory of the Lord in the mirror of the gospel is near and not distant, luminous and not dark, distinct and not obscure or uncertain, and transforming but not terrifying. 3. The manner. "With open face." The face is said to be open when it is guileless, ingenuous, and benevolent, and not sinister, crafty, or malicious; or, when the face itself is fully exposed, and not covered. This last is obviously the meaning of the expression employed. With open, that is, with unveiled face. Those who apply it to the face of the Lord make a slight transposition of the words to make the sense more apparent. Thus: "We all, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord with unveiled face." His face is unveiled, and His glory is thus undimmed. It shines forth in all its splendour. If the "unveiled face" be understood of the beholders, according to our version, then the reference is to the more immediate context in the fifteenth verse, and the contrast is between them, and "the veil which is upon the heart" of the unbelieving Jews. Now, all this serves to show that, while the most obvious reference may be to the veil over the face of Moses as contrasted with the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it is not to the exclusion of the veil upon the heart of the Jews as contrasted with the open, unveiled face of the beholders of the glory of the Lord.

“Which veil is done away in Christ?” Indeed, both veils are now removed, and done away in Christ:—the obscurity caused by the former is removed by the luminous exhibition of the gospel of Christ, and the blindness of mind caused by the latter is removed by the ministration of the Spirit. 4. The beholders. Who are the persons indicated by, and included in the “we all” who thus behold the glory of the Lord? Is it all we apostles only? or even all we whom He hath “made able ministers of the New Testament”? The expression includes all who are subjects of the new covenant, who are under grace, and in a state of grace, “all who have turned to the Lord” (ver. 16). Not only do all who turn, or are converted to the Lord, possess, exercise, and maintain their Christian liberty, but they are all “light in the Lord.” The light of the glorious gospel of Christ, the medium of spiritual vision, is not only held up as a mirror before their eyes, as before the eyes of the world; but the organ of spiritual vision is opened, unveiled, and directed to the image beheld there, radiant with beauty, and reflecting back the glory of the Lord on the eyes of the beholders. II. CONFORMITY TO CHRIST. The change thus produced is—1. Spiritual in its nature. All the glory seen on the summit, and around the base, of Mount Sinai, was of a material and sensible kind. Moses saw the glory of the Lord with his bodily eyes; the shekinah, or symbol of the Divine glory, made the skin of his face to shine. It is otherwise with the glory beheld, with the medium, the manner, and the organ of vision here—all is spiritual, and not material in its nature. The gospel reveals, and holds up to view, the things of the Spirit. And spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. They do not act as a charm. Nothing can possibly affect, impress, or influence us mentally, any longer than it is in our thoughts; or, morally, any longer than it is in our memory and in our heart. The gospel of Christ operates according to the attention and reception given to it, and the use we make of it. 2. Transforming in its influence. It is a law in nature, and a truth in proverb, that “like produces like.” The man who is much at court, naturally and almost unconsciously catches the air, impress, and polish of the court, so that he become courtly, if not courteous in spirit, in address, in manners and deportment. In going to the house of mourning, which it is better to go to than to the house of feasting, we almost insensibly catch the spirit of sympathy, and feel the spirit of mourning creeping over us. The heart softens; the countenance saddens; the eye moistens. Constituted as we all are, how can it be otherwise? Looking steadfastly and intently at such moral excellence we admire; admiring we love; loving we long to imitate it; imitation produces likeness to Him in mind, in disposition, in will, in walk, and way. Do we thus behold the love of Christ? “We love Him, because He first loved us.” Do we behold Him as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”? We become “dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” 3. Glorious in its progress. The glory of Moses’ countenance became more and more dim, by distance of time and of place from the scene and sight of glory, till it entirely disappeared. But the glory of the Lord remains the same, and the glory of the gospel reflecting it remains the same, and the more steadfastly and earnestly we behold it, the more will we be changed into the same glorious image. The expression employed is an evidence that grace and glory are not only inseparable, but in substance identical. So far from differing in kind they are so essentially the same, that the sacred writers sometimes use the words interchangeably. Paul here uses “glory” for grace in speaking of the glorious transformation of believers from grace to glory; and Peter uses “grace” for glory in speaking of the glory “that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” And the reason is no less plain than the lesson is instructive and important. The partaker of grace is “also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.” 4. Divine in efficiency, “Even as by the Spirit of the Lord,” or as the margin has it more literally and properly. “Even as by the Lord the Spirit.” It is His prerogative, and it becomes His spiritual dominion to open and unveil the heart, to enlighten the eyes of the understanding, to fix them on the glory of the Lord, to quicken the spirit, and thus to make His subjects “a willing people in the day of His power.” This subject sets before us the privilege of gospel hearers, and the honour of gospel believers, and the doom of gospel despisers. It shows—1. The privilege of gospel hearers. All who have the Word of God, who read or hear the gospel of Christ, are “not under the law, but under grace.” They are more highly privileged than were the Jews who were under the law, or the Gentiles who have not the law, and know not God. 2. The blessedness of gospel believers. They are the blessed people who know the joyful sound; they

walk in the light of God's countenance. 3. The doom of gospel despisers. They make light of the gospel of Christ; despise the Saviour it presents, and the salvation it proffers, and turn away from "the glory of the Lord." (*Geo. Robson.*) *The physiognomy and photography of Christianity*:—I. THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF THE TEXT. 1. The open face. This is the antithesis of the covered face of Moses, and must therefore be Christ's (chap. iv. 6). The idea is physiognomical, face reading. Men profess to comprehend each other's temperaments and dispositions by the study of their faces. Thus a man's face is his character, at least the key to it. In this face of Jesus Christ shines the resplendent glory of God; it is an index of the Divine mind and feelings towards a sinful world. The human face becomes a profound mystery apart from the soul within. Its wonderful expressions cannot be understood except on the supposition of an indwelling spirit. When the sky is overcast, suddenly, maybe, a beam darts through, shedding a glow of beauty over the spot upon which it gleams. The mystery of that ray could not be solved except by the existence of a sun behind. It is only in the same way that the character of Christ can be understood. Denied His Divine nature Christ becomes a profounder mystery than when regarded as God incarnate. 2. It is an open face in a glass. Once it was an open face without any intervening object, when "He dwelt among men and they beheld His glory." But now that His bodily presence has departed we have His face reflected in the gospel-mirror (chap. iv. 4). It is through Christ we know God, and it is through the gospel that we know Christ. The sun, when it has set, is invisible to us. We then look up to the heavens, and there we observe the moon, which reflects the, to us, invisible sun. This moon is the sun's image. Again, looking into the placid waters of the pool, we observe in its clear depth the moon's reflection. God is imaged in Christ, and Christ is imaged in the gospel. Now, the superiority of the gospel over the Old Testament is represented by the difference between the glass and the veil. The veil obscures the face, the glass reveals it. In fact the mirror is of all instruments the one which gives the most correct representation of the original. The idea of a person conveyed by a mirror is immeasurably superior to that conveyed by the best painting. The face in the painting may represent a dead one, but the face in the mirror must represent a living one. If the mirror excels so much the best painting, how much must it excel a shadow! The Old Testament was only a "shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." A person's shadow will give but a very indifferent idea of him. What, however, would be thought of the person who essayed to draw a picture of another from his shadow? Yet, this the Jews attempted to do in relation to Christ. So "to His own He came, and His own received Him not," because His appearance did not harmonise with their preconceived conceptions of Him drawn from His shadow. Men, therefore, should seek Him in the gospel mirror, where alone He can be seen as He is. II. THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE TEXT. "But we all . . . are changed into the same image," &c. Here the apostle explains the effects of this transparent clearness of the gospel teaching. Beholding the Lord in the gospel transforms the beholder into His own image. This is in accordance with the analogy of natural photography. The light falls upon the object, that object again reflects it in its own form upon the prepared glass. The resplendent glory of God falls, so to speak, upon Christ in His mediatorial character; Christ reflects it upon the believing mind; the mind beholding Him in faith. The mind thus reflected upon by the incomparable beauties of Christ's character is transformed into the same image. The work is progressive, but the first line of it is glory, and every additional one the same—"from glory to glory." (*A. J. Parry.*) *The image*:—I. THE IMAGE. We must lay Exodus xxxiv. 33, &c., alongside of this chapter. So the sight of Christ's glory does far more for us than the sight of God's glory did for Moses. The skin of his face was lighted up; but our very souls are changed into likeness to Christ; and this change does not soon pass away, but continues growing from glory to glory, as might be expected, seeing it is the Spirit of the Lord who works the change in us. 1. Christ, as we see Him in the New Testament, is the most perfect image in the world. Only a little of God's glory was revealed by Moses, but Christ is "God manifest in the flesh." (1) God is Light, *i.e.*, that is holiness, and how plainly that glory is imaged in the sinless Jesus! (2) God is Love, and that love is made perfectly plain by the life of Christ from the cradle to the cross. A poor African could not believe that the white man loved him. His heart was not won by cold far-off words about a far-off people. But love for the African became flesh in David Livingstone, and his life was a

glass in which they saw the true image of Christian love. 2. This image is not like the image of the ascending Christ, which faded into heaven while the disciples gazed after it on the Mount of Olives. This is an unfading portrait. Age cannot dim it, earth's mildew cannot discolour it, man's rude hand cannot destroy it; it only grows brighter as it gathers fresh beauty from the blessed changes it is working in the world. II. BEHOLDING OF THE IMAGE. I never saw the beauty of the sun so well as one day in a Highland lake, whose surface was like a mirror of polished glass. To see the naked sun face to face would have blinded me. When John saw Christ's glory directly, though it was only in a vision, he fell down as a dead man, and the same glory blinded Saul of Tarsus. The Bible is a glass in which you may gaze without fear upon the glory of the Lord therein reflected. Moses was the one privileged man in his day. But now all Christians can draw as near to God as Moses did, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is this liberty. How can I rightly behold the glory of the Lord? 1. With an open or unveiled face, just as Moses took off his veil when he turned to speak with Jehovah. A lady visiting a picture gallery on a wintry day shields her face from the biting blast with a thick veil; but, upon entering the gallery, she lifts up her veil that with open face she may fully behold the images created by sculptor and painter. Many veils hide Christ's glory. The god of this world is busy blinding our minds by drawing a veil of prejudice, false shame, ignorance of an earthly mind over them (chap. iv. 4). 2. You are to behold the image in the glass of the Bible. A picture or statue often serves only to remind me that the man is dead or far away, not so the image of Christ in the Bible. Some images, however, fill us with a sense of reality. Raphael painted the Pope, and the Pope's secretary at first took the image for the living man, knelt and offered pen and ink to the portrait, with the request that the bill in his hand might be signed. The image we behold is drawn by the Divine hand, and should be to us a bright and present reality. 3. This beholding must be steady and life-long. Unless you look often at this image and love to do so, you will not get much good from Christ. Even man-made images impress only the steady beholders of them. III. THE BEHOLDERS. 1. "They are changed into the same image." Some people think that the beholding of beautiful pictures must do great good to the beholders; but when Athens and Rome were crowned with the most splendid pictures and statues, the people were the most wicked the world has yet seen. But the right beholding of this image gains a life of the same make as Christ's. We become what we behold. Two boys had been poring over the life of Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard. In that glass they beheld the image of lawless adventurers. They admired: they would be bold heroes too. They are soon changed into the image they gaze upon from shame to shame, even as by the spirit of the devil. Here is a gentle, lovely girl. Her mother is to her the very model and mirror of womanly perfection. She gladly yields herself up to her mother's influence, and the neighbours say, "That girl is the living image of her mother"; for she receives what she admires, and silently grows like what she "likes" best. When some newspaper compared Dr. Judson to one of the apostles, he was distressed, and said, "I do not want to be like them. I want to be like Christ." 2. This change is to be always going forward from glory to glory. 3. Your beholding of Christ and likeness to Christ are both imperfect on earth. In heaven there shall be a perfect beholding, and so a perfect likeness to Christ (Psa. xvii. 15). There as here being and beholding go together. We see this change growing towards perfectness in the martyr Stephen as he stood on the borderland between earth and heaven. Even his foes "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." 4. Christ's people are to be changed so thoroughly into His image that they shall have a soul like His, and even a body like His. For "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (*J. Wells, M.A.*) *The Christian's transfiguration*:—I. WE ARE ALL TRANSFIGURED. If you look back a verse or two it is clearly seen that St. Paul means by these words to include all Christian men. "We all"—the words stand in vivid contrast to the literalising Jew of the apostle's day; the Jew, who had the letter of Scripture, and worshipped it with a veil upon his heart; so that when Moses was read in his hearing, he could not see the meaning of the Old Testament, nor look one inch beyond the letter of the book. His religion was stereotyped, so his heart and life could not be transfigured. A religion of the letter cannot produce growth; it has no beautifying power, it cannot transfigure. In Christ, the case is far otherwise; where He is, there is liberty; where Christ is, there must be growth. Paul could not believe it possible that a Christian life could remain stagnant. Wherever

there is growth, there must come, in the end, transfiguration. St. Paul felt that every believer must re-live in some measure the perfect life of Jesus. Here is the secret of transformation—Christ within, Christ about us as an atmosphere of moral growth. Fellowship with His perfect life gives human nature honour and dignity. The Thames is beautiful at Richmond, at Twickenham, at Kew, but not always so. At times the prospect, as you walk from Twickenham to Richmond, is spoiled by ugly flats of mud, and the air is not over pleasant, when the heat of summer draws the miasma from the sedgy bank. You may walk upon the bank and see but little beauty there. Wait a few hours, the tide will return and change the entire aspect of the river. It will become beautiful. The smallest river or tidal basin is beautified by connection with the sea. The pulse of ocean, if it raise the level but a few inches, adds dignity and beauty wherever it is felt. The river repeats, on a smaller scale, the larger life of the ocean, answering in its ebb and flow to what the sea has done before. So Paul felt that our nature is glorified because, through the Divine humanity of Jesus, it is connected with the ocean of eternal power and grace. The incarnation, the life, and the sacrifice of the Son of God have lifted human life to higher levels; they have created new interests and fresh currents in our thought and feeling. If our life flow onward towards Christ, and better still, if His fulness flow back upon us, we must, at flood tide, partake of His cleansing and transforming power. St. Paul does not here refer to the resurrection, his tenses are all present, and point to a change now taking place in our imperfect existence: "Changed from glory to glory." There is a glory of Christian character which we may possess even now. "From glory to glory" implies steps and stages. There is a measure of beauty, of strength, of holy character, of transfiguration, possible to the feeblest Christian—transfiguration of heart and life, a glory now, a foretaste of the eternal glory, a firstfruits of the Spirit. II. THE CAUSE OF THE CHANGE AND THE MEANS OF ITS ATTAINMENT. It is brought about by looking at Christ. "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory, are changed." To be like Christ, we must look upon Him intently. Then, on the Divine side, there is the inward change. As we look, the Spirit works within. Both things are necessary. As we gaze, the Divine influence comes down upon us imperceptibly. We are all much affected by the things we look at from day to day. A man will find sights congenial to his heart and mind. If he be artistic, he will be on the look-out for pictures and sculpture, or beautiful scenes in nature. If he have a turn for science, he will find objects of study and delight in every field and wood. If we are affectionate, with strong social instincts, our principal attractions will be found in human society. Now all these objects, in turn, react upon us. The artistic mind grows and expands by the study of beauty. The scientific man becomes more scientific by the study of nature; while the social and affectionate disposition deepens in the search and attainment of its object. Apply this to the gospel. Again, we must not forget that the way we look is also important. Our manner of looking at Christ affects us. St. Paul says, we look with "unveiled face." He here contrasts the Jewish with the Christian Church. Look at Christ, look daily, look appreciatively, lovingly, in tender sympathy, and the spirit of Christ will possess you. We may not be able to tell how the change comes about, nor why, neither need we anxiously inquire, provided we look at Christ and feel the Spirit's power. God has many ways. Stand before the mirror, and you will see the light. We care not at what angle you gaze. Look at Christ through tears of penitence, look in hope, in joy, in love; let His light stream into the heart through any one of the many avenues of thought and feeling. (*G. Walker, B.A.*) *The change produced by faith in Jesus*:—I. THE BEHOLDING. 1. By beholding we are to understand faith in one of its liveliest and most important exercises. Faith is a living principle. It hath eyes, and it beholds Christ. This beholding does not consist of a single glance, of a passing survey. "Looking" is not a single act, but the habit of his soul. "Looking unto Jesus," &c. 2. With open face. Under the Jewish dispensation Christ was exhibited, but it was as it were through a veil. There was a mystery attached to it. But now, when Christ came, the mystery which had been hid for ages is revealed. At the hour when Jesus said, "It is finished," the veil that hid the holiest of all, and the innermost secrets of the covenant, was rent in twain from top to bottom. 3. As in a glass. We, whose eye is dimmed by sin, cannot see God as the spirits made perfect do in heaven. "No man hath seen God at any time." Moses desired on one occasion to behold the glory of God. But the request could not be granted. "No man can see God and live." Yet God gave him a signal manifestation of His presence (Exod. xxxiv. 5). Such is the view which

God gives to the believer, of Himself in the face of His Son, as a just God who will by no means clear the guilty, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus—a gracious and encouraging view, not indeed of His essential glory, which the sinner cannot behold, but of His glory as exhibited in His grace, and on which the eye of the believer delights to rest. II. WHAT IS BEHELD. “The glory of the Lord.” The Lord, as the whole context shows, is the Lord Christ—the proper object of faith. We look into the Word as into a mirror to fix our attention on the object reflected. In Him as thus disclosed we shall behold a glory. In His person He is “the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person.” In His work all the perfections of the Divine character meet as in a focus surpassing brilliancy. There was a glory in His incarnation, which the company of the heavenly host observed as they sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to the children of men.” There was glory in His baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended upon Him, and the voice of the Father was heard declaring, “This is My well-beloved Son.” There was an imposing glory in His transfiguration. There was a glory, too, in His very humiliation in His sorrow, in the cursed death which He died. There was an evident glory in His resurrection, when, having gone down to the dark dominions of death, He came up a mighty conqueror, bearing the fruits of victory, and holding death in chains as His prisoner; and angels believed themselves honoured in announcing that “the Lord is risen.” There was a glory in His ascension. “Thou hast ascended on high, leading captivity captive” (Psa. xxiv). He is in glory now at the right hand of God, which glory Stephen was privileged to behold. He shall come in glory at the last day to judge the world. He shall dwell in His glory through all eternity, and the saints shall be partakers with Him of that glory. Now all this glory is exhibited in the volume of the Book, just as we have seen an expansive scene of sky and cloud, of hills and plains, of streams and woods, reflected and exhibited before us in a mirror, and we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord. III. THE EFFECT PRODUCED.. This transforming power of faith arises from two sources not independent of each other, but still separable. 1. Faith is the receiving grace of the Christian character, and the soul is enriched by the treasures poured through it as a channel. Herein lies the great efficacy of faith; it receives that which is given it, and through it the virtue that is in Christ flows into the soul, enriches and satisfies it, and changes it into the same image. 2. Faith produces this effect, inasmuch as it makes us look to and copy Christ. The Spirit carries on the work of sanctification by making us look unto Jesus, and whatever we look to with admiration and love we are disposed willingly, sometimes almost involuntarily, to imitate. We grow in likeness to Him whom we love and admire. IV. THE AGENT. “The Spirit of the Lord.” Note—1. The harmony between the work of the Spirit and the principles of man’s mind. He does not convert or sanctify sinners against their will, but by making them a willing people in the day of His power. What He does in us He does by us. It is when we are beholding the glory of the Lord Christ that the Spirit changes us into the same image from glory to glory. 2. The harmony between the work of Christ the Lord and the work of the Spirit of the Lord. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, who takes of the things that are Christ’s and shows them unto us. The Spirit directs our eyes to Christ, and it is when we look to the Lord Christ that we are changed into the same image. (*J. McCosh, D.D.*) *Transformation by beholding*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A LIFE OF CONTEMPLATING AND REFLECTING CHRIST. It is a question whether the single word rendered in our version “beholding as in a glass,” means that, or “reflecting as a glass does.” But, whatever be the exact force of the word, the thing intended includes both acts. There is no reflection of the light without a previous reception of the light. In bodily sight, the eye is a mirror, and there is no sight without an image of the thing perceived formed in the perceiving eye. In spiritual sight, the soul which beholds is a mirror, and at once beholds and reflects. 1. The great truth of a direct, unimpeded vision sounds strange to many of us. Does not Paul himself teach that we see through a glass darkly? Do we not walk by faith and not by sight? “No man hath seen God at any time, nor can see Him”; and beside that absolute impossibility have we not veils of flesh and sense, to say nothing of the covering of sin. But these apparent difficulties drop away when we take into account two things—(1) The object of vision. “The Lord” is Jesus Christ, the manifested God, our brother. The glory which we behold and give back is not the incomprehensible, incommunicable lustre of the absolute Divine perfectness, but that glory which, as John says, we beheld in Him who

tabernacled with us, full of grace and truth. (2) The real nature of the vision itself. It is the beholding of Him with the soul by faith. "Seeing is believing," says sense; "believing is seeing," says the spirit which clings to the Lord, "whom having not seen" it loves. A bridge of perishable flesh, which is not myself but my tool, connects me with the outward world. It never touches myself at all, and I know it only by trust in my senses. But nothing intervenes between my Lord and me, when I love and trust. He is the light, which proves its own existence by revealing itself, which strikes with quickening impulse on the eye of the spirit that beholds by faith. 2. Note the universality of this prerogative: "We all." This vision does not belong to any select handful. Christ reveals Himself to all His servants in the measure of their desire after Him. Whatsoever special gifts may belong to a few in His Church, the greatest gift belongs to all. 3. This contemplation involves reflection. What we see we shall certainly show. If you look into a man's eye, you will see in it little pictures of what he beholds; and if our hearts are beholding Christ, Christ will be mirrored there. Our characters will show what we are looking at, and ought, in the case of Christian people, to bear His image so plainly that men cannot but take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. And you may be quite sure that, if little light comes from a Christian character, little light comes into it; and if it be swathed in thick veils from men, there will be no less thick veils between it and God. Away then with all veils! No reserve, no fear of the consequences of plain speaking, no diplomatic prudence regulating our frank utterance, no secret doctrines for the initiated! Our power and our duty lies in the full exhibition of the truth. II. THIS LIFE OF CONTEMPLATION IS THEREFORE A LIFE OF GRADUAL TRANSFORMATION. 1. The brightness on the face of Moses was only skin-deep. It faded away, and left no trace. Thus the superficial lustre, that had neither permanence nor transforming power, becomes an illustration of the powerlessness of law to change the moral character into the likeness of the fair ideal which it sets forth. And, in opposition to its weakness, the apostle proclaims the great principle of Christian progress, that the beholding of Christ leads to the assimilation to Him. 2. The metaphor of a mirror does not wholly serve us here. When the sunbeams fall upon it, it flashes in the light, just because they do not enter its cold surface. The contrary is the case with these sentient mirrors of our spirits. In them the light must first sink in before it can ray out. They are not so much like a reflecting surface as like a bar of iron, which needs to be heated right down to its obstinate black core, before its outer skin glow with the whiteness of a heat that is too hot to sparkle. The sunshine must fall on us, not as it does on some lonely hillside, lighting up the grey stones with a passing gleam that changes nothing, and fades away, leaving the solitude to its sadness; but as it does on some cloud cradled near its setting, which it drenches and saturates with fire till its cold heart burns, and all its wreaths of vapour are brightness palpable, glorified by the light which lives amidst its mists. 3. And this contemplation will be gradual transformation. "We all beholding . . . are changed." It is not the mere beholding, but the gaze of love and trust that moulds us by silent sympathy into the likeness of His wondrous beauty, who is fairer than the children of men. It was a deep true thought which the old painters had when they drew John as likeliest to his Lord. Love makes us like. We learn that even in our earthly relationships. Let that pure face shine upon heart and spirit, and as the sun photographs itself on the sensitive plate exposed to its light, and you get a likeness of the sun by simply laying the thing in the sun, so He will "be formed in you." Iron near a magnet becomes magnetic. Spirits that dwell with Christ become Christ-like. 4. Surely this message—"behold and be like"—ought to be very joyful and enlightening to many of us, who are wearied with painful struggles after isolated pieces of goodness that elude our grasp. You have been trying half your lifetime to cure faults, and make yourselves better. Try this other plan. Live in sight of your Lord, and catch His spirit. The man that travels with his face northwards has it grey and cold. Let him turn to the warm south, where the midday sun dwells, and his face will glow with the brightness that he sees. "Looking unto Jesus" is the sovereign cure for all our ills and sins. 5. Such transformation comes gradually. "We are changed"; that is a continuous operation. "From glory to glory"; that is a course which has well-marked transitions and degrees. Be not impatient if it be slow. Do not be complacent over the partial transformation which you have felt. See to it that you neither turn away your gaze nor relax your efforts till all that you have beheld in Him is repeated in you. 6. Likeness to Christ is the aim of all religion. To it conversion is introductory; doctrines, ceremonies, churches, and

organisations are valuable as auxiliary. Prize and use them as helps towards it, and remember that they are helps only in proportion as they show us the Saviour, the image of whom is our perfectness, the beholding of whom is our transformation.

III. THE LIFE OF CONTEMPLATION FINALLY BECOMES A LIFE OF COMPLETE ASSIMILATION. "Changed into the same image, from glory to glory." 1. The likeness becomes every way perfecter, comprehends more and more of the faculties of the man; soaks into him, if I may say so, until he is saturated with the glory: and in all the extent of his being, and in all the depth possible to each part of that whole extent, is like his Lord. That is the hope for heaven, towards which we may indefinitely approximate here, and at which we shall absolutely arrive there. There we expect changes which are impossible here, while compassed with this body of sinful flesh. We look to Him to "change the body of our lowliness, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory"; but it is better to be like Him in our hearts. His true image is that we should feel, think, will as He does; that we should have the same sympathies, the same loves, the same attitude towards God, and the same attitude towards men. Wherever there is the beginning of that oneness and likeness of spirit, all the rest will come in due time. As the spirit, so the body. But the beginning here is the main thing, which draws all the rest after it as of course. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you," &c. 2. "We are all changed into the same image." Various as we are in disposition and character, differing in everything but the common relation to Jesus Christ, we are all growing like the same image, and we shall come to be perfectly like it, and yet each retain his own distinct individuality. Perhaps, too, we may connect with this idea that passage in the Ephesians in which Paul describes our all coming to "a perfect man." The whole of us together make a perfect man; the whole make one image. No one man, even raised to the highest pitch of perfection, can be the full image of that infinite sum of all beauty; but the whole of us taken together, with all the diversities of natural character retained and consecrated, being collectively His body which He vitalises, may, on the whole, be not a wholly inadequate representation of our perfect Lord. Just as we set round a central light sparkling prisms, each of which catches the glow at its own angle, and flashes it back of its own colour, while the sovereign completeness of the perfect white radiance comes from the blending of all their separate rays, so they who stand round about the starry throne receive each the light in his own measure and manner, and give forth each a true and perfect, and altogether a complete image of Him that enlightens them all, and is above them all. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

The transfiguring vision:—I. THE MIRRORED GLORY. 1. Glory is the effulgence of light; the manifested perfection of moral character. 2. In the gospel we have an exhibition of the blended righteousness and compassion of God; so it is called "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God." And since these attributes shine with softened splendour in Christ, it is called the "gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." 3. And we may all behold it. Like the famous fresco in the ceiling of the cathedral, which was brought within easy reach by reflecting mirrors on the floor. We could not all be contemporaries of the living Jesus. But now, in the fourfold biography, we may all at our leisure behold the glory of the Lord.

II. THE TRANSGURING VISION. In the very act of looking we are "metamorphosed." The same Greek word used to describe the transfiguration of Christ. 1. Some gaze and are not changed. They have never so felt the evil of sin as to put the whole soul into a look. So multitudes of hearers have their minds filled with Christian truth, but they do not gaze so long, fixedly, lovingly, as to experience the interior and radical transformation. 2. Others gaze and are changed. Flinging away obscuring veils, and fixing the steadfast gaze on Jesus, they are transfigured. (1) This change is moral. By the law of our inner life we come to resemble what we love. Love to the Lord Jesus makes us like Him. (2) This change is gradual, progressive, "from glory to glory." The initial change may be the work of a moment; the complete process is the work of a life-time. Comforting thought to those who grow weary and disheartened after painful struggles to reach an ideal goodness which ever seems to elude their grasp. Cease from working; sit still and look; let His image sweetly creep into the eye and prospect of your soul.

III. ITS GREAT AUTHOR. "The Lord the Spirit." When the veil of unbelief is taken away, the Lord Himself obtains access to the heart and imparts Himself. Where He is, there, too, is the Holy Ghost. He effects the marvellous transformation. He supplies the needed illumination. He reveals the saving sight, removes obscuring veils, purges the spiritual

perceptions, and dwells within as source of the transfiguring and assimilative power. (*A. Wilson, B.A.*) *True human greatness*:—1. Every man has a strong natural instinct for greatness and applause. 2. A wrong direction of this instinct originates enormous mischief. 3. The mission of Christianity is to give a right direction to this instinct. Of all the systems on earth it alone teaches man what true greatness is, and the way to attain it. The text teaches three things concerning it. I. THE IDEAL OF TRUE GREATNESS IS DIVINE. What is the glory of the Lord? (See Exod. xviii. 19). This passage teaches that the Eternal regarded His glory as consisting not in the immensity of His possessions, the almightiness of His power, or the infinitude of His wisdom, but in His goodness. The true greatness of man consists in moral goodness. 1. This greatness is soul-satisfying—and this alone. 2. This greatness commands the respect of all moral intelligence—and this alone. 3. This greatness is attainable by all persons—and this alone. 4. This greatness we carry into the other world—and this alone. II. THE PATH OF TRUE GREATNESS IS MORAL TRANSFORMATION. How is man to come into possession of God's glory? 1. By means of an instrument—glass. What is the glass? The mirror that reflects the glory of God. Nature is a glass. Judaism is a glass. Christ is a glass. He is the brightest glass of all—reflects more Divine rays upon the universe than any other. 2. By means of attention to that instrument. "By looking." Men look at the glitterings of worldly glory, not on the glowing beams of the Divine, and hence they are not changed into the Divine. Observe—(1) A concentrated looking on Christ commands admiration. (2) Admiration commands imitation. Christ is the most imitable being in the universe, because His character is the most admirable, the most transparent, the most unchangeable. (3) Imitation ensures assimilation. Here, then, is the path to true glory—a path clear as day, certain as eternity. All who tread this path must become glorious. III. THE LAW OF TRUE GREATNESS IS PROGRESSIVE. "From glory to glory." Glory in God is unprogressive, but in all intelligent creatures it is ever advancing. Two things show that the human soul is made for endless advancement. 1. Facts in connection with its nature. (1) Its appetites are intensified by its supplies. (2) Its capacities augment with its attainments; the more it has the more it is capable of receiving. (3) Its productiveness increases with its productions. Not so with the soil of the earth, or the trees of the forest, all wear themselves out. 2. Arrangements in connection with its history. There are three things which always serve to bring out the latent powers of the soul. (1) A new relationship. The wondrous powers and experiences slumbering in every human heart of maternity and fatherhood are brought out by relationship. (2) New sceneries. New sceneries in nature often start in the mind feelings and powers unknown before. (3) New engagements. Many a man who was thought a mere dolt in one occupation, transferred to another has become a brilliant genius. These three soul-developing forces we have here, we shall have for ever. IV. THE AUTHOR OF TRUE GREATNESS IS THE SPIRIT OF GOD. How does He do it? As He does everything else in creation—by means; and the means are here stated, "Beholding as in a glass." Conclusion: How transcendently valuable is Christianity, inasmuch as it directs the human soul to true glory and indicates the way of realising it! (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The unfolded glory*:—Man has an instinct for glory. Religion therefore to adapt itself to this instinct. Hence the glorious character of the two dispensations whereof the last is the greater. I. THE GOSPEL IS A REFLECTION OF GOD'S GLORY. 1. The person of Christ reflects the Divine nature. 2. The ministry of Christ reflects the Divine mind. 3. His death reveals the Divine heart. II. THE BELIEVER REFLECTS THE GLORY OF GOD. 1. Spiritual mindedness (2 Pet. i. 4). 2. Immortal life. III. BEHOLDING AND REFLECTING THE GLORY OF THE LORD IS PROGRESSIVE (2 Pet. ii. 5-7). (*T. Davis, Ph.D.*) *Moral assimilation*:—Our moral nature is intensely assimilative. The mind gets like that which it feeds on. Alexander the Great was incited to his deeds of conquest by reading Homer's "Iliad." Julius Cæsar and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden derived much of their military enthusiasm from studying the life of Alexander. When a sensitive, delicate boy, Cowper met with and eagerly devoured a treatise in favour of suicide. Can we doubt that its plausible arguments were closely connected with his four attempts to destroy himself? If, however, we cherish thoughts of the good and the noble, we shall become both. "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image." Ecclesiastical tradition declares that St. Martin once had a remarkable vision. The Saviour stood before him. Radiant with Divine beauty, there the Master appeared. One relic of His humiliation remained. What was it? His hands retained the marks of the nails. The

spectator gazed sympathetically and intently. So long did he look that, when the apparition ceased, he found that he had in his own hands marks precisely resembling those of Christ. None but the superstitious believe the story; nevertheless, it "points a moral." It reminds us of the great fact that devout and affectionate contemplation of our Lord makes us Christ-like. (*T. R. Stevenson.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VER. 1. Therefore seeing we have received this ministry.—*The apostolic ministry:*—Paul represents this—I. AS A MINISTRY OF LIGHT (vers. 4-6). 1. Cf. John i. 5. Nothing could be more different than the minds of Paul and John, and yet both call revelation "light." According to John, to live in sin was to live in darkness; according to Paul, it was to live in blindness. The gospel threw light—(1) On God: light unknown before, even to the holiest. Out of Christ, our God is only a dreadful mystery. (2) On man. Man, with godlike aspirations and animal cravings, asks, "Am I a god or beast?" The gospel answers, "You are a glorious temple in ruins, to be rebuilt into a habitation of God." (3) On the grave; for "life and immortality" were "brought to light through the gospel." Until then immortality was but a mournful perhaps. 2. Note three practical deductions. (1) Our life is to be a manifestation of the gospel. We do not tamper with the Word of God (ver. 2). It is not concealed or darkened by us, for our very work is fearlessly to declare the truth, and to dread no consequences. (2) Light is given to us that we may spread it (vers. 5, 6). If God has illuminated us, then we are your servants, to give you this illumination. This Paul, who had himself been in darkness, felt vividly; and shall we refuse to feel it? Perhaps we who have been in the brightness of his revelation all our lives scarcely appreciate the necessity which he felt so strongly of communicating it. (3) It is the evil heart which hides the truth. Light shines on all who have not deadened the spiritual sense. "Every one that is of the truth heareth Christ's voice." "The evidences of Christianity" are Christianity. The evidence of the sun is its light. Men who find their all in the world (ver. 4)—how can they, fevered by its business, excited by its pleasures, petrified by its maxims, see God in His purity, or comprehend the calm radiance of eternity? II. AS A REFLECTION OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST. 1. In word. Cf. vers. 2 and 13. We manifest the truth, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience," because we speak in strong belief. Observe the difference between this and theological knowledge. It is not a minister's wisdom, but his conviction, which imparts itself to others. Nothing gives life but life. Real flame alone kindles other flame. We only half believe. In ver. 5 Paul says he preaches Christ, and not himself. The minister is to preach, not the Christ of this sect or of that man, but Christ fully—Christ our hope, our pattern, our life. 2. In experience. It might be a matter of surprise that God's truth should be conveyed through such feeble instruments—"earthen vessels" (ver. 7). But this very circumstance, instead of proving that the gospel is not of God, proves that it is. For what was the life of these men but the life of Christ over again—a life victorious in defeat? (ver. 8-11). In their sufferings the apostles represented the death of Christ, and in their incredible escapes His resurrection. Figuratively speaking, their escapes were as a resurrection. In different periods of the same life, in different ages of freedom or persecution—as we have known in the depressed Church of the Albigenses and the victorious Church of England—in different persons during the same age, the Cross and the Resurrection alternate and exist together. But in all there is progress—the decay of evil or the birth of good (ver. 16). (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Paul, the model minister.* I. HIS MOTIVES. 1. His sense of the glory of his office. "Seeing we have this ministry." This arose out of his conception of the glory of the gospel (Rom. xi. 13). With this view of his office the apostle always strove to rise to the level of its dignity (1 Thess. ii. 4). 2. His sense of his indebtedness to Divine mercy. "As we have received mercy, we faint not." His whole being was penetrated with a sense of the munificence of God towards him. He never touches upon this theme but his words glow with extraordinary power. 3. The Divine cognition. "In the sight of God" (cf. chap. v. 11). What an incentive

to earnestness and honesty of purpose is this fact of God's infinite eye being ever upon us! By these motives Paul was sustained, so that he fainted not. His sail was the exalted dignity of his office, his rudder his sense of the Divine eye ever upon him, his ballast the deep-felt gratitude of his heart for the mercy of God. Every Christian minister has need of the same motives—(1) To stimulate industry and conscientiousness. (2) To sustain in the face of apparent want of success. (3) To inflame zeal in the face of want of appreciation. (4) For support in face of the difficulties usually besetting ministerial work. (5) To guard against any partial discharge of duties. II. HIS METHOD. 1. Negative. "But have renounced," &c. In the discharge of the duties of his exalted office he totally repudiated all methods and practices of which he had reason to be ashamed. He entirely avoided "tricks of the trade." By his emphatic repudiation he implies—(1) That particular care should be shown by us to avoid degrading our office by resorting to unworthy tricks and dishonest craft for securing success. (2) That peculiar care should be shown to avoid all tampering with God's Word with a view to please men. 2. Positive. "By manifestation of the truth." What does this involve? (1) An honest, clear, naked statement of it. It is impossible to convey gospel truth in too naked a form. The painted window of the cathedral may be exquisitely beautiful, yet it dims the light, and clothes the surrounding objects with false though gorgeous hues. The window which does the greatest justice to the light is the one that transmits it in all its purity, without manipulation or distortion. (2) A full statement of it in all its parts and bearings. It is only as it is thus presented in its completeness that it can prove a saving power upon men's hearts. Any one-sided presentation of it will certainly fail to attain that perfecting effect it is calculated to produce. Light consists of three primary colours—red, blue, and yellow. Not one, however, of these elements alone will produce vegetable growth in full perfection. Experiments have shown that yellow, while yielding the largest amount of light, prevents the germination of seed. Under the red the most heat is produced, but the plant is unhealthy. Beneath the blue the strongest chemical effect is produced, but under this influence the strength of the plant fails to keep pace with its growth. So a representation of the truth all doctrinal is like light all yellow; it has in it only illumination for the head. A representation of it all love is like light all red; it has in it only warmth for the heart. A representation of it all ethics is like light all blue; it has but chemistry for the conscience. (3) A manifestation in the life. The ministry must needs be illustrated by the life. III. HIS POWER. "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience"—not to their prejudices, passions, or tastes. It was a power arising, not from the charm of office, but from the charm of truth, earnestness, and holiness. (*A. J. Parry.*)

Ver. 2. But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty.—*The true minister*:—Paul here introduces himself as a true minister appointed by God. He is led to this assertion by the insinuations of false teachers. He gives certain marks which characterised his ministry, but which were altogether wanting in that of these false teachers. These were—I. PURITY OF MOTIVE. "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty." By this he implies that these false teachers used such means to promote their schemes as would need only to be known in order to ruin the cause they were intended to promote. For men see at once that the cause cannot be a good one which requires to promote it such crafty schemes as cannot bear the light of day. II. PURITY OF CONDUCT. "Nor walking in craftiness." The whole life of these false teachers was a crafty attempt to appear what they were not—to appear as if their actions were guided by a changed heart, whereas they really continued to live as they had formerly done, without any change of life or conversation. And what is he now but an impostor who pretends to teach others the road to heaven without himself leading the way? III. PURITY OF DOCTRINE. "Nor handling the Word of God deceitfully." There can, of course, only be two reasons for this deceitful handling: either—1. To arrive at false doctrine, or—2. To further some selfish end. Men do the first when they try, as some of these early teachers did, to fit Scripture into some system of human philosophy, and to teach as Divine truth the views which they brought to the sacred book. And men do the latter when, instead of preaching Christ, they preach themselves. (*J. Clarkson.*) *The conditions and character of a true ministry*:—1. The common forms of opposition to the Christian ministry. 2. The mode and spirit in which such opposition should be met. 3. What the Christian ministry must be if it is to overcome all the opposition that may be brought against it. I. THE CONDITIONS OF A TRUE MINISTRY IN THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST. These are contained in the first three clauses of the verse. 1. "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty." The word rendered "dishonesty" occurs six times in the New Testament. In every other instance it is translated "shame," and this is its proper meaning. The expression, "hidden things of shame," will have a twofold application. It may refer to things "hidden" as opposed to "manifestation"—that is, concealed from men through a feeling of shame; and in that case it would concern the gospel which the apostle had to declare. Or it may refer to things shameful in themselves, carefully hidden from the eyes of men; and in that case it would concern the apostle himself. Taking both applications, the force of the apostle's statement seems to be this: "There is nothing in the gospel which I am ashamed to tell men." "There is nothing in myself which I am ashamed for men to know." The Christian ministry demands the utmost honesty on the part of those who are found in it. The truths men are most indisposed to hear, and which are most likely to offend, are often the truths which men need most to know. The moment men begin to suspect that there are things in a man's life which will not bear examination—"hidden things of shame"—his work is over. The first condition of a true ministry is that these shall be renounced. 2. The utter absence of selfish and subtle designs. "Not walking in craftiness." The word literally means "unscrupulousness." The idea is that of one who will resort to any artifice to secure his own ends. We are to learn that craftiness is utterly out of place in the ministry of the gospel. Though the end desired may be laudable, we are never justified in adopting crafty measures for attaining it. This has been the error into which, throughout a great portion of her history, the Church of Christ has fallen, and from which, according to some, she is not yet wholly free. The employment of craftiness has not only been wrong and sinful, but a mistake—a failure. It has been so in other domains of life. It has been well shown by one writer that the policy which thought to govern India by sending out shrewd and unscrupulous men to meet and watch the keen, subtle, treacherous Hindoos, has altogether failed. 3. "Nor handling the Word of God deceitfully." We are not to tamper with it, as one who defaces, injures, impairs the value of the coin of the realm. We are not to adulterate it, as one who introduces another and inferior element into that which originally was pure and good.

II. THE CHARACTER OF A TRUE MINISTRY. "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." This is opposed to all reserve and concealment, all that is personal and selfish, all that is crafty and deceitful. 1. All that is obscure, and mystical, and unintelligible in Christian teaching is excluded. "We use great plainness of speech." To place the truth within the apprehension of all must be the one aim and desire. Not to envelope it in a mysterious symbolism, not to wrap it up in strange and difficult terms, but to hold up the truth, like a torch uncovered, so that no human device shall lessen its brightness. 2. Such a ministry requires the utmost sincerity in those who sustain it. To manifest the truth must be the one object, and nothing in the man himself must be allowed to obscure its manifestation. He must sink himself in the truth he declares. The truth is often obscured by the person who proclaims it. The truth, not himself—the manifestation of the truth, not the presentation of himself—must be the grand object. 3. The evidences of such a ministry will appear in the response it awakens in the consciences of man. "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience." There is truth in every man corresponding with the truth in the book. "In the original structure of the soul there is an unwritten revelation which accords with the external revelation of Scripture. Within the depths of the heart there is a silent oracle which needs only to be rightly questioned to elicit from it a response in accordance with that voice which issues from the lively oracles of God." A Christian minister is the living link between the truth in the Book and the truth in man. His work is so to manifest the truth contained in the Book that the consciences of men shall recognise it and answer to it. This constitutes the great hope and confidence of his ministry. The truth he has to manifest is not something requiring a new sense or a new faculty in man for its reception. 4. The solemnity of the ministry. "In the sight of God." Self will obtrude itself—pride and vanity will appear—unless a man remembers that all is done "in the sight of God." (*W. Perkins.*) **But by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience.**—*Conscience a witness to the truth*:—There are two of these assertions of St. Paul which we wish to select and take as the subject of our discourse. The first is his assertion as to his "not handling the Word of God deceitfully"; the second is his assertion as to his

"commending himself, by manifestation of the truth, to every man's conscience in the sight of God." With regard to handling the Word of God deceitfully, both the promises and the threatenings of the Bible may be handled deceitfully. A not uncommon error is the regarding fear as too base and slavish a thing to be introduced as instrumental to religion. There is many a Christian who is disquieted by the thought that it is only the dread of punishment which withholds him from sin, whereas he feels that he ought to abhor the sin itself, and not merely to hate its consequences. But it is handling the Word of God deceitfully when fear is thus represented as unbecoming a Christian. No doubt the love of God ought to be the governing principle in the genuine believer. Fear ought gradually to give place to a more generous sentiment; but, nevertheless, fear may be instrumental to the bringing a man to repentance, and it ought not to throw suspicion on the genuineness of repentance that fear has been the agency employed in its production. Now this brings us to the second topic of discourse; and that is, the fact of there being a manifestation of truth to the conscience when perhaps it is not acted on, nor even acknowledged. There is something very expressive in the words, "in the sight of God." St. Paul was satisfied that the doctrines which he preached, and the motives by which he was actuated, were equally such as approved themselves to God. This assurance of the approval of his Master in heaven must have been more to the apostle than the applause of the world, and might well compensate for its scorn. We will confine ourselves to the alleged manifestation of the truth to the consciences of the hearers. Let us consider how, in preaching of future judgment and a propitiation for sin, a preacher is likely to commend himself to the consciences of those whom he addresses. I shall appeal in evidence to yourselves. The case is one in which you must yourselves pass the verdict, otherwise it will necessarily be devoid of all force. We are now before you simply to announce a judgment to come; and if you will not give us audience out of reverence to Him in whose name we speak, we claim it on the ground that what we have to publish is of an interest so overwhelming that no being with an understanding and a heart can refuse to give heed. And it is a great source of encouragement to the preacher thus to feel that he has conscience on his side. He knows that the message which he delivers carries with it its own proof. And on this account, then, may we venture to speak of a manifestation to the conscience, as the preacher, after wielding the thunders of the law, sets himself to persuade by the announcements of the gospel. Is there one amongst you who trembles at the thought of appearing as a sinner, with the burden of his iniquities, before the Being who is pledged and armed to pour destruction on every worker of evil? Let that man listen; we seek now to persuade him. "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Oh! does not this vast scheme of mercy commend itself to you? I think it must; I think that its very suitability must be an evidence with you of its truth; I feel as if I were uttering that which seeks no proof but what it obtains from yourselves. I appeal to no prodigies, I neither quote nor work miracles; but I feel that in proposing deliverance, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, to those who, weighed down by their sins, shrink in terror from the judgment, I am proposing what must approve itself to them, as bearing the trace of a communication from God. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Truth and the conscience:—No change in religious thought is more remarkable than that which recognises that the ultimate appeal is not to authority outside of man, but to the authority inside. I have heard it solemnly argued that if men were left to themselves, even though they followed that which was best within them, they would come to as many different conclusions as there are men to think, and, as a result, each would be a law unto himself. Within a quarter of a century emphasis has been placed upon the doctrine of the immanence of God—that is, God is not outside His universe, beyond the stars and spaces, but in the universe, pervading it, controlling it, using it, as the spirit of a man uses his body. With that central thought other truths have come into prominence. If God is within man, even though the Divine may have little, if any, opportunity for manifesting Himself, there is something to which appeal can be made. The apostle made his appeal, as a religious teacher, to the necessary correspondence between truth and conscience. His thought is something as follows: A man may be surrounded by a million of others and see no friendly face. Suddenly a companion of his boyhood appears. The recognition is instant. We are in a strange land. Faces are unfamiliar. The speech is like jargon. The door opens; a friend appears; instantly the eye brightens, and the recognition is complete. In the same way truth is

recognised. We have been accustomed to be afraid of conscience—to think that it could not be trusted. But to it the Apostle Paul boldly turns. Two questions arise. What is the truth to which he referred? It was the gospel which he was preaching. What is the conscience? That is a more difficult question. There are many things which we know which we cannot define. The man approving the right and condemning the wrong is perhaps all that can be said concerning conscience. The being never lived who did not realise that he ought to do right and ought not to do wrong. There have been many explanations of this fact. Where did it come from? It is as old as history. It is universal. Opinions differ as to what is right, but not as to its authority. For myself I believe that conscience is the voice of God in every man. To violate conscience is to disobey God. Now the apostle, in his epistle, says that his appeal is made to the correspondence of the gospel that he preaches and this consciousness of right in every man. To realise that there is something within ourselves to which we can bring all questions, and by whose judgment we must stand or fall, makes excuse for wrong-doing an impossibility. I ask you to consider this appeal of the apostle. He did not say that conscience was a revealer, but that it had a judicial function. It judges concerning what comes before it, and its approval is all the authority which any statement needs. The truth which commends itself to conscience may be accepted wherever it comes from. This text teaches certain lessons which may well be studied by those who desire to know whether there is any solid foundation for truth. There is something in the natural man to which truth may appeal. Paul did not say that he was commended to the converted man, but to every man's conscience. The same thought is expressed in the second chapter of Romans: "For when Gentiles who have no law do by nature the things of the law, these having no law are a law unto themselves, in that they shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith." Again, in Romans xii. 1, he appeals to reason: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies . . . which is your reasonable service." If there is not something even in a bad man which can be trusted, it is useless to present to him truth. If he cannot recognise it he is not blamable for rejecting it. If a man knocks at your door, and you have no means of telling whether he is a thief or a friend, you are not culpable if you turn him away. If in the heathen, or those wrecks of humanity which we see in all great cities, there is not something essentially Divine, they can never discover the Divine when it is manifested. There is that in all men which knows the good, feels the force of duty, and recognises the truth when it is presented. Exceptions to this statement are apparent, but not real. The Hindu mother believes that she ought to throw her child to the River God. In her ignorance she obeys. In the world's history there is not a more superb example of loyalty to conviction. What does that example show? That the woman is ignorant and needs instruction, not that her heart is wrong. This inner light may be obscured. The light in a lantern may be hidden by filth on the glass; the singing of a bird may be lost in the noise of a great city; the voice of a mother may be drowned by songs of dissipation. But the light in the lantern is waiting only for the filth to be removed. This inner light is an elemental fact. Elemental facts are those which inhere in the nature of things. Hunger is a fact. Love is a fact. The correspondence between the eye and the light is a fact; and these facts are not affected by theories concerning their origin. It is safe to appeal to this moral sense. If that cannot be trusted, nothing can be. If that deceives, there is no way by which a revelation about God, duty, or what lies beyond the grave could be received. If that cannot be trusted we may as well burn our Bibles, for it is precisely because of the appeal which the Scriptures make to it that they get their authority. Coleridge said, "I believe in the Bible because the Bible finds me." I put emphasis on this fact because it leaves unbelief without excuse. That which satisfies and completes our moral nature carries with it the evidence of its own truthfulness. I do not tell you to accept Christ because the Bible says He is Divine, but I do tell you that He will satisfy and complete your nature if you will only once bring Him where your inmost eye can clearly see Him. To this something in the natural man the Christian doctrine of God is presented. Does it commend itself as true, or is it repelled as false? What is the Christian doctrine of God? It begins and ends in Fatherhood. The apostle of culture says that God is that power outside ourselves which makes for righteousness, and that definition is clear and beautiful as a marble statue or a dome of ice. There is nothing in it which appeals to struggling humanity. Fatherhood touches all hearts. The

New Testament says that God is Father. That does not mean that He is weak, the slave of His affections, but that all His relations towards humanity can be best indicated by the relation of parent and child. Then it is said, God is love; God is light; He makes all things work together for good; and, it is His nature to seek the salvation of those who are lost. What a splendid ideal comes from those old Hebrew writings! Love must be severe when severity is necessary. It must cut out the cancer that the whole body may be saved. It will punish the child to-day that he may be a man to-morrow. It will seek good at any cost. There is no conflict between love and justice. Nay, rather, justice is only the shadow of love. The Christian idea of God is so glorious that I wonder that any ever turn from it. Not a sparrow falls without His notice. He clothes even the lilies. Then what man is ever forgotten? The heart of the gospel is the proclamation of forgiveness, or the doctrine of salvation. The experience of guilt is the most universal and terrible. Those who laugh at the idea of a spiritual nature cannot get away from this fact. In all nations and ages the conviction of guilt has been a reality. Nothing has been sought more eagerly than an answer to the question, How can one who is in wrong relations with himself and the universe be made right? The doctrine of sacrifice is old as human history. The inquiry had been, What can we do? How can we get rid of these burdens? What can we pay? We will give of our flocks and our fields, of the fruit of our body for the sin of our souls. But the world's guilt grew heavier. The Master came with His message: "You cannot save yourselves. You cannot get away from the past. What you seek in vain by costly oblations and wearisome labours, I offer as a gift. Believe Me. You are not in the hands of a tyrant anxious that all his debts shall be paid; you are in the hands of a Father who is seeking for you as a shepherd for a sheep that is lost. Believe Me; if you will stop where you are and turn from the evil of your life, and follow Me, you will be forgiven." What a wonderful message! How simple! How strangely it has been misinterpreted! What shall I do to be saved? Turn from evil; follow Him who is the truth and the right. But how about that past? Leave that with God. That is the message of salvation. Have faith in Christ when He tells us that, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Is not that reasonable? Has not difficulty about this subject of forgiveness arisen from the simple fact that we have imagined that God was a tyrant who demanded something which could not be paid, and we have said, "We cannot believe in such a God"? But when we get to the Divine revelation, when we read the story of the prodigal, and see that the son came back and found the father waiting for him, with a kiss and a new robe, and all that was necessary for him to do was simply to come home and enter into a new life, do we not find that which satisfies our consciousness of right? Now, you who are fighting this or that theory of the atonement, who are saying, "I cannot accept Christianity, because it shocks my moral sense," simply take the parables in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, which are the revelation of God's dealing with the repentant sinner, the first two showing how He seeks for the lost, and the third how He receives the penitent, and answer your own heart. Is there anything in that which does not attract? And again I say, Can that which satisfies the profoundest longings of your soul, which gives peace in the midst of the struggle of life, be only a dream and a falsehood? If now we turn to the teaching of Christianity concerning duty, do we not find the same correspondence? There have been as many theories of ethics as there have been thinkers to devise them. The old problem concerning obligation has had a million answers. How simple and beautiful is the teaching of Christ! Make clean the inside of the cup. Pharisaism is hateful. External righteousness may be a garment hiding a corrupt spirit. The devil may masquerade in a cloak of light. Make the fountain pure, and the stream will be pure. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. Think right thoughts, and there will be no trouble about right acts. That is where the teaching of Christ begins. The next point concerns the value which should be placed upon self. Old theories of ethics had exalted the individual. Christ says it is the privilege of the individual to efface himself for the welfare of the many. The world says, "Exalt yourselves"; Christ says, "Humble yourselves." The culmination of Christ's ethical teaching was in the new commandment wherein He says, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye should love one another as I have loved you." Nothing indefinite! nothing mystical! clear as the light! Do not ask who wrote the first books of the Bible. Do not care whether Jonah is history or fiction. Simply bring yourself face to face

with these questions: Does Christ's teaching concerning God satisfy my conscience? Can I leave myself and all men in the hands of such a Being, assured that no harm can come from Him to any one? Is there anything but comfort in Christ's doctrine of salvation—that He has come to give power to all those who will repent of their sin and turn towards Him to cease from sinning and live the Divine life? Is there anything that is either unreasonable or in violation of the moral sense when He asks us to believe Him that, as we forgive our children when they repent and begin to mend their ways, so the heavenly Father forgives us? And is there anything which does not carry with it the evidence of its own truthfulness in these high and searching principles which our Master emphasised? Make the tree right in order that the fruit may be right. Use all powers for the good of humanity, and remember that those who have injured you most are those whom you should serve most. "Love one another as I have loved you." You ask, "What am I to believe as the truth of God?" Here is a statement in the Bible. It can be explained in two ways. One way my moral nature commends; the other, I am told by those who profess to know, is the true interpretation. Which one am I to accept? I reply, always choose that which commends itself to your moral nature. If the Apostle Paul could appeal to conscience to certify truth, you cannot be wrong if you do the same. (*A. H. Bradford, D.D.*) *The self-evidencing nature of Divine truth:*—

1. Truth may either derive its authority from the teacher, or reflect on him its authority. As the receiver of money may argue either that the money is good because it is an honest man who pays it, or that the man is honest because he pays good money, so in the communication and reception of truth. It is the latter mode of inference which is employed in the text. The message Paul had spoken was so completely in accordance with reason and conscience that he needed no other credentials in proclaiming it.

2. That there is an order of truth such as that to which the apostle refers, every thoughtful mind must be aware. At the root of all knowledge there are first principles which are independent of proof, which to state is to prove to every mind that apprehends them—they commend themselves at once to my consciousness in the sight of God. Now to this class belong many of the truths of revelation. As it needs no outward attestation to prove to the tasteful eye the beauty of fair scenes, as sweet sounds need no authentication of their harmony to the sensitive ear, so, between the spirit of man and that infinite world of moral beauty and harmony which revelation discloses, there is a correspondence so deep and real that the inner eye and ear, if undiseased, discern at once in Divine things their own best witness and authority. By the statement that the truths of revelation commend themselves to the conscience or consciousness of man—I. IT IS NOT IMPLIED—1. That man, by the unaided exercise of his consciousness, could have discovered them. If there be an internal revelation already imprinted on the human spirit, what need, it might be asked, for any other? In asserting that Divine revelation is self-evidencing, do we not virtually assert that it is superfluous? (1) The answer is that the power to recognise truth does not imply the power to originate it. We may apprehend what we could not invent. To discover some great law of nature, to evolve some grand principle of science, implies in the discoverer the possession of mental powers of the very rarest order; but when that law or principle has once been pointed out, multitudes who could never have discovered it for themselves may be quite able to verify it. All abstract science or philosophy, in fact, is but the bringing to light of those truths which implicitly are possessed by all; but these truths would never become really ours but for the aid which the discoveries of high and philosophic minds afford them. So, again, to what is it that the great poet owes the power to charm the minds of men but this—that he gives expression to thoughts and feelings which, though none but men of rarest genius could articulate them, the common heart and soul of humanity recognises as its own? (2) Apply this principle to the case before us. There are inscribed on the mind and conscience of man the characters of an unknown language, to which revelation alone supplies the key, and which, read by its aid, become the truest verification of that which interprets them. In that world of invisible realities to which, as spiritual beings, we belong, there are mysteries too profound for fallen humanity, of itself, to penetrate. But though by no unaided "searching" could we "find out God"; though, again, the conception of a pure and holy moral law, or the vision of a glorious immortality, be unattainable by any spontaneous effort of human reason, yet there is wrought into the very structure of man's nature so much of a Divine element, there is a moral standard so ineffaceably inscribed on the conscience, there slumbers in the universal heart a desire and yearning after immortality so deep and strong,

that that Bible which contains in it the revelation of God and holiness and heaven finds in the awakened soul an instant response and authentication of its teachings. 2. That the consciousness in its unrenewed and imperfect state is qualified fully to recognise and verify these truths when discovered to it. (1) It might be admitted that the mind of man, in its perfect state, is so in harmony with the mind of God as at once to echo and respond to the utterance of that mind in His revealed Word. But the moral reason has become dimmed and distorted. How, then, any longer can the soul be regarded as the criterion of truth? How can it be asserted that the truth commends itself to every man's consciousness? Is not such a statement at variance with 1 Cor. ii. 14? How can light be perceived by blind eyes, harmony by dull or deaf ears? (2) The solution of this difficulty will perhaps be found in the consideration that Divine truth exerts on the mind of man at once a restorative and a self-manifesting power. It creates in the mind the capacity by which it is discerned. As light opens the close-shut flower-bud to receive light, or as the sunbeam, playing on a sleeper's eyes, by its gentle irritation opens them to see its own brightness, so the truth of God, shining on the soul, quickens and stirs into activity the faculty by which that very truth is perceived. It is in this case as in secular studies—each advance in knowledge disciplines the knowing faculty. With each new problem mastered, each difficult step in science or philosophy overcome, the mental habits are strengthened, and thus a wider range of knowledge, a larger, clearer, more comprehensive view of truth, becomes possible to the mind. II. IN WHAT WAY MAY WE CONCEIVE OF DIVINE TRUTH AS COMMENDING ITSELF TO THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF MAN? 1. By revealing to man the lost ideal of his nature. (1) Whilst man, fallen and degraded, could never have found out that ideal for himself, yet, when it is presented to him in Scripture, there is that within him which is capable of recognising it as his own. You cannot blot out from his mind the latent reminiscence of a nobler and better self which he might have been, and which to have lost is guilt and wretchedness. Confront the fallen moral intelligence with its own perfect type, and in the instinctive shame and humiliation arising therefrom there is elicited an involuntary recognition of the truthfulness of the portraiture. (2) Now, such is the response which the spirit of man, in the hour of contrition, renders to the perfect type of moral excellence which the gospel brings before it. For the sorrow and self-abasement which the "manifestation of the truth" calls forth derive their peculiar poignancy from the fact that it is a sorrow not so much of discovery as of reminiscence. In the contemplation of God's holy law, and especially of that perfect reflection of it which is presented in Jesus, the attitude of the penitent mind is that not simply of observation, but of painful and humiliating recollection. The mental process is analogous to that in which the mind goes in search of some word, or name, or thought which we cannot at once recall, yet of which we have the certainty that once we knew it. Or it is still more closely parallel to the feeling of one who revisits, in reverse of fortune, and after long years of absence, a spot with which, in other and happier days, he was familiar. At first such an one might move for a while amidst old scenes and objects unconscious of any past and personal connection with them, until at last something occurs to touch the spring of association, when instantly, with a rush of recollection, old sights, impressions, incidents, come thick and crowding on the spirit, and the outward scene becomes clothed with a new vividness, and is perceived with a new sense of identity. Now, if the life of Christ were an ideal of excellence altogether foreign to us, the shame of the convicted conscience would lose half its bitterness. But the latent element that lends sharpness to the stings of self-accusation in the mind aroused by the manifestation of the truth is the involuntary recognition in Christ of a dignity we have lost, an inheritance we have wasted, a perfection for which the spirit of man was formed, but which it has basely disowned. Repentance is the recognition by the fallen self of its true self in Christ. 2. By discovering to man the mode of regaining it. The Scriptures claim from the conscience, not only a response to their description of the disease, but also a recognition of the suitability and sufficiency of the remedy they prescribe. No state of mind can be conceived more distressing than that of a man who, voluntarily or involuntarily, is falling below his own ideal. For a man's own comfort, he must either forget his ideal or strive to realise it. The great obstacles to the soul's recovery of its lost ideal are the sense of guilt and the consciousness of moral weakness. (1) The soul aspiring after holiness craves deliverance from guilt; and to that deep-felt want the gospel responds in the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. (a) In some respects the analogous case of the debtor's embarrassments may help us to conceive of the needs of the

guilty soul. Debt acts as a dead-weight on a man's energies. What this man wants in order to rouse him to effort is to cut off his connection with the past, to sweep away its obligations, and let him have a fair start in life again. Or reflect, again, on the depressing influence often produced by loss of character and reputation in the world. A man who has lost caste in society has lost with it one of the most powerful incentives to effort. If he could begin life anew it might be different with him. (b) But all such analogies are but partial and inadequate representations of the moral hindrance of guilt. An insolvent man may, by redoubled exertions, or by the intervention of a friend, be freed from the depressing responsibility for the past. But in sin the aroused conscience feels that there is a strange indelibility. The man, again, who has compromised himself with human society may, by lapse of time or removal from the scene, escape from the depressing influence of social suspicion and mistrust. But from the ban of Omniscience there is no such escape. Infinite justice is independent of space and time. Nay, even if God, by a simple act of oblivion, could pass over the awakened sinner's guilt, his own conscience would not suffer him to forget it. He would be "the wrath of God unto himself." The aroused conscience does not want a mere act of amnesty. Nothing will satisfy it, unless the sin be branded with the mark of the law's offended majesty—unless the culprit sin be, as it were, led out to execution and slain before it. (c) Now, it is this deep necessity of the awakened spirit which the gospel meets—a revelation in the person, life, and death of Jesus, which includes at once the most complete condemnation of sin and the most ample forgiveness of the sinner. Surely the trembling heart may cease to despair of itself, or regard the past with hopeless despondency, when that very Being in whom all law and right are centred condescends to wed the nature of guilty man into closest affinity with Himself. But more than this, the gospel brings relief to the self-condemned spirit by exhibiting infinite purity passing through a history which brings it into ceaseless contact with sin in all its undisguised hateful and hostility to God. And, finally, the gospel permits us to think of Christ as one who, in conveying pardon to guilt, instead of relaxing the strictness or bringing slight on the unbending rectitude of God's law, offers up the grandest possible tribute to its majesty and the most awful atonement for the sins that infringed it. (2) The other great obstacle is the conscious inertness and impotence of the soul in its endeavours after holiness. (a) It is in the attempt to reach its lost ideal that the soul becomes aware of its own moral weakness. It is not when the sick man lies prostrated by disease that he feels most his own feebleness, but when he begins to rally, and attempts to rise and walk. When despotism has so quelled a nation's spirit that it cares not to put forth the feeblest resistance to its thralldom, it is not then that it is in a condition to discover the hopelessness of its bondage; but when, the spirit of insurrection roused, the attempt has been made to throw off the hateful yoke, and made in vain—it is then that it learns the terribleness of that power which keeps it down. So it is not when sin holds undisturbed dominion in the soul, but when the new ideal of holiness dawns upon its vision, that, in the feebleness of its resolutions and the miserable ineffectiveness of its attempts to be good, there is forced upon it the painful conviction of its own moral weakness. And then, too, rises the intense longing for spiritual help. (b) Now, the gospel commends itself to the consciousness by responding to this. For it reveals to the soul Christ as not only outwardly the ideal, but inwardly the hope and strength of humanity. It would go no little way towards meeting our needs if, in our loneliness and weakness, there should be granted the perpetual presence and guardianship of some lofty angelic nature. Or, better, let any contrite soul, longing for the goodness it cannot reach, perturbed by the evil from which it cannot escape, think what it would be to have Jesus of Nazareth dwelling for a single year with it as a familiar companion and friend. But how much more are the soul's needs met in that which is the great crowning blessing of the gospel—the dispensation of the Spirit. A Spirit, would we but realise His presence, is ever with us to prompt each holy thought and nerve each pure resolve. If Christ, as an outward visitant, would be eagerly welcomed in the dispensation of His grace, we are told of a blessing greater still—of a presence of Jesus within the heart. To every soul that will receive Him, that very Jesus who departed as a visible presence from this earth comes back as an inward and invisible comforter—"Christ in you the hope of glory." (*J. Caird, D.D.*) *The mission of the pulpit is—*I. A MISSION OF THE TRUTH. In this aspect it is scarcely possible to exaggerate its importance. At home sensuality, worldliness, and scepticism, and abroad the corruption of apostate Churches, the fanaticism and immorality of heathenism, suffice to show

that this mission is urgently needed. Truth in general is the agreement of a symbol with the thing symbolised. Science is truth when it is a correct interpretation of the phenomena of nature, history when it is a faithful record of facts, worship when it is a reflection of a consecrated soul, and doctrine when it is according to godliness. It is in the last conception that the apostle is treating of it in the text. The Word of God is the fountain and standard of truth. The truth is embodied in Christ, who is "the Truth." To manifest this truth is the mission of the pulpit. The truth must be presented—1. Clearly. This is indicated both by the force of the word "manifestation," and by the contrast between Paul and the false teachers. They traffic with the hidden things of dishonesty; we manifest the truth. The truth as revealed in the Word of God embraces the most profound problems, such as God, the creation, the origin of evil, the Incarnation, &c. And that these should contain things hard to be understood is not surprising. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things which are revealed belong unto us and unto our children for ever." They are expressed in simple language. Who can understand, "God is love," "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," "In My Father's house are many mansions"? These are some of the primary principles of that truth; and why should it not be presented with that unsophisticated simplicity in which it appears in the Word of God? On the contrary, it is sometimes encumbered with a pompous rhetoric and beclouded by the jargon of a vain philosophy. This is to hide the truth rather than manifest it. The pulpit is a lighthouse; and if the light shine dimly, or be permitted to go out, or if false lights be exhibited, struggling and storm-tossed souls will be wrecked. 2. Fully. The false teachers handled the Word of God deceitfully; they mutilated, perverted, corrupted, and impaired it. It would, of course, be impossible to embody the details of the truth in the longest sermon; but it is quite possible to convey the essentials of the truth in the shortest sermon. We are in constant danger of shaping the truth to our creeds, instead of conforming our creeds to the truth. The Socinian, the Romanist, and the Antinomian profess to find their religion in the Bible; but they break the harmony of the truth—they embrace it in part, and not as a whole. Again, the preferences of hearers are sometimes a temptation to present it with studied reserve. The spirituality of God's law is an offence to the sensual, the Cross of Christ to the self-righteous, the new birth to the formalist, the judgment to come to the worldling. What then? We must ever be ready to maintain those impugned doctrines, to enforce those neglected duties, to denounce fashionable sins. 3. Authoritatively. The truth authenticates itself no less by its internal nature than by its external attestations. It is not more certain that the sun is the workmanship of God's hand than that Christianity is the embodiment of His love. Every true preacher has settled this question in his own mind once for all. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables." We cannot, therefore, regard the gospel as a debateable topic. When Christ gave His last commission to His disciples there was an air of stupendous majesty in His address which should remind His ministers that they are sent, not to prove the gospel, but to preach it. II. A MISSION TO THE CONSCIENCE. Conscience is that simple and original faculty of our nature which points us to the great laws of duty, pronounces judgment on our actions as good or bad, produces painful or pleasurable emotions in us, according to our conduct, and by its combined energy prompts us to do that which is right. It may be resisted, but it cannot be dethroned; it may be seared, but it cannot be destroyed. The worm that dieth not is the avenging power of an infuriated conscience. This mission has—1. Its advantages. The man who appeals to the conscience by the force of truth sways a sceptre of irresistible might. If we appeal to the imagination, we shall be perpetually chasing clouds and shadows; if we appeal to the reason, we shall encounter a network of sophistry and scepticism; if we appeal to the passions, we shall create floods of sentimental sorrow and troops of fictitious saints; but, if we appeal to the conscience by the truth, there is not a law, precept, prohibition, or warning of the Word of God to which the conscience will not instantly respond. Conscience is the preacher's best ally. He may be regarded as a fanatic, or as a fool; but conscience will always recognise in the faithful preacher the chosen servant of God. 2. Its difficulties. Although conscience is always on the side of truth, yet its decisions are against man, who is a sinner. Now, there is in guilt an instinctive shrinking from exposure. Just as a culprit, who, when pursued for a crime, will lurk in secret to escape pursuers, so will a sinner when confronted by

his conscience. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." They try to create peace by bribing the conscience. The atheist would persuade himself that he is the offspring of chance, and hopes to sleep for ever in the grave; the pagan tortures himself; the Romanist takes asylum in the confessional; the Pharisee thanks God that he is not as other men; the worldling rushes to the counting-house, to the tavern, or to the theatre; and all these refuges of lies must be stormed and scattered before we can present the truth to the conscience. 3. Its responsibilities. Conscience is the great judgment-day in anticipation. A faculty so wonderful is a talent of overwhelming magnitude, and one for which we must render an account at the bar of God. If conscience were to be banished, the earth would become a scene of universal lawlessness. And yet every man who conspires to undermine the sovereignty of conscience is responsible for contributing to this frightful result. It is probable that no impression once made on the conscience is ever wholly lost. How often has the memory of a person whom you injured in days gone by called up your guilt! The preacher would faint under the fearful pressure of his responsibilities, but he knows that the conscience of those who have slighted his counsels will acquit him in the last great day. III. A MISSION FOR GOD. "In the sight of God." Such solemn inspection as that which is connected with the mission of the pulpit is—1. A powerful motive to diligence in study. There is no department of Christian service which demands more careful preparation. Those who have had the longest experience in this arduous work know that the result of the pulpit is in proportion to the power which they have husbanded in the study. But mark well what that power is, and whence it comes—it is obtained "in the sight of God"—it is the effect of close communion with God. The preacher's manual is God's Book; the preacher's study is God's presence. The great preachers, whose memory is an everlasting heritage, got their strength from the skies, not by ballooning, but by praying. A praying ministry is often the result of a praying Church. "Brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course," &c. 2. A powerful motive to fidelity in preaching. It will effectually check all levity, self-confidence, and fear of man. This solemn inspection extends to the pew as well as the pulpit. You are listening, while we are speaking, in the sight of God. Do not shun His face; do not despise the riches of His love; do not quench His Holy Spirit. 3. A powerful motive to patience in trial. Adversities may darken around us, difficulties may menace us, men may frown, and devils rage; but with the eye of God upon us, with the life of God within us, and with the heaven of God before us, we shall be able to breast the storm and to seize the crown. 4. An assurance of ultimate success. Amid difficulties and discouragements, the promise that the Word shall not return void, that we shall reap if we faint not, fills us with an unwavering confidence and an unflinching hope. The precious seed possesses an indestructible vitality, and will not be all wasted on a barren soil. Conclusion: If our preaching is to be effective we must preach the law and the gospel—the law in order to probe the conscience, the gospel in order to heal it. The preaching of the law alone will lead to Pharisaism; the preaching of the gospel alone will lead to Antinomianism; the preaching of both will, by God's blessing, issue in a pure and living Christianity. (*G. T. Perks, M.A.*) *The sphere of the pulpit, or the mission of ministers:—I. THE PULPIT HAS CHIEFLY TO DEAL WITH THE COMMON CONSCIENCE OF HUMANITY.* 1. Conscience is not so much a faculty of being as the very stamina and substance of being—the "inner man"—the man of the man—that without which we should be sensuous organisms or thinking animals, but not men. This gives a felt connection with the spiritual universe. As without the physical senses I could never feel my connection with this material system, so without this conscience I could have no idea either of moral government or God. 2. Now, to this primary part of your nature the religious teacher has to appeal. There is a ministry which mainly aims at—(1) The passions. If the emotions are stirred the discourse is considered powerful and effective. But I am bound to say that to aim at this as an end is to obstruct the true progress of virtue. (2) The imagination. Poetic pictures and sonorous periods are forms into which all the ideas are thrown. But truth does not require your painting; it is itself beauty. Take your brush to set off the rainbow, or give a new tinge of splendour to the setting sun, but keep it away from the "rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley." (3) The intellect. Verbal criticisms, philosophic discussions, subtle distinctions, are the staple elements of its discourses. (4) Now, I am far from supposing that religious teaching ought not to wake the passions, &c.; but I do feel that to aim at these as ends is to pervert religious teaching. The true teacher has to do with conscience—that which underlies and penetrates every

other spiritual faculty and power in man. 3. But, whilst all men have consciences, their consciences are found existing in very different conditions. There is—(1) The torpid class—those that have never been awakened, and those which, having been aroused, have relapsed into insensibility again. The former comprehends the consciences of children and uneducated barbarians; the latter involves those which were once awakened by conviction, but which have sunk into apathy again. It is a solemn fact that a state of torpor is the general state in which the conscience is found. (2) The alarmed class. (3) The peaceful class—those consciences from which the sense of guilt has been removed. Now, in one of these general classes every man's conscience is to be found. Indeed, the true Christian man has passed through the first two, and is settled down in the last. In Rom. vii. Paul gives this moral history of the "inner man." II. The pulpit has to deal with the common conscience of humanity THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF THE TRUTH. 1. "The truth" Paul here calls the "Word of God," and "our gospel." To him, therefore, the special revelation of God developed in the teaching, embodied in the life and illustrated in the death of Jesus, was *the truth*—the truth humanity wanted to raise it from its fallen state. 2. Now, this truth Paul sought to manifest, so as to commend himself to "every man's conscience," and this his history shows him to have accomplished. He manifested the truth, not as it appeared in the traditions of the fathers, or in the formulæ of sapless systems, but as it appeared "in Jesus"—which exactly suited each of the three classes of conscience. (1) The element of truth in Jesus required to rouse the dormant conscience is the ethical. The conscience is the organ of moral vision; but, unless the light of moral law fall on it, it will be dead and useless. It is when the commandment comes that the conscience sees itself in the light of God, and exclaims, "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal—sold under sin." (2) The element of truth in Jesus required to pacify the alarmed conscience is the redemptive mercy of God. (3) The element required to strengthen and to urge on to nobler efforts and higher attainments the pacified conscience is the alimental—the universal and ever-suggesting principles of Divine truth. 3. The pulpit, then, if it would do its work, must manifest the truth as in Jesus. It must cease to be the organ of party polemics, human formalities, abstract speculations. It must become the mouth of Christ. Truth in Him is not a dogma, but a life; not a mere letter, but a spirit. It is a thing of beauty and power. It meets the moral soul of humanity as light meets the eye, as water the parched tongue, as bread the hungry soul. III. That the pulpit has chiefly to deal with the common conscience of humanity through the medium of the truth UNDER THE FELT INSPECTION OF ALMIGHTY GOD. The apostle set the Lord always before him: he toiled and suffered as "seeing Him who is invisible." 1. There are three causes of pulpit inefficiency which this would remove. (1) Man-fear. (2) Affectation. (3) Dulness. 2. How are these causes to be removed? Let the preacher feel that God is one of his auditors, and—(1) Man-fear will depart. His spirit will rise superior to all ideas about the smiles or favours of man. (2) All affectation will end. His simple nature will show itself in every gesture, look, and tone. (3) All dulness will pass away. The deepest sympathies of the soul will heave under the eye of God, as the forest and field under the breath of spring, throwing out new forms of life and beauty every hour. Conclusion: Note—1. The worth of the true pulpit. 2. The qualification for the true pulpit. Ministers must be pre-eminently men of conscience. The moral in them must transcend the intellectual, as the intellectual transcends the animal. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The minister's aim, weapons, and encouragements*:—I. THE MINISTER'S AIM—the conscience. As in the breast-plate of the high priest, amid the glittering stones, there was one of peculiar beauty and lustre, the Urim and Thummim, which listened at God's "Yes," and dimmed at God's "No," so in the heart of man there is the regal faculty of conscience. We need not ask how it came there. Enough to say that it is part of the constitution of human nature. In every man there is a conscience. It is to this faculty that the minister appeals. II. THE MINISTER'S WEAPON. "The manifestation of the truth." To the apostle all truth is ensphered in the gospel of Christ. When we seek light we go to the sun, though we do not deny that the waters of the Mediterranean may sparkle with light when ploughed by the keel of the vessel. Ancient religions have elements of truth, and so have modern systems, but for truth in complete symmetry, and in perfect, full-orbed beauty, we must go to Jesus Christ. You remember the story of how, when King Richard was imprisoned in a castle of the Austrian Tyrol, his faithful minstrel went from castle to castle, playing under their steep fastnesses the songs that King Richard knew, until from the heart of an old fortress there came

back answering notes. So the Christian minister has to come to the grim fortress of many a life, and it is not till he hears the answering notes of conscience that he knows that his message is received. I should not dare to stand in this pulpit, nor to undertake the great responsibilities of this place, were it not that my message has a double corroboration—a witness—1. From the Holy Ghost, who spake the word, and—2. From the heart of every man who hears it. Sir Walter Scott tells us how Old Mortality spent his days in removing the lichened incrustations from the tombstones of the martyrs, till the inscriptions could be read fair and clear. Something like that must be the work of my ministry among you. III. THE MINISTER'S ENCOURAGEMENTS. 1. He himself has received mercy. 2. He has the commendation of conscience. 3. His work is wrought in the sight of God. In His sight we are standing now. His eye searches us as the sun searches all the recesses of the landscape. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.**—*The hidden gospel*:—I. **WHAT IS OUR GOSPEL?** You may call it either “God’s news” or “good news,” for “God” and “good” are one and the same thing. The “gospel” is God’s good news. And what is “the good news”? Now, if I were to say that God is our Creator and Father, this might be “good,” but it would not be “news.” Almost all nature teaches that. And if I were to say that His Son came into this world, it might be “news,” but it might not be “good.” But when I add that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, is not this “news”? Is not this “good”? II. **BUT SOME OF YOU DO NOT SEE IT.** 1. You say—(1) “It would never do for God to forgive sin so easily. It will encourage sin.” You do not see that the acceptance of forgiveness provides the cure for sin. (2) Or you feel “there is a simplicity in that which is contrary to all my ideas of the greatness of God.” (3) Or you take very little trouble to understand it. It is an abstraction—like any other philosophical dogma. (4) Or you know it is true. You always heard it, and you have been educated up to it. But it has no power over your heart. It is “hidden.” 2. And if it is “hidden,” what “hides” it? A thing may be “hidden” from one or other of three causes—(1) The organ of vision may be weakened or destroyed. The apostle assigns to the Corinthians this cause. “The god of this world” had “blinded their minds.” The right image is not formed. There is no reflection of the object inwardly. You have not the capacity of seeing such things as these. (2) Something has come in between you and truth. A big sin hinders the view. (3) Men drive God to do an act of retributive justice. Neglected light has been withdrawn. 4. What underlies the threefold process? Your sin. You were not prepared to accept the gospel of His grace on the conditions. And so sin dulled the perceptive power; sin drew the veil; one sin was punished by another sin. From long darkness your heart grew dark. III. **“TO THEM THAT ARE LOST.”** (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The veiled gospel*:—I. **THAT CERTAIN STATES OF MIND MAY VEIL OR CONCEAL THE GOSPEL FROM OUR VIEW.** That is the main idea of the passage; notwithstanding its glory, it may be a thing of darkness, a “savour of death unto death.” In the Corinthian Church, party spirit, contentions, immoralities, and self-laudation, prevented their full perception of the glory and purity of the gospel. 1. Indifference may cause the gospel to be veiled. We cannot see anything except we look at it. Having the gospel is not examining the gospel. It has a personal claim, founded on facts of the most solemn character. 2. Misapprehension of its nature may veil the gospel from our minds. They have difficulties about church-government, about baptism, about election, &c.; and so to them the gospel is veiled. 3. Sometimes the troubles of life may veil the gospel from our hearts. 4. The recollections of, and despair on account of, past sins may veil the gospel from our hearts. II. **THAT THE PROVISIONS OF THE GOSPEL ARE ALL INTENDED AND ADAPTED TO REMOVE THESE OBSTACLES.** (*W. G. Barrett.*) *To whom and why the gospel is hid*:—The gospel which fills the Old Testament and the New is the most wonderful arrangement that Divine wisdom and benevolence ever made. God is more seen in the glorious work of redemption there unfolded than in all His other works. Unbelief is most unreasonable and wicked in itself. Men do not reject the gospel from any want of evidence. They believe a thousand things on far less evidence. The greatness of the sin of unbelief appears in this, that it opposes all the manifestations of God which are made in the Scriptures. 1. First, men reject the Bible because it condemns them. It reproves their sins and disturbs their conscience. A book that does this is an uncomfortable companion, and they must get rid of it to preserve their peace. 2. Secondly, men reject the Bible because it alarms their fears. It

speaks of a judgment to come. 3. Thirdly, men reject the Bible because it requires them to give up sins and idols which they are loth to abandon. They love the world supremely. 4. Fourthly, men reject the Bible because it requires them to perform duties which they do not relish. (1) The unreasonableness and wickedness of unbelief is, then, one cause why the decree has gone forth, "He that believeth not shall be damned." (2) Another reason is that it necessarily excludes men from the only remedy provided. Application: 1. Are there any present who deliberately doubt the Divinity of the Scriptures? 2. I will apply the subject to those who, though they do not deliberately doubt, are yet stupid in sin. 3. Let me address the subject to those who, though not stupid, have not yet believed with the heart. (E. D. Grijfin, D.D.) *Veiling the gospel*:—We have here—I. MAN VEILING FROM HIS OWN EYE A DIVINELY REVEALED GOOD. The gospel facts are "manifestly set forth," yet men hide them from themselves—1. By prejudice, as in the case of the Jews. 2. By enmity. 3. By fire. 4. By carnal selfishness. Love alone can interpret love. 5. By despondency. II. MAN LOST BY THE SIDE OF A POWER DESIGNED AND FITTED TO SAVE. The gospel offers men—1. Light, and yet they walk in darkness. 2. Pardon, and yet they walk in condemnation. 3. Health, and yet they groan with a moral malady. 4. Heaven, and yet they march towards hell. How great at once their folly and guilt. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *The true gospel no hidden gospel*:—The Revised Version gives a better translation: "But and if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing." Paul had been speaking of Moses with the veil over his face; our gospel wears no veil. I. THE GOSPEL IS IN ITSELF—1. A glorious light. In countless places it is so described. This light—(1) Reveals "the glory of Christ." (a) It tells us that He is the eternal Son of the Father, by whom and for whom all things were made, and by whom they continue to exist. This might not have been good news to us if it had stood alone; but the gospel further reveals to us that Christ became as truly man as He was assuredly God. This was the first note of the gospel, and there was so much of delight in it that it set all the angels in heaven singing, "Glory to God in the highest," &c. Furthermore the gospel tells us that this same mighty God dwelt here among men, preaching and teaching and working miracles of matchless mercy. But the gospel's clearest note is, that this Son of God in due time gave Himself for our sins. Yet there is another note, for He that died and was buried is risen from the dead, and has borne our nature up into the glory, and there He wears it at the Father's right hand. He is by His intercession saving sinners whom He purchased with His blood. But I must not leave out the fact that He will come again to gather all His own unto Himself, and to take them up to be with Him where He is. (2) Reveals God Himself, for Christ is the image of God. (a) He is essentially one with God. (b) He shows us what God is. What higher conception of God can you have? (3) Is light to us. (a) It brings illumination. It is a lighting up of the soul "to know the only true God," &c. (b) It affords comfort when under a sense of sin; in sorrow; in the prospect of death. 2. Most plain and clear. The gospel contains nothing which can perplex anybody unless he wishes to be perplexed. (1) That God should espouse our nature is so far a mystery that we do not know how it could be; but we do not want to know how it was done; it is enough for us that it was done. (2) So with the doctrine of the atonement. If God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins, our most reasonable course is to accept Him. We need not quarrel with grace because we cannot understand everything about it. (3) I am not asked to understand how God justifies us in Christ, but I am asked to believe that He does so. The fact is plain enough, and the fact is the object of faith. At times persons inquire, "What is believing?" Well, it is trusting, depending, leaning upon, relying upon—that is all. Is there anything hard about that? The shepherd on Salisbury Plain can understand the gospel as well as the Bishop in Salisbury Cathedral; and the Dairyman's Daughter can feel its power as fully as a princess. II. IN THE TRUE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL THIS SIMPLICITY IS PRESERVED. Paul said, "Having this hope in us we use great plainness of speech," and "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The apostle was a deep thinker, but he devoted all his energies to the unveiling of the gospel. He wrote some things hard to be understood, but when he came to the gospel he would have nothing but simplicity there. The true man of God will not veil the gospel beneath ceremonies. I know numbers who would disdain to do that, and yet they hide their Lord under finery of language. Let tawdry ornaments be left to the stage or to the bar, where men amuse themselves or dispute for gain. III. IF THE GOSPEL BE VEILED TO OUR HEARERS

IT IS A FATAL SIGN. 1. Not to believe and accept the gospel is a sign of perishing. You who receive the gospel are saved; faith is the saving token. The sun is bright enough, but those who have no sight are not enlightened. He that believes not on Christ is a lost man. God has lost you; you are not His servant. The Church has lost you; you are not working for the truth. The world has lost you; you yield no lasting service to it. You have lost yourself to right, to joy, to heaven. 2. The apostle explains how a man gets into that condition. He says that Satan, the god of this world, hath blinded his mind. What a thought it is that Satan should set up to be a god. Christ is the image of God; Satan is the ape of God. To maintain his power he takes great care that his dupes should not see the light of the gospel. The veils he uses are such as men's selfish hearts approve; for he speaks thus, "If you were to become a Christian, you would never get on in the world." 3. But you may be found yet; lost to-day, but you need not be lost to-morrow. The Good Shepherd has come out to find His lost sheep. Are any of you blinded? There is one abroad to-day who opens blind eyes. Is the god of this world your master? He need not be so any longer. Whatsoever keeps you from beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ can be removed. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The gospel hidden to the lost:—I. To whom the gospel is hid. 1. To those who deny its Divine authority. 2. To those who are ignorant of its peculiar doctrines. 3. To all those who do not obey it, however extensive and correct may be their views of its doctrines. II. THE DANGER OF THEIR CONDITION. 1. The blindness of those to whom the gospel is hid is voluntary and criminal. It cannot be ascribed to the want of light. 2. Their danger is increased by the measure of light and evidence which they resist. 3. No other means will be used for their salvation but those which have been tried and proved ineffectual. 4. They are in danger of being given up of God, to continued ignorance and error. (N. W. Taylor, D.D.)

The god of this world blinding man against the gospel:—And in it we observe these three particulars. First, the non-proficiency specified and supposed: "If our gospel be hid." Secondly, the censure and judgment that is passed upon it: "It is hid to them that are lost." It is a sign, they are cast away. Thirdly, the true cause of their non-proficiency assigned. First, is the original and natural inbred cause in themselves, that is infidelity, a voluntary unbelief. Secondly, is a cause that increases this non-proficiency of unbelief, that is spiritual blindness inflicted and wrought into them: "Their minds are blinded." Thirdly, is the author and worker of this blindness, that is the devil: "The god of this world." Fourthly, is his end and purpose why he blinds men's minds: "Lest the gospel should shine into them, and they should be converted." And this assigning of these causes of their unproficiency removes other pretended causes of their unbelief. They must be one of these three. I. They will say, God He conceals Himself from them. No; it is the god of this world, not the true God. II. They pretend the gospel is dark and mysterious. No; that is full of light, of glorious light. III. They say the apostle is obscure in propounding it to them. No; it shines evidently to them in his preaching, and would shine into them, would they but open their eyes and behold it. The first thing considerable is the pretended obscurity of the gospel, and so their unproficiency supposed: "If our gospel be hid." Here are three things considerable. First, is the special truth which St. Paul labours to free from obscurity, and the unproficiency under which he thus heavily sentences, that is the gospel. Secondly, is the special relation and interest that St. Paul claims to this blessed truth, he calls it "our gospel." Thirdly, is the imputation that is charged upon this truth, which he labours to remove, that is obscurity: "If it be hidden." I. The gospel and the justifying of it was the main scope and the end of his ministry. His employment was the publishing of the glad tidings of the gospel (Acts xx. 21; Eph. i. 13; Rom. xi. 13; Phil. i. 17). An ambassador, in point of honour, must maintain his commission, avow the truth and authority of it. If Paul preaches the law, he doth it still in reference to the gospel. 1. To convince you of your great necessity to lay hold on the gospel, by showing you the impossibility of performing the law. 2. To enforce you to fly to the sanctuary of the gospel, so to escape the curse of the law. 3. To direct you how to live under the gospel by that rule of holiness prescribed in the law. II. Paul maintains the dignity of the gospel, threatens our unproficiency under it; because the gospel is the most clear, evident, convincing means of salvation. They might more excuseably have charged obscurity upon the law of Moses; there was some darkness in that ministration. But the gospel is revealed in all evidence and manifestation (Rom. i. 17). Clearer and clearer in it the way to heaven is laid open. There is a

light in the law ; but the gospel is far more resplendent. III. Paul is severe against those who are unproficient under the gospel, because the gospel is the most powerful means to work our conversion. In respect of this the law was impotent, it made nothing perfect (Heb. vii. 19). God accompanies the word of the gospel with the efficacy of His Spirit. The law administered no strength ; required all, but helped nothing ; but the gospel, it is the ministration of the Spirit. When that is tendered to us and we refuse it, then God saith, " What can I do more than I have done to save you ? Secondly, the second thing considerable is St. Paul's claim and interest in the gospel, he calls it " our gospel." What Christ said of John's baptism, we may say of the gospel, " Is it from heaven, or from men ?" No doubt from heaven. And St. Paul elsewhere ascribes it to an higher author and owner ; he calls it " the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ " (2 Thess. i. 8). I. It is St. Paul's gospel, it was committed to St. Paul's care and trust ; he owns the gospel as his chief charge. And how thankfully he took this trust ; he blesses Christ for " counting him faithful, and putting him into the ministry." II. St. Paul counts the gospel his gospel ; it is an expression of love and affection. It is the property of love to appropriate what it loves, and to account it its own. III. " Our gospel," it is a speech of challenge ; he claims the gospel to himself against all carping opposers. IV. " Our gospel." It is a speech of confidence and full assurance. Paul is assured the thing that he preached unto them was the truth of the gospel. 1. His preaching was infallible ; he was guided by an unerring Spirit. 2. His preaching was with all evidence, he concealed nothing, but acquainted the Churches " with the whole counsel of God." 3. His preaching was ratified with the great confirmation. 4. Paul's preaching was most successful. Thirdly, the third thing considerable is the imputation which is cast upon the gospel, that it is hid and obscure ; and the apostle seems to grant there is some obscurity in it. I. It is true the gospel in itself, in its own nature, is an hidden, a secret, reserved thing. It is the mystery of God locked up in His secret counsel, naturally unknown to men or angels. II. Even after God had published it by His Son, yet still it is an hidden, obscure thing to every natural man. III. The gospel in some measure and degree is hid and obscure, even to the saints of God. IV. It is true that for all this hiddenness of the gospel, yet even those that are but wicked men may attain to some kind of knowledge in the gospel, nay, to a great ability of understanding. Balaam may prophesy of Christ, Judas may preach Him. 1. A wicked man may understand the words of Scripture, but not the things contained in them. 2. Suppose a wicked man may know those things that are in the Scriptures, yet his knowledge of them hath no spiritual apprehensions of them. All the knowledge he hath it is but natural and carnal, where reason stops he stops too. As he that looks upon a map judges of foreign countries by some imaginations he fancies to himself, not by an immediate clear apprehension of the places themselves. 3. Suppose a wicked man may attain to some supernatural knowledge of Divine truths, but his knowledge of them it is merely notional, not cordial Christian knowledge. I. It is more certain. I. It is more comfortable. As a man may guess at the goodness of wine by the colour, but better by the taste. Secondly, to the censure and judgment that the apostle passes upon those that can see nothing in the gospel to whom it is an hidden thing. And that censure it is sad and heavy. And here are two things considerable. First, is the doom he passes upon them : " They are lost." Secondly, is the manner of denouncing this doom and sentence upon them. First, the doom and censure is that they are lost. What means that ? How shall we estimate the heaviness of this burden ? The Scripture accounts us lost many ways. I. We are lost in our original, as we are all the children and offspring of Adam. II. Every sin we commit is a farther loss to us. The life of a sinner, it is a continual losing of himself. III. There is yet a farther loss, that is a loss of sentence and judgment ; when a sinner is cast in law, when sentence and condemnation is passed upon him, he hath incurred that heavy curse which God's law threatens against offenders. That shuts up all men in condemnation. These three—I. The loss of natural corruption. II. The loss of sinful transgression. III. The loss of legal malediction. But this loss which St. Paul speaks of, it is the final, irrecoverable loss beyond all redemption. It implies three things. 1. A loss in declaration. They that will not obey the gospel are lost in God's account and estimation. 2. There is a loss in condition. Such as refuse the gospel, they are in an actual state of perdition. " The wrath of God abides upon them " (John iii. 36). Those whom the gospel cannot recover, they are undone for ever. 3. There is a loss in destruction. No, if the gospel do not convert thee it will confound thee ; it will be either bliss or thy bane ;

it will either help thee to heaven or sink thee to the bottom of hell. We have seen the doom and censure which the apostle passes upon unbelievers; now let us take notice of—Secondly, the manner of denouncing of it: “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” And for the manner of denouncing this sentence, take notice of three qualifications in it. I. This form of denouncing of it is hypothetical, by way of supposal only, if there be any such. As if he should say, “It is strange and wonderful that after so much preaching there should any remain ignorant, unteachable, unconverted; it is almost incredible men should neglect so great salvation. Had any other mystery been taught them of less advantage than this mystery of the gospel, would they have continued ignorant of it? II. This form of denunciation, it is illative, brought in by way of proof and inference. It is not in the nature of an immediate absolute prediction, but by the way of menacing, and upon presupposal of their unbelief. III. This form of sentence, it is suspensive and general. “If it be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” This thunderbolt hovers over their heads in a dismal cloud of generality. The apostle fastens it upon no man’s person in particular. And so the observation is thus much. That ignorance of the gospel, and unproficiency under the ministry of it, it is a fearful token of perdition. Such an one had need look to himself lest he prove a reprobate. See the truth of this in three particulars; in respect—1. Of the want of the gospel. 2. Of the neglect of the gospel. 3. Of the rejection of the gospel. These leave them in a condition of damnation. 1. Single ignorance of Christ’s gospel is damnable. As a man that is sick of a deadly disease, not only the refusal of the sovereign medicine to cure him, but the bare want of it makes him irrecoverable. Ignorance, it is the hold of Satan, where he keeps his captives in chains of darkness. 2. A second point is wilful and careless and supine ignorance, when the gospel is offered and tendered to us that is worse. 3. A third point is obstinate, resolved and final ignorance and contempt of the gospel, it is an infallible mark, an evident token of perdition. Thirdly, to the causes of this their unproficiency. First, of the natural, inbred cause of this unproficiency, that is unbelief. It is that which makes all means of grace unprofitable. An unbelieving heart is unteachable, it frustrates all offers of grace (Heb. iv. 2). This sin of infidelity makes a stop of our conversion at the very beginning, destroys the first conceptions of grace. An unbelieving heart, it is like some ill-conditioned, cold, barren ground, that chills and deadens the seed as soon as it is sown. It is a sin to be striven against, because—I. It is a sin exceeding natural. It was that sin that gave us the first slip in our first fall, when we all fell from God in Adam. And it being the first it became the most natural sin. And this native ill-quality of unbelief shows itself specially in refusing the gospel. Three reasons of it. 1. The gospel propounds very high, sublime mysteries, truths that are exceeding spiritual and Divine. Now the soul of man by infidelity is so bowed down that it measures all truths by sense, or most by reason. It will not believe God further than it sees Him. 2. The means of salvation which the gospel propounds seems to an unbeliever exceeding unlikely and improbable, and so he refuseth them. Here is the perverseness of infidelity; some things are too high in the gospel, he cannot reach to them; again, some things seem so mean and low, he cannot stoop to them. That our Saviour should be crucified, and by such a death save us, it cannot sink into him. So all the means of grace infidelity judges them poor and contemptible. The preaching of the Word, it is but foolishness to them. The sacraments, how unlikely to be conveyances of grace to us? 3. The heart of every man by nature is full of privy guiltiness, conscious to himself, that all is not well betwixt God and him; and that makes his heart draw back by unbelief and not embrace the gospel. This guiltiness of conscience that God is become our enemy, that heaven and we are at variance, makes a man start and be shy at any appearances of God, at any message or tidings from Him. As an indebted man or malefactor is afraid at the sight of an officer, he thinks he comes to apprehend him, as Ahab was troubled at the sight of the prophet: “Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” He looks upon the Scripture, nay, the gospel, as a writ to arrest him. As traitors and rebels that reject pardon they will fight it out, they look for no mercy. That is the first, infidelity is a sin exceeding natural. II. It is a sin exceeding difficult and hard to be cured. There is no sin more inexpugnable than the sin of infidelity. 1. The long continuance in our nature makes it hardly curable; like a tree deeply rooted, it is hardly digged up. 2. Infidelity is hardly cured, it is a disease of the understanding and rational soul. And rational diseases are most incurable. It is a difficult work to take off a film from the eye. And unbelief, it is a film upon the understanding. Unbelief, it is hardly removed, because:

it seems to be reasonable. What, will you put out our eyes? bid us believe we know not what? make us go further than reason teaches us? III. Infidelity, it is a sin exceeding dangerous and pernicious, of great provocation. 1. It is very dangerous. It is seated in the most vital part, in the mind and understanding. An unbeliever errs in the first principles, and so errs more perniciously, as he that mistakes and goes wrong at first setting. It stops our entrance into the Church. 2. It is of greatest provocation. It offers an high contempt to the glory of God. It calls His truth and goodness into question. We come, secondly, to the cause increasing this unproficiency, that is spiritual blindness: "The god of this world hath blinded their minds." I. The author of this spiritual blindness is the god of this world. Who is that? It is a high title. So, then, we must make these two inquiries. 1. What is his dominion? 2. What is his deity? It is this world. Here is one word seems to enlarge his dominion, "the world," a word of wide compass; but here is another word that confines it, it is "this world," that is a word of limitation. It spoils his divinity to limit him. Ye mar a god, if ye come to confine him. A wicked man's god is but the god of this world, both for extension and duration. But our God, He is the Lord of heaven and earth, there is the extension; and His dominion is from everlasting to everlasting, there is the duration of His dominion. How, then, is Satan the god of this world? (1) Take it for the territory, and then I demand, Is Satan indeed the god of this world? Surely, "The world is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Yet something there is that bears the sway, carries the name of the god of this world. He is so—1. By usurpation, like an audacious traitor, that sets himself up against his lawful sovereign, and will order the kingdom without him. 2. By God's permission. (2) Take the world for the inhabitants. St. Peter calls it the world of the ungodly (2 Pet. ii. 5). In that sense especially Satan is the god of this world. Wicked men are called the world. 1. There is a world of them. A few good, very few in respect of the bad, they fill the world. 2. They are called the world, that is their proper element. David calls them "The men of this world, whose portion is in this life." 3. They are the world, they bear all the sway. 2. The second inquiry is, What is Satan's deity? How comes Satan to this greatness, to be the god of this world? I answer, he attains to the godship three ways. (1) By necessary devolution. If the Lord be not our God then Satan will be. (2) Satan becomes the god of wicked men by their real and voluntary submission to him. (3) Satan becomes the god of wicked men by God's just desertion and giving them over. Obstinate sinners God gives over to Satan; He sets Satan to rule and to be effectual in them. It shows us the great calamity that we bring upon ourselves by departing from the living God. (1) Wicked men make Satan their master, and themselves his drudges, and that is a base subjection. (2) Wicked men have a nearer relation, Satan gets greater interest in them; they make themselves his children. A fearful thing to be reckoned Satan's offspring. (3) The devil gets a more supreme dominion over them, he becomes their king (John xiv. 30). (4) But of all submissions this is the vilest, to set up the devil to be our god. It shows us the high contempt that God suffers from the men of this world. A wicked man, as much as in him lies, puts God out of His throne and places Satan in it. The author of this spiritual blindness is the devil. "The god of this world." II. A second thing considerable is the advantage and opportunity that Satan hath in wicked men and unbelievers to blind them, it is by being in them. It is a speech of very great emphasis, and shows that power Satan hath over the souls of unbelievers—he is in them as in his possession. As those who are sanctified and believe, God's good Spirit dwells in them. So, on the contrary, every wicked man is the habitation of Satan. Here is the difference betwixt a saint and a sinner. Satan may busy himself about a good man as an assailant, but he hath the full possession of a wicked man as an inhabitant. III. We proceed to the third particular, that is the mischievous effect which Satan works in them; he strikes them with spiritual blindness; he blinds the minds of unbelievers. That increases their infidelity, makes them incapable of the mysteries of the gospel, they cannot see the light of it (John xii. 37). Will you see the nature of this woeful disposition to be given over to blindness? There be many considerations of it that make it woeful, and those that are under it exceeding miserable. 1. A spiritual evil; and of all evils that can befall us spiritual evils are most grievous. The spirit of a man is the chiefest part of a man. Deformity of body to a sober judgment seems nothing so evil as a deformity in the soul. Bodily blindness is a rueful spectacle, but to have the eye of the soul darkened is much more grievous. 2. Blindness in our minds, it is a woeful blindness. Why the mind it is the highest faculty of the soul

of man. 3. This spiritual blindness, it is a just judgment that befalls unbelievers thus to be struck with this woeful blindness. It is most just and suitable to their sin. They will not understand, and therefore they shall not understand. This is the proportion of God's rewarding and punishing. He rewards our faith with increase of faith, and our good use of grace with more abundant grace. But He punishes the neglect of grace with the loss of grace. He blows out the candle when men will not work by it. 4. This evil, it is the heaviest judgment that can be inflicted, thus to be given over to this spirit of blindness. Oh, it is a heavy judgment not to be able to see Christ and the means of salvation; such a man bears the brand of God's heavy displeasure. Of all punishments those are the most deadly by which we are given over to sin more wickedly. 5. Spiritual blindness, it is a great evil, it lays us open to all other evils. A man struck with this blindness is prone to fall into the grossest errors, strong delusions, unreasonable apprehensions. Even those truths that they know shall vanish away. Voluntary blindness brings penal blindness. Then the inquiry must be how Satan works this spiritual blindness. First, he doth it not by any violent means. Satan cannot offer any violence to our souls. Secondly, nor can he do it by any immediate action upon our souls, by any intimate real working upon our understandings. The soul of man is out of the reach of Satan. How is it then? I. He blinds men's minds by the efficacy of some false persuasions, by which he deludes them. He persuades most men there is no such danger as these preachers do talk of. He persuades men there is no such necessity of knowledge of the gospel as they would bear us in hand. That is the first way, false persuasions. II. Satan works this blindness in men by the efficacy of errors and deluding superstitions. When he cannot keep religion out of the world, then he bewitches men with erroneous, and false, and superstitious religions. III. Satan works this blindness by the efficacy of divers lusts that he nourishes in the hearts of men, and they steam up into the understanding, and overcloud and darken it. IV. It is for some special purpose that here Satan, that is said to blind men's minds, is called the god of this world. It points us out the main instrument which he uses to work this mischief, and that is the love of this world. He knows full well that the love of the world and the love of religion can never stand together. The bribes of the world will blind the eyes of the wisest men. Satan hath more confidence to keep us off from religion by this love of the world than any other lust. His persuasions drawn from this sin. 1. They are more cunning. He will tell us that the world and the profits of it are real and substantial; you may see it and enjoy it, full bags and full barns. He will tell us that the world and the wealth of it is a present good; here it is, we are sure of it, and you may now presently enjoy it. This sin is more persuasive, because it pleads with appearance of reason. 2. The god of this world hath most confidence in this lust of the world, thereby to blind us to keep men off from religion, because it is a most commanding lust. It bears the greatest sway in a man's heart more than any other lust. The devil makes the world his viceroy. Now, then, if Satan can get this sin into our hearts, it will bear such sway in our soul that there can be no entrance for Christ or religion. Such a man sees so much in the world that he can see nothing in the gospel. So, then, are unbelievers blinded by Satan, is this their condition? Of it let us make some use. I. Are unbelievers blind by nature and blinded by Satan? It removes the scandal of the gospel that so few in comparison do embrace it. II. Are unbelievers blind men? It slights the prejudice that such men have of religion. Are unbelievers worldly men, blinded in matters of religion? Then regard not their judgment, be not troubled at their censures which they pass upon religion. They understand not what they censure, therefore regard them not. III. Are men that believe not no other than blind men? It should move us to pity them in their errors and mistakes in religion. And, as the effect is mischievous, to strike them with blindness, so his intent is malicious. He blinds their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. The first thing considerable is, what that is which Satan mainly opposes, that is the gospel. Of all the ways and works of God his greatest spite is against the gospel; his greatest endeavour is to hinder the success of that. And the apostle doth not barely name it, but with a magnificent expression. He calls it "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God." I. Let us take notice of it as it is a description of gospel. And here observe two things. 1. Paul calls it so. He names it with this addition of excellency, the glorious gospel. (1) It is the expression of his affection that he bare to the gospel. The honour of the gospel was dear to St. Paul, he could never say enough of it, never sufficiently admire it. There-

are three things that St. Paul never spake of but with great ravishments of affections. (2) Jesus Christ. (3) A second thing which Paul mentions with much affection and delight is free grace (Eph. i. 7, ii. 7). (4) A third thing Paul speaks of with great affection, it is the gospel (2 Cor. iii. 9). And this St. Paul doth both as a Christian and as a minister. (2) Paul calls it a glorious gospel, in opposition to that contempt which they in Corinth put upon the gospel. They slighted it, they saw no glory nor excellency in it. That is the first, Paul calls it a glorious gospel. And as St. Paul calls it so—2. The gospel is “a glorious gospel.” So then we have here a magnificent description of the gospel. (1) Here is the quality, the gospel, it is full of light. That is one degree of dignity in the gospel. It is an excellency. Creatures, the more lightsome they are the more noble they are and of greater dignity. Now what is spiritual light but truth? So then the gospel is a shining light, that is, it is the manifestation of saving truth. The better to conceive that the gospel is light, we may understand it, as light stands in a double opposition. 1. Light is opposite to darkness. 2. Light is opposite to dimness. We live in days of actual truth, saving truth is unveiled to us. If thou missest the way to heaven, thou mayest accuse thine own blindness, thou canst not plead the gospel’s darkness. (2) Here is the excellency of this quality, it is “glorious.” There is light in a beam of light; but glory, it is the collection of all the beams of light, as when the sun shines forth in his full strength. Indeed light, it is a most glorious creature. Truth, the more clearly it shines, the more fully it is manifested, it is the more glorious. It is a preposterous way to think to honour truth by concealing of it. Were it not so common, so much preached, it would be more revered. Nay, verily, the more it is preached, as it should be, the more the glory of it appears. True worth the more it appears the more it excels. So then the gospel, it is a glorious gospel. Wherein doth the glory of the gospel consist? I reduce it to two heads. 1. The doctrine of the gospel, it is a glorious doctrine, because in it the glory of God is most conspicuous. And wherein God appears most there is most glory. Glory is nothing but the shining forth of His majesty. And as that glorious mystery of the Trinity, so that gracious mystery of redemption, the glory of it shines in the gospel. 2. The gospel, it is a glorious gospel, because the state of the gospel is a glorious state. The Christian Church under the gospel is made exceeding glorious. “Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God.” The prophet Haggai tells us “that Christ, at His coming, will fill His Church with glory.” Glorious privileges, glorious ordinances, glorious endowments; with all these He hath enriched His Church. Our calling to the gospel, it is a glorious calling (2 Pet. i. 3). The spirit of the gospel it is termed a spirit of glory (1 Pet. iv. 14). The hope which the gospel propounds to us is a glorious hope (Col. i. 27). (3) Here is the derivation of this excellency of the Gospel, from whence it hath all its glory. A double derivation—(1) Is that which is direct and immediate, that is from Christ. It is the gospel of Christ. That makes it glorious that Christ shines in it (2 Thess. i. 8). All other treasures of knowledge, they are but trifles to this great wisdom (Eph. iii. 19). A glorious author makes his work glorious (Gal. i. 11). The second derivation of this glory—(2) Is mediate, and by reflection from the excellent glory of God the Father. It is the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. For better understanding this great mystery, that Christ is the image of God, we must conceive two things are implied in the nature and being of an image. The first is an impression. The second is an expression. In both respects Christ is the image of God. First, take Him in His Divine nature; so He bears upon Him the impression of God. Secondly, take Him in His office, as He is our incarnate Mediator, so He is the lively expression of God the Father, and of His will and pleasure. Take Him in the first respect, so He doth perfectly exemplify Him. Take Him in the second respect, in His office of Mediator, so He doth perfectly notify Him, and fully declare Him. If it be a perfect and exact image, it must be a complete similitude. Not a likeness in some one part or respect only, and defective in the rest, but it must be commensurate and fully equal to that whose image it is. Now, in all these respects to the full Christ, and only Christ, as the second person of the Trinity, is the image of God the Father. I. Christ is the image of God, He bears His similitude. Indeed, in substance they are both one. II. Christ is the image of God, such a likeness as is betwixt a father and his own natural and genuine son. The eternal generation of the second person from the first, that is the ground of this derivation. He is therefore like Him, because He is begotten of Him. III. Christ is the image of God, not only in some general notion, but He is the image of God in His most special and proper being. Not only as God is a substance, so the Son of God is a

substance ; nor only as God is a spirit, so His Son is a spirit ; but He is the image of God, as He is God, the holy and Divine nature of the Godhead as communicated to Him. IV. Christ is the adequate, exact, and complete image of God. All the excellencies and perfections of God are entirely in Christ. All the glory of God the Father is communicated to His Son. Equality of nature requires equality of glory (John v. 23). That is the first consideration of Christ's being God's image, as an image betokens an impression, and so doth exemplify. Secondly, an image serves for expression, it is of use to notify and make known that thing whose image it is. As the former belonged to His person, so this shows us the office of Christ. Wouldst thou acquaint thyself with God? Behold Him shining in His Son Christ as His living image (John xiv. 8). So then, from this description of the gospel, take notice of these two corollaries. First, take notice of the truth and blessedness of our Christian religion. Secondly, let us take notice of the reason of Satan's opposing. The gospel is a most glorious image of God, and therefore the devil do so much malign it. He is the prince of darkness, and is an enemy to any light, but his main spite is at the light of the gospel. First, he can better endure the light of nature, that is a dim light, and imperfect. Secondly, there is another light which Satan can better endure, that is the light of the law. Sunder it from the gospel, it is but a dead letter. Thirdly, this expression is purposed as an aggravation of the great sin of rejecting the gospel. It puts upon this sin a three-fold aggravation. First, it makes it a most audacious presumptuous sin. Dost thou offer contempt to the gospel? Thou offerest contempt to Christ, to God Himself, who shine forth in the gospel and offer themselves to thee. Secondly, it makes a sin inexcusable. He that opposes the gospel sins against a clear, glorious light. Such cannot plead ignorance. Thirdly, it makes it to be a malicious sin, and of the greatest impiety. Why so? Because it opposes the glory of God that wherein God's glory doth shine most clearly. Secondly, what is the opposition he makes against it? What is the course he takes to hinder it? It is by keeping the world in desperate ignorance and obstinate infidelity. Satan had other practices to hinder it, as—I. Falsifications of truth by heresies. II. False imputations by slanders and infamy. III. Persecutions by bloodshed and all kind of cruelty. But the main engine is infidelity. Thirdly, what is the end of Satan's opposition? That the light of the gospel of Christ should not shine unto them. Satan envies the world the benefits of this blessed light which is shed abroad by the gospel. What are they? Take these four. I. This light of the gospel, it is "The light of life" (John viii. 12). It is a quickening and enlivening light. That makes Satan malign and oppose it. The region of death, that is the territory of Satan. The gospel recovers us out of that woeful condition and restores us to life. II. This light of the gospel, it is a discovering light. It lays open all the impostures of Satan. That wisdom detects his impostures, and that makes him envy it. III. This light of the gospel, it is a light to direct and guide our feet into the ways of peace. It makes our way to heaven plain before us. IV. The light of the gospel, it is a refreshing, cheering, and comforting light, and that Satan envies us. Light and gladness, darkness and sadness, they go together. Now the gospel ever brings joy with it. (*Bp. Brownrigg.*) **In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.**—*The thwarting tendency in life* :—There are two very curious tendencies in the development of human character which always give interest to the study of our individual life. 1. The first of these is the thwarting tendency, or the appearance of the unlooked-for in our human nature. Children grow up to a certain age, when suddenly some strange and unlooked-for tendency asserts itself. It is like some blight, or seam, or gnarled deformity in a tree, or plant, or flower. Right across our hopes, and prayers, and efforts this thwarting power appears. But this strange, mysterious, thwarting tendency—be it from inheritance, be it from habit, or be it from the devil—makes itself felt in our daily lives! It hangs about us like a fog; it pollutes us; it laughs at our bondage to the flesh. Our nature suffers an eclipse from it; the evolution of our characters is imperfect; the revelation of God to us is hidden under the presence of this infirmity. We are lost in the growth of something which once was not in us, but which has after a while appeared! 2. The other tendency of our nature is the "blinding tendency." A very curious study of human character is this shutting of the eyes to the unwelcome facts and truths which face us in our daily life, and this leaping through the dark into nowhere, or else into ruin. The social world of to-day is filled with these moral wrecks. These, then, are the two tendencies which help to spoil our spiritual nature in the fight of life. The first is the thwarting tendency from

without; the second is the blinding tendency from within. Before this thwarting principle gains greater headway, before this blinding principle puts out the light of Jesus Christ in our lives, I beg you, struggling, tempted fellow-sufferers in the discipline of existence, to get our souls out of the ruts of indifference, indecision, and decay. Do not let this growth of your evil nature choke that seed of immortality which you feel at times is within you. Do not let the brute god of this world blind your eyes. (*W. Wilberforce Newton.*) *The mind blinded against the light:*—

Consider—I. THE GOSPEL AS LIGHT. 1. Light penetrates, so does the gospel (Heb. iv. 12). We all know the difficulty of excluding light. If there be a crevice, however small, light will enter. And so man may despise the truth, may hate it, as Ahab hated Micaiah, the preacher of the truth; but, if it be the Lord's will, He will find some crevice in the heart through which the light of the gospel will penetrate. 2. Light enables us to see (Eph. v. 13; cf. Psa. xix. 113). The gospel—(1) Opens up to us the nature of sin. Men do not really know what sin is, except by the Word of God. (2) Enlightens us upon the remedy for sin. Man would have found out the atonement except it had been revealed in the gospel. (3) Shows how sin may be overcome. 3. Light has a guiding power—so that by it we may know our way. Just as a light carried before us in the dark night is “a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path,” so the gospel shows us Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life.” 4. But the text tells us that the gospel is a glorious light, because—(1) Of its author—God. (2) Of its substance—Jesus, “the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person.” (3) It opens up to us all the glorious riches of Christ. II. THE GREAT HINDRANCE TO THE RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL. “The god of this world.” While the gospel shows us Christ in all His beauty, it leads us also to see clearly what Satan is. Now Satan employs a variety of means; therefore, “be not ignorant of his devices,” which are—1. Pride. You look within and say, “Men are not so bad as they are described”; and as for the commandments, “All these things I have kept from my youth up.” Pride is that shutter put up by the devil to keep the light of the truth from entering your hearts. 2. Prejudice against the gospel. 3. Evil passions. III. HOW THE HINDRANCE MAY BE REMOVED. 1. Satan, “a strong man armed,” who keeps what he has just as long as he can—not as long as he would. All depends, therefore, upon our finding a “stronger than he.” I look, therefore, for Him who “is light”; and I know that the Spirit of God can open my eyes, and make me see that light which is able to set me free, and deliver me from the power of Satan. 2. If you are really desirous of having the light, go and plead God's promises in prayer. 3. If you want now to receive the gospel, exertion on your own part is necessary. “Awake thou that sleepest,” &c. (*Bp. Montagu Villiers.*) *The blinded ones:*—1. These are awful words—a hidden gospel! a lost soul! 2. The expression “hid,” signifies veiled, or covered over. It was probably suggested by the language of the preceding chapter. The will of God, under the Mosaic dispensation, was revealed through types and shadows, but that veil is done away in Christ. 3. But if the gospel be so clear, how is it that so many who hear it continue unenlightened and unbelieving? The answer is, the veil is no longer upon the dispensation, but upon the heart. But from whence comes this veil on the heart? The text gives the answer, they are blinded by the devil! Note—I. THE CHARACTERS SPOKEN OF. They are “lost.” 1. What are meant by the lost? (1) Not those who are now in hell. True, they are lost; but not in the sense in which the term is used in the text. (2) But to those who are alive now, who are spiritually dead; alive, but perishing. The same expression is made use of, and in the same sense, in Matt. x. 6; Luke xv. 4, xix. 10. Then, by the lost are meant—(1) All who have not come to Christ. Coming to Christ is the first step towards salvation. (2) All the unconverted. I speak thus widely because it embraces every shade and degree of sinner out of Christ. (3) All unbelievers. “Them which believe not.” Now, under this character may be classed—(a) The unbelieving Jews, who still reject the Lord of glory as their Messiah (John viii. 24). (b) All who do not savingly believe in Christ. There is a vast difference between belief and saving belief. We may believe Christ to be the Saviour of sinners, and yet know nothing of Him as our individual Saviour. II. THEIR AWFUL CONDITION. 1. “They forsake their own mercies.” Awful thought! to exclude oneself from mercy, to reject the only Friend who can extend mercy to us. Jesus seeks the lost. 2. Their ignorance of it. They are like a blind man on the brink of an awful precipice, ignorant of their danger, although the very next step may plunge them into irretrievable ruin, both of body and soul. 3. Abiding wrath, at any moment, may become executed wrath. III. THE CAUSE OF THEIR

AWFUL CONDITION. 1. Who is the person who blinds the minds of them which believe not. "The god of this world" (John xii. 31, xiv. 30; Eph. ii. 2). The name is given him, not because he has any of the attributes of God, but because he actually has the homage of the men of this world; and though they do not worship him in words, yet they do so practically, by pursuing his plans, yielding to his temptations, and by submitting to his rule. But will Satan be "the god of this world" for ever? No! His time is limited, and he knows it (Rev. xi. 15). 2. What is the particular character under which Satan is represented? "The blinder of them which believe not." He blinds—(1) By not permitting the word to take root in the unbeliever's heart (Mark iv. 3, 4, 14, 15). (2) By producing a disproportionate view of the value of objects. A very small object will obscure the light of the sun; and a very small object will hide from us the light of the Sun of Righteousness. Satan therefore places between the unbelieving and the glory of the gospel the things of a perishing world. We have a remarkable illustration of this in the case of the young man in the gospel, who asked, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (3) By representing in a false light the effects of the gospel on mankind. He insinuates that to be religious is to be melancholy. This is as false as its author. It is living in sin which causes real unhappiness. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." True, Satan may make sin pleasant now, hiding from the eyes of the perishing its awful consequences; but, too, on the other hand, the gospel is glad tidings of great joy. (4) By making men love sin. Consequently, they cannot see the beauty of holiness. 3. The design for which Satan blinds the minds of men. "Lest the light of the glorious gospel," &c. (1) There is implied here that the gospel is God's instrument for the salvation of men. There is not one now in glory who was not saved by means of the gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (2) See now, more especially, Satan's design to hide this gospel from perishing men. (a) His craftiness. Satan dreads the gospel; he knows that the gospel and himself cannot reign in the same heart; that just as the natural sun scatters the shades of night, so does the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, received into the heart, dispel the darkness in which he has enveloped the soul. Hence he seeks to prevent this light shining into the souls of his victims. He tries to make them believe that there is no devil, no hell. (b) His hatred. His object is to destroy the soul, and therefore he places every possible obstacle in the way of a sinner's conversion; he hides from him the light of the gospel, that he may perish. (*A. W. Snape, M.A.*) *Strong delusion*.—I. THE GOSPEL IS THE TRUE LIGHTHOUSE. First, then, the gospel is the true lighthouse. The gospel, like its glorious Author, is the light of the world. II. BY WHOSE AGENCY IS THIS LIGHT HID FROM ANY? "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." How does Satan seek to hide the light? 1. By a show of wisdom. He endeavours to persuade such that the light of reason and conscience is sufficient. 2. But there are others, and these are the young, especially, who are blindfolded by Satan with a show, not of wisdom, but enjoyment. Satan endeavours to prove that the world can yield all the happiness they want, and that religion tends only to mar it. 3. But there are others more advanced in life, who are engrossed and distracted with manifold cares and anxieties, and earnest pursuit of earthly things. III. THE STATE OF THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL IS HID. They are said, here, to be lost, as if they were already lost, because they are as good as lost—"He that believeth not is condemned already." As we would say of a ship, drifting with the wind and tide towards a ledge of rocks, she is lost, although she has not yet struck; even so, we cannot but say of every unconverted impenitent soul, that he is a lost man. (*H. Verschoyle.*) *Unbelieving men blinded*.—Note.—I. SATAN'S FORMIDABLE TITLE. "The god of this world." 1. Elsewhere he is called "the prince of this world." He and his allies are denominated "the rulers of the darkness of this world." This designation belongs to a personal being. The devil is no mere power or principle of evil. When he is named here "god," it is not in the strict sense of the term, but because he possesses a god-like authority, and receives a god-like submission. The sphere of his dominion is "this world." There it is that he reigns and ravages. 2. But remember—(1) His power is not supreme. There is a Lord above Satan. The Maker of this world is its real Monarch. (2) His power is not legitimate. It has its origin in usurpation. It is founded on fraud, conspiracy, rebellion. Jesus had not to satisfy but to vanquish the devil, and this He did pre-eminently upon the Cross. II. HIS FATAL WORK. "Hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." 1. He has blinded the minds of all natural men by the sin

into which he seduced the race at first. But not satisfied with that old and far-reaching achievement of his, he carries on a constant, present process of blinding in the case of all thus brought under his terrible power. By error, sin, and ten thousand devices suited to the characters and circumstances of his victims, he withdraws them ever farther from the perception and appreciation of spiritual truths and objects. He rears up vast systems of darkness and delusion, under the influence of which the minds and hearts of millions are brought into a state of the most absolute and abject bondage. And his efforts are very specially directed against those who are surrounded by the light and plied with the overtures of the gospel. There is reason to fear that the light may break in, revealing their real condition, and leading on to their deliverance. Hence he blinds them by every method he can devise, and often in ways the direct opposite of each other. (1) Thus he does it alternately by ignorance and knowledge. (a) By ignorance. He shuts men out, if he possibly can, from all acquaintance with the gospel. He keeps from as many as he can the benefits of a Christian education—all religious teaching; and what he cannot prevent he labours to weaken and neutralise. He leaves no lights burning which he can extinguish; and when he is unable to put them out, he is an adept at dimming their brightness. (b) But when he cannot exclude knowledge, he skilfully turns it into an instrument of his own purposes. How many does he bewilder, blind, and destroy by means of a boasted science and philosophy! Frequently, the higher persons rise in mere mental gifts, the lower do they sink in spiritual capacities and tastes. (2) He does it alternately by worldliness and godliness. (a) How does worldliness often put out any eyes the poor soul ever had! The eager pursuit of business or pleasure has a strongly carnalising, corrupting influence. (b) And, stranger far, he does the same by godliness—that is, godliness in its profession and forms, not, of course, in its power. The shadow is put for the substance, the appearance for the reality; and by such means the devil's purpose is effectually served. 2. This blinding is here attributed to Satan, the god of this world, but the subjects of it are not mere helpless victims, they are active co-operators. They are to be pitied, but they are also to be blamed. The devil has a terrific power, but, in a sense, he has none except what we ourselves give him. He cannot blind us against our wills. III. HIS MALIGNANT PURPOSE. "Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ," &c. 1. Light here denotes light shining out with radiant lustre. There is not only light latent in the gospel, but light streaming out, and falling on all who hear it preached, or are otherwise brought into contact with the truth—light pouring around them as from a spiritual orb, and ready to pour into them, but for the internal barriers which are placed in its way—the blindness of mind and heart which shuts out all its brightness from the darkened bosom. The gospel is well entitled to be thus characterised. It is glorious, because it contains and reveals the glory of Christ, its great author and subject. It is full of His excellence; it is radiant with His brightness. It all treats of Him—His person, His offices, His work; and in every part of it we meet with His Divine lustre. Take Him out of it—His deity, His atonement, His righteousness, His Spirit, His distinctive features and actings—and you leave it a hollow, dark, worthless thing, a casket from which the jewels have been stolen, a sun from which the light has departed, turning it into a black, charred, unsightly mass of dead matter. 2. Now, Satan's object is to prevent this light from shining into men, into their darkened minds and hearts; for this is what saves, overthrows his kingdom, deprives him of his subjects. It is the light of life quickening the soul, in the moment of its entrance with the power of the Spirit. And in how many is the dark design of this world's god realised. It is so in the case of all the unbelieving, and who can tell their number? Alas! the blind are walking around us, sitting among us in our houses and churches. Are we blind also? 3. Mark here that, to be effectual, the gospel must shine *into* us. It is a great blessing to have it pouring its light around us—making known to us the way of salvation, and inviting us to enter on that way. But it can benefit us really and eternally, only by breaking through the barriers of ignorance, pride, and worldliness, and penetrating the hidden chambers, the deepest and darkest recesses of our being. (*J. Adam, D.D.*) *The gospel and its adversaries*.—Note.—I. THE REPRESENTATION GIVEN OF CHRIST. "The image of God" (Heb. i. 3). This representation is not a solitary one. 1. The allusion is to the Divine nature of Christ, especially with reference to the incarnation. What an "image of God" Christ was in all His movements! Who can read those movements without being constrained to say, This is some person higher than a creature! 2. The subject throws great light on the truthful-

ness and the inspiration of the N.T. writers. They who could describe such a character as Christ, "the image of God," must have been inspired by God, no uninspired men could write such a character. Heathens tried to do something in this way; but their deities were the personifications of wickedness. 3. Do you love this Christ—this "image of God"? Have you embraced Him? Have you gratefully acknowledged Him as your Saviour and King? II. THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN OF THE WORK OF CHRIST. "The light of the glorious gospel." 1. The meaning of gospel is "glad tidings." In the Saxon there was but one word for "God" and "good." God is goodness, and there is none good but God. Then the expression "spell," is not only news or tidings, but an attraction or charm. The gospel is God's charm, God's spell, or gospel. Indeed, it ought to act as a charm, for unless the Son of God had died, you must have been ruined. 2. The expression "glorious" may mean—(1) "Brilliant," because it is a striking description of the character of Godhead. Nowhere have we such an exhibition of, e.g., God's justice, as the sufferings and death of Christ, "the image of God." But the gospel is "glorious," not because it brightens one attribute of deity, but because it shows forth all His attributes, His greatness, righteousness, truth, and also His grace, lovingkindness, and compassion. (2) Excellency displayed—something super-excellent; nothing could ever be conceived like the gospel. Look at—(a) Its design—to save poor sinners from impurity, and raise them to holiness; from wretchedness, and to raise them to happiness for ever. (b) Its results. It is true the proud and the haughty reject it, but the poor are blessed by it; the man who feels himself a sinner is blessed by it. 3. The glorious gospel of Christ is the great light—it is a light to the sinner's wants and necessities—it empties him of all self-dependence, and points to Christ as one who can fill the soul with pardon and peace. III. THE DANGEROUS HINDRANCES IN THE WAY. The devil acts by means of sin and temptation; he has been nearly six thousand years practising upon our race—so that he knows our weak points. Note a few of the many ways in which he makes his attacks. 1. By positive and direct influences. 2. By indirect agency—(1) By encouraging infidel philosophy. (2) By the encouragement of false religion. If men will not do without Christianity, he will try and make them accept of a false system. (3) By representing things in undue proportions. He exaggerates the difficulties in the way of a godly life, and flatters the pleasures of a sinful. (4) By stimulating men's passions. One man is fond of pleasure, another of society, and another of amassing property, &c. (5) But the great hindrance, "unbelief." "The mind of them that believe not." (*H. Allon, D.D.*) **The glorious gospel of Christ.**—*The glorious gospel*:—All the works of God are glorious. I. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Notice—1. The gospel, or the glad tidings of salvation (Luke ii. 10). 2. It is designated the gospel of Christ. Sometimes called the "gospel of God" (Rom. i. 1). "Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24). "Gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. xxiv. 14). "Gospel of peace." It is emphatically the gospel of Christ. (1) As Christ is its author. (2) He is the subject of the gospel. (3) He is the great end of the gospel. The gospel is designed to make known Christ—to exalt Christ—to attract the souls to Christ. II. ITS GLORY. "The glorious gospel of Christ." The gospel is glorious—1. In the discoveries it reveals. 2. In the benefits it confers. 3. In the influence which it imparts. (1) A holy influence. (2) A happy influence. (3) An exalting influence. (4) A supporting influence. 4. On account of the discoveries which it unfolds. This glorious gospel is—1. The great theme of evangelical preaching. 2. The only hope of the guilty sinner. 3. And the joy and transport of the humble believer. 4. He who believeth it shall be saved—the unbeliever will most certainly perish. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) **Christ who is the image of God.**—*The image of the invisible God*:—I. CHRIST, BY THE EYE OF FAITH, IS APPREHENDED AS "THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD." "No man hath seen God at any time." Yet a vision of God is a vital necessity for the soul. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Christ, however, is only "seen" by faith. 1. Character. 2. Purpose. II. THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF HIS HISTORY. 1. By immutable facts. 2. By its uniqueness. Among all histories that of Christ stands alone—(1) In moral sublimity. (2) In loftiness of endeavour. (3) In spiritual power. 3. By the agency of the Holy Spirit. Whence comes the faith which removes the veil and floods the soul with "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 5, 6. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.—*The Christian ministry and its message*:—I. THE TRUE POSITION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER—HIS

RELATION TO THOSE TO WHOM HE MINISTERS—is here clearly set forth as—1. A position of humble servitude. “We preach . . . ourselves as your servants (lit., bond-servants).” He cannot preach Christ effectively who has not first learned the spirit of Christ—the spirit of complete self-sacrifice and self-abasement. He Himself, though Lord of all, took upon Himself the form of a servant. The service of the servants of God means the dedication of the inner man. The fetters of Christ are upon his heart. 2. But, on the other hand, the position of the Christian minister, as here indicated, is one of noble independence. “Your servants for Jesus’ sake (lit., on behalf of Jesus).” To the preacher the exhortation comes with special force, “One is your Master, even Christ.” And this complete independence of the Christian minister is absolutely essential to the faithful discharge of his duties. He is not set to please men. For only in liberty can he be strong, and only in bondage to Christ can he be free. II. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE MESSAGE; OR, THE PREACHER’S ONLY THEME. “We preach . . . Christ Jesus the Lord.” 1. Observe the uncompromising exclusiveness of this theme. It is a theme which must never be relinquished, or even temporarily lost sight of. Nothing else must ever be allowed to take its place. The subject-matter of the message is not morality; it is neither duty nor dogma, but Christ Jesus the Lord. 2. But although this theme is exclusive it is by no means narrow. I ask you to note its infinite comprehensiveness. It is not morality, yet it is all morality. It is not duty, yet it includes every duty. It is not dogma, yet it comprises the entire circle of Divine doctrine. In Christ there is the fulness of manhood, as well as the fulness of the Godhead; and out of His fulness may we all receive encouragement and helpfulness in every circumstance of life. III. THE PREACHER’S HIGH RESPONSIBILITY. “Not ourselves.” (J. Pollock.) *An apostolic ministry*.—I. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE APOSTLE’S MINISTRY—Christ Jesus the Lord. Wherever he went he preached nothing else. There are some who say that there is a certain style of preaching for the poor and unlearned, and a different style for the cultivated. But Paul preached the same gospel in Athens and Jerusalem. He preached Jesus as the Christ—the Messiah predicted in the O.T., and typified by the ceremonies of the Mosaic economy. He preached Jesus as the Messiah whom the world at that time felt convinced that they needed. He preached Him also as the Prophet and the Priest, and the King of His Church. He preached Him further in the dignity of His person, and in the combination of two natures represented in one person. He preached Christ in the grandeur of His miracles, in His wondrous atonement, in all the purity and power of His righteousness. He preached Him as the Lord of the conscience. We preach Him, then, as the Lord in every sense of the term—the Lord over the body as well as the soul. The Lord over our conscience, over our property, of our hopes, of our love and desires; the Lord of our future, and the Lord of our confidence here. Our Lord in times of prosperity and in times of trial, in times of joy, and when on a sick-bed; in the dying moment, at the day of judgment, and in eternity. II. HIS MODE. Paul regarded himself as the servant of the Church. The minister of religion should give to the Church, first of all, the entire of his time and ability, and should be with his people in times of trial, and especially in times of affliction. The minister has to do many things that other men will not do, and perhaps are not called upon to do. Let us look at—III. HIS MOTIVE. I am Christ’s ambassador, and for His sake I will be your servant. (H. Allon, D.D.) *Self disclaimed and Christ exalted*.—I. WHAT THAT SELFISHNESS IS WHICH THE APOSTLE HERE DISCLAIMS, &c. 1. It is not that regular self-love that induces ministers to zeal and faithfulness in the discharge of their sacred trust, from the consideration of future rewards and punishments. 2. This disclaiming ourselves does not imply a total disregard to our reputation and character among men, for on this the success of our ministry, and consequently the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom, may in some measure depend. But, positively, the selfishness here disclaimed is, in general, that which stands in direct opposition to the honour of God and the interest of Jesus Christ, which sets up self in the place of God in our estimation, affections, intentions, and pursuits. 1. Then ministers may be said to preach themselves when the matter of their public preaching is such as tends rather to promote self-honour and self-interest than the honour of God and the interest of Jesus Christ. 2. This selfishness respects the form as well as the matter of our preaching—*i.e.*, the governing principle from which we act in our public ministry, and the ultimate end we have in view. And this is doubtless the principal thing here intended; for, be the matter of our preaching ever so good, yet self may be the root of it all, and the object of our principal aim. II. TO CONSIDER SOME OF THE OPERATIONS OF THIS CORRUPT PRINCIPLE

IN THOSE PARTICULAR INSTANCES THAT TEND TO DISCOVER ITS REIGNING DOMINION. A faithful discharge of this important trust requires more self-denial than any employment under the sun, yet there are many things in the sacred office that may be alluring baits to men of corrupt minds. A life of study, and an opportunity to furnish the mind with the various improvements of human science, may be an inducement to those who have a turn for speculation, and would be willing to shine in literature, from mere selfish principles, to undertake the ministry. And as these undertake the sacred employment for themselves, and not for God, so they will ever "preach themselves, and not Christ Jesus the Lord." And, when self has done its work in their study, and made their sermon, it will attend them even to the pulpit, and there it will form their very countenance and gesture, and modulate their voice, and animate their delivery. And when the sermon is ended self goes home with the preacher, and makes him much more solicitous to know whether he is applauded than whether he has prevailed for the conversion of souls. Sometimes this selfish disposition will work up envious thoughts against all those who they imagine stand in their light, or, by out-shining them, eclipse their glory, and hinder the progress of their idolised reputation. III. WHAT IT IS TO PREACH CHRIST. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." As it respects the matter, it includes in general the whole sum of gospel doctrine relating to man's salvation by Jesus Christ—the original contrivance, the meritorious imputation, and actual application of it, through His blood and spirit. But particularly—1. To preach Christ is to hold Him forth, not merely as a lawgiver, to be obeyed, but chiefly as a law-fulfiller, to be believed in for pardon, righteousness, and everlasting life. 2. To preach Christ is to exhibit to view His infinite Divine fulness and the freeness of His unbounded grace, His almighty power to save, and His willingness to exert that power. 3. To preach Christ is to make Him the grand centre of all the variety of subjects we enter upon in the whole credenda and agenda of religion. As to the formal manner, it implies that we aim at the honour of Christ and the advancement of His interest. Let me now endeavour to improve this subject by an inference or two from each of the principal foregoing heads, and then conclude with a particular application. And—1. If ministers are not to preach or to seek themselves in the execution of the sacred office, then none can ever discharge this important trust acceptably in the sight of God who are under the reigning dominion of mercenary and selfish principles. 2. If the business of gospel ministers be to preach Christ, hence see the honour and dignity of their office. Let us guard against that fear of man which selfishness would prompt us to. If the reigning dominion of selfishness is inconsistent with a ministerial, it is equally inconsistent with a truly Christian, character. (*D. Bostwick, M.A.*) *Christ the supreme theme of a gospel ministry*:—I. THAT TO PREACH CHRIST JESUS THE LORD IS THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC AND PROPER EMPLOYMENT OF A GOSPEL MINISTER. It may be affirmed that something concerning Christ hath been the principal subject of every revelation that came from God, downward from the original promise made to our first parents (Acts x. 43; 1 Pet. i. 10). And if Christ was an object of such importance to those who lived before His manifestation in the flesh, it cannot surprise us to find that they who could testify that He was come, and had finished the work that was given Him to do, should in all their writings and discourses dwell upon Him as their constant theme. But what are we to understand by preaching Christ? 1. It plainly imports that we make Christ the principal subject of our sermons. 2. To preach Christ Jesus the Lord is to handle every other subject of discourse in such a way as to keep Christ continually in the eye of our hearers. We must acknowledge Him as the author of the truths we deliver, and improve them so as to lead men to Him. The apostles introduced upon all occasions the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, both into their discourses and epistles, and never failed to press the duties they enjoined by those regards which are due to Christ Himself. Thus humility and self-denial are recommended by the lowliness and patience of Christ. Husbands are charged to love their wives, "as Christ loved His Church." 3. To preach Christ Jesus the Lord is to make the advancement of His kingdom and the salvation of men the sole aim of our preaching. II. THAT PREACHING CHRIST IS THE PROPER BUSINESS AND THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC OF A GOSPEL MINISTER. Can anything be more reasonable than that they who profess to derive their authority from Christ should make Him the principal subject of their sermons, and recommend Him to the esteem and love of their hearers? But what I would chiefly observe is that preaching Christ Jesus the Lord is the great means which God hath appointed for the conversion of sinners;

and therefore it is not only highly reasonable, but absolutely necessary. (*R. Walker.*) *Self rejected and Christ exalted* :—I. WHAT WE DO NOT PREACH. "Ourselves." 1. This practice is prevalent, and ought to be censured. Men preach themselves when they preach—(1) Only to promote their own interest. (2) Only to display their own talents. (3) Only to maintain some particular system, regardless of the glory of Christ and the salvation of souls. 2. This practice is not apostolical, and should be avoided. (1) Was emolument their object? "Silver and gold," said they, "we have none." (2) Did they seek the applause of men? They were content to be "esteemed as the filth of the earth," &c. (3) Were they ambitious to display their own talents? "We came to you, not with excellency of speech," &c. (4) Had they a system of their own to establish—any human institutions to contend for? No. "We determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 3. This practice is ruinous, and ought to be condemned. It is, indeed, to defeat the very design of the gospel, and entails eternal ruin on those who persist in it. II. WHAT WE DO PREACH. "Christ Jesus the Lord." How wide the extreme! From an object the most contemptible we turn to one the most dignified. 1. What is implied in preaching Christ Jesus the Lord? (1) That His person and work be the principal subject of our preaching. It is not enough that we speak of Him occasionally. He must be the Alpha and the Omega. In every science there are first and general principles to which every teacher of that science constantly refers; and the first principles of the science which is to make men wise unto salvation are found in the scheme of redemption. (2) That His glory must be the aim and the end of our preaching. Our own glory is to be placed quite out of the question; nor must we seek to please men, "for," saith the apostle, "if I seek to please men I should not be the servant of Christ." His own glory is the great end which God has in view in all His works. It is impossible it should be otherwise. What is the great end of all the works of creation? "For Thy glory they were and are created." What is His great object in the government of the world? That He may direct everything to the grand consummation of that day in which the whole scheme of His moral government shall be accomplished. But what is the glory of creation and providence compared with that which shines in the great work of redemption? Hence—2. The absolute necessity of thus preaching Christ in order to attain the great object of our ministry. (1) It is the only object for which it has been appointed. Suppose, instead of setting up the brazen serpent, Moses had elevated a figure of himself, not many only, but all the people, would have perished. (2) Its peculiar adaptation to all the purposes of our ministry proves the necessity of preaching Christ Jesus the Lord. (a) Do we attempt to awaken the sinner, to arouse the careless? Shall we have recourse to moral suasion? Shall we exhibit the enormities of vice and the beauties of virtue, or the punishment due to the one and the rewards promised to the other? Alas! the moral history of the world is but a uniform record of the inefficacy of these efforts. But he who is insensible to every other attraction, and resists every other impression, is often affected by an exhibition of the Cross. (b) By what means shall we administer consolation to the wounded spirit? Palliatives may be easily found. Hence the complaint, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly." But has the arrow of conviction pierced the conscience? What can effect a cure but the balm in Gilead, applied by the hand of the Physician there? (c) Do we seek to promote the edification, the holiness, the comfort of believers? These objects will be attained only as we preach "Christ Jesus the Lord." That knowledge which is unto salvation is the knowledge of Him (John xvii. 3). Your holiness consists in conformity to His image. Comfort can only be given by Him who is the consolation of Israel. (3) It is to secure the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, without which our ministry must be altogether ineffectual. Success depends upon His influence. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." Conclusion: We are taught from this subject—1. The intrinsic value of the Christian ministry is to be estimated by the degree of attention it pays to the Redeemer, and the place which it assigns to Him, in the discharge of its functions. Rank, intellectual endowment, literary attainment, graces of oratory, are only subservient to the nobler pursuits of the Christian minister. 2. As it is the duty of ministers to preach Christ Jesus the Lord, it is equally the duty of those who hear to receive Him. Without this, the most eminent ministry will be in vain. 3. Are you willing to receive Him? He is willing to receive you. "He waiteth to be gracious." 4. Have you received Him? Remember your obligations, and seek to glorify Him. 5. The certain perdition of all who reject Christ. (*J. Hunt.*) *Christ as Lord* :—

1. "We preach." Preaching is a peculiar function. No other religion but Christianity has preaching in it. It is not discussion or mere explanation; it is the proclamation of gospel truth in such a way that the lives of men may be made Christian. The Christian preacher must never wear a muzzle. He must pray for boldness, and his hearers must above all ask God to give him this gift. The surgeon needs a firm hand to perform an operation; the captain needs a clear utterance to keep the vessel's head well to the storm. 2. "We preach not ourselves." Preachers may have some influence, but it is absolutely of no worth if it glorifies the man. People soon tire of a prophet whose prophecy is only about himself or in his own name. If he gain influence, it is through his service. 3. Is he, then, to be a kind of spiritual servant of all work? No; he is your servant for Jesus' sake. An ambassador is a servant that waits in a foreign court; but it is to do the will of the monarch who sent him. Now, what is the substance of the message which a Christian preacher has to bring? "Christ Jesus as Lord." We preach—I. THE DIVINE PERSONALITY IN CHRIST. Man's greatest need is to see God. All Biblical history is a series of pathways leading to God. And if this be so the Bible was leading through the O.T. to Christ. All the history of God's dealings with men sums itself up in Christ as Lord. If all men need to see God, the proof that Christ is God will be this—that men do actually see God when Christ is preached to them. The real proofs of Christ's Divinity are in the spiritual experiences of men who love Christ. 1. Christ legislates as God. When men hear Him they feel He speaks with authority. The world knows in its heart that it would be a Godlike world if it would but listen to Jesus. 2. He judges like God. He divides man from man, nation from nation, Church from Church, with unerring vision. 3. He loves like God. If He loves only Peter and James and John, what thanks has He, for these love Him in return? But when He loves Judas, Mary Magdalene, Pontius Pilate, and the poor dying thief, then men feel that a new manifestation of Divine love has come to them. II. THE DIVINE PROPITIATION THROUGH CHRIST. When Paul first went to Corinth he made a special resolution—"to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." And there are people in all our large cities who need such a treatment as this to-day, because Christ crucified meets their central want. It is not that they do not want good books, music, politics, houses, &c., but the want that towers over all is that they want a Saviour. If man is morally diseased he needs a remedy, and that remedy is in Christ, who was crucified on the Cross for our sins. The word "propitiation" refers to Christ's death, whereby God's mercy is brought to us as sinners. But "mercy" is a very humbling word. Yet, when conviction has been brought home to us that we are guilty, it is the one word out of God's rich vocabulary that we most of all need. "Mercy" is a twofold word. 1. It is a cry. You are labouring under one fell complaint, and you must cry for help. The prisoner has had a fair trial, and his guilt has been brought home to him. You are that prisoner. 2. It is an offer. The sick man need not die, for the Good Physician has come; the prisoner need not suffer, for Christ has borne the burden and curse of his sin. III. THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY IN CHRIST. "Christ Jesus as Lord." We are apt to let this idea slip out of our conceptions of evangelical religion. As soon as we have apprehended Christ as Saviour, we suppose sometimes that the work is done, whereas it is but just begun. Christ is Saviour in order that He may be King. If Christ does not rule men He has failed in the purpose that called Him here. Christ is Lord of man; Lord of the woman; Lord of the child; Lord of the home, determining its expenditure, its giving, its habits, its prayers, and its purposes; Lord of the Church; Lord of the state, decreeing justice to all, bringing law into harmony with Divine teaching; Lord of the world, driving back the darkness, destroying false religion, bringing in the true, making earth like heaven. That lordship of Christ will not let us put on our religion and put it off like our Sunday clothes. It calls upon Christians to be the subjects of Christ everywhere—to obey Christ in business, in the home, in politics, in reading, in talking, in amusements, in social life, in crying, in laughing, in giving, in dying. There is a majesty about this name that men have not yet felt. (*S. Pearson, M.A.*) **For Jesus' sake.**—*The great argument*:—1. A melting argument. Of all the arguments that address the emotional nature of man, none can have such force as that which addresses him by the love of God—"For Jesus' sake." 2. A winning argument. It does not repel the soul; it draws it. It does not compel it unwillingly; it is an argument of love that wins a willing mind. Are you a man or woman of taste? If you will own the truth, that Jesus is the author of all the beauties that salute your senses, not only as the Creator, "without whom was not anything made

that was made," but as the Redeemer, without whose sacrifice the human race would not have any more blessings than the fallen angels had, then all the separate beauties of art and nature will be so many alluring voices to win you to Jesus. Are you a man or woman of intellectual acquirement? Go through the round of human studies. Revel in all the glories of the visible creation and of mind, and while you are doing it rise to the dignity of the fact that the master mind of your Creator—Redeemer—was the glorious model in which all these magnificent things were cast, and how will you be allured to give yourself up to the worship and service of your blessed Master! 3. A commanding argument. Oh, there is that in the offices of our Redeemer, as governor of the nations and judge of the race, that invests the argument of our text with a commanding power which nothing can equal! 4. A comforting argument. "For Jesus' sake" has brought the sublimest joys that earth ever witnessed, even amid the deepest distresses that earth ever endured. 5. An ennobling argument. 6. An all-embracing argument. 7. A comprehensive argument. It appeals to us to forsake all sin. "For Jesus' sake" let us put away all sin. It appeals to us to perform all duty. (*N. D. Williamson.*)

For God, who commanded the light to shine, hath shined in our hearts.—True soul light:—There are two lights in the soul. There is—1. The "light of nature." This consists of those moral intuitions which heaven implanted within us at first. These intuitions are good enough for angels, did for Adam before he fell, but now, through sin, they are so blunt and dim that the soul is in moral darkness. 2. The light of the gospel. This comes because the light of nature is all but gone out, and this is the light to which the text refers. I. IT EMANATES FROM THE HIGHEST SOURCE. "God." The reference is to Gen. i. 3. It reminds us—1. Of antecedent darkness. The state of the soul before this light enters it is analogous to the state of the earth before God kindled the lights of the firmament. 2. Of almighty sovereignty. "Let light be, and light was." The luminaries of the firmament were kindled by the free, uncontrolled, almighty power of God. So it is with real spiritual light. It comes because God wills it. II. IT REVEALS THE GRANDEST SUBJECT. "The knowledge of the glory of God." Gospel light entering the soul makes God visible as the eternal reality and the fountain of being, and the source of all blessedness. Where this gospel light is not the soul either ignores or denies Him, or at most speculates about Him, and at best has now and then flitting visions. III. IT STREAMS THROUGH THE SUBLIMEST MEDIUM. "In the face of Jesus Christ." In the person of Christ the glory of God shone clearly, and the divinity appeared without a veil. This light coming through Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, is—1. True light. He is the truth. 2. Softened light. The soul could not stand the light coming directly from the infinite source—it is too dazzling. 3. Quickening light. It falls on the soul like the sunbeam on the seed quickening into life. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Divine knowledge:**—I. ITS NECESSITY. 1. When God viewed the earth it was formless and void, "and darkness was upon the face of the deep." So, when He comes to the soul, He sees it full of disorder and ignorance. (1) It is hard to determine at what period idolatry commenced. But there were "lords many and gods many." As the object of worship was misunderstood, so the service rendered Him was no longer a reasonable service. Even human blood streamed upon their altars. (2) Some acknowledge this to be a just statement of the heathen world, but will not allow it as regards nations blessed with the gospel. But are men secure from error and delusion in a land of vision? Do we not often see their ignorance in their views of the evil of sin and of the way of salvation—in their subjection to the world and their disaffection to God? The rays of the sun may shine around a man, while yet, because of his blindness, he may grope in darkness at noonday. We may be delivered from gross idolatry, and yet indulge in a more refined species of it, and which is equally destructive to the soul. Many make "gold their hope, and fine gold their confidence." 2. But this knowledge, of which we are destitute, is indispensable. "For the soul to be without knowledge," says Solomon, "it is not good"; it is like the body without the eye, or the earth without the sun. The devil maintains his empire by error, but God maintains His cause by truth. One reigns in a kingdom of darkness, the other in a kingdom of light. All God's operations in His people are begun and carried on in the illumination of the mind. Repentance, faith, patience, courage, love, result from, and are influenced by, just views of things, which supply what we call motives. II. ITS MEDIUM. "The face of Jesus Christ" (John i. 18). He declared Him, not only by the doctrines He taught, but by the work to which He was appointed, and by His temper, His life, His character.

If we would know what God is, we must learn of Him "who went about doing good," and who said to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Hence He is called "the image of the invisible God, the brightness of His glory," &c. 1. Much of God is indeed displayed in the works of nature. 2. It is in Christ that we see the glory of God without being dazzled to death by the effulgence. There it is approachable, inviting. There we have the only discovery of Him that could meet our case. III. ITS RESIDENCE—the heart. We may perish not only by ignorance, but by knowledge. The head may be clear while the heart is cold. The knowledge of which the apostle speaks is distinguishable from mere opinion and speculation; it has to do with the heart. It affects it—1. In a way of godly sorrow. There is a "broken heart" which "God will not despise," and here it is produced. "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced," &c. 2. In a way of desire. The man longs to appropriate what he discovers. It is called "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." 3. In a way of complacency. The believer not only submits, but acquiesces. His necessity is his choice. 4. In a way of gratitude. We love Him because He first loved us, and cannot but ask, What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us? IV. HIS AUTHOR—God Himself. When Peter had made a good confession, our Lord said to him, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." The same may be said of every enlightened sinner. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." The nature, efficacy, blessedness of this knowledge prove it to be of a Divine original. And to this every believer readily subscribes. (*W. Jay.*)

To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.—*The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*:—Note—I. THE SUBJECT OF THAT KNOWLEDGE in which Paul delighted—God. A most needful knowledge. For a man not to know his Maker is deplorable. The proper study of mankind is God. Paul does not mean the knowledge of the existence or character of God; he had known that from the O.T. before his conversion. He meant that now he knew God in a clearer and surer way, for he had seen Him in the person of Christ. He had also received the knowledge of "the glory of God." He had seen that glory in creation and in the law; but now, beyond all else, he had come to perceive it in the face, or person, of Jesus Christ, and this had won his soul. Consider this glory in the face of Jesus Christ—1. Historically. In every incident of His life God is seen. (1) At Bethlehem I perceive a choice glory, for God despises the pomp which little minds esteem so highly. The glory of God in Christ asks no aid from the splendour of courts and palaces. Yet mark how the Magi and the shepherds hasten to salute the new-born King. (2) In the temple. What wisdom there was in that Child! "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." (3) In the carpenter's shop. See there how God can wait! We should have hastened to begin our life-work long before. (4) In His public ministry. Behold, while He feeds five thousand, the glory of God in the commissariat of the universe. See Him cast out devils, and learn the Divine power over evil. Hear Him raise the dead, and reverence the Divine prerogative to kill and to make alive. Hear how He speaks and infallibly reveals the truth, and you will perceive the God of knowledge to whom the wise-hearted owe their instruction. When He receives sinners, what is this but the Lord God, merciful and gracious? (5) But never did the love of God reveal itself so clearly as when He laid down His life; nor did the justice of God ever flame forth as when He would suffer rather than sin should go unpunished and the law be dishonoured. (6) In His resurrection He spoiled principalities and powers, led death captive, and rifled the tomb. (7) In His ascension His Godhead was conspicuous, for He again put on the glory which He had with the Father or ever the world was. (8) In heaven they never conceive of Jesus apart from the Divine glory which perpetually surrounds Him. (9) The glory of God will most abundantly be seen in the second advent. 2. By way of observation. In the material universe the reverent mind perceives enough of the glory of God to constrain worship, and yet after a while it pines for more. Even when your thought sweeps round the stars, and circumnavigates space, you feel that even the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. In Christ, however, you have a mirror equal to the reflection of the eternal face, for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is the image of God. In the person of Jesus we see the glory of God—(1) In the veiling of His splendour. The Lord is not eager to display Himself. "Verily thou art a God that hidest Thyself." God's glory in the field of creation is as a light shaded to suit the human eye, and in the face of Christ it is so. How softly breaks the Divine glory through His human life! When

Moses' face shone the people could not look thereon, but when Jesus came from His transfiguration the people ran to Him and saluted Him. In Him we see God to the full, but the Deity so mildly beams through the medium of human flesh that mortal man may look and live. (2) In the wondrous blending of the attributes, behold His mercy, for He dies for sinners; but see His justice, for He sits as judge of quick and dead. Observe His immutability, for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and see His power, for His voice shakes not only earth, but also heaven. See how infinite is His love, for He espouses His chosen; but how terrible His wrath, for He consumes His adversaries. (3) In the outgoing of His great heart; for He is altogether unselfish and unsparingly communicative. We may conceive a period when the Eternal dwelt alone. He must have been inconceivably blessed; but He was not content to enjoy perfect bliss alone. He began to create, and probably formed innumerable beings long before this world came into existence; and He did this that He might multiply beings capable of happiness. This is His glory, and is it not to be seen most evidently in Christ, who "saved others, Himself He could not save"? Neither in life nor in death did Christ live within Himself; He lived for His people, and died for them. (4) There are two things I have noticed in the glory of God. I have stood upon a lofty hill and looked abroad upon the landscape—(a) I have felt the outflow of Deity. Even as the sun pours himself over all things, so does God; and in the hum of an insect, as well as in the crash of a thunderbolt, we hear a voice saying, "God is here." Is not this the feeling of the heart in the presence of Christ? Is not He to us the everybody, the one only person of His age? I cannot think of Cæsar or Rome, or all the myriads that dwell on the earth, as being anything more than small figures in the background of the picture when Jesus is before me. (b) I also have felt the indrawing of all things towards God as steps to His throne, and every tree and hill has seemed to return to Him from whom it came. Is it not just so in the life of Christ? "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." 3. By way of experience. Have you ever heard Christ's doctrine in your soul? If so, you have felt it to be Divine. Has your heart heard the voice of Christ speaking peace and pardon through the blood? If so, you have known Him to be Lord of all. There are times when the elevating influence of the presence of Christ has put His Godhead beyond the possibility of question. II. THE NATURE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. How, and in what respects, do we know the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? 1. By faith. Upon the testimony of the Word we believe that God is in Christ. The Lord hath said, "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him" (1 John v. 20). 2. By consideration and meditation. The more carefully we pay attention to the four evangelists the more is our understanding persuaded that no mere man stands before us. 3. By inward consciousness. We have come into contact with Christ, and have known, therefore, that He is God. We love Him, and we also love God, and we perceive that these two are one. It is by the heart that we know God and Christ, and as our affections are purified we become sensible of God's presence in Christ. 4. Moreover, as we look at our Lord we begin to grow like Him. Our beholding Him has purified the eye which has gazed on His purity. The light of the sun blinds us, but the light of Jesus strengthens the eye. III. THE MEANS OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. 1. Why did not everybody see the glory of God in Christ when He was here? Answer: It mattereth not how brightly the sun shineth among blind men. Now, the human heart is blind, and, moreover, there is a god of this world, the prince of darkness, who confirms the natural darkness of the human mind. He blinds men's minds with error, ignorance, or pride. As only the pure in heart can see God, we, being impure in heart, could not see God in Christ. What, then, hath happened to us? That same God who said, "Light be," and light was, hath shined into our hearts. 2. Do you see the glory of God in Christ? Then let that sight be an evidence to you of your salvation. When our Lord asked, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And our Lord replied, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in heaven." "No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." IV. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. Some expositors make the verse run thus: "God . . . hath shined in our hearts, *that we might give out again the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" Never is a gleam of light given to any man to hide away. Only think of a person, when his room is full of sunlight, saying to his servant, "Close the shutters, and let us keep this precious light to ourselves." So, when a child of God gets the light

from Christ's face, he must not say, "I shall keep this to myself," for that would shut it out. No; you have the light that you may reflect it. If you have learned the truth, make it plain to others. Let Jesus manifest Himself in His own light; do not cast a light on Him, or attempt to show the sun with a candle. Do not aim at converting men to your views, but let the light shine for itself and work its own way. Scatter your light in all unselfishness. Wish to shine, not that others may say "How bright he is!" but that they, getting the light, may rejoice in the source from which it came to you and to them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* :—"The light of the knowledge of the glory of God." A question arises as to the meaning of this expression. The knowledge of God is here metaphorically represented to be light. Now, as light, in Scripture language, is an emblem of purity, and as the glory of God is just the manifestation of the Divine character and attributes, the meaning of the whole expression, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," will be the correct knowledge; viewed in reference to ourselves, the correct and clear apprehension of the Divine character and attributes. This, the text tells us, is obtained in the face of Jesus Christ. I. WE ARE TO CONSIDER THIS KNOWLEDGE IN THE MEDIUM OF ITS MANIFESTATION. 1. And here I would observe, this knowledge is gloriously manifested in the person of Christ. It is true that the whole universe manifests forth the glory of God. In all that He does He shows Himself to be inconceivably wise and good and great and excellent. "The heavens declare the glory of God." But how vastly are these views of the Divine character strengthened, extended, and intensified by contemplating the glorious person of Jesus! Why, the gospel narratives furnish a convincing proof of their truth and inspiration merely from the fact of the moral grandeur with which they invest the person of Jesus. 2. I observe, further, that the knowledge of God is gloriously manifested in the doctrine of Christ. There is, so to speak, a heartfelt harmony between the person of Christ and the doctrines which He taught. The manifold excellences which encircle the former find their appropriate expression in the sublime benevolence which forms the very essence of the latter. 3. I observe, finally, that the knowledge of God is gloriously manifested in the work of Christ. The work of Christ is the foundation of the doctrines which He taught. Moreover, the benevolence of this work is equalled by the vastness of its aims. Where can the knowledge of God be more gloriously manifested than in the work of the incarnate Son? Here we see God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, seeing He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin. II. CONSIDER THIS KNOWLEDGE IN REGARD TO THE OBJECT ON WHICH IT OPERATES—THE HEART. 1. And here I remark that it operates on the heart first in the way of illumination—it makes the heart acquainted with itself. To make the heart acquainted with itself is no easy task. Indeed, the difficulties to be encountered in a work of this kind are, to a merely human power, entirely insurmountable, for the heart has no desire to be acquainted with itself, but, instead of this, the most sensitive aversion to everything like self-knowledge. But this is not all. It invariably resorts to those shifts and expedients which serve to make the light little better than darkness. How often do we find, when examining ourselves, that our hearts interpose to exhibit everything through a false and flattering medium. And there is no difficulty in accounting for this. Knowledge, which is external to ourselves, flatters our vanity, raises us in the eyes of our neighbours, and adds to our importance in the world. But a severe and searching inquiry into the state of our own hearts wounds our pride and lowers us in our own esteem. Now, it is upon this dark, deceitful heart that the knowledge of God operates. It may be asked, What effect does this revelation to him of the state of his heart have upon the sinner? The sinner trembles as he sees the sentence of condemnation which his conscience, now thoroughly aroused, writes on the scroll of his spiritual vision as in characters of fire; and, however self-satisfied he might formerly have been, now that he sees himself in the light of Divine truth, he readily confesses with Job, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I say unto Thee?" 2. I remark, further, this knowledge operates upon the heart in the way of purification. "The man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Every follower of Christ must strive to be like Him—like Him in benevolence and benignity of character; like Him in purity and elevation of soul; like Him in thought, feeling, and action; like Him in all those qualities which constitute His true and proper humanity—"till he come through the unity of the faith to the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the fulness of Christ Jesus." III. CONSIDER THIS KNOWLEDGE IN RELATION TO ITS AUTHOR—"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness." 1.

Now, in a certain sense God is the author of all things in relation to us. He made us, and not we ourselves. Our circumstances in life, our natural endowments, our means of instruction and improvement, and, as a consequence, our position in and influence upon the world, fall out according to the wise and beneficent arrangements of His providence. But while, in relation to these matters, God may be said to act by natural established laws, in certain other things in relation to us He acts by a direct creative act of His almighty power. It is "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," who shines in our hearts. In this descriptive appellation of God the apostle refers to the grandest exhibition of almighty power the universe ever beheld. 2. Further, the Divine authorship of this knowledge is apparent from its nature. You cannot more surely trace a ray of light to its source in the sun than you can trace the moral lineaments of that Being who is holy, wise, just, and good, in the revelation which He has given of Himself in Jesus Christ. The Divine authorship of any work is held to be proved when the means by which it is brought about are, humanly speaking, inadequate to the ends in view. Where are these conditions more amply fulfilled than in the revelation which God has given of Himself in Christ Jesus? Why, the work to be done is confessedly the most difficult in the world. 3. Finally, the Divine authorship of this knowledge is apparent by the blessedness its possession brings. This blessedness is altogether of a singular kind. It is singular as to its origin. It is not produced by the most fortunate collusion of outward circumstances, neither is it affected by the discontinuance of these. The world cannot give it, and the world cannot take it away. I would call upon all of you to remember that by nature we are all ignorant of the knowledge referred to in the text. God's willingness to impart the knowledge of Himself, and the preciousness of this knowledge. Note the apostle's language here. He does not state it as a thing that may be, or a thing that will be, but he states it as a thing that has actually occurred—God hath shined in our hearts. (*J. Imrie, M.A.*) *God's glory in Christ*:—1. In order to the perception of God's material creation, two things are indispensable—the presence of light and the possession of an eye as the perceiving power or medium. So, in order to the knowledge of the highest spiritual truth, there must be a revelation and an appropriate organ or state of the soul. "Spiritual things" are "spiritually discerned." 2. But reference is not merely to the receiving, but also to the imparting, of light. See preceding verses and chap. iii. "If we appear to be the speakers, it is nevertheless Christ, who works by us, and who inwardly enlightens us, in order that we should enlighten others." Nor need we confine the design of such enlightenment to apostles or ministers. Every Christian is to be a "light-giver in the world." Observe—I. THAT THE GLORY OF GOD IS MOST CLEARLY AND FULLY REVEALED IN THE FACE OF CHRIST. In Christ we behold—1. The real and direct expression of God. In nature we have the indirect—in the ancient modes of revelation the typical—expressions of God, in Christ the direct and true. 2. The Divine excellences embodied in a living person. The attributes of God, considered abstractly, have little influence compared with that exerted by their personal embodiment in Jesus Christ. 3. The expression of the Divine perfections in their human form—perfections which, from their very glory and exaltation, we regard as beyond our imitation. In Christ, however, we see holiness, not merely in conjunction with infinite power, but in human circumstances, contending with human weakness and difficulties. And then His love—how human, tender, touching! He reveals the heart of God. 4. The perfect blending of all God's attributes in beautiful harmony. In other revelations of God you have the divided, and sometimes distorted, beam; here, in the face of Christ, shines the pure and perfect light. II. THAT GOD GIVES A STATE OF SOUL ADAPTED TO RECEIVE AND REALISE HIS GLORY IN THE FACE OF CHRIST. 1. The appropriate state of soul is specially a heart preparation. "In our hearts." Unlike other truths, which need to be understood in order to be loved, religious truths require to be loved in order to be known. How can the carnal mind, at enmity with God, perceive the beauty of holiness, or the narrow, selfish heart realise a love which is as wide as the world, which stoops from the highest glory to the deepest abasement, and gives itself forth unto death that others might have eternal life? The heart must be opened, purged, clear, to receive the light of the knowledge of Christ. 2. Such preparation is a great and Divine work. No mere resolutions or arguments can accomplish the new creation in the soul. Gently and almost unconsciously are men often led to behold the glory of God in Christ, as the eyelids unclose beneath the brightening beams of morning. III. THAT THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOD GIVES HIS LIGHT TO SOME IS THAT THEY MAY IMPART IT TO

OTHERS. 1. The fact of our having received light enables us to impart it; and the more we receive, the more shall we be able to give. 2. This fact also renders it a most solemn duty, incumbent on all who have received the truth, to impart it to others. 3. And should we not, too, by dwelling on the glory of God in Christ, be inspired with motives sufficiently strong to bear us through all the difficulties attending the endeavour to diffuse the truth? (*B. Dale, M.A.*) *The face of Jesus Christ*:—1. How much is contained in the face of Jesus Christ? Everything—the glory of God, for Christ is the Son of God; all that pertains to ideal humanity, for Christ is true man; the history of everything pertaining to redemption is written there. 2. The Bible is a photographic album. It is full of faces taken from God's camera. Chief among these is the face of Jesus. It is a remarkable thing that nowhere have we any clue to Christ's physical identity. We have no portrait of His person, nor have we any authentic description of it. Coins and statues reveal the features of some contemporaries of Jesus, and history gives pen-pictures of Soerates, &c.; but of Him, the one historic personage of whose form and face the whole world most desires some knowledge, there is not a trace in the Bible. 3. Why this absence of Christ in marble or on canvas? Why this silence of inspired biographers? I believe it was from God. God sets Christ forth as man, and not as any particular man, so that He may not be localised. 4. We are satisfied with this way of presenting the face of Jesus Christ. While we do not have His features, we have His mind, His moral qualities, His spiritual nature. After all, is it not the aim of true art to set forth these qualities? A true artist is not satisfied with putting mere physical beauty upon the canvas. Let us turn the pages of the Bible album and look into some of the faces of Jesus Christ. There is—**I. THE HEROIC FACE** (Luke ix. 41). 1. That face turned Jerusalem-ward is a mirror. He kept His face fronting awful realities. That fixed face ought to move our souls, and react in our fidelity to Him and His cause. 2. Do not undervalue His heroism as seen in this face. He did not find it easy to walk to Jerusalem. The shrinking of His sensitive humanity stood in the way. The words imply a desperate conflict, and victory won only by means of it. 3. This heroic face helps to set forth the fierceness of the battle of Calvary, which He won as our champion. **II. THE FACE BRUISED BY HUMAN CONTEMPT AND INTOLERANCE.** This picture is a revelation of the patience of Jesus. He was keenly sensitive, and yet He bore all this indignity without a murmur. **III. THE FACE IN THE DUST** (Matt. xxvi. 39). Gethsemane was to the prostrate form Calvary before its time. Gethsemane means simply Christ shrinking from sin. **IV. THE FACE AWFULLY MARRIED** (Isa. liii.). This is the face of Christ when sin and suffering have completed their work. The hand of time takes the human face and works into it every experience through which the man passes, just as the sculptor works his thoughts into a piece of marble. His earthly career was enough to mar any face, and especially a face which belonged to a nature so exquisitely constructed. **V. THE TRANSFIGURED FACE.** This revelation is better than the face of God in nature. When we look into the face of history the different attributes of God seem to clash; but in the life of Jesus all the attributes of God are brought into play, and they work together in perfect harmony. **VI. THE FACE IN THE WHITE THRONE.** We can only recognise the fact that this face is there. **VII. THE FLASHING FACE AMID THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS** (Rev. i.). In the face buried in the dust we saw a reflection of the dark past; in the flashing face amid the golden candlesticks we see a reflection of the glorious future. Conclusion: 1. Our treatment of the face of Jesus Christ is an index of our character. Among our privileges is access to the face of Jesus Christ. If we avail ourselves of this privilege we indicate a familiarity with Christ, and a knowledge of Christ, and a desire and a love toward Christ. We indicate that we are born from above and are the sons of God. 2. The face of Christ affords an inexhaustible and soul-satisfying study. Looking forward to his awakening from the grave, the Hebrew poet sings, "As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." The highest prayer which Christ found it possible to pray for us was, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." (*D. Gregg.*) *The face of Jesus*:—Let us consider this as—**I. GRANDLY TYPICAL.** Of what? Of the family of Mary? No. Of the tribe of Judah from which He sprang? No. Of the Jewish race? Nay, for He was less a Jew than a man. The appellation by which He designates Himself about sixty-six times is "Son of Man," as if the blood of the whole human race was in His veins. 1. His face had no distinct, narrow, national type. Grecian, Roman, Syrian,

Jew, ever bore the distinctive features of their age and nation. Not so with Christ. The whole world can claim kindred here and have the claim allowed. In His heart there is room for all; in His atoning blood there is merit for all. 2. His face typified the ideal man. He was "fairer than the children of men," the perfect type of moral and spiritual excellency. Our best aspirations can never go beyond the infinite heights of holiness upon which He trod. The face of man is an index to his character. Place a light within a marble vase, and it becomes translucent. Let holy principles dwell within a man, and they will give an expression to the face. But on no human face yet were all excellences ever expressed. One has patience, another generosity, another gentleness, another boldness. But from the countenance of Jesus there beamed forth every ray from a full-orbed and complete character. His heart was bold as a lion's, yet gentle as a lamb's. II. TOUCHINGLY HISTORICAL. It doubtless laughed in infancy upon a mother's breast. To behold it sages travelled far, and lowly shepherds bowed before it with reverence and awe. When Simeon beheld it, he said, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." In the temple doctors gazed upon His face with wonder. From before it devils fled in fear, while poor sufferers sought it, finding it to be like a rising sun with healing in its beams. Often and often during the night-watches was it upturned for hours in prayer. Three times at least was it bedewed with tears. The fiendish mob spat in it and smote it, which indignity He bore with Godlike fortitude (Isa. l. 6, liii. 14). On the Mount "His face did shine as the sun," but on the Cross unutterable anguish found dread expression there. And yet, to hearts instructed as to the cause of this grief, that fair face was never more lovely than when ploughed with furrows and stained with blood. A mother, young and beautiful, once dashed into the flames of a burning chamber, and thus saved her child; but to her dying day she bore in charred cheeks the effects of that awful moment. But who shall say her face, to husband and child at least, was not more beautiful than before? In rescuing us the face of Jesus became more marred than that of any man, and to those who know His love His face of sorrow is resplendent with the glory of God. Yet that face is very different now (Rev. i.). It is the light of heaven, and all who trust and follow Him shall see it. Underneath the thin veil which covered the Athenian Jove, the worshippers could see the sharp outline of his countenance and some of his more prominent features. But on the festive days, when he was uncovered, and the sun shone upon that magnificent statue, women fell down fainting, and strong men were overcome; hence the proverb that was circulated through Greece—"Unhappy is the man that has not seen the Athenian Jove." Whatever veil of flesh or sense hides from us the face of our Well-Beloved, the day is coming when it shall be taken away, and as we gaze we shall feel, "Unhappy they who have not seen Thy face." And yet, under one aspect or another, all must see it; "for every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." III. INSTRUCTIVELY BEAUTIFUL. "The glory of God" was the specific name for the Shekinah, and by it we understand the pouring out from Himself of the perfectness and beauty of His own character. The glory of God may be said to bear a similar relation to "the Father of lights" as the rays of the sun bear to the great orb of day. By "the face of Jesus" we need not necessarily understand His countenance, for in Scripture the face is often taken to mean the person (Exod. xxxiii. 14). The text means that the perfections of the Divine nature were in the person of Jesus. Never had these been manifested so clearly, so fully, as now. Notwithstanding the wonderful disclosures of the Deity under the old dispensation, Jehovah was still a God that did hide Himself. But all the fulness of the Godhead was in Christ. In Christ we have—1. Deity sweetly conspicuous. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." The Divine indignation against sin, the Divine love for humanity, the gentleness, patience, and mercy of God are more fully revealed to us in Christ than in all other revelations combined. 2. Deity sweetly attractive. The glory of God as seen in nature and providence often repels by its awful majesty. But in Jesus we see His glory in a human face—a face so gentle that children might well be attracted to it, and the most timid natures feel safe in its presence. (*W. Williams*).

Ver. 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.—*The treasure in earthen vessels*:—I. COMPARES THE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL TO EARTHEN VESSELS. A vessel contains what is put into it. The vessels of the temple were some of gold, others of silver, and they were consecrated to God. In the most ancient times there were vessels of gold. This may remind you of Enoch. It must have seemed strange to

observe one so much devoted to God as he was. He persuaded few. The treasure then, as now, was little esteemed. Silver vessels may represent the prophets. As the vessels of silver were the ornaments of the sanctuary, so were the prophets the ornaments of the Church. Earthen vessels may represent the weakness of man.

II. THE GOSPEL IS COMPARED TO A TREASURE. The gospel finds man in a state of poverty, and he must remain in the same state unless enriched by it. The gospel is a treasure that the soul can enjoy. The gospel is a treasure which the thief cannot touch. The gospel is a treasure which will not leave the Christian at death.

III. THE GOSPEL GAINS GLORY FROM THE MEANNESS OF THE VESSELS IN WHICH IT IS CONTAINED. It is wonderful that such a treasure is in earthen vessels, because it exceeds the expectation of men. God is more observed when the instrument is weak. Such as are furnished with this treasure ascribe it all to the godness of God. We shall now make a few inferences. 1. Is it so, that there is a treasure? Then it requires diligence to secure it. No man succeeds in this world who is not active. 2. Is it so, that there is a treasure? Then take heed that you do not despise it. When the Spaniards conquered South America, they made it evident that they adored its gold, and they practised every exertion to obtain it. Let the Christian show that he values the heavenly treasure by his diligence in seeking it. 3. Is it so, that this treasure may be obtained by all? Then value it. It is not in the power of all to be rich. (*W. Syme.*) *Divine power illustrated by the triumphs of the gospel*:—God designs His glory as the result of the instrumentality He employs. What apparently could be more visionary than the design of Moses to deliver the Israelites? But God chose to illustrate His power by “leading His people like a flock by the hands of Moses and Aaron.” But the twelve fishermen of Galilee appeared, in fanaticism, to exceed all their predecessors. But ere they died they had filled the world with their doctrine. I. IT STATES AN IMPORTANT FACT. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” 1. The depositaries of Divine truth. Need I specify the truths of which they were made the depositaries? They received “Christ crucified”; they were put “in charge of the gospel”; the doctrine of man’s ruin by nature, and his recovery by sovereign grace. These truths are beautifully styled a treasure. (1) Think on their value. (2) Think on their magnitude. (3) Think on their permanence. There is a sense, peculiar to the apostles, in which they were made the depositaries of this treasure. Most of them had been admitted to personal converse with the Lord of heaven; the Spirit had taken of the things of Christ and showed to them what they had heard. 2. The instruments of Divine agency. “That the power may be of God.” All believers have this invaluable treasure, but to some it is committed with a more extensive design than to others. Jehovah’s wise and gracious plan is that of co-operation, and when He blesses any being it is to make him a blessing. Thus the world of grace corresponds with that of nature. The sun has the treasure of light and heat. Why? That he may shine—may display the glory of God, and show through nature His handy work; may fertilise the ground—may illuminate the system, and shed a lustre which some of the receivers shall again reflect. The recommendation of Divine truth, according to the station which we fill, necessarily results, not only from the Divine appointment, but from the knowledge of the truth itself. It is a treasure which cannot be concealed. 3. The occasions of Divine glory. “The power”—“the excellence of the power”—reminds us that something worthy of God is produced. What has been the effect upon society. In the metaphorical language of Scripture, “the wilderness and the solitary place was glad for them, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose.” II. AS THE STATEMENT OF A PRINCIPLE WHICH RELIGION WILL IMPROVE. The excellence of the power is of God. Let us consider it—1. With reference to God. He will be acknowledged; He has written His name in all His hands have made. Jehovah’s eternal praise is to result from the redemption of a lost world. By it His nature is exhibited, His perfections are displayed, His government is illustrated. By this method He impresses us with the nature and importance of salvation; for we see the necessity of His immediate agency to effect it. 2. With reference to ourselves. “The excellency of the power” is “of God, and not of us.” This conviction is calculated to qualify for the engagement. It is adapted—(1) To keep us humble. (2) Therefore the conviction is further calculated to keep us near to Himself. (3) This principle, further, will prevent our discouragement. “Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.” 3. With reference to our hearers. (1) It will produce in them satisfaction with our message. They will remember that our doctrine and our reproofs are not ours, but His that sent us. (2) Again, the belief of the truth

in our text will induce our hearers to aid us—to aid us by their prayers. (*J. Innes*). *The gospel treasure in earthen vessels*:—I. THE GOSPEL AS A TREASURE. 1. There are on earth many mines of material treasures, but the mine which contains this is the Word. Here are contained all things which “are profitable.” 2. But while this treasure is spiritual, it is invaluable. “Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living.” And if you ask for the evidence of this, you may see the price that it cost—not silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ. 3. Spiritual and invaluable as it is, it is an obtained treasure. “We have it.” II. THIS TREASURE IS DEPOSITED “IN EARTHEN VESSELS.” III. THIS TREASURE IS CONTAINED IN EARTHEN VESSELS TO SHOW THAT THE POWER IS DIVINE. 1. When God predicted the success of the gospel, He said, “My Word shall not return unto Me void.” When the apostles looked upon their hearers, they said, “The power is of God.” And even now, when the gospel is preached, that mind which authority could not govern, nor vengeance terrify—how often has it been carried captive by Christ! And how excellent is this power! It keeps the heart and mind in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; it is a good hope through grace. 2. Now, had an angel been the depository of this treasure, we might have been ready to give praise to the angel’s eloquence and power; but it is not so now, “for God,” saith the apostle, “hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” (*J. Alexander*.) *The gospel treasure*:—I. THAT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS A TREASURE INDEED, AND IT IS OUR UNSPEAKABLE PRIVILEGE THAT WE HAVE THAT TREASURE. The gospel of Christ is indeed a treasure, for—1. There is in it an abundance of that which is of inestimable value. “The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them, the onyx, or the sapphire” (*Job*. xxviii. 19). There are treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the truths which the gospel discovers to us. There are treasures of comfort and joy in the offers which the gospel makes us, and the blessings it assures to all believers. These are things of value to the soul of man. And there is an abundance of them, infinitely exceeding that of light in the sun or water in the sea. In Christ there is enough of all that our souls need. 2. This is safely laid up for a perpetuity, and therefore it is a treasure. It is deposited in good hands. It is hid in God—in His wisdom and counsel. It is hid in Christ and in His undertaking for us, which contain all that we need as sinners. It is hid in the Scripture. There it may be found; thence it may be fetched by faith acting on Divine revelation, assenting to it with application and resignation. It is a treasure, for it is laid up for hereafter. The bulk of these riches is that which is reserved in heaven for us—a glory that is to be revealed in due time. 3. It is of universal use to us, and therefore it is a treasure. It is not only valuable in itself, but every way suitable and serviceable to us. It is a treasure in the world; it puts honour upon it, and puts good into it. It is a treasure to any nation or people. It is a treasure in the heart of every true believer who receives it. II. MINISTERS ARE EARTHEN VESSELS IN WHOM THIS TREASURE IS PUT. They are said to have this treasure, not only because they ought to have it in their hearts themselves firmly to believe it, but because they have the dispensing of it to others. 1. They are but vessels that afford no more, no other, than what is put into them, nor can give but just as they have received. God is the fountain of light and life. Ministers must remember this and religiously adhere to their instructions. People must remember this, and not expect more from their ministers than from vessels. We have a gospel to preach, not a gospel to make. 2. They are but earthen vessels. Some think here is an allusion to Gideon’s soldiers, who, advancing to battle in the night; took lamps in their earthen pitchers, with the glaring light of which, upon breaking the pitchers, the enemy was discomfited. By such unlikely methods is Christ’s cause carried on, and yet is victorious. Let us see why the ministers of the gospel are here compared to earthen vessels. (1) They are made of the same mould with other people. All the children of men are earthen vessels; the body is the vessel of the soul, and it is of the earth, earthy. We are not only children of men, as you are, but we are by nature children of wrath, even as others. (2) They are oftentimes, in respect of their outward condition, mean and low and of small account, as earthen vessels are; not only men, but men of low degree, sons of earth, as the Hebrew phrase is. Their family, perhaps, like Gideon’s, poor in Manasseh. The first preachers of the gospel were poor fishermen—earthen vessels indeed—bred up to the sea. (3) They are subject to many infirmities, to like passions as other men, and upon that account they are earthen vessels; they have their faults, their blemishes, as earthen vessels have. (4) They are made of different sorts of earth, as earthen vessels are—all of the same nature, but not all of the same natural constitution. The bodies of some

are of a stronger make, and more cut out for labour, while others are feeble, and soon foiled. But those of the finest mould, even the china vessels, are but earthen ones. A great deal of difference there is likewise between some and others of those earthen vessels in respect of natural temper; some are more bold, others more timorous; some more warm and eager, others more soft and gentle. (5) They are of different shapes and sizes, as earthen vessels, notwithstanding which they may all receive and minister the treasure according to their different capacities. (6) They are all what God, the great potter, makes them. Therefore we ought not to envy the gifts of those who excel us. (7) They are all vessels of use and service in the family, though they are but earthen ones. (8) They are oftentimes despised by men, notwithstanding the honour God has put upon them, and are thrown by as broken vessels in which is no pleasure. It has often been the lot of some of the most faithful ministers of Christ to be loaded with reproach. (9) They are frail and mortal and dying, and upon that account they are earthen vessels. Thus the apostle explains it here: "We which live are always delivered unto death." They are worn out with their labours, and are spent in the service of Christ and souls.

III. God has put the treasure of the gospel into earthen vessels that THE DIVINE POWER WHICH GOES ALONG WITH THE GOSPEL MAY BE SO MUCH THE MORE GLORIFIED. The great design of the everlasting gospel is to bring men to fear God and give glory to Him. There was an excellency of power going along with the apostles which appeared to be of God, and not of themselves. 1. To strengthen them for the work they were employed in. To preach down Judaism and paganism, and to preach up the kingdom of a crucified Jesus, was a service that required a far greater strength, both of judgment and resolution, than the apostles had of themselves. 2. To support them under the hardships that were put upon them. 3. To give them success in that great work to which they were called. Now for the application of this. 1. It may be many ways instructive to us who are ministers, and may remind us of our duty. (1) Are we earthen vessels? Then we have reason to be very humble and low in our own eyes, and to take great care that we never think of ourselves above what is meet, but always think soberly. (2) Are we earthen vessels? Then let us not be indulgent of our bodies, nor of their ease or appetites. What needs so much ado about an earthen vessel when, after all our pains about it, we cannot alter the property of it. (3) Are we earthen vessels? Then let us not be empty vessels. A vessel of gold or silver is of considerable value though it be empty; but an earthen vessel, if empty, is good for little, but is thrown among the lumber. (4) Are we earthen vessels? Then let us be clean vessels. (5) Are we earthen vessels? Then let us take heed of dashing one against another, for nothing can be of more fatal consequence than that to earthen vessels—no, nor to the treasure that is deposited in them. (6) Are we earthen vessels? Then let us bear reproach with patience, and not think it strange, or fret at it. (7) Are we earthen vessels? Then let us often think of being broken and laid aside, and prepare accordingly. 2. This doctrine may be of use to you all. Are your ministers earthen vessels? (1) Thank God for the gospel treasure, though it be put into earthen vessels—nay, thank God that it is in such vessels, that it may be the more within your reach. (2) Esteem the earthen vessels for the treasure's sake that is put into them. (3) Bless God that the breaking of the earthen vessel is not the loss of the heavenly treasure. Ministers die, but the Word of the Lord endureth. (4) Let the glory of all the benefits you have, or may have, by the ministry of the gospel be given to God—to Him only, to Him entirely—for from Him the excellency of the power is. (5) Let the consideration of the frailty and mortality of your ministers quicken you to make a diligent improvement of their labours while they are continued with you. (*Matthew Henry.*)

The gospel treasure in earthen vessels:—I. THE EXCELLENCY OF THE GOSPEL. The gospel is described as a treasure for—1. Its value. By some it is not estimated as a very great treasure; but let a man be convinced of sin, or be threatened with death, and he will prove its value. (1) Is a Saviour of any value to the lost and the guilty? Why, this is a revelation of Christ and of salvation by Him. (2) Is free favour of any value to the poor criminal, whereby the judge tells him the king has pardoned him? Then the gospel is precious to such a mind, for it is the gospel of the grace of God. (3) Is life valuable to a dying man? Then the gospel is precious, for it is the word of life, and he that believeth it hath everlasting life. (4) Is light valuable? This is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (5) Is wisdom precious? All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are summed up in the gospel. (6) Is not food precious? "I have estimated the words of His lips more than my necessary food." 2. Its abundance.

It is the glory of the gospel that in it atonement is complete. All the influence necessary to apply this gospel with Divine power to the heart is treasured up in Christ. When the Spanish ambassador was shown the treasures of St. Mark in Venice, he immediately groped to find the bottom of the treasure, and a page who was standing by said, "In this my master's treasure excels yours—in that it has no bottom." So we say of the gospel. None have ever reached the depth and sufficiency of this heavenly treasure. Millions in all ages have received, and yet there is abundance. There are in it the riches of pardon, justification, sanctification, expectation; and hence proceeds satisfaction. A man is never satisfied till he enjoys the gospel. 3. Its duration. "Riches and honour are with Me; yea, durable riches and righteousness." Other treasures make to themselves wings, and flee away. Does it announce mercy? "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting." Does it speak of joy? "The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads." Does it tell me of love? It is "the everlasting love wherewith God has loved me." Does it tell me of strength which I am to receive? Well then, it is "everlasting strength." Does it speak to me of salvation? "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." Does it speak of the habitations beyond the grave? These are "everlasting habitations." II. THE INSTRUMENTS WHO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL—earthen vessels. And ministers are so called for various reasons. 1. As to their origin. 2. As to the estimation in which they are held. They are received by the world only as earthen vessels—their poverty, their appearance. Paul's bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible. Moses said, "I am not eloquent heretofore nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant." Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. Peter was a fisherman, Matthew a publican, John Bunyan a tinker, Whitfield a servitor at college. 3. As to their bodily constitution. Are you sick and dying? So are we. Are you subject to infirmities? So are we. Earthen vessels are subject to knocks, to falls, and speedily to be broken; they last generally but a short time. This has been the case with some of the most eminent servants of Jesus Christ. 4. As to their usefulness. An earthen vessel is useful for reception and effusion. Something must be put in, and something must be poured out. III. THE REASON WHY THIS TREASURE IS GIVEN TO SUCH INSTRUMENTS TO DISPENSE. "That the excellency of the power," &c. Now, this Divine power is almighty, and therefore not all the powers of hell, of prejudice, of error, of ignorance, of obstinacy and blindness, can stand before it. But it is not a power which subjects an individual against his own will, but it is the power of light discovering darkness to the mind; of mercy showing the way of escape from the wrath to come; of truth overcoming error and prejudice in the mind; of love silently yet effectually drawing the soul to attend to Christ's voice. (*J. Sherman.*)

Vers. 8-12. **We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.**—*Trials in the cause of Christ.*—I. THE TRIALS ENCOUNTERED IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST ARE SOMETIMES VERY GREAT. "We are troubled on every side." The man who is earnestly engaged in any cause in this world will have to encounter trials. The old prophets had theirs; some were insulted, some incarcerated, some martyred. So with John the Baptist, and so with the apostles, so with the confessors, reformers, and revivalists. II. HOWEVER GREAT THE TRIALS ENCOUNTERED, THEY ARE NOT BEYOND BEARING. "Yet not distressed," or straitened; though "perplexed," or bewildered, yet not benighted; though "persecuted," or pursued, yet not "forsaken," or abandoned; though "cast down," or stricken down with a blow, yet not perishing. The true labourer in the cause of Christ, however great his trials, is always supported—1. By the approbation of his own conscience. 2. By the encouraging results of his own labours. 3. By the sustaining strength of God. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." III. THE RIGHT BEARING OF THESE TRIALS SUBSERVES THE GOOD OF SOULS. In the right bearing of these sufferings the sufferer—1. Reveals the life of Christ to others (ver. 10). Who that has witnessed the true Christian languishing on the bed of suffering and death has not seen the spirit of the life of Christ revealed? 2. Promotes in himself and others the Christian life (ver. 11). "God," says Dean Alford, "exhibits death in the living that He may also exhibit life in the dying." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Cast down, but not destroyed.**—*Growth under pressure.*—"Sub pondere cresco"—I grow under a weight—was the motto on the crest of John Spreull, of Glasgow, who for his defence of religious liberty in the times of Claverhouse was imprisoned on the Bass Rock, in the Frith of Forth. This is the great motto of the world. Nature is like a huge watch, whose movements

are caused by the compression of the mainspring. Only by restraint is life possible. The forms of all living things, from the smallest moss to man himself, are determined by the extent and degree to which the force of life overcomes the dead forces of nature. The simple principle of growth under limitation will account for the shape of every leaf, and the formation of every organ of the human body; for the germination of a seed, and for the beating of the heart within the breast. The blossom of a plant is produced by growth under restraint. At the point farthest away from the root the vital forces are weakest, and the supply of nourishment almost exhausted; and therefore the ordinary leaves are compressed by their diminished power of resistance to the forces to which they are subjected, and modified into the strange shapes and changed into the beautiful colours of the flower. The compression goes on farther in the interior parts of the flower, according as the resisting power becomes less, until at last, in the innermost central part, the forces are brought to an equilibrium, and the plant finds rest in the round seed, which is simply the most complete compression of which the leaves are capable. The head of man is in the same way only a modification of the vertebral column, and his brain a compression of the spinal marrow, by the mechanical conditions under which they are developed. Have you ever watched a bubble of air rising up from the bottom of a clear pond to the top? If so, you cannot fail to have noticed that it ascends not in a straight line, but in a corkscrew or spiral form. The force which draws it upwards to rejoin the native air from which it has been separated, would do so, if left to itself, by the shortest course; but it encounters continually the resistance of the denser element of the water, and this pressure delays its ascent through it, and makes it take a longer zig-zag path. If you understand the reason of this simple phenomenon, you will understand the way in which every herb and tree grows in the air, and why their shapes are what we see them to be. They all grow in the most varied and complicated spiral forms because they grow under resistance. This is the simple method of nature's working, the law which determines all her forms. The same law obtains throughout the spiritual world. There, too, growth is under resistance. The law of the spirit, of life in Christ Jesus, contends against the law of sin and death; the law in the members wars against the law of the mind. The most essential character of spiritual life is that it depends upon the resistance or contest of one form of moral force by another: its tension is holiness, righteousness, self-control. We grow in grace as the trees grow in space—under limitations; and the various forms and degrees of spiritual life which men exhibit are due to the extent of these limitations. Spiritual life does not assume one stereotyped monotonous pattern. There is the same infinite variety in the spiritual world that there is in the natural, arising from similar causes. As no two plants grow in precisely similar circumstances, so no two human beings are exposed to the same spiritual influences. Of course there can be no growth without life. If the soul has no resisting power within, then the forces of the world without simply destroy it. If the soul is dead, all things deepen its death. But if it has spiritual life, then all things help to maintain and develop it. Like the sailing-boat that tacks to the wind, it takes advantage even of the contrary currents of life to reach its end. We may compare the soul that is dead and the soul that has spiritual life to two seeds, one infertile and the other fertile. The forces of nature play upon both seeds in the same way. In the case of the seed that has no life in it, these forces are unresisted; they have their own way, and they proceed to corrupt or break up the elements of which it is composed, until nothing of it remains. In the case of the seed that is possessed of life, the forces of nature are resisted, and this resistance becomes the source of living action, the very power of growth. The changes which the seed undergoes in germinating under the influence of those forces, duly controlled, form the basis of all the subsequent developments. And like these two seeds are dead and living souls. If the soul is dead it yields helplessly to the corruption that is in the world through lust; if the soul is living, it resists these disintegrating forces of the world, and uses them to increase its spiritual life and to build up its spiritual structure. It is only, therefore, of those who have spiritual life in themselves that it can be said, that though "cast down they are not destroyed." To such, justification is a living doctrine—not merely part of a formal creed, nor an intellectual abstraction. Their faith is alive, and can prove its vitality by its energy. And the force of this life is remarkable. This faith can overcome the world. It can rise superior to all its temptations and trials. The force of natural life even in the lowest forms is extraordinary. The soft cellular mushroom has been known to lift up heavy masses of pavement by its expansion

beneath them ; the tender root of a tree insinuating itself in a crevice of the rock splits it up by its growth. And if life in its feeblest form can do such wonderful things, what may not be expected from spiritual and eternal life? The life that is in Christ Jesus by mere formality and profession, is like a dead branch that is merely mechanically united to the tree, and which, destitute of the tree's vital sap and force, yields inevitably to the forces of nature, decays, and drops off into dust and ashes. But the life that is in Him by faith is like a living branch that becomes partaker of the whole force of the tree, and grows with its growth, and flourishes with its strength and beauty. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." It grows strong by opposition ; it flourishes in the most adverse circumstances ; it uses all the conditions of life for its maintenance ; it makes even its hindrances to advance its life-work. 1. What casts us down most of all is the burden of sin. In the unrenewed heart this burden is unfelt. We are unconscious of the enormous pressure of the atmosphere upon us, because our bodies are pervaded with air which counterbalances the superincumbent air. But were the air within us removed, the pressure of the air without would crush us. And so, being sinful ourselves, we are unconscious of the weight of sin. But when the love of sin is taken away, then sin becomes a burden which is too heavy for us. We feel ourselves like Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress," with his huge bundle upon his back. This pressure of sin has drawn tears from eyes which would have looked unmoved upon the martyrs' fires. Sin is indeed the great adversity, the only thing that is truly hostile to us ; and yet, in contending with it, we can use it as a fulcrum to remove the obstacles that lie in the soul's upward path. But though this great adversity be taken away by faith in Christ, other evils are not taken away, for that would be to take away what determines the strength and shape of the spiritual life : that would leave it a weak and powerless thing. The Christian is not exempt from ordinary troubles. 2. In the world he has tribulation ; and many are the afflictions of the righteous. In addition to the ordinary trials of all men, he has troubles of his own that are peculiar to the spiritual life. And these are felt most in proportion to the strength and vigour of the spiritual life ; only that in his case what crushes others proves a means of growth, calls forth, exercises, and educates all the powers of his soul, and brings down the powers of the world to come to shape his character and conduct. Sometimes, indeed, the weight is too much. There are many of God's people who are so cast down by their circumstances that they seem almost destroyed. They are like a tuft of grass growing under a stone. The stone does not destroy the grass, nor prevent it from growing, for the vital force is stronger than the mechanical ; but it dwarfs and distorts it ; it blanches its colour, and it deforms its shape. Thus many lives are prevented from being what they might otherwise have been by the crushing circumstances of life. 3. Poverty often lies like a stone upon them. The sordid care for things that perish in the using seems to dwarf the immortal nature to the level of these things—seems to make the soaring spirit a part of the dull material world. The toil that is needed to support the body leaves little time or inclination for the cultivation of the soul. Though poor in itself it can make many rich. It is when the plant is poorest in material, and most limited in force, that it produces the blossom and the fruit by which the world is adorned with beauty and the generations of living creatures are fed. And so the poverty of the Christian may blossom and fruit for others. How often has this been the case in the history of the world ! Few of the world's greatest benefactors have had worldly advantages. The inventions and discoveries that have been of the greatest use to society have been made by persons who had little wealth. It is an axiom in nature that motion takes the direction of least resistance. Poverty, therefore, must be eminently helpful to the growth of the soul, inasmuch as it removes many of the hindrances which make it hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. If the aspiration of the soul is heavenward, then a poor man encounters less opposition in that aspiration from his circumstances than one who is rich and increased with goods. He is relieved of that weight of worldliness—of those cares and anxieties which oppress the soul and give it an earthward tendency. 4. Sorrow is the commonest of all pressures that cast down the soul. This experience belongs to no class or condition of life exclusively. It is the great mystery of Providence that there should be such a prodigality of pain—how God can permit such forms of anguish. But the greatness of our sorrow is owing to the greatness of our nature. The highest mountains cast the largest shadows ; and so the dark, wide shadows of human experience witness to the original loftiness of our being. Sorrow gives a tragic touch to the meanest personality. God has ordered

that sorrow should be the most powerful factor in the education of our race. In the histories of the patriarchs and saints we see how suffering, deep and long-continued, ministered to a noble development. We see the baser earthy element in them crystallised into the purity and transparency of heaven through the fires of pain and sorrow. Many of the weights that press down the Christian life are visible and palpable. But as the palm-tree is pressed on every side by the viewless air, as it is exposed to the resistance of forces which the eye cannot see nor the hand feel, so the heaviest weights which drag down the Christian life are often invisible. Its crosses cannot be displayed. Many of its troubles are of a spiritual nature. It is cast down, not by circumstances, but by the state of the soul. And these spiritual sorrows are the evidences of the reality of the work of grace; for where there is the principle of life there must be the changes of life. The form of godliness is a dead, invariable thing; whereas the power of godliness has its winter, its summer, and its autumn states. Sorrow arises in the case of most believers from inability to realise the ideal, to reach the mark of attainment they have set themselves. They have sorrow because of the remembrance of past sins and shortcomings. They have sorrow because of the sins of the world. All this is the godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto life. In this winter state the spiritual life is collecting and concentrating itself for renewed effort when the spring of revival is come. It waits upon the Lord, and so renews its strength. No life can grow or support itself in the void by its spontaneous buoyancy. All life upholds itself in the air by continuous effort. The humblest life is a vortex of unceasing forces. Much more is this the case in regard to the highest life of the soul, the life that is breathed into us by God's Spirit and formed by faith in Christ Jesus. It has ever to do an uphill work. It has to grow against the gravitation of sin. But this resistance is meant to bring out all that is best in us, to stimulate our most strenuous exertions, to cultivate our patience, to educate our faith and hope, to mould us after the Divine pattern. It is the weight of the architrave upon the pillar that gives it stability and endurance; and it is the fightings without and the fears within that give strength to the character and perseverance to the life. What a beauty and grace does the spiritual life take from the pressure of the light afflictions that are but for a moment and that work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! The thorny sorrow that springs from the grave of some dead love or hope forms the richest adornment of life. Not only is the outward form of the Christian life moulded into shapes of moral beauty—into whatsoever things are pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report—but its inner substance is also made more lovely by the pressure of external shocks and internal sufferings. It is not the tree that grows in a rich soil and in a sheltered situation that produces the richly grained wood which is selected to adorn our finest furniture; but the tree that is exposed in its bleak, shelterless situation to every storm of heaven. The wild forces that beat upon it, and which it successfully overcomes, develop in it the beautiful veins and markings which are so highly prized by man. And so it is not when growing up in luxurious ease and comfort that we produce the gifts and graces which enrich and ennoble the Christian life. The natures that have the richest variety and the greatest interest are ever those which have grown under pressure of suffering, and by a vital faith have overcome the world. The Apostle Paul is an illustrious example of the law in question. His growth in grace was indeed under pressure of the most trying outward circumstances, and yet what a marvellous fulness and variety of form did it display! No man was more many-sided in his Christian attainments. We are not at the mercy of the thousand contingencies of life. The troubles that come to us are not accidents. Divine wisdom is shaping all our ends. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *The frailty of the instruments and the excess of the power:*—I. CRUSHED, but not panned in a corner. The idea is that of being jostled in a crowd (Mark iii. 9). They are hard pressed for space, but not driven into hopeless straits. II. IN DIFFICULTIES as to the ways and means of carrying on their ministry effectually, but not reduced to utter helplessness. III. PERSECUTED, but not left in the enemies' hands—not given over to the persecutors. IV. THROWN TO THE GROUND, but not destroyed. The notion is the pursuit of a fugitive in war, who, when overtaken and thrown down, is usually slain. Here was the overthrow, but, by God's grace, not the slaughter. (*Archdeacon Evans.*) *The broken life:*—The mystery of evil has many aspects. There is one that is contained in that sad word "waste." The germs of life that wither before they are sprung up, the lives often so full of power and promise that we see cut off in their prime, the gifted minds that are sunk in unconsciousness or madness. But there is another consideration that is

still more practical, and that comes home to all men individually. How much that was born with each one of us must pass unused and undeveloped into the grave! The profession on which a young man has set his heart may be really the one best suited to him, and if he might enter on the preparation for it with his enthusiasm, his success might be morally certain, and the natural growth of character assured. But other wills have to be consulted beside his own; there are money difficulties which are thought to be insurmountable, or there is a fear of some loss of caste, or of some problematical moral consequences which are apprehended. And so the first flush of hope and resolution is checked by an untimely frost, and the leading sapling is nipped. Will the tree grow straight afterwards? That is the question. Or the life of the affections has been in some way warped or stunted. Some, early disappointment, the discovery of some unknown defect for which no one living is to blame, some hardly avoidable error, makes us conscious of failure and limitation here, where the longing for the infinite is most insatiable. From this point onwards what is the life to be? These are marked instances of what we all find out at some point in our course—that feeling and energy have to be adapted to circumstance; that while desires and aims may be boundless, opportunity and time and human power are limited. And it is here that the difference becomes apparent between the true and false resolution and enthusiasm. We have attempted the impossible. The possible remains. But does there remain in us the strength and will to do it? Disappointment will have a weakening effect for a while, but it will only be for a while if we have any strength in us. The effect is various. The more speculative and dreamy temper discovers that the world is out of joint, and begins spinning theories of a new and regenerate condition of society, in which every nature shall grow without painful effort into the fulness of its ideal form. The more practical lose sight of their ideal altogether, and fall into a narrow, dull routine. The bolder nature becomes cynically embittered, the softer loses heart and subsides in caution and timidity. These are the subterfuges of weakness, and we must arise and shake ourselves from these if we would be spiritually healthy and strong. Suppose, then, the discovery to have been made, that of many plans only the one that seemed the least interesting can be pursued; that of many powers of which we have been conscious, only some of the more ordinary can find their natural fulfilment; that of all to which our hearts once clung, all but some poor fragment has been taken out of reach. Imagine the great soldier, struck down in middle life and doomed to drag out the rest of his time in feebleness and inaction. What then remains for us? If we are true to ourselves, perhaps the most fruitful portion of our lives. It is true that the desire granted is a tree of life, that there are some kinds of growth which can only come through the intensity or the continuance of joy. But it is also true that still deeper sources of life and growth are opened in times of sorrow and gloom for those who have recourse to them aright. Let us return to Him who, by the finger of His providence, has shown us the limits of our appointed way. Let us devote ourselves anew to do and suffer according to His will, and we shall find springing by the strait and narrow road many an unlooked-for blessing. If love and truth, humility and deep contentment be there, if the finite being is rooted in the infinite, there will be enlargement even in the least hopeful lot. The gifts that, with concurrent circumstances, might have adorned the literature of a nation, or made a lasting name in painting, or music, or some other path of art, may be concentrated on the training of one or two children, so laying up a store of usefulness for the coming time. The same energy which in some lives is seen breaking forth victoriously in all the brilliance of success has wrought not less heroically in others, underground, as it were, unsuspected and unseen except by very few, in a struggle with adverse fortune or adverse health. Viewed “under the form of eternity,” the one life is no less complete and no less successful than the other. Both pass into the hidden world with equal gain. If there be the fixed determination to do what the hand findeth to do, even though it may seem poor and mean, to do it trusting in the eternal strength and wisdom of Him who ordereth all things according to the good pleasure of His will, we need not fear that any experience, any aspiration, any love, any effort of our past lives will be utterly lost to us. To act in the present is not necessarily to break with the past. We learn to take up mangled matters at the best. We perhaps find out a way of turning to account even the accidents of life, and weaving them into the fabric of our design. Nor is experience, whether of success or failure, ever profitable for ourselves alone. The narrowest and most deserted life need not be lived wholly in isolation. If failure and sorrow have left the heart still fresh and sweet, as it will be if it have clung to a Divine support,

then, wherever there are human beings, a way will be found of pouring the oil of consolation and the wine of gladness into other lives. There is so much that wants doing in the world, so few hitherto who have been roused to do even what they can. It is terrible to think that we may miss doing the little that is laid to our hands. Let us not waste time in vain regrets, or in vague dreams of what experience has clearly shown to be impossible, but let us gather up the fragments that remain. Though sometimes we may be cast down, let us know that we are not destroyed. (*Prof. Lewis Campbell.*) *Not destroyed*:—Many kinds of seeds are gifted with powers not merely of retaining life under the ordinary circumstances of nature, but of resisting the most terrible attacks. When wine has been made from raisins, and the refuse has been scattered over the fields as manure, it has been observed that the grape-seeds have vegetated and produced young vines, and this notwithstanding the boiling and fermentation they have had to endure. The seeds of elder-berries have been observed to grow after similar trials. Many experiments have been made to ascertain exactly what amount of unnatural heat seeds can bear without being destroyed. It considerably exceeds that which plants can bear; and the same is the case with extreme cold. (*Scientific Illustrations and Symbols.*)

Vers. 10–12. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.—*Bearing about the dying of Christ*:—The first and literal meaning of these words is that Paul and his friends were in daily peril of such a death as Christ's was, and that their trials left sorrowful trace upon form and feature. It is not so that we are called to be "conformable to the death" of our Redeemer. The days of martyrdom are gone. There are those who think to exemplify the text by bearing about with them the material representation of the Redeemer's death—the crucifix. Ah! you may do that, and yet be hundreds of miles away from any compliance with the spirit of the text. Our Lord requires of us the devotion of the heart; it is spiritually that we are to bear about our Saviour's dying. **I. WE MAY BEAR ABOUT THE MEMORY OF IT.** 1. Nothing can be more plain than that we ought never to forget our Redeemer's death. When some one very near to you died, even after the first shock was past, and you could once more with some measure of calmness set yourself to your common duties again, did you not still feel, in the greater sympathy with the sorrows of others, in the quieter mood, that you had not quite got over your trial, that you were still bearing about with you the dying of the dear one that was gone? 2. The remembrance of our Lord's death should influence all our views and doings. The kind mother who wore out her life in toiling for her child might well think that the child might sometimes come and stand by her grave, and remember her living kindness and her dying words when she was far away. And oh! when we think what our Saviour Christ has done for us by His dying—when we think that every hope, every blessing, was won for us by that great sacrifice—surely we might well determine that we never shall live as if that death had never been! You hear people say—truly enough, perhaps—that this world has never been the same to them since such a loved one died—that their whole life has been changed since then. It is sad to see a Christian living in such a fashion as to show plainly that he has quite forgot how his Redeemer died! (1) When we think of sin, let us see it in the light of Christ's death, and hate it because it nailed Him to the tree. (2) Or is it suffering and sorrow that come to us, and are we ready to repine and to rebel? Then let us call to mind the dying of our Redeemer, and it will not seem so hard that the servant should fare no better than the Master. (3) Or are we pressed with the sense of our sinfulness and the fear of God's wrath for sin? Then let us remember how Jesus died for us, the just for the unjust—how His blood can take all sin away. **II. WE MAY SHOW IN OUR DAILY LIFE ITS TRANSFORMING POWER.** Our whole life, changed and affected in its every deed by the fact that Christ died, may be a standing testimony that there is a real power to affect the character in the death of the Saviour; and thus we may, in a very true and solemn sense, be always bearing about with us His death by bearing about with us a soul which is what it is mainly because He died. 1. When in the view of the Cross we see how bitterly and mysteriously evil and ruinous sin is, surely the practical lesson is plain that we should resolutely tread it down, and earnestly seek for deliverance from the curse of that fearful thing which brought such unutterable agony upon our Redeemer, and constantly pray for that blessed Spirit who will breathe new life into every good resolution, and vivify into sunlight clearness every sound and true belief. 2. When sorrow and suffering come, think of them as in the presence of the Redeemer's death, and you will learn the lesson of practical resignation. 3.

And in days of fear and anxiety, when you do not know how it will go with you, look to Jesus on the Cross, and learn the lesson of practical confidence in God's disposing love and wisdom. 4. And, to sum up all, let us daily bear about His dying by dying to sin and living to holiness. That is the grand conformity which is open to all of us—that is the fashion in which we may be "crucified with Christ." Conclusion: "Always." Yes, always bear it; never lay that burden down. Always bear it; not in sourness—not in that hard, severe type of religion which we may see in some mistaken and narrow-hearted believers. Bear it in humility, kindness, charity, hopefulness, and cheerfulness. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *The Christian's fellowship in the death of Christ*:—How do we bear about daily the dying of the Lord Jesus? I. BY CHERISHING FAITH IN A CRUCIFIED SAVIOUR. 1. The death of Christ is—(1) The most wonderful of all facts, and we should not be warranted to believe it unless it were authenticated to us by Divine testimony. (2) The most interesting. It is the foundation of all that is dear to man. It is the most interesting of all the facts that are recorded, not only in human narrative, but in the Book of God and in the annals of the universe. (3) The most influential. It spreads itself through the whole revelation and economy of God, and pervades the moral government of the Most High. It is in the Book of God the first, if not in point of order, yet of importance. "I delivered to you, *first of all*, how that Christ died for our sins," &c. 2. To cherish faith in this fact, then, is the first duty of man, and by so doing we become partakers of the sufferings of Christ. II. BY A CONTINUED REMEMBRANCE OF THIS GREAT EVENT. That which we believe most assuredly, in which we feel the deepest interest, and to which we give the highest place, will be best remembered by us; and the death of Christ, possessing all those requisites, with a good man will impress itself deeply on his mind. To help us in this great exercise is the most obvious design of the Lord's Supper. If we forget Jesus who died for us, whom and what shall we rationally and religiously remember? III. BY A PROGRESSIVE IMPROVEMENT OF THIS GREAT EVENT. The decease of our Lord is set forth in the Word of God and in the Lord's Supper, not merely for contemplation, or for curious inquiry, but for deep meditation and practical improvement. Now, a good man is anxious to improve this death for all the purposes for which it was appointed of God and endured by Christ. Others may gaze upon the Cross; he glories in it. Others may cast a passing glance upon the Divine Sufferer; he hangs upon the Cross—he lives by it. IV. BY IMBIBING MORE AND MORE OF HIS SPIRIT. And what was this spirit? It was a spirit—1. Of holy love. "He loved us with an everlasting love," and thence "gave Himself for us." 2. Of holy submission to the Divine appointment. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O My God"; and He well knew all that that involved. 3. Of determined decision in His great work. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" 4. Of holy purity. He was the Lamb of God, "without blemish and without spot." 5. Of invincible faith. "My God, My God!" He cried, claiming an interest in Him when the waters overwhelmed His soul. 6. Of entire resignation to God amid the agonies of death and the prospect of dying. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Now, a good man bears about the dying of the Lord Jesus by seeking to drink continually into Christ's spirit, and by exemplifying it more and more. V. BY A PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THAT GREAT DECEASE, OF ITS CHARACTER AND POWER. Although it was not the only, or even the main, end of His coming in the flesh to exhibit a sublime example of perfect morality, yet doubtless He came to present to us a pattern of all goodness and godliness. Hence we are told that He hath "set us an example that we should follow His steps." VI. BY A FREQUENT SOLEMN COMMEMORATION OF HIM. (*J. Mitchell, D.D.*) **That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.**—*The manifestation of the life of Christ*:—1. There is something beautifully emphatic in the idea that it is the life of Jesus that is manifested in the Christian. Century after century hath rolled away, and He who won to Himself, by agony and death, the lordship of this lower creation hath not visibly interfered with the administration of its concerns. The time, indeed, will come when sensible proof shall be given, and every eye shall gaze on the Son of Man seated on the clouds and summoning to judgment. But we are free to own that, since under the present dispensation there are no visible exhibitions of the kingship of Christ, it is not easy, if the authority of Scripture be questioned, to bring forward satisfactory proof that Jesus is alive. 2. Yet we are not ready to admit the total absence of direct, positive, practical witness. We thus bring the statement of our text, that there is such a thing as the manifestation of the life of the Redeemer. It was possible enough that the malice of persecutors might wear

down to the wreck the body of the apostle; but there were such continued miracles in his being sustained in the battle with principalities and powers that, if challenged to prove that his Lord was alive, he could point to the shattered tabernacle, and answer triumphantly, the life also of Jesus, as well as the death, was made manifest in that his body. 3. The doctrine of Christ's living for us is every whit as closely bound up with our salvation as that of His having died for us. The resurrection was God's attestation to the worth of the atonement. I. THE PERSECUTIONS WHICH THE APOSTLES UNDERWENT, AS WELL AS THE PROCLAMATIONS WHICH THEY UTTERED, WENT TO THE PROVING THAT JESUS WAS ALIVE. 1. The rulers said the body was stolen; the apostles said the body was quickened. Who sees not that, by persecuting the apostles in place of proving them liars, the rulers themselves bore witness to the fact that Jesus was alive? They had no evidence to produce of the truth of their own statement, and they set themselves therefore to get rid by force of the counter-statement. Power was substituted for proof, cruelty for argument. We therefore contend that no stronger attestation could have been given to the fact of Christ's life than the persecutions to which the apostles were subjected for maintaining that fact. 2. We may yet further argue that by submitting to persecutions the apostles showed their own belief that Jesus was alive. There is a limit which enthusiasm cannot pass. Had not the apostles believed Christ alive they would not have joyfully exposed themselves to peril and death. II. THE GRAND MANIFESTATION OF THE LIFE OF JESUS LIES IN THE SUPPORTS AND CONSOLATIONS VOUCHSAFED TO THE PERSECUTED. 1. When the malice of the ungodly was allowed to do its worst, there was administered so much of supernatural assistance that all but the reprobate must have seen that the power of the Lord was sustaining the martyrs. They went out of the world with gladness in the eye and with triumph on the lip, confident that their Master lived to welcome them, and therefore able to cry out with Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 2. Now, we maintain that, whenever God directly interposes to preserve an individual while publishing a doctrine, God virtually gives testimony to the truth of that doctrine. If the published doctrine were the reverse of truth He would never mark the publisher with His approval; and thus we have a decisive and vivid manifestation of the life of Christ in the sufferings of the apostles. 3. Whilst Christ sojourned on earth He told His disciples that persecution would be their lot, but also that He would be alive to act as their protector. When, therefore, all occurred as Christ had predicted, when the supports were administered which He had pointed out as the result of His life, what can be fairer than maintaining that the supports were a proof of the life? III. WE WOULD NOT HAVE YOU THINK THAT THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LIFE OF THE REDEEMER WAS CONFINED TO THE APOSTLES. Take any one who now is walking by faith, and not by sight. He will tell you that his whole conduct is ordered on the supposition that he has a Saviour ever living to intercede in his behalf. He will tell you, further, that never has he found the supposition falsified by experience. He goes to Christ sorrowful, *believing* that He lives; he comes away comforted, and thus *proves* that He lives. He carries his burdens to Christ, *supposing* Him alive; he finds them taken away, and thus *demonstrates* Him alive. All, in short, that is promised as the result of Christ's life comes into his possession, and is, therefore, an evidence of Christ's life. If I am a believer, I look to Christ as living for me; I go and pray to Christ as living for me; and, if I am never disappointed in my reference to Christ as living for me, is there no strong testimony in my own experience that Jesus lives? In short, if the Christian live only by faith in the living Saviour, his life must be the manifestation of the life of the Saviour. If Christ be not alive, how comes it that they who act upon the supposition that He is alive find the supposition perpetually verified and in no instance falsified—verified by the assistance vouchsafed, by the promises fulfilled, by the consolations enjoyed in these mortal bodies, which are the theatres of truceless warfare with a corrupt nature and apostate spirits? Conclusion: What we wish for you is that you might manifest the life of the Redeemer—manifest it in the vigour with which you resist the devil, break loose from the world, and set yourself to the culture of holiness. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 13. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken.—*Faith the mainspring of action*:—I. First, A MAN MUST HAVE FAITH BEFORE HE CAN HOPE TO SPEAK SUCCESSFULLY. Believing deeply must go before speaking heartily. Take it with regard to any department of human science; suppose a man did not believe in the principles of astronomy or of geology, and yet pretended to teach these sciences, his heartlessness would

quickly make his teaching useless. For suppose a man not to have this faith, how often will his judgment be at fault; how often will his spirit fail in the day of adversity; how often will his zeal expend itself in worthless objects. II. THAT IN PROPORTION TO OUR FAITH WILL BE THE ENERGY OF OUR SPEECH. Peter and John believed, when they stood calm and self-reliant before the Sanhedrim. Whitfield and Wesley believed when they roused the religious convictions, and awakened the dormant consciences of this country in the last century. III. WHEN A MAN BELIEVES, HE IS BOUND TO SPEAK. It is a heaven-prescribed duty; his soul-enshrined obligation. The whole problem of human progress hinges upon this obligation. It is "a day of good tidings; and we do not well if we hold our peace." (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Faith and its utterances*:—We have here a description of a true prophet. A mere official speaks because he is expected to say something: a true prophet speaks because he has something to say.

I. I BELIEVED. These words refer—1. To the truths that God teaches. (1) God's truths are all vital truths. The subject on which they treat is life. Clearly to see truth, and to firmly grasp it, is the life of reason. To choose the right, to do it, and to rejoice in it, is the life of the conscience. To have passions and feelings which invigorate, comfort, and ennoble is the life of the soul. Man is related to a Being who can give to him the light of reason, peace of conscience, holy and joyful emotions, and the favour of that great Being is life. His displeasure is death. Such is the momentous subject on which God's truth speaks. (2) And as the subject, such also is the matter of God's truth. It consists of directions how to attain life, and how to escape death. Under any circumstances the knowledge of these directions would be of first importance. Some parts of the world are visited with the plague. Now suppose that a remedy were revealed, would it not be a great truth, and would we not be eager to proclaim it far and wide? But how incomparably greater is that truth which is God's salvation unto the uttermost ends of the earth!

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD TEACHES THESE TRUTHS. The truth as it is taught by God exists in man. 1. As a clear apprehension. There is a great difference between clearly seeing a truth, and having only a general and confused notion of it. When you look at a landscape in a fog you can form no distinct conception of its characteristics. Truth, under similar circumstances, can produce no impression on the soul. Its beauty, importance, value are all lost upon him who has but a confused conception of it. Many think they have looked upon the Cross, but can see no glory in it. They have not really seen it. They are like the man who sees a landscape in a fog. It is owing to this that a general view of the Cross is often nothing more than a misconception; while, on the other hand, a true insight into the Cross stirs up the soul from its lowest depths. It is a heart-penetrating, soul-transforming vision; it leads the sinner to turn his back for ever on the world, and to worship the crucified One. 2. As an irresistible conviction. You believe in your own consciousness; you ask for no arguments to prove that your own consciousness is not always deceiving you. You believe in an external world; you ask for no arguments to prove that an external world is not a mere optical delusion. A child has faith in its nurse; it believes that its nurse will feed and love it and not hurt or destroy it. So he who is taught of God would be as able to disbelieve his own consciousness as to disbelieve that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. III. THEREFORE HAVE I SPOKEN. It is natural for the tongue to express what the soul knows and the heart feels; but there are two reasons in relation to gospel truth which turn, what in other cases is but natural, into a moral necessity. 1. Divine truth is of universal concernment. When "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" the news was important alike to every serpent-bitten Israelite; so this "faithful saying is worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The antidote to sin's poison should be made known wherever that poison rages. 2. The faith which the Church has received is one which peculiarly prompts the utterance of the tongue. (*W. Allott.*) *Believing speech the evangelising organ of Christianity*:—I. IN CONTRADISTINCTION TO BELIEVING LITERATURE. Literature is one of the mightiest of human institutions, and of all literature that produced by believers on Christian subjects is incomparably the most valuable. But the best of these is destitute of the power which goes with believing speech. The latter has the presence of the author. The presence of a man before his brother is itself a power. Truth through the pen is truth in lunar ray. However clear, it is cold. Under its influence landscapes will wither and rivers freeze. Truth in the living voice, is a sunbeam penetrating the cold regions of death, and

touching all into life. Hence Christ, who knows human nature and how best to influence it, committed the propagation of His gospel to the living voice. He commanded His disciples to go everywhere and preach the gospel. II. IN CONTRA-DISTINCTION TO PROFESSIONAL TALK. Millions are preached to every Sunday who are never effectively influenced by the truth. Why? There is the living voice, but that voice is not the organ of the believing soul. 1. Evident honesty. Few hearers can fail to detect the difference between the utterance of conviction and that of a mere professional talker. 2. Living manhood. The man who speaks those things which have never become convictions with him stands before his audience only as a piece of mechanism. The mechanism may be symmetrical in form, graceful in movement; still it is mechanism, not manhood. But he who speaks his convictions rings out his manhood in his words. 3. Irrepressible influence. The man who preaches without faith does his work more or less as a task. Two things give this irrepressibility. (1) The relation of the subjects believed to his social affections. The subjects of Christianity are essential to the salvation of the race, and his philanthropy urges him to make them known. (2) The relation of these subjects to his religious sympathies. They have to do with the glory of God, whom he loves supremely, and hence his piety urges him to proclaim them. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Christian missions the necessary result of Christian faith*:—The spirit of faith has in all ages been the power under whose inspiration the conflict against evil has been maintained and the victories of truth and righteousness won. Without faith the position of the apostles would have been discouraging indeed. Here, in this world of sight and mere reason, there was everything to depress. There, in the faithful Word of their unchanging God, in the presence of their living Lord, in the assurance of those mighty spiritual influences which were to crown their work with success, was everything to stimulate and strengthen. They *saw* that the whole world was moved against them; they *believed* that they worked for God, and that God worked for them. Whether other men understand it or not, our principle remains the same—"We believe, and therefore speak." I. FAITH AS THE CONSTRAINING PRINCIPLE OF OUR WORK. Everywhere faith and speech ought to be united. The man who speaks what he does not believe is a hypocrite. The man who believes what he will not speak is a coward. It is not only that we, under the impulse of chivalrous devotion to the cause we have espoused and the leader whom we follow, choose to speak, but that we are under a power which renders it impossible for us to keep silence. The love of Christ constrains us that we must speak and work for Him. 1. Faith inspires a sentiment of loyalty to the truth which we believe. The feeling is not so rare surely that its existence in Christian men should be regarded as strange and inexplicable. The hatred of mere show and tinsel, the desire to be true and genuine, have given a character to our art in that realism which is one of its most prominent features. The noblest poetry of the times has been inspired by a similar sentiment. This power of truth has made itself felt in the world of politics, overthrowing many a time-honoured abuse, compelling every institution, however venerable, to vindicate its right to exist by giving the proof of its harmony with the eternal laws of right and the best interests of society. Above all is it manifest in the realm of scientific inquiry, where even the simplest principle has to verify itself by unquestionable evidence. In this hungering after truth we must sympathise. What we ask, however, is that these searchers after truth recognise the reasonableness of the homage to truth which is rendered in the missionary enterprise. Marvel if you will at the greatness of our faith, but admit that with our faith any other line of conduct would be treason to that truth for which you as well as we profess reverence. We have ourselves tasted and handled of the good Word of Life. To us the gospel is the true light, but should we refuse it to the world we create a doubt whether we regard it as a light from heaven at all, and whether there may not be a lurking suspicion in our own minds that it may be, as its enemies allege, an illusion of human fancy or a human superstition. 2. Faith strengthens our sense of obligation by teaching us that the gospel is not only truth but that it is the truth. The exclusiveness of the gospel is one of its most marked characteristics. It does not point to one Saviour among many, but distinctly tells us that there is but one name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved. That such a provision would have been made if man could have been saved independently of it is a supposition which cannot be entertained by any one who has marked the wondrous economy of all the Divine procedure. All analogy teaches us that if man could have achieved salvation as easily as he has discovered

scientific truth God would certainly have left him to do the one as well as the other. That God has sent His only-begotten Son into the world to redeem the world is the proof that without Him there could have been no redemption. But how tremendously weighty are the obligations which the belief that this is the one message of the Father's love to His rebellious children and that we are entrusted with the delivery of that message imposes. Ask us why we should take so much trouble to disturb the faith of peoples who are quite satisfied with their old creeds—the question should rather be how it is possible for us, holding such a faith, to be content with the feeble attempts which the Church is making to instruct the millions who are alienated from God by reason of the darkness that is in them.

3. Faith calls into action a still mightier principle—loyalty to our Lord. The power of a creed, a sentiment, a principle, is weak compared with that of devotion to a person. And, while we love Him, we must share His passion for saving souls. There can scarcely be a surer proof of the want of accord between our heart and that of the Master than apathy in relation to the spread of His kingdom in the world.

II. FAITH AS GIVING US OUR ASSURANCE OF SUCCESS. 1. Christian men cannot be astonished at the utterly hopeless aspect which their enterprise wears in the eyes of those who judge it on the principles of mere reason. The purest form of your religion is not that which has been able to command the largest amount of support. If reason holds so little sway and superstition has such powerful attractions, even among the peoples who have come under the teaching of Christianity, what are we to anticipate from those who hear its doctrines for the first time? To such reasonings we have nothing to answer. If we are to look only to the "things which are seen," we must confess that our enterprise is a wild extravagance. A few missionaries dwelling in an humble home in one of those marvellous cities of the Eastern world, gathering a few children into their schools, or a miserable fraction, at best, of the whole population into their chapels, to hear the Word they have to preach, and hoping in this way to overthrow an ancient religion and convert an idolatrous people, present a spectacle which, to any eye but that of faith, has something of the ludicrous belonging to it. If we are to judge by appearances alone, no conflict could seem so unequal, no issue so certain. It is because we believe that there are other forces which we do not see, but which are mightier than all the power that can be arrayed against them, that we look forward with assured confidence to the result. It is in these things that are unseen, the force of truth, the armour of righteousness, the omnipotence of the Spirit of God, the things that cannot be shaken, but are eternal, that we trust. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." 2. The real power of these unseen forces, which men are prone to value so lightly, but which ever and anon vindicate their majesty in such wondrous ways, is not now to be learned for the first time, and the absurdity which some discover in our expectations disappears when we attempt to cast the horoscope of the future by the help of the history of the past. Who would have dared to prophesy at the time when the words of our text were written that when everything else belonging to that famed city of Corinth had passed away, when her altars and her gods had sunk together in the dust, that the one thing which would live and would carry the fame of Corinth into regions where otherwise her name would never have been heard, would be the gospel taught by that Jewish stranger. What happened in those first days has happened again and again since. 3. If ever there was an age which ought to distrust the boastful confidence which men are wont to express in mere material strength it is the present. It has not to search in the records of the past, for it has had under its own eyes evidence which ought to have convinced the most sceptical that there is truth and righteousness a power mightier than the strength of armies, than the overwhelming force of public opinion, than the prestige of rank and fashion, than the union of all the forces which the world can employ on behalf of terror. If it has not learned that there are mighty forces battling on the side of truth and righteousness, we know not what signs and miracles would remove its ignorance or shake its obstinate unbelief. To us at least they are as new calls to put our trust in God, not neglecting the employment of all the means which He may place in our power. The victory may be declared in a very unexpected way and at a time most unexpected. Some succession of events will disclose the secret weakness of those proud systems whose outward show of strength and glory has deceived the world as to their true character. Institutions which looked as strong have fallen, though wise men said they could not, and proud men said they should not fall, though their assailants were as hopeless as their friends were confident,

though everything was for them except only the power of truth. 4. This, then, is our faith, and in that faith we speak and act. But let us beware lest our own conduct falsify our professions and inflict on our cause an injury more serious than any which it could receive from its enemies. The assertion of our faith has value and efficiency only so far as it can point to practical results. Mere evanescent excitement not only works no good, but helps to deceive our hearts. It is a miserable thing indeed if we have to throw ourselves back upon the triumphs of the past to find some consolation amid signs of weakness in the present. Where is its power now? What it once had it can have again. There is no motive which it has ever called into play that does not retain all its ancient force, there is no promise on which it rests that does not remain firm and unchanging, there is no force which it has employed in the past that is not equally at its command to-day. We profess to have the same faith which inspired the heroes of our Christian chivalry in the days that are past, and if it does not work out a heroism as noble in us it is because our souls have not been submitted to its power. 5. Lord, increase our faith. Then we shall cherish a broader and deeper sympathy with humanity. Then shall we hear the voice of our King, bidding us go forth in His name and by His strength to conquer all falsehood, all sin, all tyranny, all priestcraft. Then will our consecration be more perfect, and our zeal will put forth an energy and liberality whose large-hearted and generous deeds shall put to shame the niggard offerings of the present. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*)

Vers. 14, 15. **Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also.**—*Soul-inspiring facts*:—I. THAT CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD. "Knowing," &c. No fact in history is more firmly established. II. THAT THE GENUINE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST WILL ALSO BE RAISED. "Shall raise us up also," &c. III. THAT ALL THINGS ARE FOR THE GOOD OF THE GOOD. "All things are for your sakes" (Rom. viii. 28; 1 Cor. 21-23). IV. THAT ALL THINGS IN LIFE SHOULD RESULT IN THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD. "That the abundant grace," &c. It is only in worship that the soul can find the free and harmonious development of all its spiritual powers. Worship is heaven. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 16-18. **For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.**—*Dual manhood*:—I. THERE IS A DUALITY IN CHRISTIAN MANHOOD. The apostle was not only a great theologian, but also a great philosopher. He here speaks of an "outward" and an "inward" man, and speaks of them as distinct, though in this world they are wedded together. This outer man is part of us—is ours, but not us. I feel this body is mine, but it is not me. In the outward man there dwells an inward man, invisible to the eyes of sense; it loves, believes, hopes, &c., and accomplishes many acts which the outer man cannot do. Innumerable troubles, like an attacking army, were assailing Paul's "outward man," and at any moment it might be destroyed; but his "inward man" was calm and safe—as within the walls of a castle, and grew stronger and braver as the battle waxed hotter. II. THE GROWTH OR DECAY OF THIS DUAL MANHOOD IS NOT NECESSARILY CO-ORDINATE. A man may grow outwardly, and his possessions may enlarge, while his mental and moral powers may dwindle away, and *vice-versâ*. The outward man, or casket, may decay, while the inward man, or jewel, is being polished day by day, and fitted for the Redeemer's crown. III. THESE FACTS PRESENT BLESSED HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE GOOD. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The perishing and the renewed man*:—I. GOD HAS SET SOME TYPES OF THIS GREAT TRUTH OF THE TEXT IN OBJECTS THAT WE SEE. 1. There is a fruit tree. Wood, bark, leaves, make up its visible figure. Every year it changes a little for the better or the worse, and every season gives some sign that it is growing old. Does everything about the tree, then, at last, perish? No. Underneath this visible form and colour there is a mysterious power at work. This does not grow old or decay. When this particular tree has done its whole work, that secret element of life is all hidden away in some seeds that survive. 2. You pass a cornfield. Last April that ground was bare and brown. Some weeks hence and the ground will be as bare and brown as when the last snow melted from it. Yet in the granary is stored up the life of the harvest. The outward part returns to the earth as it was; the inward part is renewed, and lives on. 3. Take machinery. Those levers, wheels, rollers, blades, valves, are continually wearing out. But there is a subtle power of nature operating through it which never wears out. The fruit of our industry often, at least, remains a lasting benefit. 4. In almost all our employments there are two

such elements. First, there is the external apparatus necessary to carrying on the business, and always perishing. Besides this, there is the less palpable but far more important and abiding product of the business in the man that does it. 5. A great nation, by the outlay and sacrifice of a desolating war of defence, may be replenishing all the nobler sources of permanent peace and honour. At any rate, and in all times, the individual and his contemporaries disappear, but the national character goes on forming. II. NOW OPEN YOUR BIBLE. In what new clearness this truth is written there! Here we have the key to all these ciphers in nature, which otherwise would be but an unintelligible riddle. Here we pass beyond all faint intimations out into the broad sunshine, where life and immortality are brought completely to light. 1. Something about you is transient. (1) In this mortal part Paul includes the visible gains of labour and calculation, the surroundings of estates and furniture and dress; and, more than these, all intellectual accomplishments, social refinements, and advantages of rank and position which are not consecrated by faith and made a part of the spiritual man (1 Cor. xiii. 8). (2) The "inward man" is one simple, definite thing. It is that wherein the living Christ dwells through faith. There is not only a formal belief in an atonement wrought out by Him ages ago, but a hearty and loving reception of Him as a present and personal life. 2. Day by day the true Christian soul's inner life grows deeper, stronger, and richer. It is not only a future immortality, but the heavenliness begins here. Never satisfied with the holiness attained, its large expectation is that of an unbounded faith, and according to its faith it is done, till this worn-out body is exchanged for the resurrection body, awaking in the Lord's likeness, and satisfied with it. 3. In this way and no other the believer is able to look calmly on the changes of his mortality, on the flight of time, on the advance of age, on pain and infirmity, on disorder, on death itself. The outward man perisheth. Let it perish; its perishing will only set the inward man free, in an infinite and everlasting liberty. So martyrs sing their lives away in the fire. So sufferers in our common dwellings give God thanks in the midst of agony, their eyes fixed on a continuing city and a more enduring substance. Conclusion—1. Healthy, happy, vigorous youth! Every day your body is gaining strength. Who, then, will say that this "outward" man of yours, which maketh daily increase, is perishing? The clock says so, with every second's stroke. This growth and gain of your body are only a prelude for the inevitable decay which is close at hand. A few swift months more, and there will be some sign given that the hill-top is crossed. What will the end be? The grave? Oh, you would not have it so! Where, then, is the inward life? The soul has only one life, which is life in Christ. It has but one death. Unbelief, selfishness, sensuality, passion, vanity, the love of the world, kill it. 2. Here is comfort for old age. You have found that long-worn and tired body of yours less prompt than it used to be to do the bidding of your will. But if your old age is Christian, the maker and Father of your life will see, as He has promised, that your inward man, which is His image, shall never die. Let the earthly tabernacle crumble. You will only see more of the sky. (*Bp. Huntington.*) *Newness of life*.—If a man is renewed day by day there will be something new for him to learn, some fresh experience for him to tell; the world will be a new world, the Bible will be a new Bible. We so seldom get a new light on a truth. People tire of the same testimony in the same form. It grows rancid and musty; there is an unpleasant flavour about it. It seems as if the doors were opened into a room that had been growing faded and dank and dismal. All the furnishings hang rotting on the worm-eaten beams. Nothing has been renewed and replenished from the first day to this. It is just the same. It stands just as it has always done. And there the poor soul stands that was once well furnished, but that now is the sorrowful tenement of decaying experiences, vestiges of a past beauty, relics of a bygone day. Men tell us to-day that the Christian experience is not interesting. It does not seem to grow. We are just where men were a thousand years ago. Life in every other department is progressing to a goal. New discoveries are made everywhere else. But here all is antiquated. Its devotion to the past may be as pathetic as that still and decaying chamber that is preserved at Hampton Court to show you exactly how it stood on some memorable historical occasion, but it is fruitful only of despair and death. The inward man must be renewed day by day. A little while ago an American preacher, well known on the other side of the Atlantic, but whose name is not so familiar to us, wrote these words, which I will venture to read to you because they put this truth in his terse American way. "There is nothing in God's earth," he says, "that grows rank and fœtid sooner than an experience. Our hymn asks—

“ ‘Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?’ ”

Don't know, and it wouldn't do you any good if you had it. Blessedness won't keep. It is one of the all-pervading principles that the more delicate a thing is, and the more finely organised, the more directly it will decay and fall to pieces when once it has parted from the root it sprang from. Strayed or stolen—a religious experience! The hymn just quoted from is an advertisement for a lost joy. It is like hunting after the blaze of the lamp that the oil is all burnt out of. Keep the wick trimmed and the lamp filled, you will have blaze enough, without advertising for last night's blaze; you don't know where that is, and you could make nothing of it if you did. Good things have to be made over and over, and everlastingly reduplicated. The fresh river must incessantly draw on the young rivulets that incessantly trickle from the hillside. Christian joy that does not bear the stamp of this very day and date is a silurian deposit, an evangelical relic, a fossilised piety." Now I venture to think that there is underneath this somewhat remarkable form a great deal of sterling teaching. Once let a man's prevailing tone of mind be the contemplation of what he was, and not of what he is, and spiritual dotage has begun. Just as Dean Swift could read over again his early writings and say, "What a genius I was when I wrote that book!" so the Christian whose spiritual life has grown old and weak, and whose spiritual experiences have been made up again and again, cut and trimmed and dyed every colour the imagination can conceive—such an one, I say, looks back on the original and now distant experiences, and derives his sole melancholy satisfaction from the contemplation of what he was. Believe me, unless the present is the greatest hour in the history of a Church, unless this passing moment is the best in the spiritual experience of the individual Christian, there is something wrong. I want to say that I do not believe we have even begun to grasp the wonder of the spirit of man. I do not believe we have begun to grasp the extent to which we make life and thought and everything, just as God made man, "after our own image." The man whose spirit is new every day lives in a new world, and does not tire of the world in which he lives; reads a new Bible, and never tires of the Bible which he reads. You do not want a new world to make heaven, but just a new soul to live in it, and to love the earth and the sea and the sky and the God that dwells in all. Here is the unrenewed man with his unrenewed soul and his weary look of *ennui*, tired of life, absolutely *blasé*, and you suggest to him some change of scene. "Oh," he says, "but I've been there"; "I've done that." He wants a change. Yes, so he does; he wants a change inside. It is the renewal of the inward man that he needs. He is just the sort of man who says, "Ah, yes, I've read the Bible; I wish you could recommend another book." He has read it, and he wants a change; and so he does, I say again—he wants a renewal of the inward man. This is what will save this heavy, wearied, bored society which has grown up to-day, and which yearns for some new thing to read and to see; a baptism of the inward man. I trust I have carried you with me in this attempt to show you that what we need, if our religious life is to become interesting, is new life—life as new as the last ray of the sun that has reached us, the last drop of dew that has trembled on the blade of grass. We want this ever-flowing, ever-growing life. We want to make contact with the source of life. There are so many people whose spiritual life is governed on the seven-day clock principle. It is effectually wound up on the Sunday, and it is effectually exhausted on the Saturday following. And the coming Sunday will find it where the last Sunday found it. There will be no real progress, no gain, no growth. The play of the living spirit of a man about and around the facts and truths of the world makes them to live anew. The play of the Divine Spirit around the spirits of men makes them to live anew. God recreates men, and by doing so recreates eternally the world that He created. Here, for instance, are the eight notes of music and the semitones, and the human spirit has played around them and blended them into infinite variations through indefinite centuries. But they are not exhausted yet. The new man will find as much music in them still as has been found in them in the past. And so with the truths of revelation. Infinite combinations, infinite interpretations, but underneath all the same great foundation of the spiritual thought. So every new man makes a new theology, and renews his own day by day. It is hardly necessary to point out to you the practical application of such a law as this. To the Apostle Paul it was the principle of his religious life. He was a very busy man; he was the greatest

preacher of his age; but he had always something new to say. He spoke out of a heart that was in constant touch with Christ. On what do you depend for the renewal of your spiritual life? Do not answer it hastily, but press this question home to your own consciences: "Do I depend on men or on God? Do I find my inward life dull and sluggish if I do not hear my favourite preacher?" On what do you depend for the renewal of your spiritual life? Do you require a peculiar type of æsthetic service? On what do you depend? I can conceive of nothing so perilous as that this matter of eternal moment should be allowed to depend on persons or places that are subject to change. Renewal is from above. (*C. Silvester Horne.*) *The inward man*:—There is much in this world to make men faint! Health is seldom long unbroken. Success is gained, and its sweetness lost, by the death of those we sought to secure it for! In religion, too, there would seem to be tendencies toward the same disappointment. Paul speaks of trouble on every side, of being perplexed, &c. But two especial sources of strength are referred to. In the "spirit of faith" (ver. 13), and the sustaining hope which springs from Christ's resurrection (ver. 14). These were antidotes to all depressions, and remembering that his own bearing as a Christian soldier would naturally affect the ranks, Paul adds: "For all things are for your sakes" (ver. 15), and then explains the apostolic position in the text. Notice the position—thus: I. THE MAN—VISIBLE. Paul does not speak contemptuously of the body, nor did he encourage maceration or court martyrdom. He says, "Though the outward man perish." It might happen, he well knew, and it did happen to him, but he was ready. "For which cause we faint not," &c. Our circumstances differ widely from his, but we too are tempted in ten thousand ways. Let me therefore remark—1. That Christians fret, but do not faint. They are still human. They fret when disappointments come, when vexatious law-suits have to be fought out—when impoverishment of the home-life comes. But the difference between them and the children of this world lies here—they do not faint—they stand. This word faint means to turn out a coward. "For which cause we are not cowards, but though our outward man," &c. 2. That Christians fail, but do not faint. Our lives are stories of failure as well as of success. "Armies," says Alexander Smith, "are not always cheering on the heights they have won." No; there are retreats, and baggage-waggon captures and desperate frays with advanced pickets, and sudden and sharp conflicts. So it is with the Christian; he does not always come off victorious. No; he fails! And then he gathers together the scattered forces of his moral life—he takes unto him "the whole armour of God," probably having neglected some part of it before, and again he renews the war. 3. That Christians die, but do not faint. Physical weakness and decay will come! "The outward man" must perish. Time is as stern an executioner as the headsman of old. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." But the Christian looks for "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away." And that inheritance is in germ already within him. "Though the outward man perishes," the great life-work is going on within; there the work of grace is meetening for the life of glory. I will ask two questions. (1) Who can wonder that worldly men so often faint? Artificial stimulants can only sustain for a time. Society, friendship, enlivening pursuits—these often hide for a time the stern realities of life. Then the dream-land of joy is broken in upon, and the man awakes to his delusions. Then comes the indescribable faintness of a soul that has no everlasting arm to rest on, no promises to console, no inheritance to anticipate. If we are worldly, we too shall faint. (2) Who else can supply what Christ provides? We have not in all history such records of consolation amid the changes of life, and in the coming of death, as we have in the Word of God. Nowhere else but in the gospel have we the power which gives spirituality to life, and solace in the hour of death, "For which cause we faint not." II. THE MAN—INVISIBLE. 1. There is an inner man. This, indeed, has been the great teaching of Revelation from the commencement. Man is separated from all other forms of created life by this—he has a soul. The inner man asserts itself. Argue against its existence as man will, there, in the depths of consciousness, is the irresistible argument—"I am." This inner man may become weakened, debased, depraved—it is a fact of history and experience that it has become so—day by day. It is in Christ that we have life; this, too, is a fact of history and experience. It is in this inner man we must find the seat of strength, and the spring of consolation. Let that be reached, and then we shall be able to triumph over the ills to which flesh is heir. We are strengthened with all might by Christ's Spirit, says the apostle, in "our inner man." 2. This inner man is renewed. Renewal is a series of acts. Just as

life is one gift, but the daily renewal of it by food, by air, by exercise, is a series of acts. Thinkers must constantly study, meditate, read; or the old stores would actually, to a large extent, die out. So yesterday's religion is a thing of yesterday. We need fresh draughts of living water, fresh breakings of the heavenly bread, fresh communings of conscience and heart with the Divine Lord. 3. This renewal is a daily one. Not a mere Sabbath one. "Give us this day our daily bread!" Day by day. (*W. M. Statham.*) *The renewal of life* :—The "outward man" is the visible, mortal man, which feels the exhaustion of endurance and endeavour. There is no magic fountain in which we can wash and be young. But the inward man must not decay. Its faculties are to be perennially vigorous—the inner eye clear, the hearing acute, the sensibility delicate, the step firm, the voice that of them who overcome. If this power and freshness are to be preserved the inward man must be "renewed day by day." I. ONLY THROUGH HABITUAL DEVOTION CAN THE FACULTIES OF THE SOUL BE PRESERVED AND PERFECTED. Darwin wrote—"Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it, poetry . . . gave me great pleasure. . . . Formerly pictures gave me considerable and music very great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry . . . I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music. . . . My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts. . . . If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week, for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have become active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature." Note here—1. That mental faculties may be entirely extirpated by disuse. This is true touching spiritual gifts. Spiritual sensibility, imagination, sympathy, aspiration, may be starved and lost by men utterly immersed in secular life, and if the perishing of the æsthetic sense is a melancholy loss, as Darwin felt it to be, the loss of the diviner faculty, by which we appreciate the eternal beauty and glory of the moral universe, is yet infinitely more deplorable. 2. That constant culture is necessary to keep the intellectual faculties alive. And if we are to preserve the precious affinities, and energies of our deepest nature we must constantly stir up the gift that is in us—contemplating the highest beauty, listening to the music of eternity, holding loving fellowship with the perfect life and righteousness. II. THE LINES OF DEVOTION IN WHICH WE MUST HABITUALLY EXERCISE OURSELVES. 1. "Day by day" we must instruct and elevate our mind by communion with God's Word. Goethe said that every man should, every day, see at least one fine work of art, hear one sweet strain of music, read one beautiful poem. But we not only need the daily bread of mental delight, we need also daily manna for our spirit. Here, then, we must be spiritually mindful, and eat uninterruptedly immortal bread. Observe in Psa. cxix. the continuousness of the Psalmist's fellowship with the God of truth. The virtue of this continuousness is implied in the closing words of our Lord (John xv. 3-7). The full beauty and fruition of the branch is dependent upon its complete and constant identification with the tree. The Orientals express the persistence of the friendship of the noble in their saying, "When the lotus is broken its fibres still remain," and whilst the frailest thread of connection remains the flower does not at once miss all its bloom; so even in the believer's declensions Christ still insinuates fresh energy into the soul by secret fibres of union; yet the full beauty and fruitfulness of life are soon missed if we permit our fellowship with the truth in Jesus to become limited and irregular. We are often deeply anxious about the outer world, its clouds, temptations, &c., but really our concern lies chiefly with the depth and force of the life within us. The authorities declare that it is not so much a matter of atmosphere with the London trees as it is of soil and draining; let the trees be right at the roots, and they will battle triumphantly with poisoned air. "Being rooted and grounded in love" and knowledge, we may defy all storms and deadly atmospheres, and put on and ever wear all the beauty of the summer (Psa. i. 3). 2. "Day by day" we must purify our soul in fellowship at God's throne. No greater mistake could be made than to allow the vigour of a church to decline with the idea that periodical revival services would recover lost ground. And in our personal life we must not expect by extraordinary devotion to recover in an hour what we have neglected in a week. Only through constant communion with God can we perfect and preserve the purity of our spirit. We must attend to our toilet every day, many times a day, if we are to

continue altogether presentable. And this is equally true of our inward life, with its thousand possibilities of defilement. The housekeeper cannot afford to let the furniture be tarnished with the design of restoring all things to brightness by some energetic periodical cleansing; the house can be maintained in true purity and comeliness only through daily industry and thoroughness. Thus is it also with character. What do days of neglect mean in a garden? What do days of neglect mean on shipboard? And the days of dulness and faithlessness in our life leave results of secret flaws and failures of character which many days of humiliation and painful striving may hardly retrieve. We must meet the wear and tear of probation by constant renewal in secret intercourse with God. 3. "Day by day" we must make the best of life's opportunities. (1) We must make the best of life's opportunities in getting good. The moral wealth of life is not minted out of great occasions and extraordinary circumstances only, but through the wise economy of routine. Most people know about the gold and diamonds of Brazil; and yet the exports of sugar and coffee from that country in one year are of more value than all the gold and jewels found in it in half a century. (2) And in doing good there must be the same faithful, systematic improvement of small opportunities. As Miss Havergal writes: "The bits of wayside work are very sweet. Perhaps the odd bits, when all is done, will really come to more than the seemingly greater pieces: the chance conversations with rich and poor, the seed sown in odd five minutes." Our condemnation is that we let the days slip away despising the many simple chances they give for speaking kind words, doing little graceful acts by the wayside and the hearth. The wealth and beauty of the world spring not from the rare aloe whose scarlet splendour flames out once in twenty, fifty, or a hundred years; but from the grass which grows upon the mountain, and which is green the year round. We sometimes see a man in a comparatively small way of business; he makes the very least noise, and yet when he dies everybody is astonished by the large fortune he leaves behind him. So it is spiritually. Solomon appointed the priests to their service, the Levites, and the porters, "as the duty of every day required." And it is by accomplishing our service "as the duty of every day requires" that we become "rich toward God." (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

The inner man or soul growth.—1. Man has two natures. 2. The outward nature is subject to the law of decay. The law of dissolution is operating on the body every moment. Particle after particle departs with every pulsation. 3. Whilst the outward man decays, the inner man may grow in strength. We would not depreciate the assistance which "the inner" derives from "the outer." Like the atmosphere to the seed, the body is the medium which conveys to the soul those sunbeams and showers which quicken it into life and nourish its powers. All that is taught is that the soul can grow even while the body is decaying. Note—*I. THE CONDITIONS OF THIS SOUL GROWTH.* 1. There can be no growth, of course, without life. All plants and animals, however young, cease to grow the moment life departs. But the life must be healthful. What is the healthful life of a soul? Supreme sympathy with God. 2. There must be wholesome nutriment. No life can live upon itself. 3. There must be proper exercise. Christianity has a power to impart the life, supply the nourishment, and stimulate the exercise. *II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS SOUL GROWTH.* 1. Beautifulness. The growth of a flower is beautiful, so is the growth of a child, so is the growth of an empire. But the growth of a soul in virtue, in usefulness, in assimilation to God, is a more beautiful object than these. That flower will wither, but the soul will advance for ever—rise from "glory unto glory." 2. Constancy. Growth is not a thing of fits and starts. The plant, the child, grow every hour; they do not grow one day of the week and pause on the others. If we are not religious always we are never religious. 3. Blessedness. A growing state is a happy state. See the lambs, the little bird, the child, &c. If you are growing in soul you are happy. 4. Endlessness. The capacity for growth in all other life under the sun is limited. The tree that grows a thousand years finds a point at which it stops and decays; not so with the soul. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." 5. Responsibility. Man may not be responsible always for the growth of his body; if he has a dwarfish body, he cannot help it, but if he has a dwarfish soul he himself is to blame. We learn from this subject—1. The necessary condition of man's well-being. It is not that your wealth should increase, your influence extend, your social circle widen, for your body decays, and with this all these things lose their worth, but it is the growth of the soul. 2. The absolute necessity of the gospel. You cannot grow without spiritual life, nourishment, and incentives to action. And nothing but the gospel

can give you these. 3. The true method of using the world. It is to make it promote the growth of the soul. 4. The Christian's view of death. It is nothing but a change in the mere costume of our being. "This mortal must put on immortality!" (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The growth of the spiritual life* :—It is assumed—I. THAT SPIRITUAL LIFE EXISTS. The phrase, "inward man," has the same meaning as the "new man." The agent producing this life is the Spirit of God; and whilst there is great variety in the means employed to produce it, its main features are always the same, the character and habits brought into conformity with God's will. II. THAT THIS SPIRITUAL LIFE IS SUSCEPTIBLE OF GROWTH. This growth consists—1. In the more vivid apprehension of spiritual realities. Spirituality of mind distinguishes the sincere Christian from the formalist. 2. In the development of a holy character. The influence of truth upon the character of a good man is like that of the sun upon the blossom, which causes it to expand in fragrance and beauty. 3. In a more enlightened and comprehensive view of spiritual truth. "When I was a child," &c. III. THAT THE GROWTH OF THIS SPIRITUAL LIFE IS BEST PROMOTED BY THE FAITHFUL AND ACTIVE DISCHARGE OF DUTY. Here were men who sought no monastic seclusion, who resigned themselves to no luxurious meditations who had no time for any lengthened seasons of retirement, and yet whose spiritual life grew. Conscientious obedience to the will of God will be followed by the advancement of the spiritual life. By this obedience we exercise its faculties and display its moral excellences. True, intercourse with the world has its dangers, but our dangers are our discipline, and it is by discipline that the spiritual life attains to maturity. IV. THAT THE GROWTH OF THIS SPIRITUAL LIFE IS GRADUAL AS WELL AS PROGRESSIVE. "Day by day." Elsewhere we read of "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." There is, then, continuous agency on the part of God, and there are continuous efforts on the part of man. 1. This daily renewal of the inner life is needed. There is the influence of a depraved nature, and the constant presence of natural objects, and these would exhaust and enfeeble its strength. 2. Is accomplished by all the events and circumstances of our ordinary life. This was the case with the apostles, who rendered prosperity and adversity subservient to the promotion of their spiritual growth. V. THAT THE PHYSICAL LIFE DECLINES WHILST THE SPIRITUAL LIFE ADVANCES. "The outward man perisheth." True, that body is the workmanship of God. A fitting palace for the immortal guest within, but taken from the dust it must return to that from which it was taken. Contrast with this, the immortality of the spiritual life. In the forests of South America, it is no uncommon spectacle to see the trunks of aged trees covered with the joyous blossoms of climbing plants that have twined around them, as if Nature, with her kindly hand, sought to conceal and even beautify the corruption which she could not stay. In like manner, the beauty of the spiritual life appears amidst the decrepitude of the perishing body, giving grace and dignity to that which otherwise it would be pitiable to behold. Conclusion—1. The words of the text suggest to us that the better part of our nature is the spiritual. 2. They furnish consolation to those Christians who are advancing in life. 3. Let each examine into his spiritual condition. (*H. Gamble.*) *Compensation* :—That there is an inward invisible man who makes himself visible by the body and uses it as his instrument, is admitted in some form by all. The inward and outward man are felt occasionally to have different interests, and there is a necessity laid on man to choose between these. The outward man is doomed to perish, and often is seen rapidly decaying, while the mental and moral powers are as visibly increasing in elevation and intensity. Why should the course of the one be upward, while that of the other is downward? Why should men have experience at the same time of two opposite processes? Let us fix our attention, in considering this subject, on—I. THE TWO CONTRASTED BUT CLOSELY RELATED PROCESSES. These illustrate the law of compensation which runs through all things. 1. Often the most painful and humiliating losses have the highest kind of compensation. (1) When a man first loses his sight how irreparable the loss appears. But from the very moment of the loss a principle of compensation is at work. His hearing, by the increased strain upon it, becomes acute; his sense of touch grows keen and discriminating. But more; how often does the blind man, shut out from the visible world, retire into the world of reflection. The objects of thought grow real to him; he acquires a command over his faculties, and a power of working on without external aid. (2) When wealth is lost, life seems emptied out. But even in the first shock there is a stirring up of the man, a groping about for something to take the place of the lost wealth. And thus gradually higher qualities are called out, a determined energy to recover, if

possible, what has been lost, or a falling back on the higher wealth of the soul. Have we not here an approach to the compensation of the text, as if the inward man were becoming younger, while the outer man was growing old. And this is in very truth what the compensation comes to. The renewal of the Holy Spirit is the rising and widening of the being towards its true nature, its immortal ideal.

2. This compensation is the solidest and greatest of all realities in the present. To become like God, this alone is greatness and blessedness, and this carries eternity in it. I watched once a series of dissolving views. One especially riveted my attention—a beautiful scene in Italy. On the verge stood a ruin, which lent to the scene pathos and romance; but while it faded there rose, dim at first, but ever clearer, the outline of another picture, till at last, when the old had wholly gone, there stood forth in majesty, a picture of the sea, the mountains, and the stars overhead. The eternal had taken the place of the transient. The same lesson is read to us every evening. The bright day departs; but when earth is hidden, heaven begins to unfold its treasures; when we lose this little world we gain innumerable worlds. So in the renewal of the inner man we have both a transcendent compensation in the present, and the pledge of a glorious and eternal future, which also enriches and glorifies the present.

3. Look at the special form of compensation seen in successive coverings and materials which perish and leave gain behind them. The warrior's armour is his most outward man inspired and guided by the inward man of his courage and skill. The armour is broken, but the warrior may survive many helmets and suits of armour. Dress is the ordinary outward man. It is that by which he is known to his fellows. His life is preserved and even dignified by it. But in thus adorning man apparel decays, yet the benefit it has conferred remains. The child has been growing all the while that the raiment that sheltered him has been decaying. The ship that carries the emigrant to the land of his hopes may be sorely battered on its course, and at last shivered on the rock-bound coast, but it has borne its passengers across the ocean. They escape and thrive in that new land; it perishes and sinks beneath the waves. Every book and pen which the child uses and wears out adds to his knowledge and facility. The paint and brush of the artist are used and expended by him in giving birth to that which endures, while his own faculty also is increased.

4. Human life thus yields innumerable examples of the gain remaining from materials that disappear. Shall not decay of the body, the decisive and the saddest decay, afford the highest example? If the body in its labour and decay does not work out permanent results of the best kind on the soul it accomplishes no result. It is only that which enters into the spirit that can survive death. If there is no compensation for the loss of the outward man, what an illusion are all the examples of the principle in the constitution of things. If the law fails here, what can it bring to us but sadness, however bright its manifestations elsewhere? And if there is compensation, it must be in the sphere of the inward man. When the temple falls, the priest will rise to the temple made without hands, eternal in the heavens.

II. THE POINTS OF CORRESPONDENCE THAT SHOULD EXIST BETWEEN THE TWO PROCESSES.

1. Decay is constant. Each of us may say, "I die daily." Our motion is ever onward to death. We ought then to have in this a constant stimulus to renewal of inward life. Let renewal day by day be our conviction, our task, and our joy.

2. Decay has times of special impulse when more progress is made toward dissolution in a few days than in many years. But this has its counterbalance in floods of grace, bursts of light, accessions of love and enthusiasm, that lift up and strengthen and gladden the inward man.

3. There is a waste caused by toil and a decay that goes on in rest; so, on the other hand, renewal is furthered by exertion and by quiescence. To labour and to rest in God are both necessary. We must contend against evil, and labour earnestly to be filled with the fruits of righteousness; but often renewal comes more from keeping the soul in a right attitude toward God.

4. Extremes and sudden changes hasten the decay of the outward man, so extremes and sudden changes of condition may hasten the renewal of the inward man. Some of these extreme and sudden changes you remember well; is it not true that they shook and roused you in an altogether peculiar way, and opened up for you unknown reaches of thought and aspiration?

5. The outward man decays both by pain and pleasure; the inward man should be renewed both by sorrow and joy. Have you known the power of physical pain in bringing down the outward man, and shall you not welcome the pains of the spirit which elevate and emancipate the inward man? Are there any that have known the weakening influence of unhallowed pleasures and joys? Will

not they of all others pursue the joys that strengthen the soul and heart? 6. Decay sometimes proceeds from without inwards, as in the case of external injury; sometimes it proceeds from the very heart, and slowly makes itself felt in the outer activity. Is there not a similar twofold process in the renewal of the inner man? 7. The whole outward man perishes. But the renewal of the inward man often bears a most imperfect correspondence in this respect. A man cannot exempt any particular portion of his body from decay, but he can shut out whole regions of his inward nature from renewal. How often it seems as if some parts of a man are like desert, while others are like Eden, as if a portion of a man were inhabited by Satan, and another portion by Christ. But should not men who know their whole outward nature to be decaying, and doomed to perish, be constantly reminded of the need of the whole inward nature being permeated by life? 8. Decay is sometimes accelerated by materials and means which usually strengthen or heal; so in the inward man renewal may be promoted by things whose natural influence and effect is to corrupt and destroy. Often the debilitated frame is injured by the most healthful influences. The bracing air pierces it, the genial heat of the sun oppresses it. Food turns to poison. Healing medicine kills. But over against this is the great and cheering fact in the spiritual world—that temptations to evil may be the most potent means for good; that a wholly corrupt social atmosphere may disgust a man with evil, and throw him with intensity into a spiritual sphere; that doubts may conduct straight to the clearest faith; that there is no difficulty that threatens to swallow a man which may not issue in high and lasting gain. All poisons are changed into food and medicine to him who keeps near to Christ. 9. Decay sometimes proceeds at a constantly increasing rate. But if there is a downward gravitation there is also an upward. We call it natural that a stone should fall faster and faster as it approaches the earth, it is equally natural that a soul should be renewed increasingly, should rise faster and faster as it approaches heaven. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*)

Vers. 17, 18. For our light affliction . . . worketh for us a . . . weight of glory.—*Light affliction and eternal glory*.—I. A FEW PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS UPON AFFLICTION. 1. There are afflictions which are common to humanity. Disease and death (Gen. iii. 17-19). 2. There are afflictions which are of a self-procured character. We can no more sin with impunity against physical laws than we can against moral laws. 3. There are afflictions which are of Divine appointment. 4. Afflictions are not meritorious. They cannot make atonement for sin, nor regenerate our nature. 5. Afflictions in themselves, abstractly considered, are heavy, but light when compared with those of others. II. LET US PONDER OUR AFFLICTIONS. They are light—1. When compared with the demerit of our sins. 2. When compared with those of our forefathers. The saints have had to suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness, fire, faggot, sword, imprisonment, and death (Heb. xi.). 3. When compared with those of Christ. 4. When compared with the weight of glory referred to in the text. 5. Being but for a moment when compared with the eternity of glory. 6. When compared with the exceeding greatness and infinite excellence of the glory. III. CONSIDER THE BENEFICIAL AND GRACIOUS TENDENCY OF OUR AFFLICTIONS. All trials, whether personal, relative, or national, may be regarded in the light of a gracious discipline. The tendency of affliction in the saint is—1. The development and maturity of moral purity. There is much about him which needs correction and refinement. Afflictions operate as fire upon metal (Heb. xii. 5, 11; James i. 2-4, 12). 2. The development and exhibition of principle and character. It is possible for a man not to know his own real character and strength of principle, till cast upon his own resources. What a living embodiment of magnanimity, self-denial, godness, and moral sublimity in the lives and deaths of many of the people of God! 3. To test the truthfulness of our Christianity and exhibit its character before the world. 4. The exercise and perfection of our faith. Faith is a principle which is strengthened by exercise. In trials faith finds ample scope for action (Heb. xi.). IV. THE FUTURE GLORY OF THE SAINT IS—1. Substantial. The word "weight" gives us the idea of ponderousness. The Greek word "doxa" and the Hebrew word "kábhodh" mean an opinion, doctrine; and then praise, dignity, splendour, and perfection. The words are applied to the visible manifestations of the Divine Being. Heaven is spoken of as a most glorious locality. It is compared to "a house eternal in the heavens," a "mansion," "an inheritance incorruptible," a "great city," and "a prepared kingdom." There will be perfect correspondence betwixt the resurrection body of the saint and heaven as an abode (1 Cor. xv. 39-58;

Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 John iii. 2). Glory embraces also the perfection of the soul. We shall be perfect in body and in mind. Enjoyments and employments will be all complete. 2. Ever-enduring. "The perpetuity of bliss is bliss." 3. Ever-increasing. Progress is as essential to man's nature as gravitation to the universe, and light and heat to the sun. (*C. Briggs.*) *The work of affliction*:—1. The text contains a repetition of *ὑπερβολή*, which is generally used when a person in any excited manner oversteps the truth. What the apostle means, therefore, is that no proportion whatever can be instituted between present affliction and future glory. 2. Now, there is much in God's dealings with our race which seems hopelessly intricate, and we satisfy ourselves by referring to the disclosures of another world when, evolving order from confusion, God shall vindicate His proceedings on the broad stage of the judgment. But while in the main this course may be correct, we must take heed that we do not refuse to be wise up to what is revealed. It would be a great clue for us, in the labyrinth of Providence, if we were to regard all that takes place in the body as preparatory to the dispensation of another state: *e.g.*, we ought to be able to show that all which a righteous man suffers goes to heighten and multiply his future enjoyments; so that each sorrow shall not only be counter-balanced, but shall be distinctly preliminary to some portion of happiness. The apostle speaks of the affliction as "working out for us glory." There is a vast deal more asserted than the mere succeeding of glory to affliction; there is the connection of cause and effect; the present and the future are so linked, that the two may be surveyed as parts of the same dispensation. I. IN WHAT SENSE CAN IT BE TRUE THAT "AFFLICTION WORKETH FOR US GLORY"? 1. It cannot be that suffering in this present life is to be accounted a make-weight for punishment in the next. We have heard persons express a hope that they should endure all their pains on this side the grave, as though pain had a power of making compensation for sin. No doubt pain is the consequence and punishment of sin; but it is evident that the future and not the present is the time at which God's threatenings are especially to take effect. And if present suffering do not pass instead of future, much less can it procure for us favour and enjoyment. The splendours of eternity are too rare and costly to be procured out of the anguish of the sinful. 2. But if affliction do not procure for us glory through any inherent merit, it must have a working power; it must be because of the discipline which affliction exerts. Whatever was required for the pardon of our sins, was wrought out for us by our Surety. Nothing more is needed in order to our being freely forgiven and graciously received. But while all this has been done for us, there is something which remains to be done in us. This is what Scripture calls "the being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." It were comparatively but little worth that we should be admitted into God's presence, if there were no change rendering us capable of enjoying what is celestial and pure. To effect this work is the office of affliction. When you have admitted the need of refining, you must expect that the furnace of affliction will be placed in the pathway of the Christian. 3. Our text goes further. Not merely is affliction preparatory to glory, but that glory is to be increased by affliction. One Christian is evidently much more tried than another. The meekest and most devoted are often most so. Therefore we conclude that affliction produces different degrees of fitness, and that with these different degrees of fitness are proportioned different degrees of blessedness in the scale of future rewards. Upon this supposition, but on no other, that as "one star differeth from another star in glory," so does one saint in heaven differ from another—can full force be ascribed to the language of our text. II. THE NOTICES OF THE INVISIBLE WORLD WHICH WE MAY EXTRACT FROM THE PASSAGE. 1. That there shall be different degrees in the happiness of the saints in heaven. The dispositions and faculties of our fellow-men are almost infinitely various. If this variety did not exist a dull monotony would be introduced. Yes, religious men are cast in great varieties of mould. The lines of distinction are strongly marked between Peter and James and Paul. So one apostle was fitted for engaging in enterprises which would not have suited another. And so with all. There are no two Christians who are quite alike as Christians. One is remarkable for his humility, another for his love, a third for his faith, and a fourth for his zeal. And God places each Christian just where there is scope for his particular gifts. If there were no difference amongst Christians, the Church would lose its beauty and power. Is it, then, to be for a moment imagined that heaven alone should not consist of this wonderful diversity? Shall death produce over the whole face of humankind that uniformity against which God has now marvellously provided? This does not interfere in the remotest degree with the perfection of the happiness

of every justified saint. That being is perfectly happy who has just as much happiness as he is capable of enjoying. And besides these arguments from analogy, you find in Scripture abundant reason for the opinion, that in hell the quantity of misery is not the same to all, and that in heaven the quantity of happiness is not the same to all. By being enormous in guilt, we may increase the capacity for pain; and by being eminent in piety, we may increase the capacity for pleasure. We should conclude indeed rashly if we should set down a believer more than ordinarily tried as designed for one of the highest places in heaven: for we cannot tell what training we may require for the lowest place in heaven. But putting together the simple propositions, that there are degrees of happiness above, and that affliction is one of the chief modes by which God prepares man for happiness, it follows that the sufferings we endure may have an effect in fitting us for a loftier throne, a richer crown, a nobler heritage; and thus may the apostle's words most literally come true. 2. There is much material for thought in the hint that affliction at the most is "light," and at the longest "but for a moment." Now we can hardly expect that such verdicts will be assented to while we are on earth. The soul must be in glory before they can be pronounced with a deep feeling of their truth. 3. Observe, in order to the obtaining a better glimpse of things within the veil, that the aim of the creature has always been independence, and one great object of God's dealings with our race has been to prove the nothingness of the creature, by placing him in a variety of estates, in none of which he is able to sustain himself. And we may well believe that the lesson thus painfully and woefully taught shall be continually in the view of the glorified multitude. Shall they not be conscious that Christ not only brought them to glory, but that Christ also supports them in glory? We find an intimation of this in a "weight of glory." The Greek word is always used of something massive and hard to be borne; and it seems implied that the glory itself will be so ponderous, that the saints need help in sustaining it. In other words, they will be no more able to do without Christ in wearing their crown, than they could do without Christ in winning their crown. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *How we ought to view our afflictions:—*Consider—I. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE APOSTLE TEACHES CHRISTIANS TO VIEW THEIR AFFLICTIONS. 1. We are apt to magnify our troubles rather than to diminish them. In the human mind there is a strong aversion to trouble of any kind. It is indeed true that affliction, in itself, is not agreeable. "Now no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." But here the apostle makes it out to be a very insignificant thing. You think it heavy—a burden greater than you can bear, but the apostle says that it is light. And, besides, you think the time of your affliction long, however short it may be, and anxiously desire its removal; but the apostle wishes you to view it even as momentary. But Paul is here speaking comparatively. His eye was full of an exceeding weight of glory which language could not express; in comparison to that his affliction was levity itself, and by faith he saw the eternity of that glory, and then it seemed contracted into a point that was invisible. 2. You cannot feel sympathy with the apostle, in this exalted view of affliction, if you remain on the low ground of this world, where you are involved in darkness. You must aspire to attain the height of the subject. You must endeavour, in some measure, to comprehend the glory to be revealed. II. THE INFLUENCE OF AFFLICTION IN PREPARING CHRISTIANS FOR FUTURE GLORY. "Worketh for us." Affliction is part of the discipline of the covenant of grace; and it worketh the peaceable fruit of righteousness in all who are properly exercised under it. 1. Afflictions work in Christians a meanness or suitableness for glory. Naturally they are unprepared, and corruption is strong within them. But afflictions weaken the power of corruption. The mind of the Christian may be unduly set upon worldly objects. These are removed, and then the Christian seeks his enjoyment in God, and raises his mind to heaven. 2. In proportion to the extent of the affliction of Christians will be their future glory. All that you can do or suffer for Christ, in itself, is without merit, but yet it will be rewarded. III. WHAT THIS GLORY IS. Who can describe the greatness of things eternal? We can only judge from what we see; and it must be confessed that in the visible universe there is much that impresses us with the greatness and the power of God. But we must beware of losing ourselves in generalities. We are not destitute of definite ideas on which to fix our minds. 1. This is an exceeding weight of glory; it will, in its very nature, be substantial, weighty, solid. Now this forms a striking contrast to the objects of the world, even the weightiest and most important of them. But men consider wealth weighty. It is, however, all a mistake, "for riches make to

themselves wings." All the riches of this world are, in comparison, less than nothing and vanity. 2. This is such a weight of glory that Christians could not sustain it if they were not prepared and strengthened by Omnipotence to do it. Even in the world men are not always able to sustain their circumstances. Some sink under the load of affliction, prosperity. Now to bear up under this weight of glory it is necessary that the soul of the Christian should be absolutely perfect, completely delivered from sin; and at the last day, when there will be a vast accession to the glory, a body fashioned like unto Christ's will be necessary: thus the soul and body of the Christian will not only be adapted to each other, but they will also be adapted to the glory which is to be bestowed upon them. At the present time you could not bear this glory. 3. And what will it be? It will be all the fulness of the Deity—all the glory of God in Christ. (1) You will be blessed with all knowledge; all mysteries, in nature, providence, and grace, will shine out clearly in your view. (2) Immense dignity will be conferred upon us; in the presence of the greatest spirits you will be honoured by God Himself, and will be exalted to sit on the throne of Christ. (3) Your happiness will be complete; you will experience the fulness of joy. (4) Add to all, it will be eternal, unlike the glories of the world, which are evanescent. Now, with this prospect, will not Christians welcome all their affliction? (*T. Swan.*) *Affliction and its issues*:—In the words there is an elegant antithesis of our future estate to our present. In our future glory there is—1. Solidity and excellency. Glory is called a weight, because the same word, "chabod," which signifieth a weight, signifieth also glory, and weight addeth to the value of gold and precious things. All words are too weak to express heaven's happiness, and therefore he heapeth expression upon expression. 2. Eternity. This is opposed to the momentariness of our affliction. Both properties suit with God's infiniteness and eternity. In the other world God will give like Himself. See how the apostle doth—I. LESSEN THE AFFLICTIONS OF OUR PRESENT CONDITION, that we may not faint under them. 1. The evil expressed, "our affliction." God will have all tried, and the most eminent most tried (Rev. vii. 14). Christ Himself was made low before He was exalted. And the members follow the head by a conformity of suffering (Acts xiv. 22). 2. The evil lessened. The highest comfort which philosophy could afford was, that if afflictions were great, they were short; if long, light; meaning thereby, that if their afflictions were grievous, they would shorten their lives; if of long continuance, by bearing they learned the better to bear. But here both light and short, too, in respect of our glorious reward, which being infinite, maketh them light, and being eternal, makes them short. (1) Our affliction is light, not in itself but—(a) Comparatively, in respect of the excellency and infiniteness of the heavenly glory (Rom. viii. 18). The trouble is nothing to the recompense, nor the cross to the crown. (b) Copulatively. Though affliction be not light in itself, yet by the strong support and comfort of the Spirit, God maketh it light and easy to us. To a strong back a burden is light which crusheth the weak and faint; a man well clad may without great annoyance bear the cold of winter, which pincheth the naked (chap. i. 5; Rom. viii. 37). Now there is a more liberal allowance of these comforts and supports to God's suffering servants than to those who live at ease (1 Pet. iv. 14). (2) It is short as well as light. If they should last for our whole lives, they are but momentary compared with eternity. (3) To make this more evident, let us consider how the afflictions of God's people are long and short. (a) Concerning their length. They seem long to those that reckon by time and not by eternity. The longest time to eternity is nothing (Psa. xc. 4). They seem long because of the impatience of the flesh. We love our own ease, and therefore affliction soon groweth irksome. An hour seemeth a day, and a day a week. Winter nights seem long in the passing. (b) For their shortness; they seem short, partly because they are not so long as they might be in regard of the enemies' rage (Zech. i. 15). Satan and wicked men know no bounds. Partly they are not so long as we deserve. The evil of one sin cannot be expiated in a thousand years; but God "in the midst of judgment remembereth mercy" (Hab. iii. 2). Partly they are not so long as they might be in regard of second causes and probabilities (Hab. iii. 2). Partly because faith will not count it long; for to the eye of faith things future and afar off are as present (Heb. xi. 1). Partly because love will not count it long (Gen. xxix. 20). If we had any love to Christ, we would be willing to suffer a little while for His sake. But chiefly in regard of our eternal reward and blessedness; so it is a light affliction, that is but for a moment, like a rainy day to an everlasting sunshine. II. GREATER HEAVENLY THINGS. They are set forth by un wonted forms of speech, but such as you may

observe an exact opposition of our happiness to our misery. 1. Affliction and glory. In our calamities we are depressed and put to shame, but whatever honour we lose in this mortal life shall be abundantly recompensed in heaven. (1) Are you pained with sickness and weariness of the flesh? In heaven we shall have everlasting ease (Heb. iv. 9). (2) Are you cast out by man? There you are received by the Lord (1 Thess. iv. 17). (3) Have you lost the love of all men for your faithfulness? You shall everlastingly enjoy the love of God (Rom. viii. 39). (4) Are you reproached, calumniated in the world? Then your faith shall be "found to praise, glory, and honour" (1 Pet. i. 7). (5) Are you cast into prison? You will shortly be in your Father's house (John xiv. 2). (6) Are you reduced to sordid poverty? There you read of the "riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Eph. ii. 18). (7) Have you lost children for Christ? They shall not come to you, but you shall go to them. (8) Must you die, and the guest be turned out of the old house? You do but leave a shed to live in a palace (chap. v. 1). If you are forced out by the violence of man, the sword is but the key to open heaven's doors for you. 2. "A far more exceeding weight of glory" and "light affliction." Things excellent we count weighty; small, light (1 John iii. 2). 3. This glory is eternal, in opposition to our momentary affliction. If we desire to prolong this life, which is obnoxious to divers calamities, how much more should that life affect us which shall be fully happy and never have end? III. SHOW HOW THE ONE IS THE FRUIT OF THE OTHER. (T. Manton, D.D.) *Sanctified affliction, its tendency and result*:—Consider—I. THE MANNER IN WHICH AFFLICTION IS TO BE ESTIMATED BY THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER. It signifies something that beats down, presses sore, and is in itself grievous and tormenting. The forms of human trial are like the lineaments of the human countenance, boundlessly diversified. II. THE BENEFICIAL TENDENCY OF AFFLICTION. The present state of man is not his ultimate condition, nor is this world his final home. While on earth his state is not only one of probation, but also of discipline and—1. It is designed to correct and reclaim. There is in the heart of man a natural proneness to wander from God. In vain, perhaps, have been the attempts of other agencies to win the thoughtless wanderer. It is in mercy, therefore, rather than in anger, that he is smitten with affliction, that he may return to God. 2. The grace of God beats the spears of affliction into pruning-hooks, to them that are in Christ. 3. In affliction there is something which exerts a subduing influence upon the mind. It prostrates pride, subdues self, disenchantments creation of its bright and fleeting colours. It is often the means of bringing the will of the Christian into a more entire subjection to the will of God. 4. It has a tendency to purify, refine, and elevate the Christian character. The trial of faith is said to be "more precious than that of gold." III. THE GLORY FOR WHICH THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER IS PREPARED BY SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION. 1. The final issue of sanctified affliction will be a higher position, greater felicity, more glory in the heavenly state. The Christian would have had glory without it, but he will have more by reason of it. 2. This glory will be eternal in its duration. The highest enjoyments this world can afford are short-lived. Life itself is short. "The fashion of this world passeth away." But the glory of heaven will endure for ever. 3. This glory is further spoken of under the idea of weight. Conclusion: The design of God, in afflictions, being to prepare us for "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," let us devoutly strive to improve them. 1. By deep humility and self-abasement. When the soul is truly humbled before God, His Spirit lifts it up, and lets in upon the feelings the genial light and warmth of the Sun of righteousness. 2. By a renewed consecration of ourselves to God. (J. Lambert.) *The world of glory*:—I. THE CELESTIAL STATE WILL IMPART EXALTED AND PERFECT FELICITY TO THOSE WHO SHALL ENJOY IT. It will be a state of—1. Unsullied and absolute holiness. Mourning, as now you do, over your waywardness and sinfulness, how must you exult in the prospect of being "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!" 2. Vast intellectual illumination (1 Cor. xiii. 9-12). As to the objects of celestial knowledge, we may believe them to be the Divine character and perfections; the reasons of providential government, the counsels of grace; the breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights of the love of Christ which "passeth knowledge," &c. As holiness is our moral glory, attainment of such knowledge will be our intellectual glory, both being associated with happiness which is incomparable and supreme. "The tree of knowledge," there will hide no serpent in its foliage, and instil no poison with its fruit. It shall be "the tree of life," as well as "the tree of knowledge," and there shall not be a leaf that adorns it, or a cluster that enriches it, that will not be

found redolent with rapture, and that can decay or die. Ye who love and long for knowledge, endeavour to find your sphere in heaven; and while now, at the best, you can but collect the fragments and the crumbs, be it your high ambition to pant always for the full banquet of intelligence in immortality. 3. Delightful communion. A vast proportion of the enjoyments of the present life arises from intercourse; the more refined that intercourse, the more delightful it is; and the delights of intercourse will be found perfected amidst the purity and the expanded illumination of the skies. If man be permitted to enjoy fellowship with God, while still he bears the remains of his sinfulness, much more will he possess that fellowship when all his impurities shall be removed, and when he shall exist perfectly in the image of his God. Intercourse with God is the very life of heaven; and were that intercourse to be withdrawn, the light would wane, and the glory would be shrouded, and the music would be hushed, and the bliss would die, and the reward would be transformed into wretchedness. 4. Active and devoted employment. The rest of heaven is not synonymous with indolence; it is rest merely from corporeal languor, pain and disease, mental sorrow and foreboding. But this rest is not incompatible with employment. As Luther said, "God requires servants in heaven as well as on earth." Worship, in presenting the expressions of adoration and of praise; study, in the contemplation of the grand themes of knowledge; and active employment, in promoting the high behests, which probably will be multiplied upon us by the vastness of our capacities and by the deathlessness of our existence. 5. Permanent and imperishable duration. Heaven bears over its golden portals the inscription, "There shall be no more death." You read of heaven as a substance; it is "a better and enduring substance." As a kingdom, it is an "everlasting kingdom." As an inheritance, it is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." There is nought in that world of glory, which is not for ever and for ever. II. THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE CELESTIAL STATE OUGHT TO PRODUCE POWERFUL INFLUENCES AND EFFECTS, WHILE WE ARE EXISTING IN THE PRESENT LIFE. 1. We ought to embrace the one appointed method, by which alone the enjoyment of the heavenly state is to be secured. Do any of you ask what is the way to heaven? By the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," if you would "be saved." Bear with fortitude, in the prospect of that celestial state, the various difficulties and sorrows of the present life. In the context you see how the fortitude of the apostle and of his companions was secured by the prospect of the future. 3. There ought also to be a constant anticipation of the period when the celestial state shall be entered by ourselves. Conclusion: Let me remind you there is no middle state, no compromise between a destiny of splendour and a destiny of darkness and despair. (*J. Parsons.*)

Ver. 18. While we look not at the things which are seen . . . which . . . are temporal.—*The law of the higher vision*:—I. THE SEEN EXISTS IN THE MIDST OF THE UNSEEN. There are two worlds—the world of sense and the world of spirit; and the world of spirit surrounds, enshrouds, and interpenetrates the world of sense. We speak as if the world of sense came first, and the world of spirit came after; whereas the truth is that the world of spirit is about us now, though the veil of sense hangs between. We imagine that we dwell in time here, and shall dwell in eternity hereafter; while the fact is we dwell in eternity here, though we take a little section of it and call it time. And if this be the correct way of putting it, see the fallacy of our common conceptions of death. We conceive of death as if it were an act of migration, a journey to some distant star. Is not the Scripture view rather this—that unseen realities encompass us now? What sights might we not see, at every moment of our existence, at every turning of our path, had we only eyes to see them! And death will be merely the giving of those eyes. The seen exists in the midst of the unseen, the temporal in the midst of the eternal. We are like sentinels in their booths on the floor of some great cathedral, "cabined, cribbed, confined," while all around us, if we only knew it, are the soaring arches, the far-down aisles, the blazoned glories, and the white-robed choristers of God's great temple. Soon the booths will be broken by death, and what then? Then, when heaven and earth have dissolved, folded like a scroll, vanished like a dream, we shall be face to face with the realities behind, even the only true, only solid certainties that are unseen and eternal. II. While it is true that the seen exists in the midst of the unseen, it is also true that THE UNSEEN IS SOMETIMES CONCEALED AND SOMETIMES REVEALED BY THE SEEN. The seen is in one sense a blind that hides, in another sense it is a transparency that discloses. Take the illustration that is

yielded by man himself. Is it not true of man that he both conceals God and reveals Him? It depends on which side you look at him. Take man in his littleness; with his selfishness, his ambition, his lust, his passion, he often makes it hard to believe in God. But take man in his greatness, he becomes a living epistle of the Deity, an incarnate, moving, breathing testimony to the reality of the unseen. Or, again, take Nature. Judge by Nature in her harsh and destructive aspects; judge by Nature in famine, pestilence, earthquake, fire; she offers a contradiction to the unseen realities we are fain to believe in—an unseen Father's mercy, an unseen Father's love. Ah! but judge by Nature in her gentler and more beneficent aspects, and she becomes instinct through every process and scene with hints of a Divinity beyond. Think of the yearly miracle of the spring. III. BUT WHETHER THERE BE CONCEALING OR REVEALING, IT IS OUR DUTY NOT TO STOP SHORT WITH THE SEEN, BUT TO PASS BEYOND IT, AND LOOK AT THE THINGS THAT ARE UNSEEN. What does this imply? Several things, and these among others—1. That we look away from the seen trial to the unseen support. What was the seen trial in the case of the young man whom Elisha exhorted? The seen trial was this, that the ground round the city was black with the hordes of the Syrians, savage warriors, prancing steeds. But he looked away from the seen trial to the unseen support, and to the mountain glowing with the hosts of a present God, even horses and chariots of fire. 2. We look away, too, from seen vicissitudes to unseen possessions. The vicissitudes may be manifold. Who shall separate us from the love of God? Who shall exclude us from the grace of Christ? Who shall deprive us of the communion of the Holy Ghost? These form abiding realities, which the shocks of circumstance are powerless to change. 3. We look away, too, from the seen reflections to the unseen substances. We are compassed with these reflections. Everywhere pictures are around us. They are "patterns of the heavenly things"—"figures of that which is true." So the visible is a parable of the invisible, things temporal the types of things eternal. How many stop short with the parable! How many begin and end with the type! To the reality they cannot reach. The essence they do not understand. Surely the advantage lies with those who cannot look round upon God's bright earth and be conscious the while that, though the outward embodiment is good, the inner reality is better; that, though the reflection be fair, the substance has the glory that excelleth. Have you never felt it? "What a beautiful sky!" said one of the company. "Yes," was the sudden reply of another, whose words breathed the longing of these lone mountain lands, yet fitted themselves to the mood of us all—"yes, if we could only see behind." So near may Nature bring us to the heart and the secret of things! So clear are her tokens! So thin is her veil! The spell of the eternal lies upon her. (*W. Gray.*) *Looking at the unseen*:—Let us consider the advantage of a steady contemplation of things unseen and eternal. I. It brings repose to the spirit amidst the ceaseless changes of life. II. The presence of the unseen and eternal gives ASSURANCE of the final triumph of truth and rectitude. III. The sense of things eternal gives ENDURANCE to bear the pains of present discipline. IV. The contemplation of eternal realities PLACES THIS LIFE BEFORE US DISTINCTLY AS THE SPHERE OF DUTY AND OF TOIL. (*B. M. Palmer, D.D.*) *Things temporal*:—All on which the eye rests is temporal. Paul refers directly to the visible sources of his trouble, hunger, thirst, &c. But he includes other things—all he had ever seen in Tarsus, Jerusalem, or Corinth; things man has made, hut and palace, encampment and city, clan and empire; things God has made—flower and tree, river and ocean, hill and mountain; things men dread and hope for, love and hate. Now if these things seen are temporal—I. THE GOOD THINGS SEEN ARE NOT ENOUGH FOR US. 1. All that affects man is not visible. We are conscious that we are spirit, and not flesh. We know that reason is not the eye, nor faith the ear, nor will the hand or foot, nor emotion and conscience the nerves of sensation. We are conscious of commanding the eye, ear, hand, and foot. We say, instinctively, "I looked, I listened, I walked, I wrote"; thus tracing our actions to an inner self. 2. Now the invisible in man thirsts for the invisible. There are two kinds of rest—one in the body, the other in the soul; two classes of enjoyments—those derived from things, and those drawn from thoughts; and for the unseen sources of enjoyment and rest men thirst. Men will continue to live, when on earth they are no more living. We desire continued existence constitutionally, and we may infer that the object of this desire is provided by Him who implanted the thirst. 3. Now familiarity with what is seen would leave us unprepared for a future state of peace and blessedness. Yonder, God is more seen than His creatures. His will is the only law of conduct; His glory the supreme

object. Pleasure, yonder, is spiritual and divine. Now if we be ignorant of God, if temporal things have been our end, if our enjoyments have been pleasures only of sense, there we shall be like living creatures taken from their native element, unable to rejoice, unable to live. Because there is more in man than what is seen, because the invisible in man thirsts for the invisible outside and beyond, because making things seen our portion will expose us to destitution in a future state, we say that the good things seen are not enough for us. We want living bread—water of life—raiment that waxes not old—houses not made with hands—treasure that moth and rust corrupt not. II. THE GRIEVOUS THINGS SEEN SHOULD NOT MAKE THE CHRISTIAN FAINT. The afflictions of Christ's disciples are all temporal; the good wrought by their sorrow abides. "The peaceable fruits of righteousness" remain after the blossoms are destroyed. The fire of the refiner is transient, the refinement endures. To Christ's disciples there is no inextricable thorn in the body; their prisons have no everlasting doors, the breath of their persecutors goes forth. They weep now, but they shall sing. They are in much tribulation; but see, they are going up out of it. Their circumstances are complicated, but all are working together for good. Night is over them, but morning will be the daughter of that night. Compare the affliction with the glory—it is a trifle, and momentary. Then shall he faint under it? Of the glory it shall be said in every stage of consciousness, "More, more"; but of the affliction the Christian may say, "Less, less."

III. THEN IN NOTHING SEEN OUGHT A MAN TO FIND EITHER HIS HELL OR HIS HEAVEN. 1. No consuming fire here, mark, need be unquenchable. No gnawing worm here need be immortal. No pit here need be bottomless. You may carry fire yonder, and there it will be everlasting. You may carry a worm with you yonder, and there it will be undying. A temporal pit may lead to an eternal pit; but thanks be to Him who has given us a Saviour; all this is not inevitable. There is a fire annihilator, a worm destroyer, a Brother able and ready to raise you from the pit. No man need be buried in affliction, lost in sorrow, destroyed by grief. He may be saved by hope—for "the things that are seen are temporal." 2. And none can find heaven here. "Fulness of joy," and "pleasures for evermore," perfect peace, undisturbed rest—these are not to be derived from things temporal. Worldly things perish in the using. Wealth, honour, happy homes, all cry, "Heaven is not in us." The things that are seen are temporal. This common truth has long been in our Bibles; will it ever be written on our hearts? Hear the wise man (Eccles. i. 2). Come to the feet of Jesus Christ, and hear Him say, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," &c. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth," &c. "I am the bread of life," &c. "If any man thirst," &c. Conclusion: There are two duties springing from this truth. 1. The duty of moderation in our use and enjoyment of all things seen (1 Cor. vii. 29-31). Hold the good things seen with a slack hand. They are temporal, and they will be taken from you, or you will be taken from them. If you grasp them firmly, the removal of them will shake you from head to foot; if you hold them lightly, when they are taken away, although you may regret that they are taken away, you will stand unshaken. 2. The duty of seeking a heritage and portion in that which is unseen and eternal. Spiritual in our nature we are spiritual in our wants and thirsts. Immortal in destiny, immortality clothes our necessities and desires. Let us provide for the future. "Seek those things that are above." (S. Martin.) *The temporal and the eternal*:—Paul makes an appeal for life as in the presence of these two empires, "the seen and the unseen"; that every day the heart beats in both, and that a man cannot alienate himself from the one and stand solitary in the other. Not a little of our teaching and a large proportion of our practice have been busy with the other theory, that we are simply manipulating those matters that belong to the material side of life, and that after death, in some way, we are to be brought into contact with the unseen principalities. The life that transcends the senses is the real one, not the life that is simply in the senses. The senses make us conscious of our environment. We have five gateways of knowledge to bring us into contact with the visible world; but that visible world is a symbol of another. It is not the reality. The life, therefore, that proposes barely to be girt by the seen, to deal only with those facts that can be measured and weighed, is the life that is making the most serious of all blunders. You cannot go very far in experience without realising the sweep of such forces as love and faith and hope, and these at once draw you away from the material. What is love? You cannot see it. What is aspiration? You cannot measure it. And yet these are the powers that are entering into you moment by moment, and are teaching you of other things than

those of the seen. We are thinking of the words of a man who was thoroughly tried by the antagonisms of this world's wrong. The closing part of the fourth chapter in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians is a brief diary of St. Paul's career. We follow his path; it is shadowed by storms. His gaze is fixed on the unseen. He steadies his life by the standards of a Divine righteousness. No trap of man's craft set for him can really catch his feet, because he walks with God. Here we have the creed of life—of the life that is to be lived by those who recognise God, and are seeking a more enduring realm than the dominion of the visible. St. Paul says the seen is a temporal thing. It is not worthy of trust, because evanescent, like autumn-leaves on forest boughs. In a little while winter winds will snatch and strew them afar. The true philosophy of life is the philosophy that turns the eye of the soul toward a present eternity. Yes, one answers, it is easy to theorise, but you have not taken into account the fact that we are surrounded perpetually by the visible. The visible will not wait, hunger and thirst are not patient. Why is the world so lovely? Why are we fashioned in this body of mortality? There is a mighty plea for the seen, which is made by very many persons just in that mood. They say of the teacher of truth, "These are fine aspirations, noble aims, but they are too high for the common, work-day world." I avow that it is not the closest thing to him; that the seen is not so near to you as the unseen. Pressing in upon your soul are certain primal facts of which you cannot rid yourself. What are these? Take the fact of God. His Divine personality brings him into immediate contact with your very self. Take the fact of His truth. That truth makes a law of right which you must observe. Take the fact of righteousness, which simply means God and truth wrought together into conduct, turned out into life and made fluent by speech and action. That righteousness ceaselessly throws its fibres round your nature and draws you upward. It is one gravitation against another. The earth would hold you, but righteousness counterworks the earth and wins you Godward. Take the fact of your desire for the nobler being which yet you are not. These are patterns before you evermore, and you cannot swiftly throw them away or break the charm of their dominion over your spirit. The stars may gleam and the forests array their banners in beauty, the grass send up its soft, low music, and the clouds shine like the white thrones of judgment on the sky; but if a great grief is at work on you, if a large joy has entered the chamber of the soul, you do not see the stars or hear the whisper of the grass or note the loveliness of the forest. A closer thing has come; what is it? A thing invisible, a thing that refuses to be tabulated as you can tabulate your accounts in a book. It is a power, nevertheless. Yet you say the invisible is so far off, the unseen is so distant. Believe me, the unseen is at the very core of things; and there would be no significance in the visible but for that other. The doing of the evil that you would not, and leaving undone the good that you would, make you cry for God perpetually. You ask for Him, not as the stern Judge that is to deal with your heart on the simple basis of justice, but as the infinite Father who is to pity and lift you out of difficulty and defeat unto His own strength. This God for whom you long, this Father's compassion for which you yearn, will not report to your mortal eye. He will not consent to press His face out between the constellations even just once. Nevertheless He is real. You are certain of Him. This unseen, invisible God constitutes the verity of yourself. It is the standard of His speech that must decide daily conduct. He demands that you measure your life by that, and not by the foot-rules of your fellow-men. Instead, therefore, of the seen, of the great outer world, being a barrier to the unseen, it is its basis. The unseen is the nearer experience. It would be far more difficult for a man to undertake to live his life utterly denying these great facts of God, truth, honour, and righteousness, than it would be for him to live his physical life outside the girdle of this visible world. But you may respond, "Is it possible to take up this standard, to live by these invisible things, and at the same time do that which is best and wisest in the actual contact of life with the world? I am in business, and my business tasks all my strength and tact. How may I be devoted to these interests that have a lawful claim, and at the same time hold by these spiritual powers?" Why, if you do not hold by the spiritual powers you cannot rightly weigh the claims of your business. Until you come to recognise the fact that God is a reality to your toil just as much as He is a reality to your faith you will be a stumbler in the world, and will be perpetually falling. You cannot take up any matter that comes to your everyday struggle, and look at it really with the finest insight until you look at it spiritually—until you look at it righteously and consider it from a religious standpoint. You must

expound to yourself this doctrine: "My contract with my fellow-man or pledge with my neighbour is an opportunity to be just and true. I must reverence his rights as well as my own in the work which connects us, in the commerce which brings us together." Do you not see where the large outlook flashes in? It comes on that side where the whole thing is weighed and comprehended, not as a matter that is bound to the earth, but as a matter that can be transfigured with the very light of heaven. But let us turn aside from that and think of other things. There are experiences that are more sacred to you than those of barter and trade. There are emotions that are more hallowed than those that come up on exchange. You have a deeper life than that which can be reckoned by your ledgers. This is the life of the spiritual, which is being trained for a Divine destiny. By that life of the Spirit God often brings to you dispensations of discipline and disappointment. Now, if you think only of that which is visible you will be utterly puzzled. If you take faith away from the world where you stand the eyes of your heart will be smitten with blindness. (*W. R. Davis, D.D.*) *The power of things invisible:—* "Temporal," more properly transitory. It was a supreme point of view the apostle had attained. It is natural for men to be impressed by things visible, by things which they call "solid," as property, commerce, government. The city of Ephesus, which Paul had left, was celebrated the world over for its magnificence. The wealth, the magnificence, seemed destined to last to the end of time. Yet Paul looked upon all and said, "These things are transitory." He looked up with other than the physical vision, and saw God and declared Him eternal. Yet this God is unseen, as unseen as that force that holds the world together. 1. This insight of Paul was evidence of great spiritual attainment. It showed that his soul had been struck through and through with heavenly truth. 2. This experience was not peculiar to the apostle. Says he, "While we look," &c. He was writing to the Corinthians, whose spiritual attainments were low. This spiritual insight belongs to all Christians, but more perfectly to those who are more perfect. I. THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL IS, THAT IT BRINGS THESE TRUTHS TO THE MINDS OF MEN CONTINUALLY AND IRRESISTIBLY. This is the evidence of its Divine authority. It addresses the faith, revealing the eternal nature of invisible things. II. HOW THESE TRUTHS REVEAL TO US THE GLORY OF THE HUMAN SOUL. We speak of the grandeur of the intellect in man, as manifested in art, literature, laws, forms of government, and we do well. We grow eloquent over the power and beauty of the human spirit. Nowhere as in the gospel does the Divine mind address the human mind as co-substantial. III. NO MAN IS GREAT IN ANY DEPARTMENT WHO DOES NOT SEE THE THINGS THAT ARE INVISIBLE. The statesman, only when he looks above the material and grasps great principles, has breadth and depth of observation. He sees when others see not. The poet, thus inspired, beholds what others do not see, as he looks upon the storm, that seems to tear and split the very azure overhead. What a grasp this insight gives the philosopher! It makes the master everywhere. So, if we look upon the Church. When sorrow surges against us, when difficulties spring up as mountains before us, and we are able to smile at them all because we know that they are short-lived, because we have a vision of the things that never perish. IV. HERE IS INDICATED THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH. The world says, "Look at me, look at my art; see the permanent things that I have wrought." The world is unfriendly. Now the Church does not exist, primarily, for charity, nor for education; but to bring men to Christ, and then lead them to see the source of all true permanence. No man has the Christian work wrought in him until he grasps the invisible. V. HOW THIS VISION OF THE PERISHABLE NATURE OF THESE EARTHLY THINGS AND OF THE ENDURING QUALITY OF THE SPIRITUAL THINGS ENABLES THE CHRISTIAN TO TRIUMPH OVER ALL THINGS ON THE EARTH. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *Looking upon the unseen:—* Whatever is unknown, dark or mysterious, has a strong attraction for a certain order of minds. We find this fact illustrated in all departments of human knowledge. The profoundest secrets of the material world do not discourage, but rather give zest to persevering investigation. Facts in nature as yet unexplained are sure to be the facts to which the greatest amount of thought and inquiry are devoted. If any door is shut, that is sure to be the one men are most anxious to open, and at which they knock with untiring persistency. No failure, no difficulty, no loss, can quench this feeling. Thus, for instance, how many expeditions have been sent out to discover a north-west passage through the regions of eternal ice? Now there is something in this tendency of the human mind far nobler than idle curiosity, and we know that it answers a most important purpose. Had it not been for this insatiable craving after the unknown, the boundaries of knowledge would never have

been pushed to their present extent. Nor is this tendency altogether unlawful when manifested towards religious truth. Any man who, acknowledging the limitation of his faculties, sets himself to understand all that the Scriptures reveal about the invisible world, undertakes a perfectly justifiable as well as an important and interesting inquiry. There are certain features of our life in the present day which are well calculated to stimulate our craving after the things which are not seen. The common occupations of the world, the keen and ever-increasing competition of business, the cares of home, have a most pernicious effect upon us, unless some strong counteracting influence is brought to bear. They make us grow intensely secular in thought and feeling. They beguile us by insensible degrees into the belief that what we see is the only reality. Only yield to the unrestrained influence of "the things which are seen and temporal," and they will soon drag you down to the very dust. Now the great corrective of this state of mind is to look away to the things which are not seen. The very remembrance that all round about us there is a region of spiritual existence—a world which, though unperceived by the senses, is as real, nay, far more real, than the solid earth on which we tread, will help to keep the soul from injury. Within that invisible region lie all our supreme interests. God is there and Christ is there, and all the gracious influences which save and sanctify the soul. The unseen magnetic pole controls the needle of the compass, and enables the mariner to navigate the pathless ocean. The injurious secularism and materialism which grow out of the busy occupations of common life, are re-enforced by a tendency which pervades modern thought. The errors of mankind seem to move in a circle, and as the wheel revolves ancient heresies are found to turn up again, only slightly modernised. Thus some who set themselves up for our teachers in these times, are attempting a revival of Sadduceeism. They are trying to prove that we are shut in on all sides by solid walls of matter, and that there is no existence outside and independent of it. Men feel a spiritual existence within them, which no philosophy can satisfactorily explain away. The course of God's providence in our life, will often turn our thoughts towards the unseen. Poverty, disappointment, failure—anything which deprives this earthly existence of its attractions, quenches its joys, and turns it into a scene of suffering, naturally leads us to look elsewhere for the happiness we can no longer find here. Of course this does not always follow. The poor may be as worldly as the rich, the depressed, and the sorrowful, as the hopeful and the happy. But the painful discipline is designed for this end, and it is accomplished in those who pay reverent attention to the lessons of Divine chastisement. There is one kind of sorrow, however, which is more successful for this purpose than any other—that which we feel when God calls our friends into the unseen. The emigration of relatives to some distant country of the earth, instantly invests that country with a new interest. It may be useless for us to think about the future for the purpose of discovery, but it is not useless for the purpose of preparation. The truest wisdom, as well as the truest piety justifies this attitude of mind. (*Bemvell Bird.*)

Things temporal :—It needed no Divine revelation to teach us the fact of the text.

1. The transient condition of everything around us we are compelled to learn in every successive stage of experience. The scenes and thoughts of childhood differ from those of youth. Manhood opens out prospects unseen before. Even in maturity nothing continues in one stay.
2. If we take a wider view we learn the same lesson. Science shows us the vast structural changes ever going on in the material world which we have regarded as abiding for ever. The historian tells of conditions of national and social life which existed a few generations ago, and that are altogether novel to the present age.
3. Now, this fact may be made to appear very sad, if not disastrous, unless we look at it from a higher standpoint than that of selfishness. Many would have all things remain as they were from the beginning, and, because they cannot escape change, they declaim against the uncertainties that surround their comfort. But we are bound to look at it in another light. God means that this changeableness shall work out high and noble results. If we saw the same things before our eyes each day, what could we learn? But, turning new pages, we become acquainted with new facts, and life has larger meaning. God intended the things that are seen to be temporal, and He will not alter the make of the world because it is unpleasant. We have to adapt ourselves to His will, and try to understand His gracious purpose. The more we do this, the more shall we perceive how good is the arrangement; we shall then thank Him that life is saved from the dreariness of monotony. "The things that are seen are temporal," may be to us—I. A WORD OF STIMULUS. 1. There are those who are

depressed by the remembrance that the morrow will be unlike to-day, that the best work they do is but one of the temporary things. "What is the use of toiling? Our relation with the world is of the briefest kind"; so they stand aside from all social, political, and religious strifes, and, watching the efforts of their neighbours with a kind of contemptuous pity, say, "It will be all the same a hundred years hence." Is this correct? No! That which is done in this generation may not last till the next, yet the character of the next will be determined by it. Again, it will not be all the same to ourselves a hundred years hence if we have failed to do our duty now. We shall have lost our chance of education. We shall have been unfaithful to present responsibility. 2. But let those who are depressed by the temporary nature of things take the example of God Himself. "The grass of the field to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven"; but God does not say, "It does not matter how I make this, for it will soon be back again to dust." Despite the fact that its being is so brief, God makes it as well as if it were to last for ever. There are myriads of tiny living creatures that live but one summer. But put them under a microscope, and you will see that God has put into them the same skill and power as is seen in the colossal creatures that are to live for a century. 3. Remember, too, that it is not the work done, but its results, to which we are to look. Walk down any street, and look at the shops and warehouses. What is their chief business? Why, to provide things that perish in the using. But these perishable things are necessary to sustain the body, and within that body are a mind and a soul being trained for an immortal life. Is there not stimulus to activity in this thought? 4. This is an answer to those who taunt us with making much of the other world and little of this—this world is more to us than it ever can be to the man who believes in no future. For we see the high reason for which we are placed here. The things we deal with are temporal, but they are destined to help in producing eternal results. We are bound to use them carefully, diligently, lovingly, with a sense that they are consecrated to the noblest and loftiest ends. II. A WORD OF WARNING. 1. We Christians believe that this world is our Father's world, that it is according to His gracious will, and for the best ends, that we should have to do with things that perish. It would surely be a gross wrong to imagine that there has been some mistake in the arrangements for which God is responsible. The temporal character of the things is according to the will of God, and therefore should be regarded not as a curse but as a blessing. Is there any condition in which you have ever been placed which you would like to last? You know that it would become intolerable after a while—nay, that your mind is so constituted that, if things without did not change of themselves, you would labour to produce a change on your own account. 2. It is at this point, however, that the special warning is essential. Much with which we have to do is beautiful and desirable. To delight in them is but natural, and there come times when we not only wish they were permanent, but when we are inclined to think that they ought to and must last. Ah, when such thoughts come stealing into the mind, would that a voice could be heard gently reminding us of the fact that the "things that are seen are temporal," and so save us from the calamity of forgetting the unseen things which are eternal, and which must soon break in upon our delusions and dispel our dreams! III. A WORD OF COMFORT AND HOPE. It was so to Paul himself in the special difficulties and troubles which tested his strength and courage. Look at the description he gives of his condition in this very chapter. Now, a man thus tried must find consolation and help somewhere; he finds it chiefly, no doubt, in the presence and grace of his Divine Master, but he finds it likewise in the remembrance that the things seen are temporal, that that which he endures will not, cannot last for ever. While it may be true that those who are in prosperity and are filled with earthly satisfactions dread the approach of any change that may disturb their peace, the possibility of change is the very thing that affords hope to those who are distressed and perplexed. It would be a horrible prospect to them if they thought that things must remain just as they are. But, thank God, invariability is unknown in human life. The man whose situation is worst to-day thinks of to-morrow with its possibilities, and that comforts him. At least, this the Christian knows for himself—that there will be an end of his sorrow at the last; the final change of all will bring him rest. And in the thought of that he endures "the light affliction," &c. (*W. Braden.*) *The seen and unseen*.—Here we have an exposition of St. Paul's life, the key which unlocks the most extraordinary character, perhaps, which this world has ever given. If we ask why he was so abundant in labours, so patient in suffering, so persevering in his work, why he did so much and sacrificed so much,

and was so cheerful and triumphant through it all, here is the answer. He looked not at the present and transient things, but he looked at the unseen and everlasting things. It must be so with us; all true religion begins and ends with the invisible. It has to do with the invisible God, with the unseen Saviour, with a future judgment, with another world. You will perceive that in these words we have—I. THE SEEN. We have here, then, two classes of objects. The seen, by which Paul specially meant the visible sources of his trouble. He meant the prison at Philippi, the scourge, the rod, the stoning, the amphitheatre at Ephesus, and all the outward sources of trouble through which he had passed. But he meant a great deal more than that; he meant everything visible to the senses, all that he had ever seen—his native city and province, the class around Gamaliel, the Holy City, the temple at Jerusalem—all that was splendid in Christianity, all that was magnificent in Rome, all that was luxurious at Ephesus. He meant more than that: things men had made—the hut and the palace, the clean and the impure. He meant things God had made—trees, flowers, rocks and rivers, mountains and valleys—everything visible to the bodily eye, everything within the sphere of our mortal life. These are the things which are seen. II. BY THOSE WHICH ARE NOT SEEN he meant, first and chiefly, God. All invisible things roll themselves up at last into that one great word, “God,” and Paul meant that; for while the bodily eye sees the material universe, the Christian man looks beyond the mere structure, and he sees the Creator God looking out through every star, touching every flower, fashioning all rivers, moving the springs of the universe, keeping them aright—that in all this there must be a God, an infinite Spirit, the unseen. He meant, further, by the unseen, the spirit of man. We look upon the body and see man as he stands before us—man in his bodily form; but we do not see man. There is something beyond the mere house; we see the house, but not the inhabitants. The real man—the spirit that looks out through the eyes, that listens through the ears, that moves all those springs—is unseen. And then we go yet further. The Christian man believes that there is another world which is not visible to the senses, that in that world God is actually revealed. God is here, but we do not see Him; He does not manifest Himself. We can only know Him by faith, by communion with the Spirit; but the moment a soul leaves the body God is visible. And there is yet more than this which the Christian man often thinks of. We see around us all kinds of actions; we see a great deal of excitement and turmoil; but underneath all these things the Christian man beholds great principles—truth, justice, loyalty to God, love, faith—and he regulates his life accordingly. To illustrate this: There is that word “law” that we so often use. What a force it has in our own country! But what is law? It is not the policeman, the magistrate, the jurors, the judge, the court, the legislation, nor the Queen—these are but the outward and visible signs of the power which we call law. Law, then, is unseen, and yet it is a force pressing upon us every day, touching our life at home and abroad, keeping society together. It is so with regard to the eternal principles which a Christian man looks at. He sees beyond all the fluctuations and excitements of society great principles, and he looks at the things which are not seen. III. Then we have THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THESE TWO CLASSES OF OBJECTS. The things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal. Now you may view this contrast in several ways. If you take the material universe in its present form, the oldest of the things which are seen are temporal. It began to be, it will cease to be, as it now is. “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up.” But now place in opposition to that the fact that God is eternal. The creation changes, the Creator is the same. If all material things vanish, I have the Father of my spirit to whom I can plead. I can do without the material; I cannot do without God, and I have Him still. That which connects us with the visible is temporal, while that which connects us with the invisible is eternal. St. Paul makes the distinction in this very chapter. He speaks of the outward man and the inward man. Now it is the body that links us with the visible, and the body is temporal, but it is the soul which links us with the invisible, and the soul is everlasting. Well, now, look at the habit of the Christian man in relation to these things. We are said to look at the things which are not seen. The word “look” is a very peculiar one, and it has these two meanings. First of all the steady, fixed gaze. You walk through a garden with some friend, and you see the shrubbery and the flowers and the walks, and as you pass through, your friend says to you, “Did you see such a flower? did you notice such a tree?” You turn back, you look at it again, you look until it is impressed upon

your memory and your mind. You had seen the whole of it before, but you had not looked at anything in particular. The other meaning of the word is even more forcible than this. Our word "scope" in the English language is taken from the very word which St. Paul here uses, and the meaning is that the scope of our life is towards the invisible. Everything tends towards that; our life is arranged on that plan; that is our aim to secure the invisible blessings; that is the scope of our life. To use a modern phrase, you know that in the great railways there are many branch lines; but there is a trunk line into which all the branch lines run, and so the trunk line of the apostle was the invisible. He was kind to all with whom he met, he took an interest in everything that he saw, he was gentle to everybody, and was willing to help everybody, he admired everything that was worth admiring; but still the trunk line of his life was towards the invisible, the everlasting, and all his earthly plans and joys ran into that and served it. We have still business to attend to; we have the family and literature and recreations; but all must be arranged in relation to the everlasting. It will not make you less attentive to earthly duties. It is said of the lark that while up in the sky it can see the smallest speck of grass down below. And so the man soaring in contemplation and looking towards the everlasting God will attend to all the little duties that come upon him day by day. It should be so with us. And now for some results which I will only just mention to you, and the first will be this. Looking at the unseen and the everlasting, you will have decision of character—you will have a controlling influence for your whole life. In the early days of navigation the mariners did not venture far from the coast. They were guided by the hills and the mountains, and they were afraid to go out of sight of them, so they could not go far to sea; but when the compass was invented they could then guide their ship away at sea as well as near to the land; they could guide it in the darkness as well as in the light, and so they could make long and perilous voyages. It is even so with us. We must have something to guide us. If we have the unseen and the everlasting, we shall not be influenced so much by things that are seen all around us—the excitements of life, the turmoil, all the stir and bustle of this earthly state; we shall have some higher, some nobler influence guiding us continually. Temptation says, "Enjoy the present; drink that cup of joy now"; but the man who looks at the unseen says, "No! I can see the serpent at the bottom of that cup, and in the results of that sinful pleasure." And so once more looking at the unseen gives calmness and even joy, amidst the sorrows and afflictions of life. He heaps one word upon another in order to express his meaning. He says our "light affliction." In labours more abundant, in stripes beyond measure, in prisons more frequent ("light affliction"!), of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one ("light affliction"!), Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep ("light affliction"!). (*Ishmael Jones.*) *Things temporal and things eternal*:—If you were to track the first steps in the growth of a flower just emerging from the seed, you would discover, upon the cracking open of the seed, that one minute vegetable fibre commences presently to be pressed thence away up through the overlying soil into the air and the light, and another vegetable thread begins, at the same time, to wind itself away down through the underlying soil into the ground beneath. If, now, you will sink a single delicate thought into the botanical fact just stated, you will see, I am sure, that that very process of groping up into the air of one part of its nature, and at the same time groping down into the deep places of the earth with the other part of its nature, is a statement in miniature, and a quiet prophecy of the double affinity with which the plant is endowed, and the twin congeniality with which it has been by God made instinct. I have made use of this illustration only that it may serve us as a picture to study our thoughts by as we grow them. Man also buds in two directions; he too is overlaid with a twin tendency. He is Divinely endowed with one impulse that tends to push him out into the world, and into the association of things that lie easily in sight, and he is endowed, also, with a companion impulse that inclines to conduct him into the fellowship of things upon which the sun does not shine. But each, like the soil under the plant, offers to become to him the means of his life and the material for his fixity, his power, and his hope. One object we have had in guiding our thought here by the simile of the plant has been that we may guard ourselves against the easy and all too common danger of cutting off one of two impulses that assert themselves in us for the sake of avoiding the painful conflict that we are liable to be involved in when both of these impulses work in us at the same time. If the plant were intelligent or conscious, we can imagine how easy

and natural it would be for it to lop off its plumules (the portion by which it rises into the air) that it might throw all its vigour into the radicle, or to lop off its radicle in order to throw all its vigour into the plumules. It is noticeable that in the realms of matter and of persons both tendencies and forces are harnessed up in pairs. God always drives in pairs. The earth, in its daily progress, is maintained by the power of a centripetal as well as a centrifugal force. Truths, like the early apostles, always go two and two. There is not one truth, whether in science or in theology, that we can quite make an all-over commitment of ourselves to. We resemble the plant, then, in being endowed with two impulses, both of them God-given, but to neither of which we can allow absolute monopoly. One of them is the impulse to let ourselves out into the contact of things that are in easy view, to things that can be seen and heard and handled; the other—an impulse equally Divine—to draw into intercourse with the realm of invisible realities—the soil in which are intertwined the roots of our life, the hidden ground in which are laid our life's deep foundations. We have dwelt at some length upon this feature of the matter for the reason that we do not like to leave the impression, or even to start the suspicion, that intercourse with things that are seen or contact with things that can be handled is any less proper or any less Divinely intended than fellowship with the invisible realities with which the seen ones are underlaid. It is as proper to eat as it is to pray. We must scrupulously dissociate from that word "eternal" all such idea as that its reference is distinctively future. It is as true of us as of the flower we have just mentioned, that we are living in two worlds at one and the same time. Unconsciously, perhaps, to ourselves, this realm of the eternal is continually giving a colour to our thoughts and putting its blessed application upon our experiences. There is not a day we live but what, with greater or less distinctness, there looms up before our minds, like mountains impalpably establishing themselves in the darkness, the dim outlines of realities that words cannot teach, but only hint at, that no more pertain to the region of days and things, and that are dimly felt by us as no more subject to the laws of change and decay than truth and justice and love and righteousness are conceived by us as coming in with the dawn and then going out with the evening twilight. Indeed, it is just that sort of realities precisely—truth, justice, love, and righteousness—which go to compose the realm of the eternal. You can call the right an abstraction, but it grows logically concrete so fast as your thought begins to twine itself about it and your heart to pulse its gentle wave into it. This sense of the Eternal—spelt with a large "E"—then, is the key to the religious position, to the Christian position. To quicken that sense, to develop it, to intensify it, is bound to be the master-purpose of all religious training. It is with this end in view that we meet one another here in the sanctuary. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Things temporal and things eternal*:—I suppose there is no one who would doubt the truth stated in our text, and yet I am afraid that the bulk of us act upon the conviction that there is nothing so permanent as the tangible and visible, and nothing so illusive and transient as the invisible. Yet—1. The truth affirmed in our text is confirmed by history, and, after all, the story of successive ages can show best of all the relative permanency of the seen and the unseen. If we go back over history we shall find that the most transient are the things which we can see with the physical eye and feel with the physical touch. Review the history of the building up of empires. Solomon's empire is gone, but the truths he uttered remain. What we have of Roman power to-day as a living energy is not found in physical structures, but in the wisdom that was embodied in her laws. 2. This truth is taught by science. It is strange that, as the result of the study of material objects, men are forced to the conclusion that material things are the most transient. Man talks loftily, and says, "I like to stand on *terra firma*," and he thinks he has said a very strong thing. Now, what of it? This grand old Book has always said that there is a time coming when *terra firma* will cease to be *terra firma*. 3. This truth is confirmed by our personal experience. Here is this body of mine. They tell me that it changes completely every few years. My personality does not depend upon what the physical eye can see of me. Amid all these changes there is something within which is not seen. Well, then, what are the meaning and ministry of these tangible things? They are intended as helps to enable us to get at the intangible and the invisible. For instance, gold and silver and other earthly possessions are only symbols of the real wealth of which God would have all men be heirs. (*D. Davies.*) *Looking at the unseen*:—I. NOW, FIRST, I WISH TO SAY A WORD OR TWO ABOUT WHAT SUCH A LOOK WILL DO FOR US. Paul's notion is, as you will see if you look at the context, that if we want to understand the visible, or to get the highest good out of the things that are seen,

we must bring into the field of vision "the things that are not seen." The case with which he is dealing is that of a man in trouble. A man that has seen the Himalayas will not be much overwhelmed by the height of Helvellyn. They who look out into the eternities have the true measuring rod and standard by which to estimate the duration and intensity of the things that are present. We are all tempted to do as villagers in some little hamlet do—think that their small local affairs are the world's affairs, and mighty, until they have been up to London and seen the scale of things there. If you and I would let the steady light of eternity and the sustaining pressure of the "exceeding weight of glory" pour into our minds, we should carry with us a standard which would bring down the greatness, dwindle the duration, lighten the pressure of the most crushing sorrow, and would set in its true dimensions everything that is here. It is for want of that that we go on as we do, calculating wrongly what are the great things and what are the small things. But, on the other hand, do not let us forget that this same standard which thus dwindles also magnifies the small, and, in a very solemn sense, makes eternal the else fleeting things of this life. For there is nothing that makes this present existence of ours so utterly contemptible, insignificant, and transitory as to block out of our sight its connection with eternity. If you shut out eternity from our life in time, then it is an inexplicable riddle. Further, this look of which my text speaks is the condition on which time prepares for eternity. The apostle is speaking about the effect of affliction in making ready for us an eternal weight of glory, and he says that it is done while or on condition that, during the suffering, we are looking steadfastly towards the "things that are not seen." But no outward circumstances or events can prepare a weight of glory for us hereafter, unless because they prepare us for the glory. Affliction works for us that blessed result in the measure in which it fits us for that result. II. And so I note that THIS LOOK AT THE THINGS NOT SEEN IS ONLY POSSIBLE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. He is the only window which opens out and gives the vision of that far-off land. I, for my part, believe that, if I might use such a metaphor, He is the Columbus of the New World. Men believed, and argued, and doubted about the existence of it across the seas there until a Man went, and came back again, and then went to found a new city yonder. It is only in Jesus Christ that the look which my text enjoins is possible. For not only has He given a certitude so as that we need now not to say we think, we hope, we fear, we are pretty well sure, that there must be a life beyond, but we can say we know. Not only has He done this, but also in Him, His life of glory at God's right hand in heaven, is summed up all that we really can know about that future. We look into the darkness in vain; we look at Him, and, though limited, the knowledge is blessed. Not only is He our sole medium of knowledge, and Himself the revelation of our heaven, but it is only by Him that man's thoughts and desires are drawn to, and find themselves at home in, that tremendous thought of immortality. III. And now, lastly, THIS LOOK SHOULD BE HABITUAL WITH ALL CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. Paul takes it for granted that every Christian man is, as the habitual direction of his thoughts, looking towards those "things that are not seen." The original shows that even more distinctly than our translation, but our translation shows it plainly enough. He does not say, "works for us an exceeding weight of glory *for*," but "*while*" we look, as if it were a matter of course. Note what sort of a look it is which produces these blessed effects. The word which the apostle employs here is a more pointed one than the ordinary one for "seeing." It is translated in other places in the New Testament, "Mark" them which walk so as ye have us for an "ensample," and the like. And it implies a concentrated, protracted effort and interested gaze. There has to be a positive shutting out of all other things. It is no mere tautology in which the apostle indulges when he says, "Whilst we look not at the things that are seen," but see. Here they are pressing in upon our eyeballs, all round us, insisting on being looked at, and, unless we consciously avert our eyes, we shall not see anything else. They monopolise us unless we resist the intrusive appeals that they make to us. We are like men down in some fertile valley, surrounded by rich vegetation, but seeing nothing beyond the green sides of the glen. We have to go up to the hill-top if we are to look out over the flashing ocean, and behold afar off the towers of the mother city across the restless waves. Now, as I have said, the apostle regards this conscious effort at bringing ourselves into touch, in mind and heart and faith, with "the things that are not seen" as being a habitual characteristic of Christian men. I am very much afraid that the present generation of Christian people do not, in anything like the degree in which they should, recreate and strengthen themselves with the contemplation which he here recommends. Let

us turn away our eyes from the gauds that we can see, and open the eyes of our spirits on the things that are, the things where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *In and by things temporal are given things eternal*:—There is a great deal said about looking away from the things of time to the things of eternity; and Paul, I suppose, is credited with this idea on the score of the language here cited. Whether he would accept the credit is more doubtful. It certainly is no conception of his that we are to ignore the temporal, and go clear of it, in order to being fixed in the eternal. It is not to literally look away from temporal things in order to see the eternal, but it is to see the temporal in the eternal, or through it and by means of it. Paul, I am sure, had no other conception. By not looking at the temporal things, he means simply not fastening our mind to them, or upon them, as the end of our pursuit; for he calls them “things that are seen,” which implies that, in another and more simply natural sense, they are looked at, for how can they be things seen if they are not? I. There is, then, I am going now to show, A FIXED RELATION BETWEEN THE TEMPORAL AND THE ETERNAL, SUCH THAT WE SHALL BEST REALISE THE ETERNAL BY RIGHTLY USING THE TEMPORAL. Things temporal he saw a great deal more penetratingly than any mere worldly mind could; saw far enough into them to discover their unsolidity and their transitory consequence, and to apprehend just so much the more distinctly the solid and eternal verities represented by them. Things and worlds are passing—shadows all that pass away. The durable and strong, the real continent, the solid landing-place, is beyond. But the present things are good for the passage, good for signs, good as shadows. So he tramps on through them, cheering his confidence by them, having them as reminders, and renewing, day by day, his outward man by what of the more solid and glorious future is so impressively represented and captivatingly set forth in them. He does not refuse to see with his eyes what God puts before his eyes. He rejoices that the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead—all the truths eternal—are, from His creation, clearly seen. He loves society also—rejoices in its new prospects now that the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus is set up in it. And, what is more than all, the Son of God Himself has come out in His eternity to be incarnate in these scenes, and live in them and look upon them with His human eyes. And so these all are hallowed by the enshrining, for a time, of His glorious divinity in them, becoming temporalities redolent of His eternity. Our apostle looked thus on the things that are temporal as not looking on them, but as looking straight through on the things eternal, which they represent and prepare. He looked on them just as one looks on a window-pane when he studies the landscape without. In one view he looks on the glass, in another he does not. Thus it is a true use, I conceive, of things temporal that they are to put us under the constant, all-dominating impression of things eternal. And we are to live in them as in a transparency, looking through every moment, and in all life's works and ways acting through, into the grand reality world of the life to come.

II. Having gotten our conception thus of the apostle's meaning, as well as a good argument from his religious habit and character to prove it, let us next CONSIDER THE FACT THAT ALL TEMPORAL THINGS AND WORKS ARE ACTUALLY DESIGNED OR PLANNED FOR THIS VERY OBJECT—viz., to conduct us on, or through, into the discovery of things eternal. Every existing thing or object in the created empire of God, all forms, colours, heights, weights, magnitudes, forces, come out of God's mind covered all over with tokens, saturated all through with flavours of His intelligence. They represent God's thought, the invisible things of God; and an angel coming out into the world, instead of seeing nothing in them but only walls, would see God expressed by them, just as we are expressed by our faces and bodies. The invisible things of God, all His eternal realities, would be clearly seen. No, we do not become worldly by looking at things temporal, but by not looking at them closely enough, and with due religious attention. How different, for example, would they be if we could but stay upon them long enough, and devoutly enough, to see the prodigious workings hid in them. We should find them swinging and careering in geometric figures, weighed and spaced in geometric proportions; and what are these but thoughts of mind and laws of thought, eternal in their very nature? There is yet another and more popular way in which these temporal and visible things carry forces and weights of eternity with them—they are related as signs or images to all the most effective and most glorious truths of religion. They are all so many physical word-forms given to make up images and vocables for religion, for which reason the Scripture is full of them, naming and describing everything by them—by the waters and springs that quench our thirst, by the bread that feeds our bodies, by the growing

corn in its stages, by the tares that grow with it, by the lilies in their clothing, by the hidden gold and silver and iron of the mountains, by the sea, the storms, the morning mist, the clouds, the sun, &c. Our complaint, therefore, that temporal things hide the eternal, and keep them out of sight, is much as if one should complain of telescopes hiding the stars, or window-panes shutting out the sun, or even of eyes themselves obstructing the sense of things visible. There is a way, I know, of handling these temporals coarsely and blindly, seeing in them only just what a horse or a dog might see. A brutish mind sees only things in things, and no meanings. But it cannot be said, without the greatest wrong to God, that He has given us these temporalities to live in for any such use. Spirituality of habit and thought could not be made more possible, or the lack of it more nearly impossible. Hence, also, the fact so often remarked, that forms, colours, objects, scenes, have all a power so captivating over childish, and indeed over all young, minds. The child or youth thinks not of it, and yet the power of the fact is on him. The real and true account of the fact is that the eternal is in the things looked on so eagerly by these young eyes, shining out, filling them with images, starting their thoughts, kindling fires of truth and eternity in their spirit. Again, it is the continual object and art of all God's management, temporal and spiritual, secular and Christian, to bring us into positions where we may see, or may rather be compelled to see, the eternal things of His government. So little reason have we to complain, as we do continually, that our relations, occupations, and works take us away from the discovery of such things, and leave us no time or capacity for it. Thus, at our very first breath, we are put in what is called the family state. In the providence of it we live. By the discipline of it we learn what love is, in all the severe and faithful and tender offices of it. And so, as it were from the egg, we are configured to the eternal family state for which we are made. So, also, if we speak, or revelation speaks, of an unseen government or kingdom, where we get the very form of the thought from our outward kingdoms below. Meantime the ordinance of want and labour, and all the industrious works and cares of life—fearful hindrances, we say, to any discovery of God—what are they still but works and struggles leading directly into His very seat? What do you do in them, in fact, but just go to the earth and the great powers of nature, to invoke them by your industry, and by your labour sue out, as it were, from them the supply you want? And when you come so very close to God, even to the powers and laws which are His reigning, everlasting thoughts, what temptation have you to lift your suit just one degree, and make your application even to God Himself! His scheme of providence, also, is adjusted so as to open windows on us continually in this earthly house of our tabernacle, through which the building of God, not made with hands, may be the better discovered. God is turning our experience always in a way to give us the more inward senses of things, acting always on the principle that the progress of knowledge, most generically and comprehensively regarded, is but a progress out of the matter view into the mind view of things; for all the laws, properties, classifications of objects, as we just now saw, are thoughts of God made visible in them, so that all the growth of knowledge is a kind of spiritualising of the world—that is, a finding of the eternal in the temporal. For God will not let us get lodged in the temporal, but is always shoving us on to what is beyond. Besides, once more, we have eternal garnered up in us all, in our very intelligence; immortal affinities which, if we forget or suppress, are still in us; great underlaid convictions, also, ready to burst up in us and utter even ringing pronouncements; and, besides, there is an inevitable and sure summons always close at hand, as we know, and ready for its hour, whose office it is to bring the great eternal near and keep them in power. Here, then, we are all going on—or in, rather—to be unsphered here, and reinsphered, if we are ready for it, in a promised life more stable and sufficient. The eternal has been with us all the way, even when we could not find it. Now it is fully discovered, and become our mansion state. The fugacities are left behind us. The eternal things are now most distinctly seen, and the temporal scarcely seen at all. So that, as we now look back on the old physical order, it was arranged, we see, to be a kind of transparency, and we were set in among and behind its objects and affairs, before open windows, as it were, there to look out on the everlasting and set our life for it. Two things now, having reached this point, let me ask you to note, or have established. 1. First, that you are never to allow yourself in the common way of speaking, that proposes to look away from the things of time, or calls on others to do it. Never speak as if that were the way of an unworldly Christian, for it is not. The unworldly Christian, if he has the true mettle of a great life in him, never

looks away from the things of time, but looks only the more piercingly into them and through. He does not expect to find God beyond them, but in them, and by means of them. God help you rather to be manly enough to use the world as it is, and get your vision levelled for eternal things in it and by it. You will come up unto God by uses of mastery, and not by retreat and feeble deprecation. 2. Another correspondent caution, secondly, needs to be noted, and especially by those who are not in the Christian way of life. They inevitably hear a great deal said of spiritual-mindedness, and they see not any meaning to give it which does not repel them. What are called spiritual things appear to them to be only a kind of illusion, a fog of mystic meditation or mystic expectation, which the fonder, less perceptive believers press out thin, because they have not strength enough to body their life in things more solid and rational. The spiritually-minded person spiritualises temporal things and the temporal life by nothing but by just seeing them in their most philosophic sense. He takes hold of the laws, finds his way into the most inmost thoughts, follows after the spirit force everywhere entempled, and puts the creation moving at every turn in the supreme order of mind. If this be illusion, God give us more of it. The spiritual habit is, in this view, reason, health, and everlasting robustness. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) **The things which are not seen . . . which . . . are eternal.**—*Looking at the things which are not seen.*—I. LET US EXPLAIN THIS STATE OR HABIT OF MIND. 1. The apostle draws a marked distinction between things seen and not seen. The first includes all terrestrial pursuits, customs, callings, and objects—all those things after which “the children of this world” seek. Many of these things are lawful and necessary, and a vast multitude unlawful. The Master says, concerning them, “Touch not, taste not, handle not.” On the other hand, the text mentions “the things which are not seen.” These are eternal. 2. At these things not seen, whether spiritual in this life, or celestial, the text requires us to “look.” (1) There is the looking of the natural eye. This, of course, is not referred to, for how can we look at that which is not seen with the bodily eye? (2) The looking of the mind. We constantly speak of perceiving things with which the organs of bodily vision have nothing whatever to do—*e.g.*, the truth. Now, it is in this sense, in part, that we are to “look at the things not seen.” We should endeavour to acquire a clear understanding, a just comprehension of them so far as they are revealed to us. (3) The looking of the heart. This may be directed either to forbidden objects or to lawful and holy ones. Lot’s wife looked back. In what did the guilt of that look consist? Was it merely the circumstance that her visual organs caught sight of the city? The fact was, her heart was in Sodom still. But the text presents to us our duty. The affections of the renewed mind are centred on new objects, on things that are pure and immortal. When we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son, and His love is shed abroad in our hearts, our desires will be toward Him and the remembrance of His name. II. LET US ATTEND TO A FEW ARGUMENTS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS WHICH MAY INCITE US TO ASPIRE TO IT. 1. The uncertainty of all things that are seen, and the certainty of things that are not seen. (1) In all things below there is the uncertainty—(a) Of attainment. Many who labour, of course, reap a full reward of their toil. But others, whose plans were equally well laid, whose perseverance was equal to that of their more fortunate brethren, from untoward circumstances have never prospered. Again, how often does it come to pass that a man appears to be prospering, and just at the crisis of expectation some unexpected blow demolishes his fairest hopes. (b) Of possession. No man holds his life on a secure tenure. “Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” What we cherish most is often first taken from us. (2) But no such uncertainty prevails in regard to the things that are not seen. They are firm and sure as the everlasting hills. The children of this world may mourn over toil unrequited, but no man, except by his own fault, ever yet worked for God and lost his labour. 2. The immensely superior value of things not seen. On the same principle on which we would readily sacrifice one pound to gain a thousand, or endure five minutes’ pain if it would secure to us a life’s comfort, we must admit that things below ought to be subordinated to things beyond. 3. In looking at the things which are not seen there is required at times self-denial and taking up the cross. Pursuits which we formerly cherished must be abandoned. We are aiming at a heavenly treasure, and we may calculate on difficulties in endeavouring to secure it, for there is no crown without a cross. But the Lord Jesus left heavenly glories for us; shall we not be willing to leave earthly vanities for Him? 4. The things that are seen will soon lose all the value which they now appear to possess. Gold cannot procure a plaster that will heal a wounded conscience, nor a pillow that will

ease a dying head. The voice of fame and popular applause is sweet siren-music for a while, but it is not heard in the chamber of death. Sensual delights have their day; the enfeebled body cannot endure them. Pitiably beyond explanation is the case of the dying worldling; all his joys are past, and his sorrows are to come. How glorious, on the other hand, are the prospects of the faithful in Christ Jesus! The trial is ending, but the triumph is commencing. (*L. H. Wiseman, M.A.*) *The Christian looking at things not seen* :—Notice—**I. TWO DIFFERENT CLASSES OF OBJECTS.** 1. Things which are seen. 2. Things which are not seen. **II. THE CONDUCT OF THE CHRISTIAN WITH REFERENCE TO THESE OBJECTS.** 1. The text. It represents him in an attitude of attention. The word rendered “look” signifies to look at earnestly, intently, as an archer, for instance, looks at the mark which he wishes to strike, or as a man in a race looks at the goal which he is pressing forward to reach (*Phil. iii. 14*). 2. But what does this involve? (1) Faith—a belief in the existence of unseen spiritual things. Many earthly things which we have never seen we all firmly believe to exist. And the Christian is just as well satisfied of the reality of spiritual things. These things have a probable existence in the estimation of most men. They are believed in very much as we believe that the planets are inhabited, or that such a town as Troy once stood somewhere on the earth. But this is not the Christian’s faith. His is a faith which is to him “the evidence,” or manifestation, “of things unseen.” It serves him in the place of eyes whereby to discern them, enabling him to feel sure of their existence, as sure as you feel at this moment that London exists, or that a few miles from you the ocean is washing with its waters England’s shores (*chap. v. 1*). (2) A high estimation of invisible things—a superlative esteem of them. The apostle, having divided in his mind all existing things into two classes, seems to have asked himself, “Which are the best? which shall I take as the objects of my pursuit?” and then to have decided on invisible things. You cannot bring the men of the world to this. They look only on the things nearest to them, and these, contemplated alone, appear all-important. **III. THE REASON THE APOSTLE ASSIGNS FOR THIS CONDUCT OF THE CHRISTIAN.** Here, as elsewhere, he almost surprises us by the low ground he takes. Ask us why unseen things are to be preferred to the things around us. “They are so much more excellent,” we should say, “so much more able to satisfy the soul.” But the apostle merely says that he prefers them because they are more durable. And here breathes forth the immortality of the soul. “What matters it to me what things are?—will they abide? I am to last for ever—will they?” **IV. THE HAPPY EFFECT PRODUCED ON THE CHRISTIAN BY THE PECULIAR CONDUCT HERE ASCRIBED TO HIM.** 1. It makes all present afflictions seem light to him (*ver. 17*). 2. It will sanctify our afflictions. What Paul means in the previous verse is that they ripen us for the glory before us. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Things unseen to be preferred to things seen* :—**I. I SHALL GIVE A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE THINGS.** 1. As to their intrinsic value, and in this respect the disparity is inconceivable. This I shall illustrate in the two comprehensive instances of pleasure and pain. To shun the one and obtain the other is the natural effort of the human mind. And these principles are co-existent with the soul itself, and will continue in full vigour in a future state. Nay, as the soul will then be matured, and all its powers arrived to their complete perfection, this eagerness after happiness, and aversion to misery, will be also more quick and vigorous. 1. Visible things are not equal to the capacities of the human soul. The soul, which lies obscured in this prison of flesh, gives frequent discoveries of surprising powers; its desires in particular have a kind of infinity. But all temporary objects cannot afford it a happiness equal to its capacity, nor render it as miserable as its capacity of suffering will bear. On the other hand, the soul may possess some degree of happiness under all the miseries it is capable of suffering from external and temporal things. Guilt, indeed, denies it this support; but if there be no anguish resulting from its own reflections, not all the visible things can render it perfectly miserable; its capacity of suffering is not put to its utmost stretch. But, oh! when we take a survey of invisible things we shall find them all great and majestic—not only equal, but infinitely superior, to the most enlarged powers of the human, and even of the angelic, nature. And let me also observe that all the objects about which our faculties will be employed then will be great and majestic, whereas at present we grovel among little sordid things. And, since this is the case, how little should we regard the things that are seen in comparison of them that are not seen! 2. The soul is at present in a state of infancy, and incapable of such degrees of pleasure or pain as it can bear in the future world. 3. And, lastly, all the happiness and misery of the present state, resulting from things that are seen,

are intermingled with contrary ingredients. We are never so happy in this world as to have no uneasiness. On the other hand, we are never so miserable as to have no ingredient of happiness. In heaven the rivers of pleasures flow untroubled with a drop of sorrow: in hell there is not a drop of water to mitigate the fury of the flame. And who, then, would not prefer the things that are not seen to those that are seen? II. THE INFINITE DISPARITY BETWEEN THEM AS TO DURATION. Can you need any arguments to convince you that an eternity of the most perfect happiness is rather to be chosen than a few years of sordid, unsatisfying delight? III. TO SHOW THE GREAT AND HAPPY INFLUENCE A SUITABLE IMPRESSION OF THE SUPERIOR IMPORTANCE OF INVISIBLE TO VISIBLE THINGS WOULD HAVE UPON US. This I might exemplify in a variety of instances with respect to saints and sinners. When we are tempted to any unlawful pleasures, how would we shrink away from the pursuit had we a due sense of the misery incurred and the happiness forfeited by it! When we find our hearts excessively eager after things below, had we a suitable view of eternal things, all these things would shrink into trifles. When the sinner, for the sake of a little present ease, and to avoid a little present uneasiness, stifles his conscience, has he then a due estimate of eternal things? Alas! no; he only looks at the things that are seen. When we suffer any reproach or contempt on a religious account, how would a due estimate of eternal things fortify us with undaunted courage! How would a realising view of eternal things animate us in our devotion! How powerful an influence would a view of futurity have to alarm the secure sinner! How would it hasten the determination of the lingering, wavering sinner! In a word, a suitable impression of this would quite alter the aspect of things in the world, and would turn the concern and activity of the world into another channel. Eternity then would be the principal concern. (*S. Davies, M.A.*) *Looking at the unseen*:—1. We think of men, of their wealth, power, mechanisms, and institutions; we think of our country and the globe. All these seem real, while those things that are unseen we leave for the philosopher's speculation, and for the poet's pen, as being not matters for the consideration of practical men. But the spirit of industry is more than wealth, for it will renew—nay, even surpass—the loss of the past in the achievements of the present. The genius that rears the imposing edifice is more than the edifice itself. We see the vast warehouses which commerce plants, and the spacious mansions which wealth builds; but the spirit of law—that impersonal power that protects them—is more than these visible objects and immediate results. So is it with the institutions of men. Life is the basis, the motive, the end of all man accomplishes. Hope is better than that which hope gets. So it is that statesmen and philanthropists in their wisest aims work for the conservation of these invisible, hidden forces. 2. So, in the physical universe, it is what we do not see that is of prime importance, rather than the things that are seen. The diamond is beautiful, but it were better that all the diamonds should be crushed than that the law of crystallisation should cease to act. Better level the mountain rather than the soil which it helps to nourish should lose the element of productiveness. Better far were it that the stars should be annihilated than that the law of gravitation should fail. These unseen forces appear neither to our hearing nor to our vision, but they are real and abiding. 3. Paul gained what no historic research or scientific insight alone could discover—an apprehension of the unseen by means of religious faith. It was a great achievement on his part, for his life was not one of retirement. He was familiar with Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, &c. It is not the philosophic or scientific, but the Christian temper that belongs to the religious life; it is a devout appreciation of God in Christ; it is an intelligent recognition of His providential control of the world's affairs. Paul saw this unseen power in other lives, and felt it in his own. He knew, and so do we, how this indwelling life and love blazed forth in the suffering martyrs and toiling missionaries, and was a more real, palpable power than city or sea, or the mountain that shadowed both. He saw the greatness of immortality. Several suggestions grow out of this train of thought. Here is—I. THE BEST POSSIBLE ILLUSTRATION OF THE FINENESS AND POWER OF THE HUMAN SOUL, which can thus rise from the transient to the eternal. We are impressed by the genius of the sculptor that sees the angel in the stone; we admire the genius of the musician to whom the music of unwritten harmonies comes before he has touched either organ or score, and that of the scientific man who conducts us amid nature's mysteries through the occult ministry of forces unseen. But I know no other point at which the human spirit comes into nearer contact with Divine wisdom than here. The wisdom that shines in the senate, and the military sagacity that conducts a campaign, command our respect; but the disciple of

Christ in humble life that can say, "I know God, although I have never seen Him; I know eternity, although I have never been there," reveals God's interior light in the soul. It is a higher revelation—it is a prophecy of immortality! Do not tell me that such a soul is to die with the body, affiliated as it is with the spiritual, carrying in itself the promise, the assurance, of everlasting life—an immortality full of splendour! II. THE SECRET OF A GREAT CHARACTER. Power of character comes not from intellectual training or association with the greatest men of the race, but by conscious relations to God, by reflecting the glory shining from above. III. THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL. It is saturated with the unseen. The quiet lake, over whose bosom not the faintest breeze is felt, seems like a mirror swimming between two immensities, the one seen above, the other in its liquid depths. So the gospel shows the Divine realities of both worlds as in a mirror. IV. THE ASPIRATION FOR US. It is the life within the veil. We dwell in cities crowded with monuments of skill, of power, and wealth. The contemplation of these things is apt to pull us down to a low level unless we feel the corrective which the power of the Holy Ghost in our hearts exerts. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *Things seen and unseen*.—"The things which are seen are temporal"—what is it but the tritest axiom of proverbial lore? "The things which are not seen are eternal"—what is it but the furthest reach of faith, the uttermost effort of aspiration? Yet surely such recognition is needed. In view of the changes of time, the mind is in quest of the constants of eternity; but, till the problem be fully stated, what can we hope for but inadequate solutions? Let us attempt, then, to trace the development from human experience of the idea of change, and then consider the flights of fancy, the findings of the reason, and the verdict of the spirit in search for fixity. Change is a thing to which we become inured before we begin to think, while scarcely we can feel. Think of a child, upon a bright May morning, in the middle of a flowery field, himself unfolding, like a blossom in the sun, to the first keen sense of life's delightfulness. He is busy with a thousand plans which no lifetime would suffice to execute, but they are all to be carried out upon that bright May morning. Now picture the sky overclouded, the falling of big raindrops on the grass, the flowers drenched and drooping on the darkened earth, and the child hastening homeward in sorrow. Here is a first lesson in the reading-book of life, a first line in the primer of experience. But how gently is the truth conveyed! For the sun will soon shine out again. But the child will live to see the summer pass; he will live to see the bright days fewer and the dark days more; he will live to see the leaves turn yellow and fall, the flowers wither, and the year decay. Then they will tell him of the coming spring, and make him glad with the promise of fresher flowers and greener leaves. Then comes another step more hard to take, another lesson more sorrowful to learn. There are changes which outlast the seasons; there are losses which the year's revolution can never more repair. There is the change of sickness in cheeks that are daily more hollow, and eyes that are daily more dim. There is the change of death. There is change, too, in the living and the healthy—changes of tone and feeling, changes of frame and figure. There is a change of places, too, as well as of persons. Who that has revisited his childhood's playground or his boyhood's haunts, the old home of the far-spaced years, but has felt it like a shock? Here the poplars and the elms of his infancy are felled. We have spoken of the changes that are measured by a lifetime, and we talk sometimes as if there were no others. The farther we extend the range of historical research, the deeper we sink the fathom-line of geological discovery, the higher we raise the scaling ladder that reaches beyond the stars, the closer we scrutinise the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral domain, the more does all seeming permanence dissolve in change. Many landmarks of supposed stability are being washed away. The doctrine of progressive development has taken the place, in scientific minds, of the once familiar notion of a stereotyped creation. We speak no longer of fixed species, but of successive and surviving forms. And thus, with a wider range of observation, and a broader field of induction, we seem to be rapidly approaching the point of view anticipated of old by Heraclitus, the sage of Ephesus, who found in nature only constant flux, and gazing on the river as it coursed along its channel, the same, yet not the same, each moment that it flowed, saw the facts of the universe exemplified, the mirrored mutability of all things. But we have not yet exhausted the realm of the changeable. For among the things which are seen may be counted, without absurdity, not only the more immediate objects of corporeal vision, but equally those products of the mind which, when formulated, registered, and promulgated, acquire an objective reality in the eyes of men. In many an ancient custom, in many a lordly structure,

in many a ponderous tome, we behold the visible embodiment of some tenacious opinion, or doctrine, or phase of faith. And often the fabric outlasts the faith that reared it, the book survives the opinions of the men who wrote it, the custom perseveres when the belief that produced it is dead. The thoughts of men have undergone a revolution far greater than all the changes that have taken place in the style of our architecture, while the usages of society and the epochs of literature are but a halting and uncertain index of the progress of ideas—a progress which, indeed, they tend sometimes to hinder, and but seldom simply reflect. And now, to conclude our picture of the instability of the things of time, let us think once more of death. Let the world change much or little, we must leave it soon; our eyes shall close upon the tide of time, with its eddying ebbs and flows, the vicissitudes of human fortune, and the changes of human thought. Wherever and whenever in the history of our race the mutability of the things of sense has been strongly impressed upon the mind, the question has inevitably arisen, Is there anything steadfast and sure? Is there rest in the turmoil of life? Shall we find a fixed point amidst the vortex of existence, or a stable bottom to its rolling sea? The search for fixity in the midst of change has assumed sometimes the form of an intellectual problem. When Heraclitus had propounded his doctrine of perpetual flux, a kind of panic seized the mind of Greece. Men despaired of the possibility of knowledge. The sophists, or clever talkers of the day, took advantage of this novel conception of universal change to ridicule the reason of mankind, and rampant scepticism threatened to reign supreme. “No truth,” was the alarm-cry raised, “for there is nothing steadfast to speak the truth about.” If any one were hardy enough to maintain that man was a rational being, or any equally simple proposition, he was instantly met with the retort, “Man is not the same for two moments. Who, then, is the man whom you assert to be rational?” Then Socrates came to the rescue with those general definitions which his disciple, Plato, poetised into animate ideas. Socrates was the first who consciously constructed an abstraction. He was the first to see that, while men changed from hour to hour and died, man still continued permanent, the species outlasting the example, the kind the individual unit. Out of this piece of sober reasoning, by the aid of a vigorous imagination, Plato constructed the ideal world, and endowed it with substantial existence. And thus, behind the transient phantasms of sight and sound, he pictured an everlasting universe of unchangeable realities. Infuse into this Greek conception a little of the Hebrew spirit, endow it with an interest less purely intellectual and more essentially religious—the very fate which actually awaited it when Jews and Greeks were blended in the Alexandrian schools—and so fitly does it harmonise with the Christian mood of mind that the words of my text themselves might almost be mistaken for the verbal reproduction of an old Platonic saw. And this is no surface likeness, this is no chance resemblance. Alike to the Athenian and the Nazarene was it given to lay hold upon the unseen world, and if the grasp of Jesus was the firmer, yet the grasp of Socrates was the first. It is not the philosophical value of abstract definitions, but the moral tone which inspires the philosopher’s researches, upon which we should fix our attention. And what is the verdict of the spirit upon this finding of the reason? It were needless to say we reject, as belonging to the childhood of philosophy, the notion that our abstract ideas, as such, have any substantial existence outside the mind that produced them. For us the religious and intellectual worth of the ideas is this—that they draw our attention to the fact of the permanence, the continuity of these very minds amid the shifts and changes of the outer world. True, not even our ideas are immutable—they vary and expand with our knowledge—and yet they are comparatively lasting as measured against the objects of sight, the sensuous impressions of the moment. But there is a something more enduring still—the link that binds them each to each and blends them in a sovereign unity, the principle of selfhood, the consciousness that makes them ours. And here a new light breaks in upon us, for is it not this constancy of self, this perseverance of the conscious subject, to which alone we owe the knowledge that the world is changing around us? But there is yet another of the findings of reason which the spirit finds fruitful and suggestive. This is that axiom of physical science, anticipated by Empedocles and Leucippus in Greece, and popularised by Lucretius in Rome, concerning the eternity of matter. There is no such thing in nature as annihilation. All change is dissolution only. Corruption is the food of life, decay the beauty and the strength of bloom; and the same leaves that wither in the autumn, and rot upon the ground in winter, clothe the bare branches with a fresher green when spring comes round again. Here, then, we are presented with another exemplification of the truth that

the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal. Matter, in its outward and momentary manifestation, is visible and transient; in its inner, persistent, continuous identity, invisible and permanent. The outward changes we perceive by the senses, the inward constancy we grasp with the mind. And this power of mind to grasp the eternity of matter is a witness of its own eternity. The invisible things of faith are invisible not in fact alone, but equally in nature. The great realities of the spiritual world are neither objects of sense nor the abstractions of such objects, nor imaginative copies of material things. Rather are they certain imperishable principles that pervade the universe. The principle of love, the principle of progress, the principle of reverence, the principle of hope, the principle of trust, the principle of freedom—it is these that pervade all nature, these that outlast all change. And these, the invisible things of eternity, are clearly described by faith in the visible things of time. For look at the very changes to which the things of time are subject, discerning the end from the beginning—is it possible to doubt that they are changes for the better? Finally, as in all else besides, so, too, in the dogmas of theology, there are permanent principles of truth underlying the changing shape. It is never the form of a creed, it is only the faith it inspires, which has wrought any deliverance in society and done any good in the world. As the chords of the spirit still vibrate when the strings of the lyre are mute, and the strain which the ear has drunk in makes melody for ever in the soul, so, though the words of ancient creeds are silent on our lips, the eternal sentiments of veneration, love, gratitude, and trust shall yet maintain their hold upon our lives, shall yet perpetuate their music in our hearts. (*E. M. Geldart, M.A.*)

The changeable and the unchangeable:—1. Here is a written creed drawn up by the finest genius of the Christian Church. Every line bears traces of critical and most pious care, but at the same time the whole was done as the result of human co-operation. How shall we place this creed? We may instantly place it among things which are temporal. What then is it which is by its nature opposed to this thing which is temporal, and is therefore to be reckoned amongst things eternal? The answer is faith. The difference between a creed and faith is the difference between things which are temporal and things which are eternal. Faith is not a human creation, a human contrivance. The creed will vary—faith will abide. One creed cometh and disappeareth after another, but faith abideth for ever. 2. Denominationalism is to be ranked with things which are temporal. What is the quantity which is set in direct opposition as being permanent, yea, everlasting? Its name is Worship—religious homage, religious loyalty, praise of God, and consecration to His service. Denominationalism, like all our little systems, has its day; it serves a most useful purpose. But worship endures. 3. We may apply the same principle to a religious institution. Let us say the Sabbath. Some say that the Sabbath should be on Saturday, and some that it should be on Sunday. The mere day must be set amongst things which are temporal. What is it that is eternal? Rest. You can appoint the day if you please to be Saturday, to be Creation Day, or Resurrection Day, or Pentecostal Day, but the thing you cannot trifle with is God's gift, God's command of rest. With perfect reverence we may apply the principle to the Bible itself. Looking at the Bible externally, it is a book which men made; they made the paper, they cast the type. The Bible, therefore, considered as a book, a manufacture, must be ranked amongst things which are temporal; it has its human aspects. Then what is it that is eternal? The answer is: the thing which is eternal is Revelation—the contact of the Divine mind with the human mind, the specific communication from heaven of heaven's high purpose; a revelation of the nature of God, the economy of providence, the whole scheme of life, with all its mystery of sin, and all its sublimer mystery of atonement. In the fields of controversy we should assent to things eternal. What does controversy intermeddle with? With things that are temporal. Controversy takes up little subjects, minute points; displays its shrewdness and cleverness in the detection of flaws or discrepancies in human economies. What a ground of union we have discovered now in things which are eternal! Who does not in all the Christian Church believe in the necessity of faith, worship, philanthropy, revelation? Yet who has not allowed himself to be driven off into adjacent lines that he might fight angry battles about unimportant things? 4. In coming to God in prayer, we should fix the mind upon things which are eternal, and regulate our prayer by their wide sweep. We are not to ask for things which are temporal, with any desire to insist upon them. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Things eternal:—I. OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUTURE LIFE IS ENTIRELY A MATTER OF REVELATION. II.

REVELATION DOES NOT DESCRIBE THE "UNSEEN THINGS," IT DOES STATE EXPLICITLY THAT THEY HAVE THIS QUALITY OF DURATION. 1. It tells us that our life that is lived here among things that change and pass away, will then be surrounded by what is permanent, that the relationships into which we shall enter there will never be broken, that the good we attain there we shall never be in danger of losing. Here nothing is constant. The eternal things are like God Himself; they are fixed and secure. 2. Probably, however, some are saying that if life in heaven is thus permanent, there is a prospect of monotony. But progress is perfectly consistent with the idea of permanence. Heaven need not change, though we may become increasingly familiar with its glory. The Divine Being need not change, though we may grow in knowledge of His will, and receive fresh revelations of His character. Our natures may not alter, though we may become grander in our intellectual conceptions, and be enriched in our spiritual life. The tree which five years ago bore but a bushel of fruit, and this year bears five, is the same tree, and the fruit is of the same kind, only more abundant. No change in its nature has been effected. The boy who awhile since stammered through the letters of the alphabet with difficulty, but who can now read the masterpieces of English literature, is the same boy, though his intellect has grown. (*W. Braden.*) *Things seen and things unseen*:—Here is a paradox: our eyes, are they not made to look at things that are to be seen? Direct them to what is unseen, is that wisdom? But there is truth in many a paradox. What did Paul mean? It is the truest of metaphors that the soul has eyes as well as the body. Your eyelids may close, and leave your soul all the freer to gaze on the world within—the world of thought and feeling. Paul did not, indeed, employ only his body in his various activities; but the energy he exhibited was sustained by his keen gaze on spiritual realities, which "eye hath not seen, or ear heard." I. THE TRANSITORINESS OF ALL THINGS SEEN, THE PERPETUITY OF THINGS UNSEEN. The text exhibits a truth wider than perhaps we all suspect. 1. Take your home. There is the visible house, garden, &c.; but they alone do not make the place home; because to other people, who come and see the same things, it is not home. Then what have you there which they have not? You have the dear associations and fond attachments of many happy years. Those two things make a place home; on the one hand, the house and its belongings; on the other hand, the associations of years. The one set, "the things seen," and the other, "the things unseen." 2. Take the inmates of that home. Their forms, once so familiar to our eyes, may have lain for years in their graves; but the love and fidelity, the minds and hearts which animated them, these God has taken—they cannot die. They live and glow with unfading brightness though their bodies have crumbled away—"for the things which are not seen are eternal." 3. Now these are but striking examples of a principle which runs all through our life. Mere lapse of time cannot change love, it may live and grow, though the visible object of it is no more. The seen is not all, or half; but as shadow to substance; sign, to thing signified. II. FIXING THE VIEW ON THINGS TEMPORARY OR ETERNAL. This far-reaching truth has very practical bearings. It seems most obvious that the thoughts and affections of spiritual beings should be set, not on the transitory objects which perish in the using, but on those underlying verities, sublimities, spiritual realities, which abide. Set your heart on a flower, a day will blight your joy. Employ your faculties and interests on the marvellous laws and forces which produce it, and your interest will be called forth perpetually. So let your heart be set on human beauty; it is but a question of a little longer time, and you will be weeping over its loss. But let your affections fix rather on charms and graces of character, and you may have a good hope that you will find them again unchanged, imperishable, like your own recollections. So, again, fix your whole soul on material wealth, and the good things of earth, or on anything you can see: your happiness is a mere question of years. Pursue honour, fidelity, truth, beauty of soul, especially in the living form of God revealed, eternal truth, eternal beauty; He is unseen, the invisible source and fountain of what we behold now, and shall behold hereafter. (*T. M. Herbert, M.A.*) *The things seen and unseen*:—I. THE THINGS THEMSELVES. The Christian man looks at the outward fluctuation of life—at what is done, endured, enjoyed; but amidst all, his eye is fixed upon those great eternal principles, which come directly from the God that is above him; and he feels His great government to be a living power, pressing perpetually upon him, and making him to be what he is. II. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THESE TWO CLASSES OF THINGS. Very different degrees of duration belong to "the things which are seen"; but none of them possess perpetuity. 1. If you take that which has the longest

duration—the material universe—still, we are taught by Scripture that it is temporal, and reason confirms the idea. The eternity of matter would make matter to be God. The whole universe is but the material manifestation of God, and the time will come when the great God, having for ages worn this splendid regal robe, sparkling with its innumerable lustrous lights, will just put it off, fold it up, and lay it aside; while He Himself changeth not, but is ever the same, from everlasting to everlasting! So that you see, compared with God, that which has the greatest duration is yet temporal and transitory. 2. Again, there is greater duration belonging to the structure than to the race who inhabit it; and to that greater duration God has opposed His own eternity. Humanity has a less duration than the universe, the habitation; and the individual has a much less duration than the race. But contrasted with this, there is the “spirit in man”—the “inspiration of the Almighty, which giveth him understanding,” and which partakes of the indestructibility of God. 3. Again, the great things that make life what it is—the bustle, activity, ambition, the sweat and stir of mankind—why, they are not even so long as life itself. The little child outlives the things which to his age are “the things which are seen,” and which please while they last. So is it with the youth, and with the young man, and with the man of “full age.” So you find it with men everywhere; they outlive the things for which men live—they often outlive even the capability of enjoying them if they had them. All the particular forms of human action, virtue, glory, temptation, suffering—all these are temporal and transitory; but the principles connected with them all are eternal. I do not expect to have to buy and sell in heaven; but whatever I do there, I must do justly and uprightly—the principle that must regulate my buying and selling here. III. THE RELATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MIND AND HEART TO THESE. “We look,” &c. This language implies—1. A perfect persuasion that these things are. Everywhere the thoughtful have thought—surely, there is a great Spirit; surely, I myself have a spirit. And not only so, but that there is a difference between this thing and that; I call the one right and the other wrong, this bad and that good. But there have been doubt, scepticism, and uncertainty—mingled with all this—reason, wanting satisfaction on authority. And the very condition of our nature here, as being in a state of probation, demands that principles of this sort, the great ruling laws by which we ought to be regulated, should not be overpowering in their manifestation. But the Christian man believes, on the authority of the declaration of God; that there are these unseen existing things and persons and principles. 2. That he looks at them attentively, regards them habitually, realises the fact of his being surrounded by these unseen things, and acts in relation to them. IV. THE RESULTS OF THIS CONDITION OR RELATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MIND AND HEART TO THESE THINGS. 1. It elevates and dignifies all things. The world and man are no longer mere material; life is no longer little or mean, for everything is capable of being associated with these eternal, infinite, unseen things. Your poets and novelists can sit and laugh and snarl at human life. But why? Because they look only at what is seen, at what is little, mean, degraded. But there is no littleness even in the follies and vices of society, when we regard their aspect to God and to eternity. 2. It affords the Christian a firm footing for the fulfilment of duty and the resistance of temptation. Duty—what is that? “Whatever thy hand findeth to do,” do it, because the principle is an eternal thing. Temptation—what is that? “Child of mortality, turn aside, take thy present pleasure, enjoy it now!” But the man whose eye is clear, and whose heart is true, says, “No, no! I see through it, I understand it, it is all hollow, false, empty.” Temptation is nothing to the man that sees it is but the bubble rising to the surface of the stream, and knows that though it looks beautiful for a moment, in the sunbeams that are falling upon it, it shall perish and pass away, but that he has to do with things real, Godlike, and enduring. 3. It is the great secret of the inward life, by which we may bear sorrow, and get good out of anything that may come upon us. It is thus the apostles were sustained. They could sing in the gaol, because they could glory in tribulation, looking at “the things which are not seen.” They could say, “Our light affliction which is but for a moment,” &c. (*T. Binney.*) *Seen and unseen things:*—The apostle here discloses the great secret of his life-power. He was one of the world’s greatest benefactors; and yet the world repaid him with contempt, stripes, imprisonment. But all his sufferings fitted him for his work. His nature was kept near God, weaned from all low and selfish aims, and filled with zeal. But there was one condition essential to this elevation and purifying, viz., that in all his suffering and struggles he looked not at things seen, but things unseen. Above him was the

Sun of Divine love. The apostle does not say he looked at future things. The invisible things that he looked at were also present. The present things that he looked at were eternal. I. MANY REGARD THE TEXT AS PRESENTING A HARD AND ALL BUT IMPOSSIBLE DUTY. You complain that the outward world lies too close to you, and that it is difficult with this visible world forcing itself on you to look to the invisible. Do you never think that the unseen world presses itself still closer to you? The visible world is not always before you. Darkness comes on, you are in solitude. Do you not feel a world of thought pressing closer to you than any visible things ever did? Are not men followed by ideas, by plans, by the voice of conscience, in a far closer way than the outward world can follow? Do not say that the visible world shuts out the invisible; for have you not often been absorbed in your own thoughts, while the outward world flowed by you unnoticed? And is not the thought of God, of Christ, of truth, of righteousness, of duty, of love, of the perfect and the beautiful in life—are not these thoughts of such a kind as to lay hold of the soul? They are not easily shaken off. Unseen things are present realities. They are things which your heart and conscience are crying after. Your heart needs a Father, you need the sense of forgiveness, help, rest, comfort, light over your future and heavenly guidance. You cannot say that it is difficult to look at these things. The difficulty is to be a man with a conscience and a heart, and not to look at these things. Conceive what a struggle any man must have who utterly refuses to look at the things which are invisible. But it may be said the visible things stand between men and the invisible. But do all men feel that the seen things hide the unseen? Are there not some at least to whom the seen things are reminders of the unseen? Are there none to whom rising and setting suns speak of a day that never ends, of the flight of time and the nearness of eternity? What are all human relationships but types and shadows of unseen realities? Are not fatherhood and motherhood drawing and wooing the heart to the Infinite One, who is our true Father and our Mother too? Are not separation and death pointing on the bruised soul to a world of re-union? II. SOME OF THE MEANS AND HELPS TO LOOKING AT THINGS UNSEEN. Man by his very constitution must look at things unseen. Whoever feels the words right or duty real, is looking at things unseen. But yet to look fully and steadily at the unseen requires effort. It is not the less binding or necessary on that account. But a person may make huge effort about a thing, and yet come much farther short of the mark than one who makes little effort. 1. Take up a right position in reference to anything, and that is half the labour saved. Here is a man striving hard to see the object he is working at. Now, if he would only take a few steps nearer the light this would be all unnecessary. Here is a man looking up at the stars from the ground-floor of his house. He has difficulty in seeing on account of the houses around him. If he would but go up to the topmost flat of his house, what an expanse there would be before him without the slightest effort! The secret of looking at things unseen and finding it easy just lies here—take up the right position. The right position is the spirit of reconciliation. Many fail to look at unseen things just for this reason—they have not accepted the reconciliation. A cloud is lying between their soul and God. Come out into the sunshine of God's love and you will see unseen things. 2. Whatever unseen thing is clear and prominent to you already, whether it be a doctrine or a person, or a prophecy, dwell on that unseen thing which you see. It is most precious, as the earnest of the whole. Make the most of it. The great difficulty is to you already overcome. The unseen is seen. The one spot stands for the whole to you, and it may bring the whole. 3. Look steadily at the unseen things of duty that are most real and weighty to you. There are some matters of duty and right that stand out clear before almost every one. Only be faithful and resolute, and follow on. It will take no long time for a tender and brave conscience to come in sight of the greatest things. 4. Cherish a penitent spirit. Sorrow for sin visits all men, but only some welcome it. But the wise recognise it as among their best friends. There is a peculiar power in sorrow for sin to make the unseen seen. In the darkness of life men see the stars of heavenly guidance. 5. Think much of Christ as He appeared on earth. He was the invisible made visible. God was visible in Him. When the visible Christ stands out clear, beautiful, real, strong, winning before you, the invisible Christ will be real. Christ is the bridge between the seen and the unseen. 6. Be in the habit of considering all seen things as pictures of the unseen. (*R. H. Story, D.D.*) *The seen and the unseen*:—I. HERE WE HAVE AN AUTHORITATIVE ACCOUNT OF THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW IN RESPECT OF TWO WORLDS—the seen and the unseen. 1. “The

things that are seen" are not simply whatever meets the eye of sense in this present life. Along with the things we see go naturally our associations; we have our impressions, and judgments, and hopes, and fears about them. "The things that are seen" mean the complex life of the society in which we live, the life of a great community, the State of which we are members, the life of our neighbour, the life of our immediate friends, of our family. Now a Christian, St. Paul says, is in the position of a man who is aware of the presence of the visible world, while his gaze is fixed persistently upon the world invisible. He is mentally in the position of a traveller passing through scenery which is interesting, but who is absorbed in a discussion arising out of the scenery which makes him concentrate his thought on something beyond it. 2. "The things which are not seen!" Those truths and virtues which are obscured or crowded out of view in the present life of most of us, but which are nevertheless beautiful and enduring realities; they are justice, charity, truth, sanctity. We do not see God. The King, eternal and immortal, is also the invisible. We do not see the angels. We do not see the souls of the departed. "We look at the things which are not seen." We are citizens, as the apostle says, of heaven; "we walk by faith and not by sight." And what is the reason for this? "The things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal." That which meets the eye of sense is here only for a season; it will pass away. That which meets the eye of the soul illuminated by faith will last for ever. This quality of eternity suffices to outweigh the advantages which at first sight might seem to be on the side of the world of sense. So far as matters of this world are concerned, it has, no doubt, much to say for itself, but it is outweighed by the fact that the world which we hold in our hands is already passing. This present life—it is like one of those acidulated drops which melt in the mouth, even as we enjoy it. In this world, "Change and decay in all around I see." Friends die off, society around us wears every year a new face, our power of body and mind become modified and weaker. And how different our country is to-day from the England of George IV., from the England of Pitt, from the England of Nelson; but Almighty God, He is exactly what He was at each of those periods, and the great moral virtues and the ever-blessed angels, and the conditions of the unseen world—they are just exactly what they were; and then as now, and now as then, souls who desire to escape from this torrent of change and decomposition around us and to lay strong hold upon the alone unchangeable must, with St. Paul, look not at the things which are seen, but the things that are not seen. And this had been before the teaching of our Lord. The kingdom of heaven which He founded on earth was but the vestibule of that kingdom in heaven. To any who thought that this world would be the main scene of the new kingdom. He addresses that solemn parable of the man who would pull down his barn and build a greater. II. TO THESE CONSIDERATIONS AN OBJECTION HAS OFTEN BEEN MADE WHICH IS WORTH NOTICE. "See how you Christians," it is said, "with your faith in eternity, forget the duties that belong to time." But this is grossly untrue. It is contradicted by the Christian doctrine of judgment, by 2 Thess., and by Christ's example (note particularly John xiii.). This truth as to the relative importance of the seen and the unseen, if it be really held, will affect our lives in not a few ways. 1. It will govern our disposal of our income. If we look only at the things which are seen, we shall spend it mainly upon ourselves, reserving, perhaps, some portion for objects of a public character, which it is creditable or popular to support; if we look mainly at the things which are not seen, we shall spend at least one-tenth, probably more, upon some agencies that shall bring the eternal world, and all that prepares men for it, home to our fellow-creatures. It might help some of us to try to think what we shall wish we had done with the means which God has given us, five minutes after our hand has become unable to sign a cheque. 2. It will affect our whole view and practice in the matter of education. If our reason is confined to this life, we educate our children for this life and this life only. If, with the apostle, we look to the things that are not seen, we educate our children primarily for that existence which awaits them beyond the grave, and secondarily for this life, which is but a preface, though a most important preface, to that which will follow it. Conclusion: There used to be in bygone centuries, perhaps there is still, a custom at the enthronisation of a Pope which embodied this truth with vivid effect. When at the most solemn moment of the great occasion the procession of which the new Pontiff was the central figure, was advancing along the nave of the great church, representing, as it did, all that art and worldly splendour could do to enhance the idea of mingled ecclesiastical and civil sway, a master of the ceremonies led a torch which slowly

died away until it went out, and as he bore it aloft at the head of the procession he chanted the words, "Pater Sancte, sic transit gloria mundi"—Holy Father, thus does this world's glory pass away. That was a bit of hard truth in a scene where there may well have been much to mislead, to inflate, to overlay spiritual realities by temporal pomp—that was a bit of hard truth that we might do well to remember solemnly at the proudest and brightest moments of life when friends surround us with kind, perhaps flattering words, which self-love might easily weave into a robe that would hide our true selves from our inward gaze. "So passes the glory of this world." No doubt it is a commonplace, but each generation of men forgets the accumulated teaching of experience, and has to learn for itself the old lesson over again. Only when the evening of life is come on, only when the shadows are lengthening do most men who are not deeply influenced by Christianity repeat it with entire sincerity. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The visible and the invisible*:—The truth proclaimed in the text indicates—I. THE STANDARD OF TRUE POWER. It is an immeasurable practical truth. 1. This spiritual discernment, throwing all things into true relations, gives to each thing its real value. The man who habitually contemplates these permanent realities is delivered from scepticism. The importance of all life, the inherent greatness of being, is to him made apparent. He whose vision is limited to that which is seen may easily fall into doubt and disparagement. To him things may seem to have no purpose. He sees them growing and decaying, appearing and vanishing, in a wearisome monotony of change. "The things which are seen are temporal"; and, if the existence of man is involved with these alone, what object is there in lofty and self-sacrificing work? But encouragement for such endeavour is at once made manifest when we regard this lot of ours as involved with "the things which are not seen"; for "the things which are not seen are eternal." 2. Nor is the man who looks at "the things which are not seen" to be regarded visionary, while he whose eyes are fixed upon "the things which are seen" is to be reckoned as the man of solid and practical sense. Quite otherwise. That man is not visionary who discerns things as they are, but he who lives in the illusion of a false or partial vision. He is not a fanatic who takes the broadest compass of being for the standard of things; but he who lives in the delusion of the senses, and the narrowness of his own conceit. There are fanatics of the senses, visionary worldlings, who, with a bit of coin, hide all heaven from their own eyes, and who bury their souls in the limitations of the flesh. Read in this chapter the record in which the apostle recounts his labours, his sacrifices, and his sufferings, and then remember that the man who thus wrought and endured looked to "the things which are not seen," and was able thus to do and to bear, because he looked to "the things which are unseen." It was something not yet seen for which Russell suffered and Hampden fell. Things not seen hovered above the Pilgrims' stormy passage, drew Columbus onward, and made Luther say, "Here stand I: I cannot otherwise. God help me!" Things not seen fired the apostle's heart, and bade him challenge the corruption of Corinth, and the pride of Athens. 3. All the highest kinds of power are unseen. In the material world, the things we see are only phenomena projected by energies which we do not see. The sap and root of all life in nature are unseen. And, in this human organism, where is the principle of life that moves the heart and drives the blood? No knife has ever laid it bare, no galvanic current has forced its secret. These great instruments of civilisation, too, the printing-press, the steam-engine, the ship—behind them all stands the inventor's idea, the builder's thought. The grandest actions, the mightiest endeavours, are they not inspired by unseen forces of thought and will? When we look to the things which are not seen, we look to the sources of the highest power. II. THE STANDARD OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE. 1. The most fatal hindrance to all knowledge is the conceit of present attainment. For intellectual life consists in the consciousness of perpetual acquisition and perpetual need. When our knowledge becomes a pond, instead of a river, it stagnates. In what practical forms this conceit breaks out! It is expressed by him who virtually limits all truth to his own creed, or all right to his party, who regards every innovation as heretical, and every adverse argument as folly. But truth will not be thus cramped and excluded. 2. A cure for such assumptions is found by looking to "the things which are not seen." The immense region which lies outside our actual knowledge, forces upon wise minds the conviction that we know but little; which, if in some degree a humiliating, is also a profitable and consoling conclusion. For who shall estimate the riches, the possibilities, that are hidden from our sight? This earth on which we dwell, how fruitful is it in sources of astonishment! And yet, in the sweep of telescopic vision,

our earth, with all that it contains, dwindles to an atom. But all this magnificent theatre of the visible is merely the vestibule of the invisible, while the entire physical creation is only the star-woven veil that hides those finer realities, with which, as yet, we are not fitted to hold communion. And yet there are men who talk, and who live, as though all things lay open to the natural eye. 3. And, passing into the region of our daily life, I ask, considering the conditions of our actual knowledge, is there not a suggestion and a caution as to how we decide upon the movements of Providence? For the works and the ways of God are intimately involved with "the things which are not seen"; and surely, in this consciousness of human limitation, there is ground not only for humility, but for trust and consolation. III. THE STANDARD OF TRUE LIFE. For man's true life is above the level of the senses. That in which we have the deepest interest, which sustains us while we sleep, and flows in all the currents of our action, and rebukes or consecrates all we do, is not palpable, like our food or raiment or houses or money. It is unseen. And in a short time, at the longest, our bodily peculiarity and all that pertains thereto will drop as a garment, and we shall pass into the unseen. And if practically we neglect this truth we cannot truly live. That which we implicitly trust, that which we truly love, forms an essential constituent of our being. There is nothing that the eye sees, or the hand touches, that is not liable to change and to vanish. In proportion as we trust in that which is seen, we are weak in its weakness, and insecure in its uncertainty. And it is thus with whatever we truly love. Our affections are sure of their objects only as they intertwine themselves with the unseen, the deathless thought, the beauty of the soul, the wealth of immortal love, all recognised, but all unseen. Our possessions are firm when they become parts of ourselves, intrinsic elements of our spiritual but hidden nature. And he whose hope is anchored in heaven, and whose reliance is upon God, is entangled with no uncertainty, and fears neither the hostility nor the failure of earthly things. (*E. H. Chapin, D.D.*) *Things eternal weighed against things temporal*:—There are two ways in which to consider these assertions. We may speak of the former as temporal, and of the latter as eternal, either as they are in themselves or as they are possessed by us. I. "THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN ARE TEMPORAL." 1. Is it, then, so that the glorious and mighty fabric of the material universe is to last only for a time? We must be careful that we do not overstrain the apostle's expression, but it practically matters little or nothing whether matter is to be annihilated, or whether it is to be lost in new shapes and combinations, provided only that in either case there is to be so complete a removal of the existing system of things that the earth and the heavens may be said to "flee away before the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne." This certainly suffices to affix a temporal character to all that is seen, and therefore to vindicate the apostle's statement in our text. And upon this we would fasten your attention. Is it not a confounding thought, that by a simple effort of His will the Almighty is to unhinge and dislocate the amazing mechanism of the universe, and yet remain Himself the great "I am," the same when stars and planets fall as when, in far back time, they first blazed at His command? Who amongst us does not feel rebuked by this, if he be living in preference of the objects of sight to the objects of faith? Man of pleasure! go on delighting thyself with things which gratify the senses; man of learning! continue to neglect the wisdom which is from above, and account thyself knowing because acquainted with certain laws and phenomena of nature; man of avarice! persist in digging for gold, and consume thy days and nights in labours to become rich; man of ambition! still toil for distinction and spare no sacrifice which may gain a higher title; but know, all ye worshippers of visible things, that, immortal yourselves, you are cherishing as your portion what is finite and perishable. 2. But some may say, "The things which are seen may thus be only temporal; but where the duration is so immense there is nothing very affecting to the mind in proving that it is not infinite." Let us descend, therefore, to lower ground. Our connection with earth must be terminated by death; the sun must rise on us for the last time, though millions of cheerful eyes will hail his rising on the morrow. 3. Will ye not then allow, that, forasmuch as there is to be this total separation between you and "the things which are seen," these things are to be called "temporal," whatever their duration? And since, however attractive these things may be, it is unavoidable that our connection with them must be brief, and our separation from them final, will ye not confess that it cannot be the part of wisdom to place our affections on them, and to devote our days to their acquisition? We will not argue with the sensualist in the midst of the fascinating objects wherein he delights; we will not argue with the philosopher

as the broad arch of heavens fixes his study; but we will argue with them all amid the graves of a churchyard. That tomb!—it is that of an opulent merchant. He made thousands, and then could carry nothing away with him of all that he had accumulated. Yonder proud marble!—it marks the resting-place of one who attained high rank. He wore stars and ribbons, and then left them for a winding-sheet. Beneath your feet is the dust of a voluptuary. He thought nothing worth living for but pleasure; he took his fill, and was then stripped of every power of enjoyment. This stone covers a man of science. He delighted in searching after knowledge; and, having stored his mind with a varied erudition, he was hurried into a world of which he had gained no intelligence. II. “THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN ARE ETERNAL.” 1. Who can hear of “things not seen,” and not immediately feel his thoughts turn to that amazing and glorious Being of whom it is said, “No man hath seen God at any time”? Let man decay, let the forests wither, let the mountains subside, let the rocks crumble, yea, let the very heavens cease from what we are wont to call their everlasting march, and God will have undergone no change throughout this immeasurable series of revolutions; “I Am that I Am,” when this series commenced, “I Am that I Am,” when this series shall have closed. 2. But though eternity is thus to be affirmed of God in a sense in which it cannot be of anything besides, there are “things which are not seen” and which are “eternal” in the ordinary acceptation of the word. It is here that we must deal with the word “eternal” in the manner in which we dealt with the word “temporal”—consider it, that is, in reference not only to objects in themselves, but to our own connection with them. If you have the riches which are seen, they are but temporal, for you must part with them at death; if you have the riches which are not seen, they are eternal, for you shall never be deprived of their possession. If you suffer pains here they are temporal; they shall end, if not before, yet with the close of life. If you suffer pains hereafter they will be eternal. And do ye believe this? Then what meaneth this devotion of your energies to what is earthly and perishable? What meaneth this setting of the affections upon shadows and upon baubles? What meaneth this languor and indifference in religion? The grand object of practical Christianity is to gain its rightful ascendancy for invisible things. It is here that the struggle lies. Faith and sense, these are the contending parties, and ye are under the dominion of the one or of the other—judge ye which; but let no one call himself a believer in the reality and superiority of invisible and eternal things, when he is manifestly engaged with the love and desire of visible and present. The truths of the Bible are of such a nature, that there can be no evidence of our believing them except our obeying them. Do ye believe in the happiness of heaven? Not unless ye are trying to secure it. Do ye believe in the wretchedness of hell? Not unless ye are striving to escape it. (*H. Melville, B.D.*) *The Christian's habit of mind*:—To be a Christian you must look at the things “unseen and eternal”; to continue to be a Christian you must habitually regard them. Paul was a converted, *i.e.*, a turned man. Before his conversion he looked one way, after he looked quite in the opposite direction. Two facts, then, are plain—first, the habit of the worldly mind is to “look at things seen and temporal,” and second, the Christian habit of mind is to “look at things unseen and eternal.” In a time of persecution, it is said that seven Christian youths of Ephesus found refuge in a cave. They slept for two hundred years, till “kings had become nursing fathers to the Church.” When they awoke they entered the city cautiously, inquiring if there were any Christians there. “Christians!” was the reply; “yes, we are all Christians here.” On one side they were pointed to a splendid dome with a golden cross; on another to schools where Christianity was taught. No longer the rack, the stake, the sword. Further inquiries, however, grieved them. They learned that as Christianity prospered, it had become worldly and corrupt. “You have shown us,” said they, “something but little better than you were before; where, after all, are the Christians?” In great sorrow they returned to their cave, and God removed them to heaven. Note—**I. THE TENDENCY TO LOOK AT TEMPORAL THINGS MAINLY.** How accounted for. 1. The natural difficulty of fixing attention upon spiritual and heavenly things. “Out of sight, out of mind.” Yet we must not allow too much to this adage. Things unseen may and do powerfully affect us, *e.g.*, stars to the astronomical student, even when out of sight, are present to his mind; an absent friend, a loved one in heaven. Why then forget God and eternity? 2. Moral indisposition. It comes of unbelief. Many banish thoughts of the eternal as intrusive. 3. Procrastination. Temporal concerns are termed “business,” as though they only deserved attention, and higher things might be deferred to leisure

moments. Men have their premises insured, but alas! in reference to eternity they seek no insurance. 4. The blinding power of sinful habits. He who is confirmed in any sinful habit is rendering himself less inclined to and less capable of religious thought. The man is of the earth, earthy. His soul comes into no affinity with spiritual things. II. THE CHRISTIAN HABIT OF LOOKING AT "THINGS UNSEEN AND ETERNAL." 1. It is not an occasional impulse; it is a habit. His eye rests on those things that have the stamp of endurance. Young Christians must not be discouraged if the habit is not rapidly formed. The albatross has to skim at first on the surface of the water, but once risen, it soars till its extended wings are almost invisible. 2. The benefits of this habit. (1) It will lift us up above a base and worldly life. Spiritual dignity attaches to that man's character whose "citizenship is in heaven." (2) It will afford comfort in changes and adversities. Paul realised this consolation, for he felt affliction to be but "light and for a moment." The same pole-star will guide us if we look up to it. See the pilot in the tempest at night. He keeps his eye on the light of the harbour. He does not look at the surging waves as they strike on the rocky coast, but he looks to the light till he passes safely into "the desired haven." In severe trial there is no other talisman than looking to "things unseen and eternal." (3) It will prepare us for death. Christians form the habit of looking forward with expectancy to the change from mortality to a blissful immortality. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *Vanities and verities* :—The text is a double paradox. Things that can be seen are, naturally, the things to be looked at. And yet the apostle tells us not to look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. But how can you look at what you cannot see? This is only one paradox of the Christian life, but we shall soon see that there is no difficulty whatever. I. LET US LOOK AT WHAT CAN BE SEEN, and ask, what is meant by this protest? 1. Lightly esteeming present joy and sorrow, as if they were not worth looking at. The present is so soon to be over, that Paul does not care to look at it. Here he is persecuted, despised, forsaken. "It will not last long," saith he. "We are like a man who stays at an hostelry for a night whilst he is on a journey. Is the room uncomfortable? When the morning breaks it is of no use making a complaint; so we merely chronicle the fact and hasten on. If a person is going a long distance in a railway carriage, he may be a little particular as to where he shall sit, but if it is only a short stage, he does not think about it. A whole eternity lies beyond, and therefore a short temporality dwindles into an insignificant trifle." Paul meant more than that, however, viz., that he had learned not to regard the things of the present as real, substantial, or enduring. Like as clouds when they float overhead assume divers shapes but change their form while we are gazing at them, so events as they seemed to be transpiring were to him no more than apparitions. Look upon loss or suffering in the light of time, and see what a fleeting thing it is, and bear it bravely like a Christian man, because you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. 2. The word is sometimes translated "mark." We are not to mark the things which are seen as if they were worth notice. Children clap their hands and otherwise express their delight at a new toy or frock. Be not children, but quit yourselves as men, and look on the things of this life as toys. But carefully mark down the eternal things. Did the Lord appear to you? Mark that down. Did you win a soul to Christ? Mark that down. Did you have sweet answers to prayer? Mark that down. 3. Another meaning is, take heed. The apostle was not anxious about the things which were seen. "After all these things," says Christ, "do the Gentiles seek." Well, let the Gentiles follow their pursuits; but the child of God should not, for our Lord says unto us, "Take no thought," &c. 4. Paul in Gal. vi. 1 uses the word in the sense of considering, e.g., if the apostle knew that he should glorify God by preaching the gospel, and if friend or foe should say to him, "Paul, you will risk your life if you do," he would never take their caveat into his consideration. And if they had said, "If you administer such and such a reproof in a certain Church, you will lose caste among them," again he would have smiled. It would have had no more influence upon him than it would have upon a merchant should you say to him, "If you go into such a district you will have to encounter clouds of dust." He would reply, "Why, if I can nett a thousand pounds, what do I care about dust or no dust?" 5. By "not looking at the things which are not seen," we may understand not making them our scope. That is the nearest equivalent to the Greek. Alas, there are many whose whole scope of life is that they may prosper in this world. The next world may go as it will; their scope ends here. Eternal things seem dim and unsubstantial. Now, it must not be so with us. We should say, "The things eternal I pursue. I am no more a

citizen of this world, but a pilgrim bound for the celestial city." II. LOOKING AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN. 1. Realise them by faith. Try to look at these things as present facts. Some will never do so. 2. Look on them with the eye of delight. Is it not a delicious thing to look forward to heaven? The poor girl who goes home from this joyous place of worship to her own little cheerless room would feel miserable indeed if she looked at the shady side of her condition; but she says, "My Lord is in this room," and the place glows as if it were made of slabs of gold. She settles down and begins to think of the heaven that is hers. On the other hand, if you are not converted, I would urge you to look upon the eternal future with an intense dread, for without Christ what is there for you among the things which are not seen, and are eternal, but misery? 3. Look to them with hope. Long for the bright appearing of the Lord. Should there be any young man here who knows that when he comes of age he is to enjoy a rich heritage, I will be bound to say he has often forestalled the time because he is sure of his title. If any one of you had a legacy left him of a large estate, he would be off this week to have a look at it. Christian, be sure to survey thine own possession in the skies. What a sanctifying influence such anticipations will have upon you! "Every one that hath this hope purifieth himself." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *On eternity*.—I. TO ILLUSTRATE THE GENERAL NATURE OF ETERNITY. But who can explain it? who can comprehend it? Our conception of it is somewhat like the survey a man takes of the ocean from on board a ship sailing in the midst of it. He sees the ocean, though not the whole ocean; and where his sight is terminated by its own weakness, can perceive that the ocean extends further than he can see. II. CONSIDER ETERNITY WITH PARTICULAR APPLICATION TO OUR OWN SOULS, THEIR IMMORTAL NATURE, AND FUTURE EVERLASTING STATE. 1. Our souls are immortal or everlasting. 2. The state to which our souls remove at death is an eternal, unchangeable state. Reflections: 1. How great are our obligations to God and the Redeemer for discovering eternal things to us, and making provision for our escaping everlasting misery, and obtaining everlasting life. 2. What folly and madness are men chargeable with, for neglecting eternal concerns! 3. How serious should ministers and parents be in addressing the souls committed to their charge! 4. What an awful thing is it to die and enter upon an eternal state! 5. How much is it our duty and interest to look at unseen and eternal things! or to eye and regard eternity in all we do! 1. I am to consider what looking at eternal things includes. And that is a firm belief of their reality, a serious consideration of their importance, and steady aims and pursuits agreeable thereto. (1) Looking at eternal things implies a firm belief of their reality, that we have immortal spirits with us, and that there is an eternal state and world just before us. (2) A serious consideration of their importance. The word here translated "look at," is in other places rendered, "take heed, consider, mark, or observe attentively," and signifies serious, fixed, repeated consideration. (3) A steady aim and diligent pursuit, agreeable to their nature and importance; or a diligent incessant care to escape eternal misery and secure eternal happiness. The word "look at" signifies also to "aim at" or "pursue." To excite you to this, I am—2. To propose some motives and arguments. (1) Life and time and means are given us, that we may prepare for eternity. (2) We must quickly go out of time into eternity. (3) As our character is when our time ends, so will our eternal state be. (4) Many present and great advantages will attend our looking at eternal things—advantages which will have a powerful effect upon our present temper and character, and consequently on our eternal state; and they are these. Looking at and regarding eternity will restrain our fondness for the world; increase our hatred of sin and love to God and the Redeemer: it will make us careful to redeem our time, promote our patience under afflictions, make us serious and lively in all the duties of religion, dispose us to do good to others, and make us willing to die. (*J. Orton.*)

CHAPTER V.

VER. 1. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved.—*The certain knowledge of the future*.—1. The description which the apostle makes of the present state in which we now are. 2. His description of the

future state, in which the faithful shall be hereafter. 3. The certainty of that happy state. The one habitation is certain as the other. But what certainty is there of such things, may some say? May we not abuse ourselves, if we look for that which no man ever saw? Is not this to build castles in the air? The apostle answers to such surmises, here, in my text: "We know that we have a building of God," &c. We have solid grounds for this persuasion that it amounts to a knowledge. I. HE SAITH IT WAS A THING KNOWN; A MATTER THAT WAS DEMONSTRABLE BY PROPER ARGUMENTS. It was not a probable opinion, but an undoubted conclusion. There were sound arguments which led them to this unmovable belief. What were they? 1. For they knew that Jesus their Master, who made discovery of these things to them, had certain knowledge of them himself, and could not deceive them. He was not like to many idle persons, who draw maps of such territories as they never saw. 2. They knew likewise that this person, who could not but speak the truth, had promised to purified souls, that they should see God (Matt. v. 8). How can we behold, then, the glory of God, unless all our powers be mightily widened beyond the highest of our present conceptions. 3. Of this change they saw an instance in our Lord Himself. 4. Accordingly they knew that He did ascend up to heaven forty days after His resurrection (Acts i. 10, 11). 5. For they knew withal that their very bodies should be made like unto His (John xvii. 24). 6. And this truly they knew, as well as anything else, that He lives for evermore, and can make good His kind intentions and gracious promises (Rev. i. 18). 7. Especially they knew by the change that He had wrought in their souls that He could easily do as much for their bodies. It was no harder for Him to give a luminous body than it was to illuminate their minds; to turn this earthly house into an heavenly than to fill the spirits of common men with the spirit and wisdom of God. 8. To conclude, they knew likewise there had been some alteration already made, upon occasion in the body of some of them, and that others also felt an higher elevation of their soul. As for the body, St. Stephen's face was seen as it had been the face of an angel (Acts vi. ult.). Let us believe the testimony of men so well assured. For to think that there is no habitation for us in the heavens, because we were never there, is as foolish as if a man that had never stirred beyond the door of his cottage should imagine that all the goodly buildings he hears of at London are but so many clouds in the air, and have no real being. Let us but a little awaken our souls to look beyond this house of clay. II. IT IS CONSIDERABLE THEN THAT THIS WAS A MATTER GENERALLY KNOWN; A THING WHEREIN THEY WERE ALL AGREED. They had a knowledge and not a mere opinion. And yet an opinion that is not private, but common, carries no small authority with it. We are all very much overawed by that which is universally received. They were all satisfied that this was the very truth of God, there was no dispute or division among them about this doctrine. It was the common faith of God's elect; the common hope of their heavenly calling, and, in one word, the common salvation (Titus i. 1, 2, 4; Eph. iv. 4; Jude 3). It was not the belief of St. Paul alone. This shows that they had no superficial thoughts of the life to come, but that they were exceeding serious in the belief of it. III. They knew these things so clearly that they MADE THEM THE AIM TO WHICH THEY DIRECTED ALL THEIR DESIRES AND ENDEAVOURS. This particle "for" sends our thoughts back to the words before, and gives us an account of that character which we there find of the Apostles of our Lord, who "looked not at the things which were seen, but at the things which were not seen." They were so persuaded of this happy state hereafter that it was always in their eye. They slighted and trod upon all other things in compare with this. A great token of the sincerity of their belief; for otherwise they would not have been so foolish and unthriftly as not to have made some present temporal benefit of that great knowledge and power wherewith they were endowed. IV. But more than this; they were so sure of this building of God in the heavens THAT THEY ENDURED ALL SORTS OF MISERIES AND PAINS IN THIS LIFE MERELY IN EXPECTATION OF IT. V. THEY WERE SO SURE OF THIS THAT IT SEEMED TO THEM AS IF THEY HAD THIS HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS IN PRESENT POSSESSION. They speak as men that belong to two countries, and have estates in this and in another kingdom. Such men say, "We have a building." Though they cannot dwell in both their houses at once, yet they call them both theirs. They had a right and title to it. They had good deeds and evidences to show for it, which proved that it was settled on them by the will and testament of Jesus Christ their Lord and Master, to which they had the witness of the Spirit in their hearts. They might challenge it as their own, and lay hold on eternal life, which words instruct us that we must work in this earthly house wherein

we dwell. We are in a place of labour and not of idleness and sport. (*Bp. Patrick.*) *The nature of assurance and the way to attain it:—*I. I AM TO OPEN TO YOU THE BEAUTY AND PROPRIETY OF THE SEVERAL METAPHORS HERE USED. II. I AM NOW TO SHOW YOU THE FORCE OF THE APOSTLE'S ARGUMENT THAT THE ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL GLORY IS THE BEST SUPPORT UNDER ALL TEMPORAL CALAMITIES. For this reason we faint not, for we know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 1. This assures the soul that all the afflictions of this mortal life are but light and transient, and when longest and heaviest, if once compared with that eternal weight of glory which succeeds them are as nothing. 2. During the present short space of suffering this assured hope of a blessed immortality revives and entertains the soul with the most delightful views of it. 3. This assurance contributes further to the support of the afflicted mind as it disposes it to a meek and quiet resignation to the will of God. III. TO MAKE SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ASSURANCE, WHICH IS POUNDED ON THE WORDS OF THE TEXT. 1. I observe that an assurance of heaven is attainable in this life. 2. I would observe that it is not easily nor suddenly to be attained. It requires much labour, self-denial, and vigilance. 3. I would further observe that there is no small danger of mistaking in this matter. Mention some of those sources from which false assurance arises. (1) It is often the effect of wrong notions in religion, such as the Jews had, who must needs think themselves the favourites of heaven, because they were the children of Abraham. (2) A too sanguine and confident temper of mind often betrays men into these false hopes. (3) This false assurance often flows from gross ignorance, even when there is little or no bigotry or superstition in the case. Because, perhaps, they have done nobody any harm, and never committed those open immoralities which they see others to be guilty of. (4) Some suddenly attain good hopes of themselves through mere indolence and aversion to thought. They hope, but they do not know why, and are fully persuaded of they know not what. (5) That even infidelity is sometimes the means of inspiring men with false and confident hopes as to their future state. So that hence it appears that it is an easy thing to be mistaken in this matter. 4. I would observe that though this false assurance be very common it is very dangerous, and if continued in, of irreparable detriment. It is a dreadful thing to go down into the grave with a lie in the right hand. 5. We cannot be too careful in determining a matter which is in its consequences of so vast importance. IV. TO SHOW IN WHAT MANNER WE ARE TO PROCEED IN THIS AFFAIR, OR HOW A RIGHT ASSURANCE OF FUTURE HAPPINESS MAY BE ATTAINED. 1. In order to a well-grounded assurance of future happiness there must be a well-informed conscience and a good understanding in the right way to salvation. In order therefore to a well-established hope of heaven there must be a right knowledge of the nature of that happiness which is to be there enjoyed, the proper qualifications for it, and how those qualifications are to be attained. 2. In order to establish our hopes of future bliss there must be a sincere renunciation and departing from all known sins, those that are more secret as well as those which are more open to the eye of the world. 3. To this must be joined the love and practice of universal righteousness, or a sincere and humble obedience to all the precepts of the gospel. 4. To attain unwavering hopes of immortal glory there must be a large and particular experience of the power of religion in the government of our passions and propensions. This goes a great way to establish our hopes. 5. To all this must be joined a lively and active faith. I shall now conclude all with two or three brief reflections. 1. Let it be well remembered that there may be a good and comfortable hope of heaven without a full assurance of it. 2. Let those who are of a more sanguine and confident temper learn hence to guard against a spirit of delusion. 3. Let us all then be persuaded to labour after it in the way now prescribed. (*J. Mason, A.M.*) *The good man's present and future house:—*I. THE GOOD MAN'S PRESENT HOUSE. The mind occupies the body. We "dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust." 1. This house is earthly. (1) From the body returning to the earth, we see that it is composed of the same material. (2) It draws our spirit down to sublunary objects. 2. Movable. A tent can be easily taken down. 3. Decaying. The term "dissolve" means properly to dis-unite the parts of anything. 4. Exposed. It is situated in a locality where it is liable to the ravages of time and rough usage. 5. Inconvenient (ver. 2). How much of our attention it requires in order to ensure its preservation! It needs daily cleansing, repairs, and protection. Often is it giving us extreme anxiety, putting us to considerable expense, or causing us severe pain. 6. Inferior. Paul desired a better, *i.e.*, a suitable habitation. He

longed for the period when his vile body should be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. II. THE GOOD MAN'S FUTURE HOUSE. The redeemed soul's final domicile will be the clay tenement in its changed and beautified condition (1 Cor. xv.). This will be—1. Superhuman. "A building of God, a house not made with hands." Jehovah will be the architect of this future abode. Though built by the Almighty, the Christian's present house decays as if it had been the work of some poor mortal. The latter, framed thoroughly by the Highest, will be more in harmony with the unchangeableness and excellence of our adorable Maker. 2. Eternal. The body the believer shall ultimately have will never be taken down by death. 3. Unexposed. Its site is to be "in the heavens." There will be nothing to weaken it or mar its beauty. 4. Attractive. Hence the godly in every age have, like the apostle, longed to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 5. One for which the saint is prepared (ver. 5). Every one that wishes to possess the building of God, must be meetened for it. 6. Assured (ver. 5). God sends forth the Holy Ghost to witness with the believer's spirit that he shall finally have the better body. Conclusion, have you such a house in prospect? (*Homilist.*) *The earthly and the heavenly house*:—I. THE BODY IS ONLY THE HOUSE OF THE SOUL. Note—1. What kind of a house? (1) It is only a lodging-house. The soul is not sent to dwell in it, but to sojourn in it, while on the way to another world. "We are strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were." (2) It is a weak house. The soul in the body is not lodged as in a tower or castle. (3) It is a house that is daily in danger. (a) It is in danger from without. There are storms to blow it down, and a very small blast will sometimes do it. (b) It is in danger from within. There are disorders to undermine the house. The seeds of diseases, when we know not, are digging like moles under the mud walls, and soon destroy the house. (4) It is a dark house. How many dangers come to the house from without which are never perceived by the eyes till they arrive. 2. The peculiarities of this house. (1) It is a curious house of brittle materials. (a) The body is a stupendous piece of workmanship, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The very outworks of the house are admirable. Observe the wisdom of God in that beauty and majesty that are in the face, in the faculty of speech, &c. How God has put the eyes and the ears in the head as in their watch tower, that they may the better serve for seeing and hearing. Two arms to defend ourselves. These are the guardians of the house. Nay, there is not a hair, nor nail in the body, but has its use. But what is all this to the curiosity within? (b) But the more curious, the more easily marred. The greatest beauty is soonest tarnished. So we are exposed to the greatest danger by a small touch. (2) It is a house that needs reparation daily. Your meanest houses, once right, need nothing for a year. But this earthly house needs reparation daily. Hence eating and drinking are necessary, the house must be patched up with more mud daily. And some are so taken up with repairing the body that all the day they do nothing else. 3. Uses from this doctrine. (1) Prize your souls above your bodies, as you do the inhabitant above the house. (2) Make not your body a war house against heaven. (3) Take care of the house for the sake of its inhabitant. (4) Never ruin the inhabitant for the house. (5) Beware of defiling the house, seeing it has such a noble lodger. (6) Take heed to the door of the house. Let it be duly shut and be discreetly opened. Open your mouth with wisdom. (7) Take heed to the windows of the house. The soul got its death-wound at first by the eyes. (8) Provide in time for a better house. You must depart from this. II. MAN'S BODY IS A TABERNACLE OR TENT FOR HIS SOUL. Paul was a tent-maker, and he takes a lesson of his frailty from what was among his hands, teaching us to do the same. It is so-called—1. Because it is easily taken down. Whatever force may be necessary to pull down a house, it is easy to pull down a tent. 2. A tent is a movable house, one that is carried from place to place. So while we are in the body, we are not come to the place of our rest or settled habitation. 3. Tents, though mean without, may be precious within. However mean outwardly the body be, it has a precious soul within, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, capable of enjoying God for ever. 4. Uses of this doctrine. (1) We need not wonder at sudden death. It has often been seen that a tent has fallen down when not a hand touched it. (2) Let us lay our accounts with hardships while we are in the body. They that dwell in tents do not expect the ease and conveniences which a house affords. The ease is coming in the building of God. (3) Let us live like pilgrims and strangers who are quickly to remove. (4) Let us be preparing for an abiding mansion, and be careful to secure our title to it. III. THE EARTHLY HOUSE OF THE TABERNACLE OF OUR BODY WILL BE DISSOLVED BY DEATH. 1. In what respects is death a

dissolution? (1) Death dissolves the union betwixt soul and body. (2) Death dissolves the body itself. (3) Death dissolves—(a) The vital flame that kept the body in life. (b) The communion betwixt the parts of the body. No more blood flows from the heart. No more spirits from the brain. Then all falls down together. The eyes see no more, and the ears hear no more. (c) The joints and bands with which the body was united. In the grave the strongest arms fall from the shoulder blade, and every bone lies by itself. (d) The most minute particles of the body, and though the bones last longer, yet they also moulder into dust at length. 2. This body shall be dissolved. (1) There is an unalterable statute of death under which men are concluded. "It is appointed unto men once to die." (2) Daily observation tells us we must die. (3) All men consist of perishing materials. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." (4) We have sinful souls, therefore dying bodies. The leprosy is in the wall of the house, therefore it must be pulled down. (5) We are hastening to a dissolution. "Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. They are passed as the swift ships, as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." IV. WHEN THE TABERNACLE OF THE SAINTS' BODY IS DISSOLVED BY DEATH THEY HAVE A HOUSE OF GLORY IN HEAVEN READY FOR THEM. 1. It is a dwelling house, not a house in which to lodge, but to abide. 2. It is a royal house, a palace. "They shall enter into the king's palace." Christ calls His saints to a kingdom, and their house is suitable to their dignity. 3. It is a holy house, a temple. 4. It is a heavenly house. (1) It is situated in the better country, blessed with a perpetual spring, which yieldeth all things for necessity, conveniency, and delight. That land enjoys an everlasting day, "for there shall be no night there." An eternal sunshine beautifies it. (2) As for the city, this house stands "in that great city, the holy Jerusalem," a city which shall flourish when all the cities below are in ashes. A city that never changeth its inhabitants. Blessed with perfect peace, nothing from any quarter can ever annoy it. 5. It is a father's house. 6. It is a spacious house. This clay body is a narrow house, where the soul is caged up for a time. But that house hath many mansions. 7. It is a most convenient house. Every saint shall find his own mansion prepared and furnished with every conveniency for him. O believer, art thou in poverty and straits? There is an incorruptible treasure in that house. Are you groaning under the tyranny of sin? There you shall walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. 8. It is a safe house. The gates "are not shut at all by day," for there is no danger there. No unclean thing can enter it. 9. It is a glorious house. (1) The visible heavens are but the porch of the seat of the blessed. (2) It is the house in which the King's son is to dwell with the bride for ever. (3) It was purchased at a vast expense, even the blood of the Son of God. (4) The indispensable necessity for washing and purifying, to fit persons for dwelling in the house, shows it to be glorious. 10. It is an everlasting house. It is eternal in the heavens. Conclusion—1. Behold and admire the happiness of the saints. 2. Seek a house now into which you may be received when your earthly house is dissolved. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *The tent dissolved and the mansion entered*:—My text begins with the word "For." Paul's mind was argumentative. If able to defy the present and rejoice in the future, he had a solid reason for so doing. I like an enthusiast who yet in his fervour does not lose his balance. Let the heart be like a fiery, high-mettled steed, curbed and managed by discretion. Consider.—I. THE CATASTROPHE WHICH PAUL SAW TO BE VERY POSSIBLE. "If our earthly house," &c. He did not fear that he himself would be dissolved. He does not say, "If I were to be destroyed." The "we" is all unharmed and unmoved. Many people are in a great fright about the future; but Paul regards the worst thing that could happen to him as nothing worse than the pulling down of a tent. 1. The apostle perceived that the body he lived in was frail in itself. Most likely he had a tent or two to repair lying near which suggested the language of the text. A tent is but a frail structure, and Paul felt that no great force would be required to overthrow it; it was like the tent which the Midianite saw in his dream, which only needed to be struck by a barley cake, and, lo! it lay along. A house of solid masonry needs a crowbar and a pick to start its stones. 2. Paul had many signs about him that his body would be dissolved. His many labours were telling upon him, and so were the cold, hunger, nakedness, and sickness he endured, and, besides, his tent might come down any day through the violence of his persecutors. Once he most touchingly spoke of himself as "such an one as Paul the Aged," and aged men cannot get away from the consciousness that their body is failing. Certain crumbling portions warn the old man that the house is dilapidated; the thatch which has grown thin or blanched tells its tale. 3. Paul knew that so many

others whom he had known and loved had already died, and he gathered from this that he would himself die. Our crowded cemeteries supply ten thousand arguments why each of us must expect to die in due time. Now this was all that Paul expected on the sad side, and truly it is not much. Certain Swiss peasants were feeding their flocks when they heard a rumbling up in the lofty Alps, and knew what it meant. In a brief space their fears were realised, for a tremendous mass of snow came rushing from above. What did it destroy? Only their old, crazy *châlets*. Every man was safe; the event was rather to them a matter which caused a *Te Deum* to be sung in the village church below than a subject for mourning. So the avalanche of death will fall, but it will only dissolve your earthly house. To-day we are like birds in the egg; death breaks the shell. Does the fledgling lament the dissolution of the shell?

II. THE PROVISION OF WHICH THE APOSTLE MOST SURELY KNEW. He knew that if his tent-dwelling was overthrown he would not be without a home. He did not expect to be in purgatory for the next thousand years, and then to leap from purgatory to Paradise. He had not even the thought of lying unconscious till the resurrection. He says not "we shall have" but "we have." 1. What did the apostle mean?

(1) That the moment his soul left its body it would at once enter into that house of which Jesus spoke in John xiv. 2. Do you want to know about that house? Read the Book of the Revelation and learn of its gates of pearl, &c. If after that you desire to know more take the advice given by John Bunyan, who bade his friend live a godly life, and go to heaven, and see for himself. (2) That in the fulness of time he would again be clothed upon with a body. At this present in this body we groan being burdened. We are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

2. How Paul could say he knew this. This enlightened century has produced an order of wise men who glory in their ignorance. How odd that a man should be proud of being an ignoramus, and yet that is the Latin for the Greek "Agnostic." How different is our apostle! He says, "we know." Whence came this confidence? (1) Paul knew that he had a Father, for he felt the spirit of sonship; he knew also that his Father had a house, and he was certain that if he lost the tent in which he lived he would be welcomed into his Father's house above. How do our children know that they can come home to us? Did they learn that at school? No, but by their children's instinct, just as chickens run under the mother-hen without needing to be trained. (2) He knew that he had an elder brother, and that this brother had gone before to see to the lodging of the younger brethren (John xiv. 2). (3) He thought of the Holy Ghost, who condescends to dwell in these mortal bodies, and, therefore, when we leave our earthly house He will leave it too, and as He has been our guest, in His turn He will be our host. (4) He knew that when he died there was a Paradise prepared, for he had been there already (chap. xii.). Remember that this is the place to which the Lord Jesus admitted the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

(5) He knew that when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved there would be a new body for him; because Christ had risen from the dead. If Jesus be alive and in a place of rest He will never leave His own without house or home. There is such an attachment between Christ and the believer; yea, more, such a vital, indissoluble marriage union that separation is impossible. III. THE VALUE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE TO US.

Secularists twit us with taking men's minds away from the practical present that they may dream over a fancied future. We answer that the best help to live for the present is to live in prospect of the eternal future. Paul's confident belief—1. Kept him from fainting. 2. Made his present trials seem very light, for he felt like a man who sojourns for a night at a poor inn, but puts up with it gladly because he hopes to be home on the morrow. 3. Transformed death from a demon into an angel; it was but the removal of a tottering tent that he might enter into a permanent palace. 4. Made him always calm and brave. Why should he be afraid of a man that could not do him harm? Even if his persecutor killed him he would do him a service. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Views of life, death, and the future* :—

I. WE HAVE THE VIEWS WHICH CHRISTIANITY TEACHES US TO TAKE OF LIFE. 1. The first view which it gives us, suggested by the text, is that life is a pilgrimage. The text speaks of "tabernacles," tents; we are dwelling in tents. 2. A second view of life, in the text, is, that it is uncertain. 3. The third view which the apostle takes of life is that, even as to believers, it is a life of trouble and affliction. "We in this tabernacle do groan." 4. But there is a fourth view of life of which the apostle takes, at least in the verses which immediately succeed the text. He teaches us that life is to be subordinated to one great end, so to please God as to have the

testimony that we are accepted of Him. The highest heaven of a good man is to be accepted of God. Such are the views which Christianity teaches us to take of life. II. WE HAVE THE VIEWS WHICH CHRISTIANITY TEACHES US TO FORM OF DEATH. Meditate on that word, "unclothed!" Death, then, is not the termination of our being. "Unclothed!" Then there is no cessation of consciousness. "Unclothed!" Then, of course, everything in the body which obstructs the operation of the mind must necessarily be removed. "Unclothed!" Then there is a change of place as well as condition. The connection of our spirits with the body renders us inhabitants of the earth. "Unclothed!" Then must we become conscious, by virtue of this unclothing, of the presence of those spirits who have undergone the same process before us, and have been unclothed like ourselves. We are not now at all conscious of the presence of disembodied spirits; they are, for the while, lost to us. "Unclothed!" but the import of this word is not yet exhausted; then must we become conscious at once, in a manner we cannot be on earth, of the presence of God. The body hides God from us, and prevents the immediate recognition of God by the spirit. III. WE HAVE HERE THE VIEWS WHICH CHRISTIANITY TEACHES US TO FORM OF THE FUTURE PERMANENT STATE OF BELIEVERS. (*J. Walker, D.D.*) *The present and future of believers:—*I. THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT STATE. 1. Temporary. To impress this the apostle compares the body to a house, composed of earthly materials, which must soon return again to its original element. The damps of infirmity and waters of affliction soon undermine the frail tenement. The figure of a house, however, is too stable a metaphor. Hence the body is called a mere tabernacle (*Neh. viii.*). 2. Afflictive (*ver. 2*). Shall we illustrate it by an humble cottage buried in snow, whose inmates groan for deliverance? Or shall we take the fact that the atmosphere presses with a force of fourteen pounds on every square inch of surface? The tabernacle is oppressed, the weight is great, no man can remove it, or make his escape but with the loss of life itself. Though death cannot crush at once, he makes us feel his pressure. Ultimately it must succeed, but as the silver rises in the barometer by the pressure of the air, so the weight of affliction causes the believing soul to rise towards God. 3. A state of earnest longing and ardent hope—"In this we groan, earnestly desiring." Grief is vocal, and from the heart soon finds its way to the lips. To groan, when oppressed, is natural, to desire heaven is supernatural. Here the believer stands distinguished from the vast masses of the creation which groaneth and travaileth in pain. It is a maxim among moralists that no man can desire evil for its own sake, which is just the sentiment of the apostle. We cannot desire death for its own sake; we cannot wish to be left naked, houseless, by the dissolution of the present tabernacle; but such are the happiness and glory found in the house not made with hands that we desire to exchange habitations. 4. One of certain knowledge, and Divine assurance of future glory (*ver. 1*). But whence does this knowledge arise? Not by intuition. The mind possesses a capability of knowing it, but nothing more. Not from the senses, for its subject is altogether supersensual. The Divine testimony of revealed truth is the foundation, the Holy Ghost is the great agent, and faith the appointed instrument of this knowledge. II. HIS INTERMEDIATE STATE. 1. It is a state of simple abstract being. The apostle speaks of no new house, tabernacle, or clothing; but of a complete divestment of all, in being "naked" and "unclothed." He speaks of the understanding, conscience, memory, imagination, will, and affections being laid naked and open before God, and the whole invisible world, while all the inhabitants thereof are equally laid open to the view of the soul when divested of mortality. 2. It is a state of conscious existence. Is it possible that insensibility can reign in the direct presence of Christ, who is the life and fountain of all knowledge and happiness? Was not Abraham conscious in Paradise when he replied to the rich man? 3. It is a state in which trial and probation are ended. An impassable gulf was fixed between good and bad spirits, according to the testimony of Abraham, as recorded by Luke. 4. It is a state of imperfection in relation to knowledge, the corporeal powers, and the manifestation of future glory. III. HIS FINAL AND ETERNAL STATE. What is the house not made with hands? Is it a material covering or vehicle into which the soul enters on its departure from the body? This notion was entertained by Plato and his followers, but stands opposed to our text, which speaks of the soul "being naked and unclothed." Besides, if a material covering be meant, the apostle says it must be eternal. It would therefore exclude the resurrection of the body. Neither can the house not made with hands mean the ethereal heavens, including sun, moon, and stars, they as well as the

earthly house, pass away. The "heavens," therefore, must mean the abode of God—the glorious city of the New Jerusalem. But mark that the "house" is not said to be the heavens, but a fabric in the heavens—viz., the resurrection body. We are now prepared to observe that the final and eternal state of the believer will be a state of—1. Restitution. If we have lost by the sin and apostasy of the first Adam, we gain more by the death, resurrection, reign, and faithfulness of Jesus, the second Adam. 2. A state of reward. 3. A state of pure unmixed life. "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." (*D. McAfee.*) *The changeable and the permanent:—*I. ALL THINGS

SUBLUNARY ARE CHANGEABLE. 1. God has condemned this world to dissolution (Heb. i. 10, 11). The individual house or tabernacle must be dissolved. Our fathers, where are they? "It is appointed for man once to die." Neither wealth, temperance, nor medicine can protect the frail tabernacle from dissolution. 2. All our enjoyments are liable to the same change. They stand on two insecure legs, insufficiency and uncertainty. 3. It never was God's design that this clay tabernacle should stand for ever. What a mercy it is for Christians that they are mortal (John xvii. 24).

II. HEAVENLY THINGS ARE PERMANENT AND ETERNAL. 1. The building itself is eternal; the leprosy of sin has never affected its walls; no curse hangs over the New Jerusalem. Adam was expelled from Paradise, and the Jews were expelled from an earthly Canaan; but the redeemed shall never be expelled from heaven. "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." 2. The perfections of heaven are eternal also, entire exemption from all sin. What does the proud man think of this? Is it a blessing to be humble? What does the covetous man think of this? Is it a blessing to be delivered from the bondage of a greedy disposition? Good men, in proportion to their being good men, love that heaven because there is no pride, envy, malignity, temptation. III.

THE CHRISTIAN DUTY OF EARNESTLY DESIRING THE HEAVENLY STATE. 1. A calm and settled conviction of its existence. "We know!" 2. A deep sense of our need of it (ver. 2). 3. The exercise of walking in the road that leads to it. Conclusion—1. We must all die, our tents must be struck soon. The man who loves this world will not be pleased at this conclusion, but the Christian man will be delighted at it. 2. The believers' best days are yet to come. There is an eternal house which the Saviour has gone to prepare. (*A. Waugh, D.D.*) *Tent and building:—*I. So MY

TEXT MAINLY SETS BEFORE US VERY STRIKINGLY THE CHRISTIAN CERTITUDE AS TO THE FINAL FUTURE. The clear, broad distinction between me and my physical frame. There is no more connection, says Paul, between us and the organisation in which we at present dwell than there is between a man and the house that he inhabits. The foolish senses crown Death and call him Lord; but the Christian's certitude firmly draws the line, and declares that the man, the whole personality, is undisturbed by anything that befalls his residence; and that he may pass unimpaired from one to another, being in both the self-same person. Then, again, note, as part of the elements of this Christian certitude, the blessed thought that a body is part of the perfection of manhood. No mere dim, ghostly future, where consciousness somehow persists, without environment or tools to act upon an outer world. To dwell naked, as the apostle says in the context, is a thing from which man shudderingly recoils, and it is not to be his final fate. And now, if we turn to the characteristics of the two conditions with which my text deals, we get some familiar yet great and strengthening thoughts. The "earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved," or, more correctly, retaining the metaphor of the house, is to be pulled down, and in its place there comes a building of God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The first outstanding difference which arises before the apostle is the contrast between the fragile dwelling-place, with its thin canvas, its bending poles, its certain removal some day, and the permanence of that which is not a "tent," but a "building," which is "eternal." Involved in that is the thought that all the limitations and weaknesses which are necessarily associated with the perishableness of the present abode are at an end for ever. No more fatigue, no more working beyond the measure of power, no more need for recuperation. And the other contrast is no less glorious and wonderful. "The earthly house of this tent" does not merely define the composition, but also the whole relations and capacities of that to which it refers. The "tent" is "earthly," not merely because, to use a kindred metaphor, it is a "building of clay," but because, by all its capacities, it belongs to, corresponds with, and is fit ed only for, this lower order of things, the seen and the perishable. And, on the other hand, the "mansion" is in "the heavens," even whilst the

future tenant is a nomad in his tent. That is so, because the power which can create that future abode is "in the heavens." It is so in order to express the absolute security in which it is kept for those who shall one day enter upon it. And it is so, further, to express the order of things with which it brings its dwellers into contact. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption." Let no man say that such ideas of a possible future bodily frame are altogether inconsistent with all that we know of the limitations and characteristics of what we call matter. "There is one flesh of beasts and another of birds," says Paul. Do you know so fully all the possibilities of creation as that you are warranted in asserting that such a thing as a body which is the fit organ of the spirit, and is incorruptible, like the heavens in which it dwells, is an impossibility? The teaching of my text and its context casts great light on what the resurrection of the dead means. We have heard grand platitudes about "the scattered dust being gathered from the four winds of heaven," and so on; but the teaching of my text is that resurrection does not mean the assuming again of the body that is left behind and done with, but the reinvestment of the man with another body. It is a house "in the heavens." We leave "the tent"; we enter the "building." There is nothing here of some germ of immortality being somehow extricated from the ruins, and fostered into glorious growth. Or, to take another metaphor of the context, we strip off the garment and are naked, and then we are clothed with another garment and are not found naked. The resurrection of the dead is the clothing of the spirit with the house which is from heaven. And there is as much difference between the two habitations as there is between the grim, solid architecture of northern peoples, amidst snow and ice—needed to resist the blasts, and to keep the life within in an ungenial climate—and the light, graceful dwellings of those who walk in an atmosphere of perpetual sunshine in the tropics. Therefore let us, whilst we grope in the dark here, and live in a narrow hovel in a back street, look forward to the time when we shall dwell on the sunny heights in the great pavilion which God prepares for them that love Him. II. And now note again HOW WE COME TO THIS CERTITUDE. My text is very significantly followed by a "for," which gives the reason of the knowledge in a very remarkable manner. "We know . . . for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven." Now that singular collocation of ideas may be set forth thus—whatever longing there is in a Christian, God-inspired soul, that longing is a prophecy of its own fulfilment. We know that there is a house, because of the yearning, which is deepest and strongest when we are nearest God. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Of course such longing, such aspiration and revulsion are no proofs of a fact except there be some fact which changes them from mere vague desires, and makes these solid certainties. And such a fact we have in that which is the only proof that the world has received, of the persistence of life through death, and the continuance of personal identity unchanged by the grave, and that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And let no man take exception to the apostle's word here, "we know," or tell us that "Knowledge is of the things we see." That is true and not true. It is true in regard of what arrogates to itself the name of science. If it is meant to assert that we are less sure of the love of God, of immortality than we are of the existence of this piece of wood, or that flame of gas; then I humbly venture to say that there is another region of facts than those which are appreciable by sense; that the evidence upon which we rest our certitude of immortal blessedness is quite as valid as anything that can be produced, in the nature of evidence, for the things around us. III. Lastly, note WHAT THIS CERTITUDE DOES. The apostle tells us, by the "for" which lies at the beginning of my text, and makes it a reason for something that has preceded. And what has preceded is this, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." That is to say, such a joyous, calm certitude draws men's thoughts away from this shabby and transitory present, and fixes them on the solemn majesties of that eternal future. Yes! and nothing else will. And we shall not let our thoughts willingly go out thither unless our own personal well-being there is very sure to us. And such a certitude will also make a man willing to accept the else unwelcome necessity of leaving the tent, and for awhile doing without the mansion. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Heaven anticipated*:—Note—I. THE APPROPRIATE DESCRIPTION GIVEN US OF THE HUMAN BODY—"the earthly house of this tabernacle." Notice 1. Its material origin. It is "earthly." How mysterious and complicated soever may be the machinery of the human frame, it is, after all, a composition of earthly

materials. 2. Its use. It is a "house." Every house is built by some man, but He that built this house is God. 3. Its temporary existence. 4. Its ultimate dissolution. II. THE ASSURANCE THE APOSTLE INDULGED. 1. It is a building of God. (1) God the Father is the efficient cause or architect of this building. Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (2) The procuring and meritorious cause of this building is Jesus the Mediator. "I go to prepare a place for you." (3) It is a building worthy of God. 2. It is permanent, "eternal in the heavens." All other buildings are weak and precarious. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." 3. Where this building is situated. "In the heavens." The inspired writers invariably speak of it as a place of ineffable blessedness and unspeakable glory. If permitted to arrive there, we shall be ready to exclaim, as the Queen of Sheba did when she beheld Solomon's wisdom and prosperity, "Behold the half was not told me." III. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THIS ASSURANCE RESTED. 1. The testimony of God's word (chap. iv. 13). 2. The consciousness which he himself had of being the subject of Divine grace (ver. 5). Conclusion—Let us learn from this subject—1. To be habitually entertaining thoughts about death and another world. 2. The unspeakable value of the gospel. "Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *Dissolution no injury* :—Cicero tells of a prisoner who had always lived in prison; he had never once seen the outer world. And so when he had become an old man, and they began for some reason or other to pull down the walls of his prison, he broke into bitter lamentings because they would destroy the little window through whose bars he had got the only bit of light that had ever gladdened his eyes. He did not understand that the falling of the walls would let him into a broad, bright world, would open to him the wide glories of sun and sky and summer. And so when we see the body sinking in ruinous decay it seems as if we were about to lose everything, forgetting that the senses are but the dim windows of the soul, and that when the body of our humiliation is gone the walls of our prison-house are gone, and a new world of infinite light and beauty and liberty bursts upon us. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *A larger house* :—Passing by a house a short time since I noticed the intimation, "This House to Let." "How is this? Is the former tenant dead?" I asked. "Oh, no, sir," said the caretaker; "he has removed to a larger house in a better situation." Even thus, as we look upon the clay tenement in which some loved Christian friend has dwelt, we answer, "No, he is not dead, but removed into the enduring house in 'the better country,' where the 'better resurrection' is, and where eternal life is." (*Henry Varley.*) *Christian knowledge concerning the future body of the good* :—The Christian knows that :—I. IT WILL BE BETTER THAN THE PRESENT. 1. It will be directly Divine. "A building of God." The present body is from God, but it comes from Him through secondary instrumentalities. The future body will come direct, it will not be transmitted from sire to son. 2. It will be fitted for a higher sphere—"In the heavens." The present body is fitted for the earthly sphere. 3. It will be more enduring, "eternal." 4. It will be more enjoyable. II. HE IS NOW BEING DIVINELY FITTED FOR THE BETTER BODY OF THE FUTURE (ver. 5). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Not made with hands* :—Is there anything "not made with hands"? Then there is something apart from manufactures. Some of you live in what you call the manufacturing districts. Now what do your manufactures amount to? But we have been proud of our hand-making. Within given limits that is perfectly proper. The prosperity of the world is due in no small measure to the work of the hands. And yet we are now face to face with something—is it home, church, mankind, temple, heaven?—something that hands have never touched. I must therefore get you to live elsewhere as well as in the manufacturing districts. Why, you do that in part already. I would press your logic to further issues. You do not live in the factory. Oh, you say, we live a mile or two out. Why? That we may have some little whiff of nature, some fresh air, some tolerable breathing space. Now that is not all. I want you to get a little further out under larger skies, to breathe fresher air, to see fairer downs. After all, what have the hands made? They have made nothing worth speaking about. Did the hands build the temple? No, except in a very narrow and literal sense of the term. Who built the temple? The man who thought it, the man who drew it, the man who saw it in aerial lines before he put pen or pencil to paper. He made the temple. The hands, they were mere hired servants. They would have pulled the temple down quite as easily and quite as readily. There is another very remarkable expression in Mark ix. 3: "As no fuller on earth can white

them." Then there is something above art as certainly as there is something above manufactures? Now ask the fuller to look at his work, and at this work on Tabor. Fuller, didst thou wash this robe on Tabor? No, no. Why not? Why, it was washed with lightning, it was cleansed in heaven, it was dipped in the fountains of eternity. No fuller on earth can white like that. So be it. "Not made with hands." Manufactures? No. "No fuller on earth can white them." The arts? No. What is left then? Nature. Is that so? Be careful. Admissions will be turned against us presently. So this brings us to a third remarkable expression (Acts xxvi. 13), "Above the brightness of the sun." Then nature goes. What radiance is this? We thought the sun was bright. We used to say of that old glory, "He puts the fire out." He blinds our little lamps. 1. Now this is exactly so with regard, for example, to character, saintly, holy, beauteous, inspired character. It is of a whiteness such as no fuller on earth can make it. Why, there be many fullers who are trying to whiten the world; rare fullers, costly fullers, energetic, fussy, busy fullers, but they get no further on. They are moralists, they lecture upon moral philosophy. There be many whitening fullers, persons who say that on such and such conditions they will renovate you. They will make new men of you if you will sign a vow, undergo a discipline, subject yourselves to certain scheduled operations, each coming in its own proper time, then at the end all will be well. Oh, poor fuller! What doth this great Christ do? He washes us in blood, and when we stand up from that catharism, the Fuller says, "No fuller on earth can white it like that." If you despise a saint, you have never seen one. A saint is holy. Why, He would not have any fuller on earth touch our souls. He only who made the soul can touch it, redeem it and work that wondrous miracle of washing white by cleansing with blood. Your character is not what it is on the outside. Your character is the quality of your soul, your motive, your purpose, your innermost self, and no fuller on earth can put that through any process of cleansing. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." 2. It is the same with inspiration. It is not made with hands. What have I seen you do again and again? Have I not seen you searching for inspiration as if it were in black ink and in printer's letters? Yes, I have. We must get away if we can from these people to whom everything is valuable in proportion as it is handmade. Why, the literalist never read the Bible. It was only when he left his literalism and began to touch the higherisms that want names, found in heaven, rightly to express their intent, that he came upon revelation. He said, "This book told me all that ever I did, then it must be inspired." It is not made with hands. 3. And so with Divine hope. It is a light above the brightness of the sun. It is Christ's hope. He did not stop at the Cross. He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Why? Because onward, far away on the horizon line there lay a light that meant immortality and glory inevitable. And what is the practical application of this? It needs but few words to express it. We must go from the things made with hands to the things hands cannot touch. Here are the lilies, Christ says. "We have seen the lilies, we have touched the lilies." "Have you?" "Yes." Then consider them. "Why?" Because your Father in heaven clothed them and made Solomon ashamed of himself in all his pomp, and if He clothed the lilies He will not leave you naked. And we must live the supernatural life. That is the hard part of it. "Not made with hands." "No fuller on earth can white like this." Sun, there is a light above thee. Until we get to these conceptions and exactions we shall be living a very poor life. I am tired of houses made with hands. I have seen it all. Yes, I am tired of this fuller's work. It becomes dingy and poor in my eyes. And I get tired of nature. There is no monotony like the monotony of sunshine. (J. Parker, D.D.)

Ver. 2, 3. **For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon.—***Christian's uneasiness in the mortal body and desire of the heavenly happiness:—*
 I. WE ARE TO CONSIDER A CHRISTIAN'S GROANS WHILE HE IS IN THE BODY UNDER PRESENT UNEASINESS. "In this we groan." And "while we are in this tabernacle we groan, being burdened." 1. As to what the body is the more immediate seat and subject of. Of this kind we may consider the following instances. (1) The weakness and disorder of the bodily nature. (2) Weariness of labour. The Christian life is a state of warfare as well as service. (3) The afflictions and sufferings of life. (4) The dissolution of the bodily frame. There is a natural love in the soul to the body arising from the close union and long intimacy together. 2. What the body may further occasion to the soul; and in several ways occasions uneasiness. (1) It is a

great hindrance to our spiritual attainments, and to all our improvements in knowledge and grace. How often do the necessities and pleasures of the bodily life hinder a wise improvement of opportunities? We are apt to indulge in sloth, and regret the necessary pains of higher improvement. (2) It is a great occasion of sin, as well as of imperfection. The depravation of nature seems interwoven with the bodily constitution, and by the laws of union between the body and soul, the one is much affected by the other (Rom. vi. 13). The sensible world round about us powerfully strikes our sensible natures, and proves a dangerous snare. It gives a great advantage to the devil's temptations. (3) It exposes them to many troubles. How many calamities befall us by accident or violence, by the hand of Providence or our own mistake! (4) The necessary distance and absence from the Lord. II. I AM TO CONSIDER A CHRISTIAN'S DESIRES OF THE HEAVENLY HAPPINESS. He earnestly desires to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven. There is the weight of their present burdens. They not only groan, but desire, and the groanings breed desires. Oppressed nature longs for rest. Besides, there is the excellency of the heavenly state, or the object of their desires. In ver. 4 he speaks of being clothed upon, or covered all over with it, and mortality being swallowed up of life. Even the mortal part, or what was before mortal of us, will become immortal. He represents the future state by a presence with Christ. "Present with the Lord." The peculiar temper of a Christian's mind with reference to it. 1. He describes it by their faith of the heavenly blessedness. This he expresses in ver. 1 by knowledge. 2. There is their preparation for it. This we have in ver. 5—"Now He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who hath also given to us the earnest of His Spirit." 3. Their courage, or fortitude of mind. This is mentioned in ver. 6—"Therefore we are confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." In ver. 8, "We are confident, I say." We have bravery sufficient to support our minds in the prospects and conflicts with death; we dare to die rather than not be with the Lord. 4. Complacency, or willingness (ver. 8). 5. Their constant endeavours. This we find in ver. 9—"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." His favour is our happiness living and dying, in this world and in the other. I shall only further observe that the word also imports ambition; and it is as if he had said, "This is the highest honour of which we are ambitious, and what we propose as the proper prize." III. I SHALL CLOSE THIS SUBJECT WITH TWO OR THREE PRACTICAL REMARKS. 1. We may learn from hence the nature of the present state. It is made up, according to this account of it, of groans and desires. The one is the fruit of fallen nature, the other of the renewed nature. The one is the effect of the curse, the other of Divine grace. 2. The difference between sincere Christians and other men. They groan under their present burdens indeed, and have sometimes a larger share than other men, but then they have their desires too. But now wicked men have groans without desires; they have no desires of the heavenly state. 3. We should look well to our interest in the heavenly glory. 4. The happiness of departed saints. They have the full satisfaction of their highest desires, and the perfection of their felicity and joy. (*W. Harris, D.D.*) *The desire for immortality*:—I. THE REASONS FOR THIS GROANING are—1. The pressures and miseries of the present life (ver. 4). We are burdened—(1) With sin. To a waking conscience this is one of the greatest burdens that can be felt (Rom. vii. 24). It is not the bare trouble of the world which sets the saints a-groaning, but indwelling corruption, which may be cast out, but is not cast out. A gracious heart seeth this is the greatest evil, and therefore would fain get rid of it. (2) With miseries (Rom. viii. 20, 21). It is a groaning world, and God's children bear a part in the concert (Gen. xlvii. 7). There are many things to wean a Christian from the present life. (a) Manifold temptations from Satan (1 Pet. v. 8, 9). (b) Persecutions from the world. (3) Sharp afflictions from God Himself. God is jealous of our hearts. He is fain to embitter our worldly portion, that we may think of a remove to some better place and state. We would sleep here if we did not sometimes meet with thorns in our bed. 2. Our having had a taste of better things (Rom. viii. 23). The firstfruits show us what the harvest will be, and the taste what the feast will prove. (1) We have but a glimpse of Christ as He showeth Himself through the lattice, but there we shall see Him with open face. (2) Our holiness is not perfect, and therefore we long for more. The new nature is seed (1 John i. 9; 1 Pet. i. 2). As a seed will work through the dry clods, that it may grow up into its perfect estate, so doth this seed of God work towards its final perfection. (3) Our comforts are not perfect. The joys of the Spirit are unspeakable things; but at His right hand there is fulness, pleasures for evermore

(Psa. xvi. 11). These the soul longeth for. 3. The excellency of this estate. It is great ingratitude and folly that, when Christ hath procured a state of blessedness for us at a very dear rate, we should value it no more. 4. The three theological graces. (1) Faith. They that believe that there is another sort of life infinitely more desirable than this will find their affections stirred towards it, for sound persuasion showeth itself in answerable affections (Heb. xi. 13; 2 Pet. iii. 12). (2) Love. They that love Christ will long to be with Him (Phil. i. 23; cf. Col. iii. 1). (3) Hope. What you hope for will be all your desire (Phil. i. 20). 5. The Holy Ghost stirreth up in us these groans partly by revealing the object in such a lively manner as it cannot otherwise be seen (Eph. i. 17, 18; 1 Cor. ii. 22), partly by His secret influences, as He stirreth up holy ardours in prayer (Rom. viii. 25, 26). 6. All the ordinances of the gospel serve to awaken them. The Word is God's testament, wherein such rich legacies are bequeathed to us that every time we read it, or hear it, or meditate upon it, we may get a step higher, and advance nearer heaven (2 Pet. v. 4; Psa. cxix. 96). So for prayer—it is but to raise those heavenly desires. We long in the Lord's Supper for new wine in our Father's kingdom, to put an heavenly relish upon our hearts. 7. These desires are necessary because of their effect. What maketh the Christian so industrious, so patient, so self-denying, so watchful? Only because he breatheth after heaven with so much earnestness. 8. The state of the present world doth set the saints longing for heaven. For this world is vexatious, the pleasures of it are mere dreams, and the miseries of it are real, many, and grievous. II. OBJECTIONS MET. 1. But how can Christians groan for their heavenly state, since there is no passage to it but by death, and it is unnatural to desire our own death? (1) They do not simply desire death for itself, which in itself is an evil, but as a means to enjoy these better things (Phil. i. 23). (2) Death is sweetened to them. By Christ's death it is made their friend, a passage to an endless life (1 Cor. iii. 22; Rom. viii. 38). 2. But must all sincere Christians thus groan and long? Many groan at the least thought of death. (1) Somewhat of this there must be in all that believe; they all groan in this tabernacle, and desire to be dissolved. How can you labour for that which you do not earnestly desire and groan after? (2) Much of what is here expressed may belong to an heroic degree of grace not vouchsafed to all Christians. But yet still we must be growing up to this frame of heart. Here are marks to aim at. (*T. Manton, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.—*The two tabernacles*:—Life and immortality have been brought to light through the gospel. A feeble, fluttering guess was all that unaided men could ever reach regarding the life beyond. A jar may be charged with electric fire, and capable, in certain circumstances, of giving forth light and heat; yet, if it remain isolated, all is dark and silent. Thus there is in a human spirit a susceptibility and a capacity which lies dormant as long as man is left to himself, but which leaps into life as soon as the Word of God is pointed to the heart. Let us examine the text word by word. I. TABERNACLE is a frail, temporary dwelling. But, seeing that the body is made so perfect, why is it made so feeble? 1. An infant in a dark and dangerous path dare not stir from his father's side, whereas a robust youth may select his own route. Our Father in heaven knows that it is difficult to keep His children close to Himself as matters stand, and it would have been still more difficult if the child had been entrusted with greater power. 2. When the spirit of a dear child has through Christ been attained, the frailty of the truster makes the trust more sweet. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. 3. If we know that the abiding home is ready, the shaking of the temporary tabernacle will contribute to remind us of another rest, and quicken our desire for an abundant entrance on its blessedness. II. This tabernacle. Our body is not our only dwelling-place, and the design of the Spirit here is to preserve us from bestowing all our regard on this tabernacle while another is more worthy. III. BURDENED. 1. There may be some who for a time could scarcely recognise this as a description of their condition. The young, healthy, and prosperous—their hearts for a time are as light as their limbs; they trip along life as if they were chasing butterflies in a flowery meadow. To a certain extent this is the Creator's kind appointment. The cares of age laid on the heart of a child would crush his spirit, and render him incapable of fulfilling his task when he should come of age. But even in childhood some weights begin to press, and, when youth has passed, the cares of house and children, of business and company, of friendships and enmities, increase and multiply until the beams of the tabernacle are creaking prematurely under the accumulated weight. 2. These burdens may be inventoried

among the "all things" that work together for good. The sorrows of earth will enhance the joys of heaven; the rugged rocks and scorching sand of the desert will make the golden streets of the New Jerusalem feel more smooth beneath the pilgrim's feet. IV. WE GROAN. A groan is nature's outlet for grief, and indicates also a desire for relief. This desire does not by itself constitute a mark of grace. It belongs to nature. The discontented make many changes in order to escape from suffering, but the suffering follows them into every sphere. Some are weary of this world who are by no means ready for the next. V. NOT THAT WE WOULD BE UN-CLOTHED. This means to put off this tabernacle. Even Paul, after he had attained triumphant faith and blessed hope, shrinks from the dissolution of the body. I learn here that positive love of closing with the King of Terrors is not a necessary mark of Christ's redeemed people. I love this warm life. I shrink from death. And therein I think I do not sin. God is not displeased with me for loving that which He has bestowed. If, by faith in His Son, and through the ministry of His Spirit, He make me willing to give it up when He recalls it, enough: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." Christians love life for many reasons.

1. As sentient beings, in common with those who know not Christ, but who see the sunlight, and feel the balmy air, and tread the flowery ground. They love it in common not only with their fellow-men, but in common with the brutes that perish, with the cattle that browse on the meadows, and the birds that warble in the trees, and the insects that flutter in the sunbeam. 2. With a deeper, more intelligent love than other creatures—(1) Because the gifts which are in their own nature sweet are sweeter when they are received from a Father's hand. It is a mistake to suppose that the worldly enjoy their portion here, and that Christians postpone the prospect of enjoyment until they pass through the gates of the grave. Those who hope in Christ for the world to come enjoy the world that now is better because of that hope. (2) As a field of useful labour. Work may be done here which cannot be done beyond the boundary of the present life. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The groans of believers under their burdens* :—

I. THE FIRST THING IS TO GIVE YOU SOME ACCOUNT OF THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT LODGING WHILE IN THE BODY. And there are these two or three things that I remark about it which I find in the text and context. 1. Then, I find it is called a house in the first verse of this chapter. And it is fitly so called, because of its rare and curious structure and workmanship (Psa. cxxxix. 14, 15). 2. I remark, concerning the believer's present lodging, that, however curious its structure be, yet it is but a house of earth. And it is so, especially in a threefold respect. (1) In respect of its original; it is made of earth. (2) It is a house of clay in respect of the means that support it; for the corn, wine, and oil wherewith the body of man is maintained do all spring out of the earth. (3) It is a house of earth in respect of its end; it returns thither at its dissolution (Gen. iii. 19). 3. I remark, concerning the believer's present lodging, that it is but a best tabernacle. Tents are for soldiers and pilgrims. 4. Another thing that I remark concerning the believer's lodging is that it is but a tottering house. "The earthly house of this tabernacle is to be dissolved." II. The second thing proposed was to SPEAK OF THE BELIEVER'S BURDENS WHILE IN THIS TABERNACLE. This earthly house, it lies under many servitudes, and the believer pays a dear rent for his quarters. For—1. The clay tabernacle itself is many times a very heavy burden to him. The crazy cottage of the body is liable to innumerable pains and distempers, which makes it lie like a dead weight upon the soul, whereby its vivacity and activity is exceedingly marred. 2. Not only is he burdened with a burden of clay, but also with a burden of sin—I mean indwelling corruption, enmity, unbelief, ignorance, pride, hypocrisy, and other abominations of his heart. 3. He is burdened many times with a sense of much actual guilt which he has contracted through the untenderness of his way and walk. 4. He is sometimes sadly burdened with the temptations of Satan. 5. Sometimes the believer is burdened with the burden of ill company. 6. Sometimes the believer is sadly burdened, not only with his own sins, but with the abounding sins and abominations of the day and place wherein he lives. 7. The believer is many times while in this tabernacle burdened with the public concerns of Christ. He is a person of a very grateful and public spirit. 8. The poor believer has many times the burden of great crosses and afflictions lying upon him, and these both of a bodily and spiritual nature. III. The third thing in the method was to SPEAK OF THE BELIEVER'S GROANING UNDER HIS BURDEN. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." Upon this head I shall only suggest two or three considerations. 1. Consider that the working of the believer's heart under the pressures of these burdens vents itself variously. Sometimes he is said to be in heaviness (1 Pet. i. 6).

Sometimes he is said to sigh under his burdens, and to sigh to the breaking of his loins: "My fighting cometh before I eat," says Job. Sometimes his burdens make him to cry. Sometimes he cries to his God (Psa. cxxx. 1). 2. For clearing this ye would know that there are three sorts of groans that we read of in Scripture. (1) I say we read of groans of nature (Rom. viii. 22). (2) We read of groans of reason, or of the reasonable creatures under their affliction (Exod. vi. 5). (3) We read of groans of grace, or of spiritual groans (Rom. viii. 26). 3. A third remark I offer is this, that these groans of the gracious soul here spoken of seem to imply—(1) A great deal of grief and sorrow of spirit on the account of sin, and melancholy effects of it on the believer, while in this embodied state. (2) It implies a displeasure, or dissatisfaction, in the believer with his present burdened estate; he finds that this is not his resting-place. And—(3) It implies a panting of soul after a better state, even the immediate enjoyment of God in glory. Ver. 1: He groans with an "earnest desire to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven." IV. But I proceed to the fourth thing in the method, which was THE APPLICATION OF THE DOCTRINE. And the first use shall be of information. 1. Hence we may see the vast difference between heaven and earth. In a word, there is nothing but matter of groaning for the most part here, but all ground of groaning ceaseth for ever there. 2. See, hence, a consideration that may contribute to allay our griefs and groans for the death of godly relations; for while in this tabernacle they groan, being burdened, but now their groans are turned into songs, and their mourning into hallelujahs. 3. See, hence, that they are not the happiest folk that have the merriest life of it in the world. 4. See, hence, that death need not be a terror to the believer. Why? Because, by taking down this tabernacle, it takes off all his burdens, and puts a final period to all his groans. The second use of the doctrine may be of reproof unto two sorts of persons. It reproves these who are at home while in this tabernacle. A third use shall be of lamentation and humiliation. Let us lament that the Lord's people should have so much matter of groaning at this day and time wherein we live. 1. The abounding profanity and immorality of all sorts that are to be found among us. 2. The universal barrenness that is to be found among us at this day is matter of groaning unto the Lord's people. 3. The lamentable divisions that are in our Reuben occasion great thoughts of heart and heaviness to the Lord's people at this day. 4. The innumerable defections and backslidings of our day are a great burden to the Lord's people, and make their hearts to groan within them. (R. Erskine, D.D.) *Man's dilemma*:—I. MAN SHRINKS FROM DEATH. 1. Man shows this in many ways. (1) By the pensive regret with which he views its precursors, and the eagerness with which he sometimes seeks to shut out the prospect of it. (2) By the plaintive awe with which he contemplates its prey. (3) By the unaffected sorrow with which he mourns the consequences of it. Every object that he sees which formerly was endeared by pleasant associations brings only sorrow after death has inscribed his name around it. If experience shows us exceptions to this general rule, they have some special feature which renders them intelligible. They may occur where life has become burdensome, or, oftener, where some great end is to be attained by the sacrifice of it. 2. Why, then, is this universal recoil from death? (1) Because it is unnatural. There could never be a natural revulsion from anything that was not in itself unnatural to us. (2) Because of the deep and mysterious sympathies it disturbs. (3) Because all, to unaided reason, is dark beyond it. II. MAN IS DISSATISFIED WITH LIFE. And we must here consider life as dividing itself into three departments—animal, intellectual, and moral. True wisdom lies in the right adjustment and harmony of these three different elements. The nearer they approach to harmony, the more this dissatisfaction increases, for it only shows how much yet remains to be attained. Man exhibits this dissatisfaction with life in various ways. 1. He seeks to change his position in it. 2. He shows it when he witnesses the failure of his purposes and plans. 3. Even should success attend him, that success fails to fulfil his desires. The attainment of success in this world almost invariably induces increasing ambition; it only sharpens the appetite for yet greater prosperity. Just as our view expands the higher we ascend the steep of a vast mountain, so do our wishes widen the further we advance in wealth. 4. If he cultivates his powers, his capabilities outgrow the resources of life. The keener our perceptions become, the more clearly do we perceive the inefficacy of these resources to feed our extending capacities. 5. On a retrospect of it, however extended, it appears to him as an unsubstantial dream. III. MAN PANTS FOR THE PERFECTION OF HIS BEING. Some have professed to believe that at death we sink into annihilation. But no man ever yet really wished to be nothing, and those

only have pretended to desire it who have felt that they were good for nothing. No! It is an instinct of our nature to look forward to immortality. The righteous shall be satisfied, for they shall awake in the likeness of their God. (*A. Mursell.*) *Not unclothed, but clothed upon*:—The doctrine of this text is that we do not wish to be disembodied spirits hereafter, but to have another higher body superinduced on this. I think the phrase indicates a desire for a process of gradual development. The body, in this passage, is first compared to a tabernacle—that is, a tent—and then to a building. Perhaps there flitted through his mind the idea of the Jewish tabernacle, or church tent, which they carried with them through the wilderness—a sort of travelling church where they had their sacrificial worship every day—which was so made that it could be taken to pieces and put up again. The present body is like that; the body to come is like the temple of Solomon on Mount Moriah, built of solid marble, immovable, incorruptible—a beauty and a wonder of the world. No doubt the corruptible body weighs down the soul. In one point of view there is no correspondence between them; they are deadly foes. Here is a poor soul struggling to get at some truth, some beauty, some love, some goodness, and it is imprisoned in a body which will not let it do so. The bodily organisation is dull and heavy, is univacious, is coarse and unrefined; it tends to irritability and wilfulness, instead of sweetness and beauty. The soul aspires, the body drags it down. In all men there is some hereditary depravity. Nevertheless the body is, with all its defects, the clothing for the soul. All clothing does, in some sort, begin to correspond with the wearer, and to express a little his tastes and ideas. We see a man's mind somewhat in his dress. The body has some kind of correspondence with the mind. The dress of a Turk corresponds with his dignified character, his quiet ways, his slowness and solemnity. Thus the human body has some sort of analogy to the soul that it wears. You look at a face, you hear a voice, you see the gestures, and an impression is made on you of character. That impression is often the best and most reliable means of knowing a man's character. It is spontaneous. Some people argue as though this body were all bad, and say that in heaven we shall have none, but be floating about the universe, pure disembodied spirits. Paul does not say that; body is to remain, but the mortal part of it is to be swallowed up of life. Body, in its lowest form, is a mystery of wonder; the human body is the most wonderful and beautiful thing on earth. It is a muddy vesture of decay, but it is also a transparent veil through which the soul shines. See it in its ideal forms in the statues of Greece; what grandeur and dignity in the Apollo of the Vatican; what overflowing grace in the Amazon of the Capitol, or the Flora of Naples! Now these forms give us hints of a more idealised and higher beauty. The thought the apostle expresses—"that we do not wish to be unclothed, but clothed upon"—is a very important one. It is an essentially Christian idea; it distinguishes the Christian view of morality from the natural view. "Not unclothed, but clothed upon"—let us see what it means. The Christian view of all growth and progress is by addition, not subtraction; by building up, not pulling down; by positive means, not negative; by attraction, not repulsion; by love of good, not fear of evil; by power of love, not power of law. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil. Most reforms and inventions come by improving what we have. The first farmer probably stirred the ground with a sharp stick. After a while came a man who fastened another to it, and so made the original plough. By and by a piece of iron was substituted for one of the sticks, and that is essentially the plough of to-day. The wool from a sheep's back was twisted with the fingers, next with a distaff, then with a spinning-wheel; at last the same thing is done by the spinning-jenny, and mule-spinning by steam. The Puritans and Quakers tried to unclothe religion of all its rites and ceremonies. They took off its royal robes of architecture, painting, statuary, music, and left it bare. That was a mistake. They should have exchanged the earthly dress for a higher and more heavenly one. This is the Christian principle, and it applies in a thousand ways. Here is a boy who has done wrong. He is a culprit; he has stolen, or he has committed some other offence. The law arrests him and puts him in prison. This the law must do, for the business of law is to prevent offences, to keep them from going on and from getting worse. But the law cannot cure the criminal; it can only stop him in his evil course. You must show the boy some good thing; you must attract him toward a better life; you must give him an opportunity for something better. Law takes off for a little while his clothing of sin; Christianity must clothe him with a house from heaven. Any home is better than none. If you cannot get a house, take a cabin. Mentally, we do not wish to be unclothed, but clothed upon. Mental progress does not consist in losing the old

knowledge, but in adding to it new. The principle of conservatism is a sound one. Keep your present faith till you can get a better one. The man who believes something can go on and believe more. God furnishes us with a mental outfit of common and universal beliefs to begin with. We are not to be unclothed of them, either in this world or in the next, but clothed upon with more. Look at nature in this affluent season of spring, when the voice of God is saying, "Let there be life." See how nature swallows up the old in the new; see how she absorbs the old vegetation in the coming grasses; how earth, bare and dead, is clothed upon with new and wonderful forms of growth. The affections are a clothing and a home for the heart. God's method is to give us always better and higher affections, and to make the lower a step upward to the higher. "He who loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?" All human love leads up to Divine love. Everything which draws man out of himself does him good. Much of earthly affection is, no doubt, poor, weak, unworthy. It is idol-worship; it is a blind and foolish affection; it is also weak and changeable. But, such as it is, it is always better than nothing. Do not destroy it; fulfil it. All love, so far as it is love, is good; and it is good in this way, that it takes us out of ourselves, making us for the time unselfish, and also that it makes us for the time truly pure. Those who love are emancipated from doubts, hesitations, terrors. Every one needs to be able to be with those, sometimes, to whom he can speak of anything he chooses, without any doubt or anxiety or hesitation. Then he is at home. That is home, the home of the heart. These may, indeed, be only tents to live in till we reach the Promised Land; but we know that, when these are struck and folded, we have a building of God waiting us beyond the veil of time. God, who provides the tent for us here, will provide the house there. He who gives us in this life the wonders and beauties of nature, the lessons of truth, the opportunities of action and endeavour, the helps of friendship, the charm of love, the nobleness of life, and the pathos of death, will provide for us better things beyond, "which eye has not seen, nor ear heard." Therefore, O human heart! trust and look forward, and do not doubt nor fear, but go from truth to truth, from love to higher love. We do not wish to be unclothed of this world's affections and interests, but clothed upon with higher. This life is not the end, but the beginning. (*Jas. Freeman Clarke.*)

Ver. 5. Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.—*The patient Divine Workman and His purpose*:—These words penetrate deep into the secrets of God. To Paul everything is the Divine working. Life is to him no mere blind whirl of accidental forces, but the slow operation of the great Workman. And he believes that the clear perception of the Divine purpose will be a charm against all sorrow, doubt, despondency, or fear. I. GOD'S PURPOSE IN ALL HIS WORKING. 1. What is that "self-same thing"? The apostle has been speaking about the instinctive reluctance that even good men feel at the prospect of "putting off the earthly house of this tabernacle." He distinguishes between three different conditions in which the human spirit may be—dwelling in the earthly body, stripped of that, and "clothed with the house which is from heaven"; and this last and highest state is the very thing for which God has wrought us—*i.e.*, the highest aim of the Divine love in all its dealings with us is not merely a blessed spiritual life, but the completion of our humanity in a perfect spirit dwelling in a glorified body. 2. That glorified body is described in our context. II. THE SLOW PROCESS OF THE DIVINE WORKMAN. 1. The apostle employs a term which conveys the idea of continuous and effortful work, as if against resistance. Like some sculptor with a hard bit of marble, or some metallurgist with rough ore, so the loving, patient, Divine Artificer labours long and earnestly with somewhat obstinate material, by manifold touches, here a little and there a little, and not discouraged when He comes upon a black vein in the white marble, nor when the hard stone turns the edge of His chisels. Learn, then—(1) That God cannot make you fit for heaven all at a jump, or by a simple act of will. He can make a world so, not a saint. He cannot say, and He does not say, "Let there be holiness," and it comes. Not so can God make man meet for the "inheritance of the saints in light." And it takes Him all His energies, for all a lifetime, to prepare His child for what He wants to make of him. (2) That God cannot give a man that glorified body of which I have been speaking unless the man's spirit is Christlike. By the necessities of the case it is confined to the purified, because it corresponds to their inward spiritual being. It is only a perfect spirit that can dwell in a perfect body. Some shall rise to glory and immortality, some to shame and everlasting contempt. If we are to stand at the last with the body of our

humiliation changed into a body of glory, we must begin by being changed in the spirit of our mind. 2. Consider the three-fold processes which, in the Divine working, terminate in this great issue. (1) God has wrought us for it in the very act of making us what we are. Human nature is an insoluble enigma if this world is its only field. Amidst all the mysterious waste of creation, there is no more profligate expenditure of powers than that which is involved in giving a man such faculties and capacities if this be the only field on which they are to be exercised. All other creatures fit their circumstances; nothing in them is bigger than their environment. They find in life a field for every power. But we have an infinitude of faculty lying half dormant in each of us which finds no work at all in this present world. What is the use of us if there is nothing except this poor present? God, or whoever made us, has made a mistake; and, strangely enough, if we were not made, but evolved, evolution has worked out faculties which have no correspondence with the things around them. Life, and man, is an insoluble enigma except on the hypothesis that this is a nursery-ground, and that the little plants will be pricked out some day, and planted where they are meant to grow. (2) Another field of the Divine operation to this end is in what we roughly call "providences." What is the meaning of all this discipline through which we are passed if there is nothing to be disciplined for? What is the good of an apprenticeship if there is no journeyman's life to come after it, where the powers that have been slowly acquired shall be nobly exercised upon broader fields? Life is an insoluble riddle unless the purpose of it lie yonder, and unless all this patient training of our sorrows and our gladnesses is equally meant for training us for the perfect life of a perfect soul, moving a perfect body in a perfect universe. And who can think of life as anything but a wretched fragment unless he knows that all which begins here runs upwards into the room above, and there finds its explanation and its completion? (3) So in all the work and mystery of our redemption this is the goal that God has in view. It was not worth Christ's while to come and die if nothing more was to come of it than the imperfect reception of His blessings and gifts which the noblest Christian life in this world presents. The meaning and purpose of the Cross, the meaning and purpose of all the patient dealings of His whispering Spirit, is that we shall be like our Divine Lord in spirit first, and in body afterwards. 3. And everything about the experiences of a true Christian spirit is charged with a prophecy of immortality. The very desires which God's good Spirit works in a believing soul are themselves confirmations of their own fulfilment. III. THE CERTAINTY AND THE CONFIDENCE. 1. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." Then we may be sure that, as far as He is concerned, the work will not be suspended nor vain. This Workman has infinite resources, an unchanging purpose, and infinite long-suffering. In the quarries of Egypt you will find gigantic stones, half-dressed, and intended to have been transported to some great temple. But there they lie, the work incomplete, and they never carried to their place. There are no half-polished stones in God's quarries. They are all finished where they lie, and then borne across the sea, like Hiram's from Lebanon, to the temple on the hill. 2. But it is a certainty that you can thwart. It is an operation that you can counter-work. Oh! do not let all God's work on you come to naught, but yield yourselves to it. Rejoice in the confidence that He is moulding your character, cheerfully welcome the providences, painful as they may be, by which He prepares you for heaven. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Preparation for heaven the work of God*:—There are five steps in orderly succession whereby we are wrought, made fit, for the kingdom of God. I. The first of these is the DIVINE CALL, by which we are excited and urged to seek salvation. II. The second step in the preparation of the soul for heaven is DIVINE ILLUMINATION. III. The spiritual illumination of the inner man is followed by REPENTANCE. IV. And this conducts us to the fourth step in the process of religion—namely, FAITH IN CHRIST. V. The final step in the method of salvation is the SANCTIFICATION OF THE SOUL. (*J. A. Sartorius.*) *Preparation for heaven*:—I. THE WORK OF PREPARATION. 1. It is almost universally admitted that some preparation is essential. Whenever death is announced, you will hear the worst-instructed say, "I hope, poor man! he was prepared." (1) Men need something to be done for them. (*a*) God declares that we are enemies to Him. We need, therefore, that some ambassador should come to us with terms of peace, and reconcile us to God. (*b*) We are debtors also to our Creator—debtors to His law. Some mediator, then, must come in to pay the debt for us, for we cannot pay it, neither can we be exempted from it. (*c*) In addition to this, we are all criminals—condemned already; in fear of execution unless some one come in between us and punishment. Say, then, has this been

done for you? Many of you can answer, "Blessed be God, I have been reconciled to Him through the death of His Son; my debts to God are paid; I have looked to Christ, my Substitute, and I am no longer condemned" (Rom. viii. 1). Come, let us rejoice in this, that He hath wrought us for this self-same thing. (2) Something must be wrought in us. (a) We are all dead in trespasses and sins. Shall dead men sit at the feasts of the eternal God? Only the living children can inherit the promises of the living God, for He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. (b) By nature we are all worldly. We "mind earthly things"; the world's maxims govern us, its fears alarm us, its hopes and ambitions excite us. But we cannot go to heaven as worldly men, for there would be nothing there to gratify us. The joys and glories of heaven are all spiritual. (c) We are unholly by nature; but in heaven they are "without fault before the throne of God." No sin is tolerated there. What a change, then, must come over the carnal man to make him holy! What can wash him white but the blood of Christ? That a great change must be wrought in us even ungodly men will confess, since the Scriptural idea of heaven has never been agreeable to unconverted men. When Mahomet would charm the world into the belief that he was the prophet of God, the heaven he pictured was a heaven of unbridled sensualism. Could a wicked man enter into heaven, he would be wretched there. There is no heaven for him who has not been prepared for it by a work of grace in his soul. 2. If we have such a preparation, we must have it on this side of our death. As the tree falleth, so it must lie. While the nature is soft it is susceptible of impression, stamp what seal you may upon it; once let it grow cold and hard, you can do so no more; it is proof against any change. We have no intimation in the Word of God that any soul dying in unbelief will afterwards be converted. "He that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Moreover, we ought to know, for it is possible for a man to know whether he is thoroughly prepared. Jesus Christ has not left us in such a dubious case that we always need to be inquiring, "Am I His, or am I not?" He tells us that "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." If we have obeyed these commands we shall be saved, for our God keepeth His word. We need not harbour endless questionings. 3. Alas! how many put off all thoughts of being prepared to die! They are prepared for almost anything except the one thing needful. "Prepare to meet your God." II. THE AUTHOR OF THIS PREPARATION FOR DEATH. Who made Adam fit for Paradise but God? And who must make us fit for the better Paradise above but God? That we cannot do it ourselves is evident. We are dead in trespasses and sins. Can the dead start from the grave of their own accord? The dead shall surely rise, but because God raises them. Conversion, which prepares us for heaven, is a new creation. The original creation was the work of God, and the new creation must likewise be of God. Think of what fitness for heaven is! To be fit for heaven a man must be perfect. Go, you who think you can prepare yourselves, be perfect for a day. Man's work is never perfect. God alone is perfect, and He alone is the Perfecter. III. THE SEAL OF THIS PREPARATION. "The earnest of the Spirit." Masters frequently pay during the week a part of the wages which will be due on Saturday night. God gives His Holy Spirit, as it were, to be a part of the reward which He intends to give to His people when, like hirelings, they have fulfilled their duty. So God gives us His Holy Spirit to be in our hearts as an earnest of heaven. Have you received the Holy Spirit? Do you reply, "How may I know?" Wherever the Holy Spirit is, He works certain graces in the soul, such as repentance, patience, forgiveness, holy courage, joy, &c. This gift, moreover, will be conspicuously evidenced by a living faith in Christ. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The great hope and its earnest*.—I. WHAT "THIS SELF-SAME THING" IS FOR WHICH WE ARE "WROUGHT." Studying the context, we find it to be a certain state of mind in regard to many things. We must go back to chap. iv. to understand this fully. And I think it must be allowed that it is a very great and heroic attitude. He who can take up the language of a passage like this, and honestly adopt it as the description of the state and feeling of his mind, is a very king, and must be among the happiest of men. We have around us here and now the world—God-denying and anti-Christian—which was around the Apostle Paul. It is not changed! The apostle seems to have lived in a tough house, and yet a house that, after years of toil and hardship, became worn out and frail. If it was a great thing for him to triumph over bodily suffering, and to face death, must it not be a great thing for afflicted and suffering people to do the same now? And is it not a great thing, in these times, to be able to look to that "beyond" in faith and confidence, to cast anchor of thought and faith, as well as of desire and hope, in another life? While atheism

spreads blackness over the universe, while materialism drags men down to the dust, while heartless philosophies and flippant literatures tell us "it does not matter"—in times like these it is a great thing to stand on the old watch-tower, and to look by faith clearly beyond the visible into the invisible, declaring, "Yes, I see it. *I know* that if the earthly house of this tabernacle," &c. II. IT IS WHOLLY THE RESULT OF A DIVINE PROCESS. It is not a natural development. If it were so, the apostle might have said, "He who created us, when we were born, for this self-same thing is God"; or, "He who gave us life, and gave us power to mould and renew our own nature till we rise into all goodness, is God." But his words take another line. "He who hath wrought us"—created us anew in Christ Jesus—"wrought us," as the block of marble is wrought into the shape of the fair figure. So are we "wrought" by God. His work is marvellous. He must have wrought a great work in Stephen before he could stand up fearlessly, with an angel face, amid the shower of death-dealing stones. He works always along main lines, amid infinite variety of circumstance, but always with a view to the "self-same thing," and therefore in some degree along the same road to reach it; and this is the road (Rom. viii. 29, 30).

III. ALL THIS IS MADE SURE TO US, NOT ONLY IN DIVINE PROMISE, BUT BY "THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT." That is to say, this "self-same thing" means not merely a hope that something good and great is coming by and by, but that it is in part matter of experience now. There are estates in this world which you can enter by crossing a river, or going over a chain of hills. You are then in the estate, and if you know the proprietor, and he accounts you his friend, you have some feeling of safety as you travel on over moor and moss, through gloomy forest and dark defile; but if you are going to the mansion—that is twenty or thirty miles distant, perhaps, and many adventures may come to you by the way. Still, if you walk well, and walk right on—not stopping for every dog that barks, or sheltering from every shower that falls, but pressing always on—why, then, just about sunset, perhaps, the western sky all gold, sweet evening breathing peace over the earth, you will see the towers of the castle whither you are going. And the landscape will begin to soften and glow; the grass is greener now; the trees are more select; the road—how smooth it is, compared with some of the first miles you trod! And then you pass the great iron gate, and lo! yonder in the doorway is your friend who has sent for you, and who is lord of all the way by which you have come. Such is our heavenly way. Every step of it is on King's ground. We are in heaven when we begin to live to heaven's King. But it is a wide estate, and looking, and longing, and praying as they travel; and this is "the earnest of the Spirit"—this is the witness in the man himself that he has "passed from death unto life," and that he shall win the life immortal at length. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The glorious hereafter and ourselves* :—

It is a very comforting thing to be able to see the work of God in our own hearts. We have not to search long for the foul handiwork of Satan within us. The apostle found indications of the Divine work in a groan. Believers may trace the finger of God in their holy joys, yet just as surely is the Holy Spirit present in their sorrows and groanings which cannot be uttered. So long as it is the work of God, it is comparatively a small matter whether our hearts' utterance be song or sigh. I. GOD'S WORK IS SEEN IN CREATING IN US DESIRES AFTER BEING "CLOTHED UPON WITH OUR HOUSE WHICH IS FROM HEAVEN." 1. The Christian is the most contented man in the world, but he is the least contented *with* the world. He is like a traveller, perfectly satisfied with the inn as an inn, but his desires are ever towards home. He is like a sailor, well content with the good ship for what it is, but he longs for harbour. 2. What is it that makes the Christian long for heaven? (1) A desire for the unseen. The carnal mind is satisfied with what the eyes can see, &c., but the Christian has a spirit within him which the senses cannot gratify. (2) A yearning after holiness. He who is born again of incorruptible seed finds his worst trouble to be sin. What bliss to be without the tendency or possibility to sin! (3) A sighing after rest, which we cannot find here. (4) A thirst for communion with God. Here we do enjoy fellowship with God, but it is remote and dark. 3. This desire is above ordinary nature. All flesh is grass, and the grass loves to strike its root deep into the earth; it has no tendrils with which to clasp the stars. Man by nature would be content to abide on earth for ever. 4. While they are contrary to the old nature, such aspirations prove the existence of the new nature. You may be quite sure that you have the nature of God in you if you are pining after God. 5. Note the means by which the Holy Spirit quickens these desires within our spirits. (1) They are infused in us by regeneration, which begets in us a spiritual nature, and the spiritual nature brings with it its own longings—viz., after perfection and God. (2) They

are further assisted by instruction. The more the Holy Ghost teaches us of the world to come, the more we long for it. (3) They are further increased by sanctified afflictions. Thorns in our nest make us take to our wings; the embittering of this cup makes us earnestly desire to drink of the new wine of the kingdom. (4) They are increased by the sweets as well as the bitters. Communion with Christ sharpens the edge of our desire for heaven. And so does elevation of soul. The more we

are sanctified and conformed unto Jesus, the more we long for the world to come.

II. THE FITNESS FOR HEAVEN WHICH IS WROUGHT IN US. 1. Who fits us. (1) God the Father, by adopting us into His family, by justifying us through Christ, by preserving us by His power. (2) God the Son, by blotting out our iniquities, by transferring to us His righteousness, by taking us into union with Himself. (3) The Holy Spirit, by giving us food for the new nature, instruction, &c. 2. In what this fitness consists. (1) In the possession of a spiritual nature. The unregenerate would not by any possibility be able to enjoy the bliss of heaven. They would be quite out of their element. A bee in a garden is at home, and gathers honey from all the flowers; but admit a swine, and it sees no beauty in lilies and roses, and therefore it proceeds to root, and tear, and spoil in all directions. (2) In a holy nature. If a man has no delight in God he has no fitness for heaven. (3) In love to the saints. Those who do not love the people of God on earth would find their company very irksome for ever. (4) In joy in service. (5) In conformity to Christ. Much of heaven consists in this. 3. The unfitness of unrenewed souls for heaven may be illustrated by the incapacity of certain persons for elevated thoughts and intellectual pursuits. Alphonse Karr tells a story of a servant-man who asked his master to be allowed to leave his cottage and sleep over the stable. What was the matter with his cottage? "Why, sir, the nightingales all around make such a "jug, jug, jug" at night that I cannot bear them." A man with a musical ear would be charmed with the nightingales' song, but here was a man without a musical soul, who found the sweetest notes a nuisance.

III. THE LORD HAS GRACIOUSLY GIVEN TO US AN EARNEST OF GLORY. An earnest is unlike a pledge, which has to be returned when the matter which it ensures is obtained; it is a part of the thing itself. So the Holy Spirit is a part of heaven. His work in the soul is the bud of heaven. 1. His very dwelling in our soul is the earnest of heaven. If God Himself condescends to make these bodies His temples, is not this akin to heaven's honours? 2. When He brings to us the joys of hope, this is an earnest. While singing some glowing hymn our spirit shakes off all her doubts and fears, and anticipates her everlasting heritage. 3. When we enjoy the full assurance of faith, and read our title clear to mansions in the skies; when faith knows whom she has believed, and is persuaded that He is able to keep that which she has committed to Him—this is an earnest of heaven. 4. Heaven is the place of victory, and when the Holy Spirit enables us to overcome sin we enjoy an earnest of the triumph of heaven. 5. When through the Spirit we enjoy fellowship with Christ, and with one another, we have a foretaste of the fellowship of heaven. Conclusion: If these things be so, believers—1. Be thankful. Remember these things are not your own productions; they have been planted in your soul by another hand, and watered by a superior power. 2. Be reverent. When a scholar knows that all he has learned has been taught him by his master, he looks up from his master's feet into his master's face with respectful esteem. 3. Be confident. If the good thing had been wrought by ourselves we might be sure that it would fail before long. Nothing of mortal man was ever perfect. But, if He that hath begun the good work be God, there is no fear that He will forsake or leave His work undone. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Detaching.—I. **IN GOD'S ECONOMY THIS LIFE IS A PROCESS OF DISENTANGLING FROM ITS OWN CONDITIONS.** Mortal life is a getting loose. 1. Note the imagery of the context. We mortals are as dwellers in a tent. This tent is being gradually "loosened down." The same word was used by our Lord of the stones of the temple at Jerusalem, and indicates a gradual destruction, stone after stone. So in striking a tent. Paul has a like figure in Philippians, where he desires to "depart," or, literally, "to break camp." This gradual loosening, this detachment, is a familiar fact of our life. We are breaking up, and God hath wrought us for this very thing. One of the most puzzling things about the world is that such superhuman ingenuity, such perfect finish of workmanship, will crumble to dust. How exquisite is the structure of a bee or of a butterfly, and yet how short-lived they are. 2. These are familiar facts. What is our attitude toward them? (1) The average man ignores them. He strikes out the tabernacle from the text, and substitutes a building. He lives and plans as if both he and the world were eternal. The earlier stages of life are occupied with amassing instead of

throwing off. The love and intimacy of the family circle are taking the boy deeper into themselves. Then his social nature is throwing out tendrils and attaching itself to school and college friends. Then comes social and business or professional life. The bonds multiply; more and more the man is getting wrapped round and tied up. Domestic life encircles him. Business becomes engrossing. So the world winds round him, coil after coil. If the house of his earthly habitation is a tent, it is a substantial tent, or so it seems. It has stood a good many hard blasts. The man himself, too, has been all along growing. All is increase, enlargement of range. (2) But as time goes on you notice a change. The man has reached his altitude. The cords on the rear of the tent begin to slacken. A father or a mother dies. Brothers and sisters form homes for themselves, and their interests and his diverge. The old circle of kindred begins to break up. It goes on quietly, like the undermining of a bank. And as time goes on the connections with his own generation gradually break. The push of younger, fresher life crowds him back on one side. Some day he realises that almost all his old comrades are gone. The break is heading towards the centres of life. He has lost some ambition. He is not so ready for the undertakings which make a drain on nerve and strength. He gives up more easily than of yore. And so the final stage sets in; physical wreck, mental feebleness, complete withdrawal from the busy world. Let it go on its way. He cares no longer. The tent, with its loosened cords, flaps and strains, then collapses. The earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved; and yet He that wrought us for this very thing is God. God meant this. 3. This is a very sad picture if this is all. Nay, it is an insult to common sense to ask us to believe that this wondrous frame of nature and of man are made merely to be destroyed. God did not make us for death, but for life. If He has appointed a tent for our sojourn, He has reared a building for our dwelling. Moses, in Psa. xc., voices the truth. There is nothing eternal but God. There is no warrant of man's eternity but God. There is no eternal home for man but in God. II. And so we turn to the other side of our text. **GOD HAS MADE US FOR THE TENT, BUT HE HAS ALSO MADE US FOR THE BUILDING.**

1. The important point is that we should see these two things as part of one economy—the tent and the building as related to each other. Even if sin had never entered the world, I doubt whether this human life and body would have been any more than a temporary stage of existence through which men would have passed into a purely spiritual life. Because I find that this is according to the analogy of God's working elsewhere. God's plans unfold. They do not flash into consummation. They involve progressive stages. The line of His purpose runs out to eternity, but it runs through time. 2. Thought has tended too much to the violent separation of the mortal life from the eternal life—has tended to set them in contrast and opposition instead of in harmony. For instance, we draw the line sharply between life and death; and yet many a scientist will tell you that death is the beginning of life, and Christ and Paul tell you that in unmistakable terms. And what we want clearly to apprehend is that this mortal, transitory tent-life has a definite relation to the permanent spiritual life of the future; that it serves a purpose of preparation and development toward that life; that it furnishes a soil in which the seeds of the spiritual life are sown; and that, therefore, instead of being despised and neglected because it is temporary and destined to dissolution, it is to be cultivated as the effective ministrant of the eternal life. "He that wrought us for this very thing is God." 3. We have in nature a great many illustrations and analogies of this. Take, *e.g.*, the soil. Existence underground, in the dark, is a low form of life, and yet the seed must be cast into the ground, and remain there for a time, before the beauty and fruitfulness and nourishment of the fruit or grain can become facts. And that stage ministers directly to the higher form of life. So in animal life. What a delicate and beautiful structure is the egg of the fowl! It is made, as we all see, to be broken, and an egg-shell is a synonym for something worthless. And yet there have been lodged in that frail and temporary thing forces which minister to life. So the worm rolls himself up in the cocoon, but within the cocoon the purple and golden glories of the butterfly are silently elaborating themselves. Even so it is God's intent that the immortal, the spiritual life should be taking shape under the forms of the mortal life—that in the tent man should be shaping for the eternal building. 4. This feature of our mortal life is intended to show itself early. The average human life, as we have seen, tends to become more and more enveloped in the wrappings of this world, and to consider nothing else; and many practically reason that attention to the interests of the next world may be deferred until the process of detachment from the things of time has fairly and consciously

set in. On the contrary, the life should be shaped for eternity from the beginning. The ministry of the soil begins with the very first stage of the seed-life. The world to come does not appeal merely to manhood and old age. It is the child that is most inquisitive about the sky, to whom the stars are a wonder. Why not the same fact in spiritual life? Why should not heavenly aspirations characterise childhood? Why should not the child-life be touched and quickened by contact with heaven? Within and under the life of society, the life of business, the domestic life, an eternal, spiritual manhood may be outlining itself. 5. When men have undertaken to shut themselves out as much as possible from the contact of this life, they have not seen that He that hath wrought us for this very thing is God. 6. For years, as the traveller on the Rhine came in sight of Cologne, the first object which greeted his eye was the unsightly mass of scaffolding around the cathedral spires. It is all gone now, and the twin spires soar heavenward from their base, and cut the horizon with their clean, sharp lines of stone. Yet the scaffolds were necessary to the building. Whether this life is to be more than scaffolding depends on the man who lives—depends on whether or not he mistakes scaffolding for building. If the cocoon is all that the worm comes to, poor worm! Worthless cocoon! If business, politics, social life, fame, are all the man comes to, poor man! The tent will fall. Shall you be left uncovered? Beware, beware of these same wrappings. They are folding you in closely. Detachment may mean for you victory and immortality. God hath wrought you for the eternal building in the heavens no less than for the frail, perishing tent on earth. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) **Who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.**—*The earnest of the Spirit*:—I. WHAT IS GIVEN BY WAY OF EARNEST. II. THE NATURE OF AN EARNEST. 1. An earnest supposeth a bargain and contract. The right to eternal life cometh to believers in a way of covenant; they resign themselves to God by faith, and God bindeth Himself to give them forgiveness of sins. 2. Earnest is given when there is some delay of the thing bargained for. As soon as we enter into covenant with God we have a right; but our blessedness is deferred, not for want of love in God, but partly that in the meantime we may exercise our faith and love (*Phil. iii. 21; Rom. viii. 23*), and partly that the heirs of salvation may glorify Him here upon earth (*Matt. v. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 12*). 3. An earnest is part of the whole bargain, though but a little part. So the saving gifts, graces, and comforts of the Spirit are a small beginning, or a part of that glory which shall then be revealed. Grace is begun glory, and they differ as an infant and a man. Regeneration is an immortal seed, a beginning of eternal life. 4. Earnest is given for the security of the party that receiveth it, not for him that giveth it. There is no danger of breaking on God's part; but God "was willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel"; because of our frequent doubts and fears in the midst of our troubles and trials, we need this confirmation. 5. It is not taken away till all be consummated, and therein an earnest differeth from a pawn or pledge. A pledge is something left with us, to be restored or taken away from us; but an earnest is filled up with the whole sum. So God giveth part to assure us of obtaining the whole in due season (*Phil. i. 6; 1 Pet. i. 9*). III. THE USE AND END OF AN EARNEST IS—1. To raise our confidence of the certainty of these things. There is some place for doubts and fears, till we be in full possession, from weakness of grace and greatness of trials. 2. To quicken our earnest desires and illustrious diligence. The firstfruits are to show how good, as well as earnest how sure. 3. To bind us not to depart from these hopes. (*T. Manton, D.D.*)

Vers. 6-9. **Therefore we are always confident . . . at home in the body . . . absent from the Lord.**—*Paul's thoughts about dying*:—1. The peculiar interest of this passage is, that it gives us an insight into the apostle's personal feelings in the contemplation of death. In other places he refers to what is before and after death; but this is the only passage that gives us an insight into his forebodings about the act itself. 2. He evidently writes under the pressure of some sadness; and in chap. iv. this feeling deepens, and phrases that express it occur in almost every verse. We see throughout the conflict of natural feeling with Christian faith. And in this chapter he carries this conflict of feeling into his contemplation of dying. But if he thinks of the painful taking down of the earthly tabernacle, he thinks also of the glorious "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And he never for a moment hesitates in his preference. His human conflict works itself out to this result—"Wherefore we labour that whether present or absent," whether found by the Master at His coming present in the body or absent from it, "we may

be accepted of Him." 3. The lesson to ourselves is, that we need not trample down our human instincts and yearnings in order to be spiritual. Our shrinking from death by no means implies unsubmitiveness of heart. Note—**I. THAT OUR LIFE IS NOT TWO, BUT ONE.** It is the same life, "whether present or absent," in the body or out of it, on earth or in heaven. Now we admit this theoretically, but we do not feel it practically. We rather think of two different lives. Men ordinarily think of their chief life as the vital principle of the body. So long as we can walk, and eat, and speak, we call ourselves living men; so soon as these cease, we speak of ourselves as dead. But is that really the living man? We know that it is not, we know that the thought, affection, virtues of our friends are not identified with the body that we put into the grave. This, according to the apostle's figure, is only the tabernacle of the man. The life of man is the spiritual flame which God has enkindled, and which no physical changes can affect—it is the immortal spirit which is God's own breath, and which partakes of the inextinguishableness of His own being. And yet so sense-bound are we, that we are far more affected by the unimportant death of the physical body than by the essential life of the indestructible spirit. Observe concerning this one soul life of man—**1.** That its spiritual, or holy character, both here and hereafter, is realised in virtue of our union with Christ (John xi. 25). **2.** The spiritual life which we realise through Christ in nowise hinders the physical death of the body. However perfect our faith, however holy our life, the body must die. The curse of sin is reversed, not by the exemption from death of the body, but by the spiritual life of the soul. There are obvious reasons why the body must die—**(1) Natural reasons.** The body, as fitted for this earthly and probationary condition of being, is too sensuous for heavenly and immortal life. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." It is essential, therefore, for a higher condition of life, that the physical body should be "changed," transfigured. We must in some way or other leave the world, be introduced to our new and final state of being. **(2) Moral reasons.** To exempt believers would disorganise the conditions of human life, and anticipate the rewards and punishments of the future by distinctions between the good and the evil during their probation. Beyond the natural effects of piety, therefore, God bestows upon it no rewards—exempts it from no evils here. Nor, all things considered, would we have it otherwise. Who, for example, would willingly lack the manifest truth and power of the gospel, as seen in the dying peace and triumph of holy men? **3.** While the outward thing is not abrogated, the essential character of it is changed. Its "sting" is taken away. Indeed, every evil which sin has entailed, is, in virtue of our union with Christ, essentially and radically changed. Suffering becomes a fatherly chastisement, and death a fatherly summons. Nay, even the body itself no longer dies, it only "sleeps." **II. THAT OUR ONE LIFE HAS TWO HOMES.** **1.** There is the home of the physical body. Notwithstanding its disabilities and drawbacks, how many things still make it a home! The comparison is not so much between an evil and a good, as between a good and a better. We are pilgrims only in relation to a "better country"; our houses are tents only in relation to the house not made with hands. To be in heaven is to be with Christ visibly, and therefore "far better"; but to be on earth is also to be with Christ spiritually, and is a good thing. God has made the earth a home for us, filled it with goodness, and beauty, and joy, and it does not need to enhance heaven that we disparage it. Only as spiritual men we can never rest in it with perfect contentment. And so wisely has God adjusted our experiences, so alluringly has He revealed the future, even while He has given us such satisfactions in the present, that, while we do not impatiently wish the future, we lovingly desire and seek it. Enough is revealed to incite us; but it is sufficiently veiled to enable contentment, and quiet work, and peaceful joy. **2.** We wait and hope, therefore, for the home of the spiritual body. There every condition of happiness, which here is so marred, will be perfect. The body will know no weariness nor incompetence, the soul no sorrow nor sin, ignorance will not incapacitate, uncertainty will not disquiet; they "rest from their labours." The chief difference, however, is constituted by the different conditions of our spiritual life—the different conditions of our communion with Christ. Here our holiness is struggling and imperfect; our recognitions of Christ are only recognitions of faith; "we know only in part"; we are "absent from the Lord." There we "see Him as He is," "know as we are known," commune with Him "face to face," and under conditions of confidence and delight, with no consciousness of sin. It is this that makes heaven blessed—that makes it home; the being so immediately with Christ, the perfection of all purity and joy. This is the "far better" which we now desire. To the Christian heart Christ is

heaven, and heaven is Christ. 3. The form of the apostle's expression and desire implies that the transition from the one home to the other will be immediate—that, whatever the condition of separate spirits, they are where Christ is, consciously and rejoicingly in His presence. III. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF THIS RECOGNITION UPON OUR PRESENT DAILY LIFE. It constituted Paul's life a life of faith, endowed it with "the powers of the world to come," and by these his entire being was regulated. What can intimidate a soul so full of spiritual recognitions—what can seduce it—what can make it wretched? Amongst the influences of this recognition upon his present spiritual life the apostle instances—1. Its boldness—"Therefore we are always confident," and he reiterates the assertion—"we are confident, I say." It filled him with fortitude to endure, with boldness and strength to do. 2. Its ruling principle. "We walk by faith, not by sight." Every action and feeling was regulated by the things of the spiritual world. "He looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." 3. What marvel, then, that such faith should be so ardent in its desire, that with such recognition the heart of piety and of love should be inflamed; that it should mightily yearn, and tend, and pray towards that better life. "Wherefore we labour, that whether found in the body or absent from it we may be accepted of Him." Wherefore we practically strive to realise our desire; the things that our hearts leap forward to with eager and satisfied joy. For heaven is not to be won by barren desire, by sentimental recognition, by spiritual visions, but by earnest, practical labour. (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *The believer in the body and out of the body*:—I. THE BELIEVER HAS GROUND FOR CONSTANT CONFIDENCE (VERS. 6-8). 1. Note the confidence which the believer has in reference to his present condition. "Knowing that while we are at home in the body we are from home as to the Lord." (1) In the present state we are at home in the body; but it is a home which is not a home, a frail lodging to accommodate us till we reach our true home. It is such a home as a soldier has in the camp, or as a passenger on a journey. In a sense, however, this body is a home, for here dwells the living, thinking, active mind. It is a house for which we have no little affection, and we are loath to quit it.

"This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of this house of clay,
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind."

We complain of the infirmities of our bodies, but we are in no hurry to leave them. (2) But yet this body is not a fitting home for us. (a) We often discover by experience how inconvenient it is. In the course of years it has become soiled and creased, and worn like the tents of Kedar. We have suffered many inconveniences; often the spirit has been willing, but the flesh has been weak. (b) According to the Greek, ours is a home in a foreign country. A numerous band of our brothers and sisters are with us, even as the Jews found company of their own race in Babylon; but this is exile to us, we have no inheritance here. (c) It is a home, too, which keeps us from our true home. To-day we are at school, like children whose great holiday joy is to go home. We are labourers, and this is the work field: when we have done our day's work we shall go home. (d) Home is the place where one feels secure; we find no such home spiritually in this world, for this is the place of conflict and watchfulness. In heaven there will be no foes to watch against, nor men of our own household to be our worst enemies. (e) Home, too, is the place of the closest and sweetest familiarities. Here, alas, our spirits cannot take their fill of heavenly familiarities, for distance comes between; but up there what indulgence shall be accorded to us! (3) These are the inconveniences, but Paul, despite all, was confident. (a) He had a hope of the immortality to be revealed. He knew that when he shook off this body his soul would be with Christ. (b) His confidence came from God's work in his soul. "He that has wrought us to the self-same thing is God." When the statuary takes the block of stone, and begins to carve it into a statue, we get the promise of that which is to be. But he may turn aside, or die, and therefore there may be no statue. But God never undertakes what He does not finish; and so if to-day I be the quarried block of marble, if He has begun to make the first chippings in me of genuine repentance and simple faith towards God, I have the sure prophecy that He will work me up into the perfect image of Christ. (c) Another ground of confidence was "the earnest of the Spirit." 2. Paul was equally confident about the next state, viz., the condition of a disembodied spirit (ver. 8). (1) It was not because Paul thought it would be better to be without a

body that he thus spoke. He has told us already "not for that we would be unclothed." Our great Creator does not mean us to be maimed creatures for ever. (2) But if Paul preferred the disembodied state to this, then the spirits of dead saints are not annihilated. Paul could not have counted destruction better than a life of holy confidence. Neither are they unconscious, for who would prefer torpor to active confidence? Neither are they in purgatory. Paul would not have been willing rather to be tormented than to live here and serve his Lord. (3) He was willing to depart into the disembodied state because he knew he would be at home with the Lord in it. (4) In that condition to which we are speeding—(a) We shall be beyond all doubt as to the truth of our holy faith. There will be no more mistrust of our Lord or of His promises, and no more shall we doubt the power of His blood or our share in His atoning sacrifice. (b) We shall communicate with Christ more sensibly than we do now. Here we do speak with Him, but it is by faith through the Spirit of God; in the glory land we hear His voice while He personally speaks to us. (c) We shall have greater capacity for taking in the glory of our Lord. II. THE BELIEVER HAS REASONS FOR AN ABSORBING AMBITION (ver. 9). From henceforth the one great thing we have to care about is to please our Lord. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The Christian's home* :—I. A CHRISTIAN IS NOT IN HIS OWN PROPER HOME WHILE HE SOJOURNETH IN THE BODY. Instances: Abraham (Heb. xi. 9). David (Psa. xxxix. 12). Christ (John xvii. 16). He that was Lord of all had neither house nor home. Reasons—1. Our birth and parentage is from heaven. Everything tendeth to the place of its original; men love their native soil; a stone will fall to the ground, though broken in pieces by the fall. There is a double reason why the new creature cannot be satisfied here. (1) Here is not enough dispensed to answer God's love in the covenant. "I will be your God," noteth the gift of some better thing than this world can afford unto us (Heb. xi. 16; Matt. xxii. 32). (2) Here is not enough to satisfy the desire and expectation of the renewed heart—perfect enjoyment of God, and perfect conformity to God. 2. There lieth our treasure and inheritance (Eph. i. 3). Christ hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in earthly places; here He hath adopted, justified, and sanctified us in part, but the full accomplishment is reserved for the world to come. 3. There are all our kindred. There is our home and country, where our Father is, and our Lord Jesus, and all the holy ones of God. 4. There we abide longest. An inn cannot be called our home; here we abide but for a night, but there for ever with the Lord. 5. The necessary graces that belong to a Christian show that a Christian is not yet in his proper place. (1) Faith hath another world in prospect and view; and our great aim is to come at it. (2) Hope was made for things to come, especially for our full and final happiness. (3) Love (1 Peter i. 8). 6. Let us therefore give in our names among them that profess themselves to be strangers and sojourners here in the world. (1) Let us be drawing home as fast as we can. A traveller would be passing over his journey as soon as may be. (2) Make serious provision for the other world (Matt. vi. 33). (3) Mortify carnal desires (1 Pet. ii. 11). (4) Patiently endure the inconveniences of our pilgrimage. Strangers will meet with hard usage (John xv. 19). (5) Beg direction from God, that we may go the shortest way home (Psa. cxix. 19). (6) Get as much of home as we can in our pilgrimage, in the earnest and first fruits of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 23). II. THE MAIN REASON WHY A CHRISTIAN IS NOT AT HOME, IS, BECAUSE HE IS ABSENT FROM THE LORD, WHILE HE IS IN THE BODY. I shall here inquire—1. How are believers absent from the Lord, when He dwelleth in them, as in His temple, and there is a close union between Him and them? I answer, Christ is with us indeed, but our communion with Christ is—(1) Not immediate. (2) Nor full. (3) Often interrupted. 2. Why, God's children count themselves not at home till they are admitted into this perpetual society with Christ. (1) Because this is the blessedness which is promised to them. And therefore they expect it, and thirst after it (John xii. 26). (2) This is that which is highly prized by them, to be where Christ is. Why? (a) Out of thankfulness to Christ's delighting in our presence (Prov. viii. 31). (b) Out of love to Christ (Psa. lxxiii. 25). (c) Taste. Communion begun maketh us long for communion perfected (Psa. lxxiii. 1, 2). (d) Their complete happiness dependeth upon it (1 John iii. 2; John xvii. 24). (T. Manton, D.D.) *Longing after home* :—I. THAT LONGING AFTER HOME ESSENTIALLY BELONGS TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS BY NO MEANS SO GENERALLY ACKNOWLEDGED AS A PIOUS MIND OUGHT PERHAPS TO EXPECT. More loudly than ever voices are raised, which contest the right of that longing, and the hope out of which it springs to a place in the Christian's inner life. The one who believes on Christ hath eternal life, and needs not to long for it in the other world. 1. But

those who have already partaken of eternal life in communion with God, have always longed most heartily after its completion. Paul has been especially named the apostle of faith, and yet—(1) Paul had rather a desire to depart from the body, and be at home with the Lord. For the very reason that Christ is his life, even here during his earthly pilgrimage death is his gain (Phil. i. 21). The life of the believer is still hid with Christ in God; but when Christ our life shall appear, then will His people appear with Him in glory (Col. iii. 3, 4). Yea, the apostle speaks of the Holy Ghost as a pledge of the incorruptible inheritance (chap. i. 22, v. 5; Rom. viii. 23). But the statement that the resurrection had already taken place, *i.e.*, in a spiritual way, is rejected by the apostle (2 Tim. ii. 16, 18). (2) So with the apostle of love (1 John ii. 28, iii. 2). (3) So with the apostle of hope (1 Pet. i. 8, ii. 11, iv. 13, 14, v. 10). (4) With all this the testimony of our Lord agrees (John vi. 40, xvii. 24; Luke xxiii. 43).

2. What the words of our Lord and of His apostles teach us is also confirmed by the condition and inward connection of the life which His Spirit works in us. "Whilst we dwell in the body," says the apostle, "we are absent from the Lord" as in a foreign land; "for," adds the apostle as his ground, "we walk by faith, and not by sight." Is not faith the fountain of the new life, and is it not a certain confidence of what is hoped for, a firm conviction of what is not seen? (Heb. xi. 1.) Do we not know by it that the Lord, with His grace, is always near to us on our pilgrimage? And yet, however close the connection of the believer with Christ may be, it is nevertheless to be esteemed a separation in comparison with the perfect communion with Him of which he will then become partaker, when his faith is once changed into sight. And if faith is nothing else than the concealed glory of sight, how should we not long after the development of this bud into glorious bloom? If we see now in faith the glory of the Lord only through a glass, and as in a riddle (1 Cor. xiii. 12), who should not long, with the holy apostle, to see face to face, and to know even as we are known? (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) A time is coming when everything imperfect reaches its perfection, and everything piecemeal appears a beautiful whole; where all difference disappears, and all concealed glory becomes manifest; where all holy longings find perfect satisfaction, and all blessed anticipations and hopes become a living reality. Then shall our faith, which at one time is an offence to the children of this world, at another time a folly, be solemnly justified through seeing.

II. THE EFFECTS OF THIS LONGING WILL NOT BE OTHERWISE THAN SALUTARY. 1. It will strengthen and enliven our zeal after holiness (ver. 9, *cf.* Rom. ii. 7). As the sun cannot do otherwise than give light and warmth, so the longing after home in the case of the Christian cannot do otherwise than manifest itself in redoubled striving after a conduct well-pleasing to God. Each one who has such a hope in Christ purifies himself even as He is pure (1 John iii. 3). For only to those who have a pure heart is the promise given, that they shall see God (Matt. vi. 8). 2. It will promote our comfort and peace as regards the earthly life. If our life is like a journey, say which traveller will, with more cheerful courage, proceed on his way—he who knows that at the close of it he will meet his end; or he who knows at the end of his journey there awaits him an entrance into the most delightful home? The thought, which no one can drive away, that we are at every step come nearer to the end, is dreadful to those who have no hope; but for the one who longs after his home it is a source of holy joy. Certainly one proceeds calmly and peacefully through the earthly life when one has nothing to dread but everything to hope (Rom. viii. 18; chap. vi. 9). (*Julius Muller, D.D.*) (**For we walk by faith not by sight.**)—*The influence of faith upon the Christian's walk*:—You see, you feel, and know, by the testimony of your own senses, what your present situation is. And there are advantages as well as disadvantages attending the present state. But of the life to come you have no experience. To obviate this cavil, the words of our text are brought in by way of parenthesis. "It is true, we never saw our house that is from heaven, and all that we know about it is by report. But that report is the report of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, and it may be relied on with more assurance than even the testimony of our senses."

I. THE DENOMINATION HERE GIVEN TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. It is called a walk. 1. That Christians in this world are in an unsettled and movable state. For the same reason the body is called a tent or tabernacle in the first verse. Need any of you be told that here you have no continuing city? The fashion of this world is continually passing away. How widely different is your present condition from what it was a few years ago! It will probably be as much changed in a few days more. 2. That it is a progressive state. 3. That Christians in this world are in a state of voluntary activity. The men of the world, if they had

their choice, would not walk, but sit still; they move towards another world with great reluctance. 4. This expression imports that the Christian's life in this world is a toilsome and uneasy life. The luxury of modern times has contrived various methods of accomplishing journeys without walking. It is not in this manner, Christian, that you are to perform your journey. You must travel through the wilderness on foot. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE IS SPENT—his journey performed. "We walk by faith." There are chiefly three ways in which our knowledge in this world is acquired. 1. By the testimony of our external senses. 2. By rational demonstration. 3. By moral evidence, or the testimony of rational agents. Thus are all matters of fact ascertained, of which we have not ourselves been witnesses. It is manifest, that the strength of our faith should always correspond to the degree of veracity that belongs to his character, upon whose testimony it rests. The greatest part of those truths that constitute the matter of the Christian faith are of such a nature that they could never have been known to us otherwise than by the testimony of God. It is equally manifest that if we did believe these things, upon any other evidence, our belief of them could not be a Divine faith. Once more, true faith includes in it, or, at least, it necessarily produces, a firm reliance upon the faithfulness and power of God, for a full and final performance of all His words of grace, to the person in particular, till he be filled with all the fulness of God. They walk by this faith in the following respects—1. By faith they learn the way in which they ought to go. At man's first creation, God inscribed upon his heart a law, sufficient to direct him in every part of his way. Some remains of this law continue upon the hearts of all Adam's posterity. But this knowledge is so imperfect that, though it may inform us that we go astray, it can never keep any person in the right way. Notwithstanding the clear objective discoveries that we have of the way of truth and duty, such are often the perplexing circumstances of our lot, and such is our natural incapacity to understand and apply the rule, that our way is often covered with darkness, and we are at our wits' end. 2. By faith they receive strength to prosecute their journey. All Christians in this world are in a state of childhood. Their way is long and difficult, and they have no strength to prosecute it. 3. By faith they are furnished with motives to animate them in their walk, and so are encouraged to prosecute their journey with unwearied perseverance. Though the authority of God is a sufficient reason for our obedience, yet He does not require us to obey Him in a blind and irrational manner. We come now to speak concerning the negative part of what the text says about the manner of the Christian's walk—"We walk—not by sight." 1. They walk not by the sight or appearance of those material things which alone are capable, strictly speaking, of being seen. In this view the words import the three things following. Christians walk not by sight. (1) Material or seen things are not the principal objects of their attention. The men of the world are so immersed in sensuality that they can think of almost nothing but what has a tendency to gratify their senses. They walk after the sight of their eyes, and that is also the desire of their hearts. (2) Things capable of being seen are not the principal objects of their pursuit. Unrenewed men pursue happiness with all their might, but they seek it anywhere, or everywhere, except where it is really to be found. (3) The motives by which they are influenced in their walk are not drawn from visible things. If the motives of their actions were drawn from things that are seen they would surely follow such a course as might be calculated to obtain seen advantages, or, at least, to secure them against visible disadvantages. 2. Even in respect of those things which they do pursue, they are not influenced, in the pursuit of them, by their own sight, sense, or feeling; but by the testimony of God concerning them, received and relied on by faith. Though spiritual things fall not under the cognisance of the outward senses, they are capable of being perceived by the soul in a manner some way corresponding to that. That heavenly house, in which you hope to dwell for ever, you have not yet seen, and therefore, in longing for it, you cannot be influenced by a personal experience of what it is, but only by the testimony that God has given you concerning it. So it is with regard to all those invisible things towards which you press in your daily walk. Thus faith continues to have its usual influence upon our walk, even when our sight, sense, or feeling runs in direct opposition to it, as appears in the following instances. (1) When a Christian walks in darkness about his spiritual estate, and can attain no sensible assurance of his interest in Christ, or his being within the covenant of grace, he dares not, on that account, neglect any duty that is incumbent upon him as a friend or disciple of Christ. (2) When difficulties, apparently insurmountable,

are seen in the way, when the Christian is most sensible of his own weakness, and when the help of God, in which he trusts, seems to be, in a great measure, withdrawn, the influence of faith prevails over that of sense, and even in that case he sets forward. When Israel came to the Red Sea they had no way to escape the fury of their enemies but by going forward, and that, in all human appearance, was impossible. (3) When the greatest danger is seen to lie in the way of duty, and when sense and reason assure us that the danger cannot be avoided unless the duty is postponed, the Christian, depending upon the promise of God, despises the danger; and, that he may not be wanting in the performance of his duty, rushes into the jaws of a seen destruction. 3. When, instead of a present accomplishment of the promise, the Christian sees Divine providence moving in a contrary direction, and the Lord seems to be taking methods to render its accomplishment impossible, even then he so far overlooks appearances as to form his whole conduct upon the assured persuasion that God will still do as He hath said. A clear instance of this we have in Abraham.

III. WE ARE NOW TO CONCLUDE WITH THE FOLLOWING INFERENCES. 1. From what has been said, we may see the excellence of the grace of faith, and its usefulness to them that possess it. (1) It attains the knowledge of things that surpass all created knowledge. (2) It believes things that, upon the principles of unenlightened reason, are incredible. (3) Faith can bear things that, in all human appearance, are intolerable. (4) It sees things invisible. In a word—(5) Faith performs things impossible. 2. See the sin and unreasonableness of infidelity. We would only beg leave to suggest the two following considerations. (1) Were you to act upon the same principles in the common affairs of life as you do in matters of religion, it would be simply impossible for you to subsist in the world. Are there not many things relative to the most important concerns of life that you necessarily must believe upon evidence not better than what you have for the truth of Christianity? (2) Whatever objections you may have to the truth of the Christian religion, you cannot pretend to prove that it is not true; otherwise you go further than any of your brethren ever did, so far as we know. And therefore you must grant that it is possible it may be true. 3. See the sin and folly of unbelief. Though every infidel is an unbeliever, there are many unbelievers who are not infidels. Yea, there is much unbelief in the exercise of every Christian while in this imperfect state. 4. See the sin and folly of too much attachment to sensible enjoyments. (1) When you give yourself up to discouragement and downcasting on account of the want of it. The ground of your joy, as well as of your faith, is all without you. (2) When, on account of your want of this, you indulge yourself in the neglect of any duty that you would think incumbent upon you if you had it, excepting the single duty of being thankful for it. (3) When you cast away your confidence, or refuse to believe the promise, because you dare not say with certainty that you have a present interest in it. (4) When you improve your assurance of an interest in Christ, as a ground of your faith, or of your boldness in coming to the throne of grace. (5) When, because you cannot be sure that you are in Christ, you certainly conclude that you are a stranger to Him, and so give yourself up to unbelieving discouragement or despair, and rob God of the glory due for all that He hath done for you. 5. See various marks by which the real followers of Christ may be distinguished from the rest of mankind. (6) To conclude—We may see from this subject the duty of all who profess the Christian religion, or have the Word of God among their hands. It is to follow the example of these primitive teachers of Christianity, and walk by faith, not by sight. Beware of considering yourselves as in a state of rest.

(*J. Young.*) *Seeing and believing*:—There are two worlds, the visible and the invisible: but for the Fall they would constitute one. Had we remained pure, the visible world would be to us the mirror of eternal realities. For Jesus the invisible world is everywhere. He finds it in the well, in the branches of the vine, in the cornfields, and in the minutest details of the life around Him. Thus it ought to be. Alas! most know no realities but in this world; the rest they consider as vain-dreamings. Even religion, which ought to be, before all things, a revelation of the invisible world, they degrade by making only the handmaid of this present life. I. THE TEXT IS IN THE MOST STRIKING CONTRAST WITH SOME MODERN IDEAS AND TENDENCIES. 1. Positivism says, "What is the use of letting your thoughts stray into the invisible world; to pursue those vain clouds which are called religions? Lay hold of the visible world." This doctrine is re-echoed on every hand. What is the invisible world to most of our monied men? 2. Yet what an array of weapons have we for the defence of the invisible world? (1) The greatest things, and those which have been the most salutary for humanity, are the work of those

who walked by faith and not by sight. When St. Paul spoke these words, the ancient world was precisely in the state to which men would lead back the modern world. It only believed in visible and palpable things; it considered as chimeras and trifles all that went beyond them. And what had it arrived at? Who is not aware that there was never a more shameful degradation of the dignity of man? Who has given it life again but those men who opposed to the present world the world to come? Now this fact has often repeated itself. For how often has the world been ready to sink back into that condition in which Christianity found it? (2) We should form a strange idea of Christianity if we believed that it teaches us to despise the earth and the present life. I know that many causes have favoured this error. The monastic life and the deplorable exaggerations of certain Christians who have neglected life's duties, pretending that eternity was taking up all their thoughts, have too often furnished infidelity with weapons. But Christianity has never taught us to forget the duties and privileges of earth. But earth is not—it cannot be—the aim of the Christian, but it is the scene of his activity, even the place where his eternal future is prepared. It is often maintained that eternity diminishes the happiness of the present life; but I assert, on the contrary, that it gives it incomparable grandeur. If, instead of passing through the world, I must remain here, life is an enigma as cruel as it is inexplicable, and one must write on its threshold, "Without God, without hope." Open to me, on the contrary, eternity. Tell me that life is a journey, a marching forward; tell me that my fatherland is awaiting me, then I am able to begin and undertake everything, and the bitter feeling of vanity disappears.

II. ACCEPTING THIS MOTTO THEORETICALLY, WE MAY OPENLY DENY IT IN REALITY. 1. What shall we say of those who do not accept religion unless it be presented to them under a fascinating form with the approbation of man, with all that speaks to the senses and the imagination? But Jesus said to His disciples, who admired the beauty of the temple, "See ye not all these things?" What would He, then, say to those who cannot understand truth when not accompanied by a gorgeous ceremonial, and upheld by a powerful hierarchy? And can we positively affirm that such a temptation has never crept over us? Have not we been troubled in our faith, because we saw the Church feeble, obscure, and despised? Did we never wish her the homage of the world, the support of distinguished men, the authority of numbers, or of public opinion? Well, asking for these external signs is wishing to walk by sight, and not by faith. Ye who want these signs, what would you have done in the days of Jesus Christ? 2. There are Christians who are troubled because to the Church in our days God no longer grants miraculous signs of His intervention. But—(1) Miracles alone have never converted the heart. The Galilæans remained unbelievers in the presence of the most marvellous wonders, and the hearers of St. Paul, without a miracle, were converted by thousands. (2) If miracles were necessary to faith, every one must witness them, and if that were the case they would lose their power, being no longer regarded as supernatural. (3) The more revelation advances, the less God shows Himself to sight, and the more He reveals Himself to faith. In the beginning, there were continual signs and wonders, a pillar of cloud or of fire marks His presence; the thunder roars on Sinai. Everything speaks to the sight; but, with the advent of Christ, everything changes! He teaches us that there is a sign which attests better the presence of God than all the external miracles—it is love. When John, the man of the old covenant, asks Christ, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Christ answers him by enumerating the wonders which He has accomplished; but He finishes with those sublime words, "The poor have the gospel preached to them." God will not now open the heavens; there will be no sign given to this unbelieving generation but that of the Cross; for he whom the Cross leaves insensible would not be moved though a man should rise from the grave and declare Jesus is the Christ. 3. We walk by sight, and not by faith, when we wish Christianity to justify itself entirely in the eyes of reason. Miracles speak to the senses, arguments speak to the intellect; but God will lay hold of our moral being. He wishes that we shall freely give up ourselves to Him by faith. 4. We are still desiring sight instead of faith when we ask God to mark His providence by continual deliverances—(1) By immediate answers to our prayers. But imagine a life where prayer would always be followed by an immediate deliverance. Many would be disciples, but how many from the right motive? Now it is just that mercenary instinct which God wants to destroy in us. Therefore, while He assures us that all our prayers are heard, He seldom shows us beforehand how He will answer them. The most glorious victories of faith have

been won against every appearance. Christ Himself by faith saw before His death the fruit of the bitter travail of His soul, and it was not sight which could reveal to Him a conquered world, a redeemed Church. How often, when we see the prayer of some saint manifestly answered long after his death, we say, "Oh, that he had lived to see this day, the day he so desired!" We must remember, though he saw not, he believed. Pray, then, Christian mother, pray still for the conversion of your son, pray without doubting, and should your eyes only meet subjects of discouragement, remember that we walk by faith and not by sight. (2) These remarks on prayer find also their application on every Christian activity. It is a singular fact that the greatest progress in the kingdom of God has been attained by men who believed though they did not see. What did Christ see in His ministry? What would He have done if He had walked by sight? And what shall we do if we want to see instead of believing, if we resemble those children who, after having cast a seed corn into the ground, return every instant to see whether it has sprung up? God only blesses those who have confidence enough in His faithfulness to commit to Him the care of results, and to say with Luther, "It is Thy work, not mine." It is stated that Kepler, when lying on his death-bed, and being asked by a friend whether he suffered not cruelly to be obliged to die without seeing his discoveries appreciated, answered, "My friend, God has waited five thousand years till one of His creatures discovered the admirable laws which He has given to the stars; why should I, then, not wait till justice is done to me?" 5. They are wrong who want to describe beforehand, as it has been so often tried, the way which the Christian is to follow. The Christian life is like an immense region which thousands of pilgrims have already travelled through; each had followed the road which God had traced out for him; some have found it soft and light, others dark and difficult. Yet all these ways led to the fatherland, and none has a right to say that the road he followed is that which all others must enter upon; for if this road were known, if it could be described, we should walk by sight, and no longer by faith. Let us then accept any unforeseen events; let us expect that God will destroy our plans and disappoint our expectations; whether He send us joy or sorrow, let us walk by faith, allowing Him to lead us. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *Faith versus sight*:—I. THE POSTURE MENTIONED. It implies—1. The possession of life. You can make a dead man sit or even stand in a certain position, but to walk necessitates life. In the sense in which the term is here used, the ungodly man does not walk at all. 2. Activity. It is a blessed thing to sit "with Mary at the Master's feet"; but we walk as well as sit. Many can affirm—"We talk; we think; we experience; we feel"; but true Christians can say, "We walk." 3. Progress. A man does not walk unless he make some headway. God does not say to us, "This is the way," and then stop; but He says, "This is the way, walk ye in it." We are always to be making advances, from faith in its beginnings to faith in its perfections. 4. Perseverance. When a man goes along a step or two and then stops, or returns, we do not call that walking. 5. That in the ordinary actions of life we are actuated by faith. Walking is that kind of progress in which a man continues hour after hour. We often read of men who, by faith, did great exploits, and some Christians are always fixing their eyes upon exploits of faith. But Paul does not speak about running or jumping or fighting, but about walking, and he means to tell you that the ordinary life of a Christian is different from the life of another man; that he has learned to introduce faith into everything he does. II. TWO PRINCIPLES CONTRASTED. All men naturally walk by sight. They have a proverb that "Seeing is believing," and no further. Their maxim is—"Know things for yourself; look after the main chance; take care of Number One." Now the Christian is the very opposite of this. He says: "I do not care about looking after the things that are seen and are temporal; the things that are not seen influence me, because they are eternal." Now, since the world thinks itself wise and the Christian a fool for acting contrary to the world's proverb that "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," let us just see wherein the wisdom of this matter is, and wherein it is not. 1. Walking by sight is a very childish thing. Any child can walk by sight, and so can any fool too. You give him a number of coins; they are all spurious, but he is so pleased with them that he does not care about having real sovereigns. The child says that the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening, but men know that it does not move, only the earth. But it is a very manly thing to believe something which you cannot see. What a man was Columbus compared with his contemporaries because he walked by faith! So the Christian is a man, while the worldly saith, "This is all the world; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we

die," he says, "there must be another half; I will leave this world to you children, and will seek another and more heavenly one." 2. The one is grovelling while the other is noble. A man earning his bread all day long—what is he better than the donkey at Carisbrook Castle, pumping up water and always going round? The children go to the seaside with their little wooden spades and build up a pier of sand, but the tide comes and washes it away, and this is just what men do. They build with heavier stuff, which gives them more care and not half so much merriment, but the end is just the same, only the children live to build again. While these big children, these grovellers, are washed out to sea with all their works and perish everlastingly. If there be not another world to live for, I must say that this life is not worthy of a man. But to believe what God tells me, that I am God's son, that I shall one day see His face and sing His praise for ever, why, there is something here. The man who believes this expands into something worthy of a man who is made in the image of the Most High. 3. There is something exceedingly ignorant about believing only what I can see. Nine out of ten things in the world that are the most wonderful and potent cannot be seen, at least not by the eyes. A man who will not believe in electricity—well, what can you make of him in these days? And this is the case with regard to spiritual things. If you only walk by sight, and only believe what you see, what do you believe? You believe that while you are living here it is a good thing to make the best you can of it, and that then you will die and be buried, and there will be an end of you! What a poor, miserable, ignorant belief this is! But when you believe in what God reveals, and come to walk by faith, how your information expands! 4. Walking by sight is deceptive. The eye does not see anything; it is the mind that sees through the eye. The eye needs to be educated before it tells the truth, and even then there are a thousand things about which it does not always speak truly. Now the man who has a God to believe in, is never deceived. The promise to him always stands fast; the person of Christ is always his sure refuge, and God Himself is his perpetual inheritance. 5. The principle of sight is a very changeable one. It is well enough to talk of walking by sight in the light, but what will you do when the darkness comes on? It is very well to talk about living on the present while you are here, but when you go and lie on your dying bed, what about the principle of living for the present then? But the principle of faith does best in the dark. He who walks by faith can walk in the sunlight as well as you can, but he can walk in the dark as you cannot, for his light is still shining upon him. 6. That those who walk by sight walk alone. Walking by sight is just this—"I believe in myself," whereas walking by faith is—"I believe in God." If I walk by sight I walk by myself; if I walk by faith then there are two of us, and the second one—ah! how great, how glorious, how mighty is He! Sight goes a warfare at its own charges, and is defeated. Faith goes a warfare at the charges of the King's Exchequer, and there is no fear that Faith's bank shall ever be broken. III. THE CAUTION IMPLIED. The apostle says positively, "We walk by faith," and then he adds negatively, "not by sight." The caution, then, is—never mix the two principles. You may go a journey by land, or you may go by water, but to try to swim and walk at the same time would be rather singular. A drunken man tries to walk on both sides of the street at once, and there is a sort of intoxication that sometimes seizes upon Christians, which makes them also try to walk by two principles. 1. You say, "I believe God loves me; I have prospered in business ever since I have been a Christian." The first part of that is faith; but the second part of it is sight. Suppose you had not prospered in business, what then? Will you deny that God loves you because you have not prospered in business? 2. Another says, "I have believed in Christ, but I am afraid I am not saved, for I feel to-night so depressed." "Oh," says another, "I am sure I am saved, because I feel so happy." Now you are both wrong, for you are both walking by sight. Faith is not meant for sweet frames and feelings only, it is meant for dark frames and horrible feelings. Conclusion—Take heed to one thing. You must mind if you do walk by faith, that you walk by the right faith—viz, faith in Christ. If you put faith in your dreams, or in anything you thought you saw, or in a voice you thought you heard, or in texts of Scripture coming to your mind—if you put faith in anything else but Christ—I do not care how good it may be or how bad it may be—you must mind, for such a faith as that will give way. You may have a very strong faith in everything else but Christ, and yet perish. Rest thou in the Lord Jehovah. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Walking by faith*:—These were the words that arose to our recollection in visiting that old castle of St. Andrews, out of which Hamilton and Wishart, our first Scotch martyrs, came to die

for God's truth at the stake. Groping our way along a tortuous passage, we descended by some steps into an inner prison, and there, by a beam of light that streamed through a loophole of the massive wall, we saw an opening in the rocky floor. Candles lighted and let down showed a shaft descending into the bowels of the rock, where, widening out like the neck of a bottle, it formed a dreadful dungeon. It was called—and justly—an *oubliette*, or place of forgetfulness, because those that black mouth swallowed up were ever after lost to life, to light, to liberty. It made one shudder to look down into that horrible pit; nothing seen but the blackness of darkness—nothing heard but the muffled sound of the waves, as bursting on its rocky walls they seemed to moan for the deeds that had been perpetrated there. "There," says John Knox, "many of God's children suffered death, pining away slowly till their life lapped up like the tide on the shore, or was suddenly destroyed by the blow of the assassin." Such were the bloody days and deeds of Popery—never more, we trust, to return. But as our fancy called up the men who entered that low door to be let down like a coffin into that living sepulchre, never to come out but to die on the scaffold or the stake, the words that sprang to our memory were, "They walked by faith, not by sight." The apostle makes a similar application of these words, which are the key to what must have been regarded as a perfect enigma. Note not the resignation only, but the cheerfulness with which he and his fellow-Christians suffered wrong (chap. iv. 17, 18). No doubt our days are in many respects very different from his, but the changes that have taken place in the world since the days of Paul have not changed human nature. This world is like yon volcanic mountain, where vineyards and fig-trees cover its sides with verdure; an occasional growl, a tremor, a puff of smoke, proves that the volcano that buried Herculaneum and Pompeii in its fiery discharges is not dead; it is but dormant. But whatever be the age we live in, whether we shall wear a martyr's crown or not, all the saints that go to glory must go there by the way of faith. The believer walks by faith—I. IN THE WORK AND CROSS OF CHRIST. 1. By faith Noah, Abraham, David, &c., won themselves a place in the cloud of witnesses. And yet he who waited for the consolation of Israel was second to none of them. What is that he holds in his aged arms? An infant—the offspring of a poor woman; born in a stable, a flame, a breath would blow out. Simeon is at that stage in human life when enthusiasm dies, and yet this sight throws him into an holy ecstasy. And why? The long looked-for has come at last; and now, as if there were nothing more on earth worth looking at or waiting for, he lifts his aged arms and eyes to heaven to exclaim, "Now, Lord," &c. Faith never uttered a bolder speech than that. In that infant, as I have seen the giant oak wrapped up in the tiny acorn, Simeon saw the Saviour of mankind, and in the arm that hung round a mother's neck, the strength that sustained the universe. He walked by faith in that, and yet we have more need than he to walk by faith. He said, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"—a privilege ours never shall enjoy till these eyes are closed on this world and open on another. Still more had the disciples in their senses aids to their faith which we do not enjoy. Simeon saw the boy; they saw the man; they touched the hand that wrenched its fetters from the tomb; they heard the voice that rebuked the tempest and cured disease, and said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." 2. Are we ready to envy the apostles and Simeon? "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." The faith of the humblest believer nowadays is in some senses a higher attainment than theirs. The emigrant who sees the hills of his native land sink beneath the wave, and goes away to the land of gold, has seen and handled the gold dug from the mines of that distant land. He has seen those who have been there—go out poor and come back rich; but I believe in a land to which I have seen hundreds go, but none come back to unveil its secrets. I believe in a Saviour I never saw, and never saw the man that saw, and commit to His keeping what is more precious than all the gold of the Bank of England—viz., my precious soul. I stake my everlasting welfare on works done eighteen long centuries ago, of which there is not one solitary vestige now on this earth for my faith to cling to, like ivy to a crumbling ruin. And does the world say to me, "Such trust were madness in earthly matters"? I admit it, but "I am not mad, most noble Festus." Is He unseen? Why the most real things in this world are unseen. My spirit is unseen. The things you see are but the shadows of the unseen, and because my Saviour is unseen, that no more shakes my faith in Him than it shakes my faith in God, in angels, in the heavens, in the spirits of the blest who await my coming. 3. Yon lighthouse tower that stands among the tumbling waves, seems to have nothing but them to rest on, but beneath the waves its foundation is the solid rock.

And what that tower is to the hut on yon sandbank, which the last storm threw up, and the next shall sweep back into the sea, Christ's righteousness is to mine—Christ's works to my best ones. And so, when the Christian man was dying after a life full of good works, and they told him of them, he replied, "I take my good works and my bad works, and I cast them in one heap, and I flee from them both to Jesus. He is all my salvation, He is all my desire." II. IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD. 1. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge of Him. All nature is vocal with His praise. For a man to sit down and write a book to prove it, seems to me a perfect waste of time and labour, graved as these are on every rock, written on every leaf, painted on every flower. But though that be true, generally, what may be called His special providence, at least so far as regards His own people, is very often with them more a thing of faith than a thing of sight. The sun shines on the evil and on the good, the rain falls alike on the just and unjust, and there are many things besides death of which it is true that there is one event to all. Nay, our faith finds stumbling-blocks far more staggering than this. There is Lazarus begging at a rich man's gate. In poverty, in disease, in domestic trials, I have seen God's people have the bitterest cup to drink, and the heaviest burden to bear. "Peace, Mary, peace," said a godly woman, who had lost all her family, to a godless neighbour, who was rebelling against the providence that had taken one child of many; "while I have six empty pairs of shoes to look on you have but one." There are trying circumstances in which the only safety or confidence of a believer rest in walking by faith, and not by sight; in believing how "behind a frowning providence" God hides a smiling face. 2. In ascending a lofty mountain, standing high above all its fellows, which the sun is the first to reach and the last to leave, I have seen the rock that crowned it cleft with storm, and its summit all naked and bare, and so, sometimes, with those whose heads are most in heaven. What are they to do under such circumstances? On the higher Alps, along a path no broader than a mule's foothold, that skirted a dreadful precipice, I have known a timid traveller who fancied it safest to shut her eyes and not attempt to guide the course nor touch the bridle. And there are times in the believer's life when, if he would keep himself from falling into despair, he must, as it were, shut his eyes, lay the bridle on the neck of Providence, and "walk by faith, not by sight." 3. Had Jacob, for instance, done so, he had played a nobler part in Pharaoh's palace; he had stood a venerable witness for the God of truth in that heathen palace instead of indulging in this pitiful cry, "Few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage on earth." He lived to regret he had ever said it, and to bear other testimony to the providence of God. Our great dramatist says of one of his characters that nothing of his life became him so much as the leaving it. Nor did anything in Jacob's life become him so much as the leaving it. "The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Jacob dies in the light of faith. Never say, "All these things are against me." Let all His waves and billows go over ye, let your bark go rolling and staggering amid the sea of troubles; never yield to the belief that you are the sport of chance, at the mercy of winds and waves. Your Father is at the helm, as the sailor boy said. III. IN AND TO ANOTHER WORLD. The discovery of the New World was not, like many discoveries, an accident; it was the reward of Christopher Columbus's faith. He found fruits on the shores of Europe, cast up by the Atlantic waves, which he knew must have grown in lands beyond. They thought him mad to leave his home, to launch on a sea which keel had never ploughed, in search of a land man had never seen. I tell that infidel that I know whom I have believed; I can give a reason for the faith that is in me; and so could he. And so he launched his bark on the deep, and with strange seas around him, storms without, and mutinies within, that remarkable man stood by the helm, and kept the prow of his bark onward till the joyful cry, "Land!" rang from the mast-head, and faith was crowned with success, and patience had her perfect work. Now I look on that man as one of the finest types of a believer, but I cannot read his story without feeling that it puts our faith to the blush. "I have not found such great faith; no, not in Israel." What had he? He walked by faith, and not by faith such as we have. He had but conjecture, we have certainty; he had not even the word of man that lies; we have the word of Him that cannot lie. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Practical spiritualism*.—Did Paul ignore the material universe, or so underrate it as to pay it no attention? No. He studied, admired, used it. He speaks comparatively, and means that in the daily course of himself and his Corinthian brethren, they were influenced more by the invisible than the visible, by the spiritual and eternal than by

the material and the temporal. They were practical spiritualists. In relation to this course of life we may observe—I. It is a MORE PHILOSOPHIC COURSE. A life of practical spiritualism is far more rational than that of practical materialism, because the spiritual is—1. More real than the material. We have stronger evidence for the existence of spirit than of matter. True, the essence of both is beyond us; but the phenomena of spirit come more closely and impressively to us. Thought, volition, hope, fear, are immediate subjects of consciousness, and these belong to the spirit. (1) The whole structure of the visible universe indicates the existence of spirit. Matter is essentially inert, but every part of nature is in motion. Matter is blind, but every part of nature indicates contrivance. Matter is heartless, but every part of nature is instinct with goodness. And then, too, it seems designed for spirit. Does not its contrivance appeal to thought, its streams of goodness to gratitude, its beauty to admiration, its sublimity to reverence and awe? What is this fair universe without spirit but a magnificent mansion without a tenant; a temple filled with the glories of the Shekinah, but containing no worshipper? (2) The impressions of mankind sustain the belief. From remotest times, in all places and in every stage of culture, men have believed in the spiritual. A belief so universal must be intuitive, and any intuitive belief must be true, otherwise there is no truth for man. (3) The Bible authoritatively declares this fact. It tells us of legions of spirits in various orders and states, and that there is One Infinite Spirit, the Parent, Sustainer, and Judge of all. I am bound to believe, then, that the universe is something more than can be brought within the cognisance of my five senses. We are confessedly more intimately and solemnly related to the spiritual, and is it not natural to expect that we should have a sense to see spiritual things? Were such a sense to be opened within us, as the eye of Elijah's servant was opened of old, what visions would burst upon us! The microscope gives us a new world of wonders, but were God to open the spiritual eye, what a universe of spirits would be revealed! 2. More influential. The invisible is to the visible what the soul is to the body, that which animates and directs every part. Its spirit is in all the wheels of the material machine. It is the spring in all its forces, the beauty in all its forms, the glow in all its life. 3. More lasting. II. It is a MORE UNPOPULAR COURSE. It is opposed to—1. Popular science, which teaches that matter is everything, that all thoughts about the invisible are idle and superstitious. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." 2. Popular religion, not only of heathendom, but of Christendom, which is the religion of the senses. Popular life. The great bulk of mankind live a material life; their ideas of wealth, grandeur, beauty, dignity, pleasure, are all material. Their grand question is, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The Christly man, in walking by faith, sets popular science, religion, life, at defiance. Though he is in the world, he is not of the world. III. It is a MORE BLESSED COURSE. 1. It is more safe to walk "by faith" than "by sight." The senses are deceptive, the eye especially makes great mistakes. "Things are not what they seem." 2. It is more useful. Who is the more useful man in society—the man who is controlled by appearances, who is materialistic in all his beliefs and pursuits, or the man whose mental eye enters into the invisible region of eternal principles, ascertains the real work they do in the universe, arranges them, and applies them to the uses of man's daily life? Undoubtedly the latter. To him we owe all the blessings and arts that adorn civilised life. Albeit a stupid age calls the former a practical man, and the latter a theorist and a dreamer. In the spiritual department of life, the man who lives under the practical recognition of One whom no eye has seen or can see, is the man who both enjoys for himself and diffuses amongst others the largest amount of happiness. 3. It is more ennobling. He who walks by sight is bounded by the material. Matter is his cradle, his nourishment, the circle of his activities, and his grave. On the contrary, he who walks by faith, towers into other regions, brighter, broader, and more blest. Conclusion—Which of these courses of life are we pursuing? It is not difficult to determine this question. Jesus Himself has supplied the test, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit." 1. He that walks by sight is in all his experiences, purposes, and pursuits, "flesh." His mind is a "fleshy mind," his wisdom is "fleshy wisdom." 2. On the contrary, he who "walks by faith" is spirit. Spirit in the sense of—(1) Vivacity. All his faculties are instinct with a new life—the life of conscience, the true life of man. He is spirit. (2) Social recognition. He is not known as other men are known, as men of the world. But, as a spiritual man, distinguished by spiritual convictions, sympathies, and aims. (3) Divinity. He is born of the Divine Spirit,

and has a kindredship with, and a resemblance to, his Eternal Father. He is now a conscious citizen of the great spiritual kingdom. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.—*Philosophy of true courage* :—The word “confident” here means courageous, and implies—1. Unavoidable perils and trials (chap. iv. 8-10). The man that rushes into danger is not courageous, but reckless. 2. Intelligent views and convictions of being. Much of battle-field valour springs from ignorance of what existence is, or false views of it. Paul regarded—(1) The body as the organ of being—an “earthly house.” (2) The soul as the personality of being. “We that are in this house.” The soul, not the body, is the I, or self, of being. (3) Death as only a change in the mode of being. (4) Heaven as the perfection of being. It is “the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” But these views are repeated here in a more condensed form. The apostle’s courage was based on—I. A CONSCIOUSNESS THAT HIS DEATH WOULD NOT ENDANGER THE INTERESTS OF BEING.

1. That which gives a fear-awakening power to events is the dread of death. The most malignant disease, the fiercest hurricane, or the loudest roar of musketry would have no fear-awakening power without this. Let the fear be taken away, as it was from Paul, and men would then, like him, be always courageous. 2. Now observe the apostle’s view of—(1) The interests of being. “Present with the Lord.” (2) The bearing of death upon the interests of being. He regarded death as the flight of the spirit to the presence of its Lord. “Absent from the body,” &c. 3. Notice Paul’s state of mind under the influence of these thoughts. “Willing rather,” &c. II. A CONSCIOUSNESS THAT DEATH WOULD NOT DESTROY THE GREAT PURPOSE OF BEING. 1. Men without purpose are almost indifferent to life. 2. The master-purposes of men differ. They are pleasure, wealth, to please God. This last was Paul’s grand purpose. “Wherefore we labour,” &c. This purpose is—(1) Reasonable. If there be a God, reason dictates that to please Him ought to be the supreme purpose of intelligent natures. (2) Delightful. The highest happiness of a moral intelligence is to please the chief object of its love. 3. Now death destroys the main purposes of the voluptuous, avaricious, and ambitious, and hence it is terrible to them, but it does not destroy the chief purpose of the Christian. “Whether present or absent” his chief purpose will be to be “accepted of Him.”

III. A CONSCIOUSNESS THAT DEATH WOULD NOT PREVENT THE REWARDS OF BEING (ver. 10). Success must ever have an influence upon the mind of man in every department of labour. Non-success discourages. The Christian labourer looks for success, but it does not appear here at all proportioned either to his desires or efforts. Paul, no doubt, would like to have seen the full results of his labours in Corinth, &c., and if death could have prevented a full realisation, he would have esteemed it an evil, and shrunk from it with fear. But here he distinctly affirms an opposite conviction. 1. Every one shall receive the recompense of labour. 2. Every one shall receive a reward for every deed. For every good deed. There shall be no lost labour. And every “bad” deed, too, shall be recompensed. Conclusion—If we possess Paul’s convictions of life and his spirit, we may have this sublime courage. Let us look at death as he looked at death, as the flight of the spirit into the presence of its Lord. Is not fear of death a disgrace to the Christian? “If,” said Cicero, “I were now disengaged from my cumbrous body, and on my way to Elysium, and some superior being should meet me in my flight and make the offer of returning and remaining in my body, I should, without hesitation, reject the offer, so much should I prefer going to Elysium, to be with Socrates and Plato, and all the ancient worthies, and to spend my time in converse with them.” How much more should the Christian desire to be “absent from the body and present with the Lord!” (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The old house and the new* :—I. THE CHRISTIAN VIEW

OF WHAT DEATH IS. 1. The apostle is not here referring to the state of the dead, but to the act of dying. His language is more accurately, “willing to go from home, from the body, and to go home to the Lord.” The moment of transition of course leads to a permanent state, but it is the moment of transition which is in view here. The Christian view of the act of death is that it is simply a change of abode. 2. The text suggests that to the Christian soul the departure from the one house is the departure into the other. The home has been the body; the home is now to be Jesus Christ. We know not how much separation may depend upon the immersing of the spirit in the fleshly tabernacle, but we know that, though here by faith souls can live in Christ, yet there shall come a form of union so much more close, all-pervading, as that the present union, precious as it is, shall be “absence from the Lord.” 3. Perhaps, in the bold metaphor of my text, there is an answer

to the painful questions, "Do the dead know aught of what affects us here? and can they do aught but gaze on Him and love and rest?" If there is any analogy between the relation of the body on earth to the spirit that inhabits it, and that of Christ to him who dwells in Him, then it may be that, as the flesh, so the Christ transmits to the spirit impressions from the outside world, and affords a means of action upon that world. Christ may be the sensorium of the disembodied spirit, and the hand of the man who hath no other instrument by which to express himself. But be that as it may, the reality of a close communion and encircling by the felt presence of Christ, which will make the closest communion here seem to be obscure, is certainly declared in the words before us. 4. This transition is the work of a moment. It is not a long journey, of which the beginning is "to go from home," and the end is "to go home." But it is one and the same motion which, looked at from the one side, is departure, and looked at from the other is arrival. "There is but a step between me and death." Yes, but there is but a step between me and life. The consciousness of two worlds blends; the spirit is clothed upon with the house which is from heaven, in the very act of stripping off the earthly house of this tabernacle. 5. This transition obviously leads into a state of conscious communion with Jesus Christ. The dreary figment of an unconscious interval for the disembodied spirit has no foundation, either in what we know of spirit, or in what is revealed to us in Scripture. It is absurd to say of an unconscious spirit, clear of a bodily environment, that it is anywhere; and there is no intelligible sense in which the condition of such a spirit can be called being "with the Lord." 6. And that is all we know. Nothing else is certain but this, "with the Lord," and the resulting certainty that therefore it is well. It is enough for our faith, comfort, and patient waiting. Not only that great hope of the "body of His glory," but furthermore, "the earnest of the Spirit," ought to make the unwelcome necessity less unwelcome. If the firstfruits be righteousness and peace and joy of the Holy Ghost, what shall the harvest be? II. THEREFORE THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER IS THAT OF QUIET WILLINGNESS AND CONSTANT COURAGE. There is nothing hysterical, morbid, overstrained, artificial. The apostle says: "I would rather not; but when I see what I do see beyond, I am ready. Since so it must be, I will go, not dragged away from life, nor clinging desperately to it as it slips from my hands, nor dreading anything that may happen beyond; but always courageous, and prepared to go whithersoever the path may take me, since I am sure that it ends in His bosom." There are other references of our apostle's substantially of the same tone as that of my text, but with very beautiful and encouraging differences. "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth," &c. That is our model. "Always courageous," afraid of nothing in life, in death, or beyond, and therefore willing to go from home from the body, and to go home to the Lord. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *To die or not to die*:—I once heard two good men holding a dialogue. One of them said he wished that his time was come to go to heaven; he did not see anything here worth living for. The other said he had many reasons why he would rather just then live than die. He had lived to see the Church in prosperity; he should like, therefore, to be a sharer in the Church's joy. Besides, he had those he loved on earth, &c. Now consider—I. WHEN IT IS RIGHT AND WHEN WRONG TO DESIRE TO STAY. 1. It is wrong—(1) When the Christian has grown worldly. Dr. Johnson, being taken by one of his friends over his fine house and beautiful garden, observed, "Ah! sir, these are the things that make it hard to die." The world was never meant to fill a believer's soul. (2) When he has a secret fear of dying. Christ came into the world to deliver those who are subject to this bondage. Thou art afraid of a stingless enemy, of a shadow, of heaven's own portals, of thy Father's black servant whom He sends to bring thee to Himself! (3) When it is the result of his doubting his interest in Christ. We have no right to doubt. The apostle says, "We are always confident." Now, some hate the very word "confidence," but the apostle knew what was the proper spirit for a believer. (4) When it is because he has a large family dependent upon him. 2. It is right—(1) When he wants to do more for his Master, and a sphere is just opening before his eyes. As a valiant soldier, with the field of battle in view, he wants to win a victory. Carey, Ward, and Pierre, when laid down with sickness at Serampore, prayed that they might live a little longer, because every godly man in India was then worth a thousand. Paul himself said, "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you, and therefore I prefer to stay." II. WHEN IS IT RIGHT, AND WHEN WRONG FOR A BELIEVER TO WISH TO GO TO HEAVEN? 1. It is wrong—(1) When he wants to get there to get away from his work. Suppose your servant came to you about ten o'clock in the morning, and

said, "Master, it is a very hot day, I wish it was six o'clock at night." You would say, "I want none of those laggard fellows that are always looking for six o'clock." Or suppose you met him on Thursday, and he said, "I wish it was Saturday night." "Ah," you would say, "a man that always looks for Saturday night is never worth his master's keeping." And yet you and I have been guilty of that with regard to the things of Christ. (2) When it is because there is some little discouragement in labouring for Christ. Jonah thought he would rather go to Tarshish than to Nineveh. We get cowardly and distrustful of God. 'Tis then we fretfully say, "Let us go to heaven." I fancy I hear Luther talking like that! Melancthon said, "Let me die," but Luther said, "No, we want you, and you are not to be let off yet, you must stand in the thick of the battle till the fight changes and victory is ours." (3) When it is to get away from the Lord's will on earth. Some have had so much pain, that they would like to be released from it. We cannot blame them. But yet does it not sometimes amount to this, "Father, if the cup cannot pass from me, let me pass away from it"? Such people never do die for years afterwards; because the Lord knows they are not fit to die. But when we are able to say, "Well, let it be as He wills; I would be glad to be rid of pain, but I would be content to bear it if it be God's will"; then patience hath had her perfect work, and it often happens that the Lord says, "It is well, My child: thy will is My will." 2. It is right—(1) When it is because you are conscious of your daily sins and want to be rid of them. To be perfectly holy is an aspiration worthy of the best of men. (2) When you wish to serve God better than you do. Then, inasmuch as it is a proper thing for the servant of God to desire, to be a better servant, it must be right and proper for him to long to serve his Master without imperfection. (3) When we have been at the Lord's table, or in some service where we have had great enjoyment, we have had the earnest and want to have the whole of the redemption money. (4) When you have had near fellowship with Christ. It would indeed be a strange thing if you did not wish to be with Him where He is. If a woman loves her husband she longs for his society. You are a child; he is not a loving child that does not wish to see his father's face. How some of us used to long for the holidays! We are also labourers. It were a strange thing if the labourer did not wish to achieve the end of his toils. And then, what soldier does not long for victory? He would not shun the fight, but he wishes it were triumphantly over. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *An apostle's prospect of death*.—Note—I. THE PROSPECT OF THIS GREAT TRANSITION, AND THE WILLINGNESS EXPRESSED. In this willingness there are four main elements. 1. The acknowledgment of a higher claim. The apostle has a figure of two habitations for the soul, and both presenting their rival claims. The body has a claim, and reasonably. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Through the bodily senses and perceptions the soul has its education. It gazes upon the fair universe through the windows of the eye; through the ear flows in the music of creation; and it is by the organs of speech that spirit communicates with spirit. Now, is there not here a claim? To be "unclothed," in the apostle's speech, would seem to be cut off from fellowship with the universe. Who then could be well pleased to be absent from the body? Those only who are conscious of a higher claim. Christ claims us. A thousand objects seem to stretch imploring hands to us and cry, "Thou art ours"; but Christ says, "Thou art Mine." With the claim that redemption gives us what else can compete? The body, with all the wonders of its construction, is, after all, but the servant of the soul; Christ is its Master. We, therefore, are ready to renounce the lower for the loftier claim, and willing to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. 2. The acceptance of a necessary condition. Why should the two claims come into competition? The ideal man of God's purpose and first creation may be well conceived as equally at home in both worlds. As it is, the two things are incompatible. Whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from Him, and to be at home with Jesus we must die. Now it cannot be said that this is in itself desirable. The best, the bravest of us must falter when we think of going to an untried eternity. But we know that it must be so. We therefore accept the decree with submission, nay, with love, for we "reckon the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." 3. The longing for a promised deliverance. The body is not merely a veil which we are willing should be drawn aside that we may behold the Saviour's glory; it is often a source of the deepest trial and sadness. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," &c. What wonder, then, that he thought it good rather to be "absent from the body," which he found so painful and insecure a home, and to be "at home with the Lord" at whose right

hand are pleasures for evermore! 4. The embodiment of the highest aspiration. The Saviour left the world with "Lo, I am with you alway." To apprehend His presence is the one great aim of the souls that love Him, and He is ever near. This also is the life of heaven. All else in that life is mystery. II. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THIS ANTICIPATION EXERCISES. 1. We are "of good courage"; this begins the text, strikes its keynote. The true tone of the Christian character is a brave, undismayed way of looking at life with all its possibilities, and at the distant prospect or the near approach of death. There is no insensibility in this. The spirit is exquisitely alive to the solemnity both of life and of death, yet courageous, cheerful, knowing that already "death is swallowed up in victory." 2. But with this "courage" the apostle combines faithfulness. "Wherefore we make it our aim"—our ambition is, "whether present or absent, to be well pleasing unto Him." The triumphant confidence becomes, whether here or there, the inspiration of faithful work. Acceptance of that work remains the crowning hope and joy of life. (*S. G. Green, D.D.*) *Desire to be present with Christ*:—I. IT IS THE DUTY OF EVERY CHRISTIAN TO HAVE AN ARDENT YET SUBMISSIVE DESIRE TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY, THAT HE MAY BE WITH CHRIST. This may be argued—1. From the principles of our nature. Is it not contrary to every principle of our nature to be pleased with misery, to fail to desire happiness? And yet this must be the strange disposition of every believer who does not wish "to be absent from the body, that he may be present with the Lord." Is this a condition in which a reasonable man should be satisfied to remain, when the joys of the New Jerusalem are proffered to him? 2. Consider the spirit and the principles of our religion. (1) True religion gives to the soul a holy and a heavenly temper; but can such a temper be invrought in that soul which contentedly settles down on earth? (2) A holy love of God and the Redeemer lies at the very foundation of true religion. But what kind of love, I pray you, is that which is satisfied to be absent from the Lord rather than be absent from the body? (3) A love to the children of God, and a delight in their society, are essential to the Christian character. But can the soul of that man be warmed with this love, who sees the pious, one by one, departing from earth, and yet desires not to go with them to join the holy host of the redeemed? (4) Hope is one of the Christian graces; but hope includes desire. What a contradiction, then, to say that we hope for the presence of the Lord when we had rather that He would delay His coming! (5) There is no religion in that heart which does not long after greater degrees of holiness, and continual increase in grace. But this is the character of him who prefers a sinful world to a holy heaven. 3. The representations of the Scriptures confirm this same truth. They uniformly represent those who "mind earthly things," "who look at the things which are seen and temporal," without any right to hope for eternal blessedness. 4. The examples of saints teach us to cultivate this disposition which we are recommending. Look at David: "My heart is glad, my glory rejoiceth, my flesh also shall rest in hope; for Thou wilt show me the path of life." Listen to Paul: "I desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." View the delight of Peter: "I must shortly put off this tabernacle," &c. Hear the joyful response of John, when the Saviour tells him: "I come quickly:" "Even so, Amen; come, Lord Jesus." II. OBJECTIONS TO THIS DOCTRINE, AND EXCUSES TO PALLIATE THE NEGLECT OF THIS DUTY. 1. Do you say, "I am unwilling to die, because I am not assured of the love of God towards me"? This is not an objection against our doctrine, for the Christian desires death as connected with the presence of the Lord; we have not been endeavouring to persuade you to be willing to die, but to induce you to shake off that worldly spirit which makes you prefer earth before the enjoyment of Christ. But let me ask you that present this plea, why do you not tremble when you make it? What! you yourselves acknowledge that it is a matter of uncertainty whether, when you die you enter into the presence of an angry Judge or tender Redeemer, and yet can be tranquil! Where is your reason, your prudence? 2. Do you object again, "I am not willing to depart, because I wish yet to remain some time longer in the earth, to serve and glorify God"? But do you suppose that you cease to serve and glorify God, when you depart from earth? Think you that Abraham, David, Paul, &c., when they left this little speck of earth to enter the more extensive regions beyond the skies, lost either inclination or opportunity of serving God; think you that their service is fainter, or less important, or less constant than that which you pay? 3. Do you say, "I am not willing because I have friends, relatives, children, to whom I may be of advantage"? But is not God the supreme object of our pursuit? And is it right for us to put the dearest earthly connections in competition with Him? (*Matt.*

x. 37.) 4. Do you object that "such a desire is unnatural"? But we are compounded beings; and an inclination is not, therefore, unnatural, because, while it accords with the tendencies of our superior part, it is opposed to those of our inferior part. Sensitive nature shrinks from death; but rational nature, especially when the soul is renewed, longs for that period when it shall be delivered from corruption. And by what law of nature is it that the superior part is bound thus to submit to the inferior part? Conclusion: If such be the Christian temper, how few real followers of the Saviour are to be found in our assemblies! Where are the men who are disentangled from earth, longing for the presence and enjoyment of the Lord? (*H. Kollock, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. Wherefore we labour, that . . . we may be accepted of Him.—*Labouring for acceptance*:—I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE TEXT. 1. The apostle did not mean that he "laboured"—(1) To make any atonement for his sins. That had been high treason against the sovereign authority of Him who "by one offering hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." (2) To add to the righteousness of Christ; for if he and all the saints of God had attempted to add to it, it had been to defile it. (3) To be more a child of God than he was; for he had taught that "we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Labour is lost here. 2. Then in what sense did he "labour"? All things that are spiritual are acceptable to God. He loves a spiritual mind; it is the reflection of Himself. Observe, there is a regular climax, an ascending gradation of expression, in these three passages (Rom. xii. 1, 2; 1 Thess. iv.; Col. i. 9, 10). God loves high and holy service, the obedient spirit and the quiet heart, those who "follow on to know Him." The apostle did desire these things, and "laboured" for their attainment. Oh! with what deep self-renunciation did he labour! (1 Cor. xv. 10.) II. WHO IT IS THAT GIVES THIS REMARKABLE DECLARATION. Was he a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles? The Lord signally owned him. But did his apostleship, his ministry, satisfy him? This is what he says, "Wherefore we labour," &c. The apostle had been "caught up into the third heaven"; he had heard things which "it was not lawful for him to utter." Was he satisfied with revelations? He counted them all as nothing, compared with this object of his soul's desire. Paul was a man of no small attainment either, yet he said, "We labour." III. THE REMARKABLE EXPRESSION HE CONNECTS WITH IT. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." No one could ever say these words that had not both his feet standing firmly upon the atonement. Conclusion: There is not one but is "labouring" for something. It may be but the floating bubble in the water. Is it pleasure? friends? intellectual attainment? the grosser or the purer walks of life?—but still without God? Oh! solemn thought! If we saw a man with his house on fire, labouring to save his goods, and then we saw him burning with his goods, no one could look without shuddering at the sight. And yet we see thousands of sinners doing it all around us. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The great ambition of a true Christian*:—I. WE MUST NOT ONLY DO THINGS WHICH ARE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD FOR THE MATTER, BUT THIS MUST BE OUR FIXED END AND SCOPE. 1. We cannot be sincere unless this is the case. One main difference between the sincere and the hypocrite is in the end and scope. The one seeketh the approbation of men, and the other the approbation of God (chap. i. 12). 2. This makes us serious and watchful, and to keep close to our duty—the fitness of means is judged of by the end. Let a man fix upon a right end, and he will soon understand his way, and will address himself to such means as are fitted to that end, and make straight towards it without any wanderings. (1) Consider how many impertinencies are cut off if I be true to my end and great scope; *e.g.*, when I remember that my business is to be accepted of God at the last, can I spend my time in ease and idleness, or carnal vanities and recreations? (Eccles. ii. 2.) (2) It will cut off all inconsistencies with our great end (Gen. xxxix. 9). 3. This gives us comfort under the difficulties of obedience, and the hardships of our pilgrimage. The end sweetens the means. Now, what greater encouragement can there be than to think how God will welcome us with a "Well done"? (Matt. xxv. 21, 23.) II. THIS MUST BE OUR WORK AS WELL AS OUR SCOPE; and this design must be carried on with the greatest seriousness, as our great care and business. "We labour." There is a double notion of great use in the spiritual life: making religion our business, and making religion our recreation. It must be our business in opposition to slightness; it must be our recreation in opposition to wearisomeness. The word in the text hath a special signification. We should with no less earnestness endeavour to please God than they that contend for honour in

the world; we should make it our constant employment that God may like us for the present and take us home to Him at length into His blessed presence. What is all the world to this? III. WE MUST NOT ONLY TAKE CARE THAT WE BE ACCEPTED OF GOD AT LAST, WHEN WE GO OUT OF THE BODY, BUT WE MUST STRIVE TO BE ACCEPTED OF HIM NOW. 1. How else can we long for the coming of Christ, if before we pass to our judgment we know not whether we shall be accepted, yea or no? 2. Else we cannot comfortably enjoy communion with God for the present. How can we come before Him if we know not whether He will accept an offering at our hands? 3. We cannot have a cheerful fruition of the creature and worldly enjoyments till God accepteth us (Eccles. ix. 7). Till we are in a reconciled estate, all our comforts are but as stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret, like Damocles' banquet, while a sharp sword hung over his head by a slender thread. 4. That which maketh us more lively and active in our course of pleasing God is—(1) The future judgment (ver. 10). Whom should we please, and with whom should we seek to be accepted? A vain world, or frail man, or the God to whom we must strictly give an account? (2) The hope of our presence with Him, and the beatifical vision and fruition of Him; for in the context he speaketh of presence and sight, and then he saith, "Wherefore we labour." Conclusion: 1. Some reasons of the point. (1) We were made and sent into the world for this end, that by a constant course of obedience we might approve ourselves to God, and finally be accepted of Him, and received into His glory (John vi. 38). (2) We were redeemed to this end (Rev. v. 9). (3) Our entering into covenant with God implieth it. (4) The relations which result from our covenant interest. There is the relation between us and Christ of husband and spouse (Hos. ii. 19). Now the duty of the wife is to please the husband (1 Cor. vii. 34). The relation of children and father (chap. vi. 18). Now the duty of children is to please the parents. Masters and servants (Ezek. xvi. 8). They that please themselves carry themselves as if they were their own, not God's. 2. Some study to please men. (1) How can these comply with the great duty of Christians, which is to please the Lord? (Gal. i. 10.) (2) There is no such necessity of the approbation of men as of God. Please God, and no matter who is your enemy (Prov. xvi. 9). 3. Is this your great scope and end? (1) Your end will be known by your work. (2) If this be your end, it will be known by your solace (chap. i. 12). (3) If God's glory be your scope, any condition will be tolerable to you, so as you may enjoy His favour. (T. Manton, D.D.) *Labour and motive*:—I. THE SPHERE OF LABOUR TO WHICH THESE WORDS REFER. There can be nothing more prejudicial to a truly religious life than the supposition that there is any sphere into which we are not to carry our religion, and where the eye of the Master takes no cognizance of the deeds that are done. "Holiness unto the Lord must be written upon the bells of the horses." We must give an account of all the things done in the body. Every province of our life belongs to the kingdom of Christ. 1. The servant or workman has another Master besides the human master that he serves, and all his secular work is done to Christ (Col. iii. 22). The workman then, as such, is a servant of Christ. 2. The master, too, has a Master as well as the workman, to whom he shall have to render an account of the deeds done in the body (Col. iv. 1). 3. This sphere of labour also embraces trade and commerce. 4. Kings and subjects, as such, are also to serve Christ. 5. Our sphere of labour also embraces all the relationships of life which we sustain, and the works of benevolence to which we are called. The love of parents for their children and of children for their parents is service rendered to God. 6. I need scarcely add that this sphere embraces what we are accustomed specially to call religious life and work. We are to labour in prayer and self-culture; to keep our hearts with all diligence and our bodies under subjection: this requires self-denial and toil. We are to strive daily to grow in grace. II. THE MOTIVE BY WHICH WE ARE TO BE INFLUENCED AND ANIMATED IN OUR WORK, "that we may be accepted of Him." It was this that stimulated the apostle's heart and strengthened his hands and fired his zeal. 1. This will make our work pleasant. How much pleasanter the ordinary duties of life would become if we could feel that in doing them we serve Christ! 2. We shall also enjoy the presence and favour of Christ. The man who serves Christ in everything will find Christ in everything. 3. Service done from this motive will at length receive its full reward. 1. Let us learn, then, from this subject that religion enters into every department of human life. There is nothing secular in the sense that it is not also sacred. 2. How diligent and conscientious this should make us in the discharge of every duty! He sees us, He examines us, He rewards us. (A. Clark.) *Pleasing Christ*:—I. THE SUPREME AIM OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. To be "accepted," "well-pleasing";

not merely that we may be accepted, but that we may bring a smile into Christ's face, and some delight in us into His heart. Set that two-fold aim before you, else you will fail to experience the full stimulus of this thought. 1. Now such an aim implies a very wonderful conception of Christ's present relations to us. We may minister to His joy. Just as really as you mothers are glad when you hear from a far-off land that your boy is doing well, so Christ's heart fills with gladness when He sees you and me walking in the paths in which He would have us go. That we may please Him "who pleased not Himself," is surely the grandest motive on which the pursuit of holiness and the imitation of Christ can ever be made to rest. Oh! how much more blessed such a motive is than all the lower reasons for which men are sometimes exhorted to be good! What a difference it is when we say, "Do that thing because it is right," or "Do that thing because you will be happier if you do," or when we say, "Do it because He would like you to do it." Transmute obligation into gratitude, and in front of duty and appeals to self put Christ, and all the difficulty and burden of obedience become easy, and a joy. 2. This one supreme aim can be carried on through all life in every varying form, great or small. A blessed unity is given to our whole being when the little and the big, the easy and the hard things, are all brought under the influence of the one motive and made co-operant to the one end. Drive that one steadfast aim through your lives like a bar of iron, and it will give the lives strength and consistency, not rigidity, because they may still be flexible. Nothing will be too small to be consecrated by that motive; nothing too great to own its power. You can please Him everywhere and always. The only thing that is inconsistent is to sin against Him. If we bear with us this as a conscious motive in every part of our day's work, it will give us a quick discernment as to what is evil which nothing else will so surely give. II. THE CONCENTRATED EFFORT WHICH THIS AIM REQUIRES. The word rendered "labour" is very seldom employed in Scripture. It means literally, to be fond of honour, or to be actuated by a love of honour; and hence it comes, by a very natural transition, to mean, to strive to gain something for the sake of the honour connected with it. We ought, as Christians—1. To cultivate this ambition. Men have all got the love of approbation deep in them. God put it there, not that we might shape our lives so as to get others to pat us on the back, and say, "Well done!" but that, in addition to the other solemn motives for righteousness, we might have this highest ambition to impel us on the road. That will take some cultivation. It is a great deal easier to shape our courses so as to get one another's praise. A prime condition of all Christ-pleasing life is a wholesome disregard of what anybody says but Himself. The old Lacedæmonians used to stir themselves to heroism by the thought: "What will they say of us in Sparta?" The governor of some English colony minds very little what the people think about him. He reports to Downing Street, and it is the opinion of the Home Government that influences him. You report to headquarters. Never mind what anybody else thinks of you. Be deaf to the tittle-tattle of your fellow-soldiers in the ranks. It is your Commander's smile that will be your highest reward. 2. To strive with the utmost energy in the accomplishment of it. Paul's notion of acceptable service was service which a man suppressed much to render, and overcame much to bring. Look at his metaphors—a warfare, a race, a struggle, a building up of some great temple structure, and the like—all suggesting the idea of patient, persistent, continuous toil, and most of them suggesting also the idea of struggle with antagonistic forces and difficulties, either within or without. So we must set our shoulders to the wheel, put our backs into our work. But then do not forget that deeper than all effort, and the very spring and life of it, there must be the opening of our hearts for the entrance of His life and spirit by the presence of which only are we well-pleasing to Christ. According to the old illustration, the refiner sat by the furnace until he could see in the molten metal his own face mirrored, and then he knew it was pure. So what pleases Christ in us is the reflection of Himself. And how can we get that except by receiving into our hearts the Spirit that was in Christ Jesus, that will dwell in us, and will produce in us in our measure the same image that it formed in Him? "Work out your own salvation," because "it is God that worketh in you." III. THE UTTER INSIGNIFICANCE TO WHICH THIS AIM REDUCES ALL EXTERNALS. 1. What differences of condition are covered by that parenthetical phrase—"present or absent!" He talks about it as if it was a very small matter. If the difference between life and death is dwarfed, what else do you suppose will remain? Whether we be rich or poor, solitary or beset by friends, young or old, it matters not. The one aim lifts

itself before us, and they in whose eyes shine the light of that great issue are careless of the road along which they pass. 2. Then remember that this same aim and this same result may be equally pursued and attained whether here or yonder. On earth, in death, through eternity, such a life will be homogeneous, and of a piece; and when all other aims are forgotten and out of sight, then still this will be the purpose, and yonder it will be the accomplished purpose of each, to please the Lord Jesus Christ. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. For we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.—*The judgment seat of Christ*:—The image here is the same as that in Rom. xiv. 10, and the expression is peculiar to these two passages, being taken from the tribunal of the Roman magistrate as the most august representation of justice which the world then exhibited. The “Bema” was a lofty seat raised on an elevated platform, usually at the end of the Basilica, so that the figure of the judge must have been seen towering above the crowd which thronged the long nave of the building. So sacred and solemn did this seat and its platform appear in the eyes not only of the heathen, but of the Christian society of the Roman Empire, that when, two centuries later, the Basilica became the model of the Christian place of worship, the name of Bema (or tribunal) was transferred to the chair of the bishop, and this chair occupied in the apse the place of the judgment seat of the prætor. The more usual figure for the Judgment is a throne (Matt. xxv. 31; Rev. xx. 11; Dan. vii. 9). (*Dean Stanley.*) *The judgment seat of Christ*:—I. THE NECESSITY. 1. It must be so, for God hath decreed it, and reason enforceth it. But why? Not to discover anything to God, but—(1) That grace may be glorified in and by the righteous (1 Peter i. 13). (2) That the wicked may be convinced of their sin and defect. (3) That God’s justice may be cleared (Psa. li. 4; Acts xvii. 31). 2. It shall be so (John v. 28). (1) Reason showeth that it may be, and argueth—(a) From the nature of God. There is a God; that God is just, and it is agreeable to His justice that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do evil. This does not appear so here; therefore there is a day when it shall be made conspicuous. (b) From the providence of God. There are many judgments which are pledges of the general judgment, as the drowning of the old world, the burning of Sodom, the destruction of Jerusalem. (c) From the feelings of conscience. After sin men are troubled, though there be none to call them to an account. Heathens are sensible of such a thing (Rom. i. 32). Felix trembled at the mention of it (Acts xxiv. 25). (2) Faith showeth that it shall be—(a) From that revelation which God hath made in His Word (Matt. xiii. 49, 50; John v. 28, 29; Heb. ix. 27; Rom. xiv. 12; Matt. xii. 36, 37; Rev. xx. 12; Jude 14). (b) Christ’s interest is concerned in it—(i.) That the glory of His person may be seen. His first coming was obscure and without observation. (ii.) That He may possess what He hath purchased (Heb. ii. 13). (iii.) With respect to the wicked. It is part of His office to triumph over them in their final overthrow (Isa. xlv. 23; Rom. xiv. 10, 11; Phil. ii. 10). (iv.) To require an account of things during His absence (Matt. xxv.; 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Thess. i. 8). II. THE UNIVERSALITY. All mankind which ever were, are, and shall be. No age, no sex, no nation, nor dignity, nor power, nor wealth, nor greatness, can excuse us. III. THE JUDGE. 1. How Christ comes to be the world’s judge, and with what agreeableness to reason this honour is put upon Him. To a judge there belong these four things—wisdom, justice, power, and authority. (1) Wisdom is in Christ twofold—Divine and human. As Christ is God, His wisdom and His understanding are infinite (Heb. iv. 13). His human wisdom is such as doth far exceed the knowledge of all men and angels. When Christ was upon earth He could know whatever He would (Luke viii. 45; Matt. ix. 3, 4; John ii. 23–25). Now, if Jesus was endowed with such an admirable wisdom even in the days of His flesh, what shall we think of Christ glorified? (2) As there is a double knowledge in Christ, so there is also a double righteousness, the one that belongs to Him as God, the other as man, and both are exact and immutably perfect. His Divine nature is holiness itself (1 John i. 5). And His human nature was so sanctified that it was impossible that He could sin in the days of His flesh, much more now glorified in heaven, and there will be use of both in the last judgment. (3) His power (Matt. xxiv. 13). (4) His authority. IV. THE MANNER OF JUDGING. We must so appear as to be made manifest. 1. To appear; that we must all appear, every individual person. Four things evince that. (1) The wisdom and justice of the Judge. Such is His wisdom and perspicuity that not one sinner or sin can escape Him (Heb. iv. 13). It concerneth the Judge of the world to do right, which He cannot do unless all sins and persons be manifest to

Him, that He may render to every one according to his deeds. (2) The power, impartiality, and faithfulness of His ministers (Matt. xxiv. 31; Luke xvi. 22; Matt. xiii. 39-41, xiii. 49, 50). There is a mixture unavoidable of good and bad in the Church, but then a perfect separation by the ministry of angels. (3) The nature of the business requireth our appearance. Partly, because in a regular judgment no man can be judged in his absence, partly because we cannot appear by a proctor (Rom. xiv. 12). Now we have an Advocate who appeareth for us (Heb. ix. 24); then the Judge will come to deal with every one in person. (4) The ends of the judgment require our appearance. (a) The conviction of the parties judged. God will go upon clear evidence, and they shall have a fair hearing (Matt. xxii. 12; Jude 15). (b) Satisfaction of the world in the righteousness and justice of God's proceeding. When every person is arraigned and every work is manifest, it cleareth God's justice in rewarding His own and in punishing the ungodly. 2. To be made manifest. Our persons must not only appear, but our hearts and ways be tried (Luke xii. 2). The final doom shall repeal all the judgments of this life, and repair them abundantly; many things that are varnished with a fair gloss and pretence here shall then be found abominable, and many things disguised with an ill appearance to the world shall be found to be of God, approved (1 Cor. iv. 5). We shall be manifested—(1) By the knowledge of the Judge. We may hide our sins from men, but not from God. (2) The good angels may be produced as witnesses; they have an inspection over this lower world, are conversant about us in all our ways, and are conscious to our conversations (Psa. xci. 11; Eccles. v. 6; Numb. xxii. 34; 1 Tim. v. 21; 1 Cor. xi. 10). (3) Devils may accuse men in that day. (4) The Word of God will be our accuser (John v. 45, xii. 48). (5) The ministers of the gospel (Matt. xxiv. 14; cf. Mark xiii. 9, vi. 11; Matt. x. 14, 15). (6) Conscience itself shall witness, and God will discover ourselves to ourselves, that we shall see the judgment is just. "The books were opened" (Rev. xx. 12), and one of these books is conscience, and though it be in the sinner's keeping, yet it cannot be so defaced but our story will be legible enough, and forgotten sins will stare us in the face (Numb. xxxii. 23). (7) It will be made evident by the confession of offenders themselves. As their consciences will convince them, so their own tongues will accuse them, as Judas (Matt. xxvii. 4; see also Luke xix. 12; Rom. ii. 15; Psa. lxiv. 8). (8) Wicked men shall accuse one another. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ*:—The language of the text conveys the idea of a manifestation rather than that of a mere presentment. I. THE TRIBUNAL OF THE LAST DAY WILL BE THE GREAT FINAL REVEALER OF HUMAN CHARACTER. There all deceptions will be at an end, and the inner life will make itself visible to the eyes of the assembled world. Now much of the popular notion of the day of judgment is drawn from the modes of procedure in our courts of law. We read in the Bible of a tribunal and a judge. Accordingly we find it believed that the destiny of the man, as in a human court of justice, remains uncertain and undecided until the sentence upon him is actually pronounced. But this theory will not bear a moment's thoughtful consideration. The moment of our death is virtually the moment of the proclamation of our sentence. When the day of grace has closed and the soul and the body are divorced for a time, the spirit passes at once into a place of happiness or a place of woe. The happiness is not complete. The woe is not at the worst. Both are conditions of anticipation. But in both cases the condition is fixed and known. Then comes the day of resurrection. The body suddenly rises, but it rises "that body that shall be." If the life which is to be manifested is a life with Christ and in Christ, the material frame will partake of the beauty and splendour of the appearance of the Judge who sits upon the throne. If, on the other hand, the man has not lived for Christ, the inward aversion from God will find expression in his outward appearance. It will be seen at once, beyond possibility of mistake, what the past has been. You drop a seed into the ground, and when you have done so it is an absolutely certain and settled thing what the future of the plant or the tree shall be. The seed-corn never produces a lily. The bulb of the lily never produces an oak. It is just so with ourselves. The great day of judgment determines nothing. It only makes visible and palpable what we really are. II. IN THIS WORLD A PROCESS OF SELF-MANIFESTATION IS CONTINUALLY GOING ON. The general opinion about a man as to the real tendency of his life is pretty sure to be the correct one. Let him go in and out amongst you, and the popular estimate of him may, generally speaking, be depended upon. You make no doubt, *e.g.*, of the "worldliness" of a certain person who is numbered amongst your acquaintance. But why? The man is respectable enough, a church-goer too, perhaps a communicant. You cannot put

your finger upon anything and say it is absolutely faulty. No! But you have been acquainted with him for some time, and all this time he has been unconsciously manifesting himself. Little things have let you into the secret. Tones, glances, remarks, or the absence of remarks, have told you that there is a lack of spiritual life in the man. Now this process of self-manifestation, continually and inevitably going on now in all of us, comes to a culmination in the great day of judgment. What is in us comes out. If we have lived to self, it is known. If we have lived to Christ, it is known. III. THIS VIEW THROWS LIGHT ON THOSE PASSAGES WHICH SPEAK OF MEN AS BEING JUDGED OUT OF A BOOK ACCORDING TO THE THINGS WRITTEN THEREIN. What is the record? I believe it to be the impression made upon the human memory by the various acts and thoughts and feelings of our lives upon earth. We are told with respect to some persons who had been recovered from drowning that, just before the state of unconsciousness came on, every event in their history, everything which they had thought, or said, or done, seemed to rise up again, and to be present to their minds in a moment of time. Wake up the memory as Eternity will wake it! And then the spectres of the past, of past neglect, of past indifference, past practical contempt of God, past rejection of the offers of Christ, come trooping in, and close round his soul, and refuse to depart. Oh, if he could only bathe his perturbed spirit in some Lethe, in some stream of forgetfulness, he might know comfort again! But they will not go. They cannot go. "The books have been opened"; the man has been "manifested." He has seen himself. (*G. Calthrop, M.A.*)

Christ in judgment:—I. THE CERTAINTY OF IT. The Scriptures never say that it is something which may take place. Whatever else may fail or prosper, this will not touch the decree that has fixed one day beyond them all—the judgment. There is scarcely one human interest, institution, undertaking, of which we can predict the course for twenty-four hours; but far above all their chances, independent of them all, subject to no chance, no postponement, is the judgment. The whole framework of order in outward nature may be broken to pieces; the catastrophe will only make sure the fulfilment of the whole prophecy, and the inevitable end will be the judgment. II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF IT. We must all appear. Here the individual sometimes escapes notice either by retiring from society, or by being lost in its crowd. There the one kind of concealment will be just as hopeless as the other. There will be room enough for all, and yet the personal soul of each, with its individual character, will stand out as sharply distinguished as if no other soul had ever been related to it, or shared its experience. There will be no excuse taken, and there will be no absence to be excused. Every name will be called—those that have been written in the Book of Life, and the names of those that have heard the gospel year after year, and yet would not turn to take the cross and follow Christ. Obscurity, insignificance, weakness, youth, poverty, ignorance—those natural extenuations that we so often plead for not taking up responsibilities here, will not keep any out there. Station and dignities and wealth will avail nothing to obtain an exemption or a substitution. III. WHAT IS HERE KEPT HIDDEN MUST COME TO LIGHT. We pray every Sunday to Him "to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid." In that day this Searcher of our hearts will deal with us. Deception and concealment will have had their crafty way long enough. Masks will fall off. The cunning sagacity that has covered up the lurking passion, or the cool calculation, will lose its self-possession. Whatever wicked thing we have been at most pains to conceal will be written out as with a pen of fire on our foreheads. IV. THE JUDGE IS THE SON OF GOD AND THE SON OF MAN. Repeatedly Christ says that His work, while on earth, in His first coming, is not judgment. Here "I judge no man." Here He ministers life; will we receive it? There, on His throne, all judgment is committed unto Him, "because He is the Son of Man." He knows all man's infirmity, to have compassion; all man's sympathy with evil, to punish. It is not then the time of salvation. The time of salvation is now. (*Bp. Huntington.*) *On the general judgment*:—I. THE CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT. Other events may be more or less doubtful. How often are the calamities which we dread, as well as the blessings which we hope for, and regard as almost within our grasp, alike arrested in their course towards us! Every thing, every event in human life is constantly subject to variation, and is deeply stamped with the characters of uncertainty and change. The colour and features and substance of our lot may be modified, or be totally changed by a thousand precarious contingencies which we cannot provide against. How near were the Jews at one time to destruction! Their doom, both as to its time and its manner, was determined. The orders to kill were already despatched to all the provinces in which they dwelt. Their enemies were gathering

themselves together to cut off the whole nation in one day. Haman has his gallows erected for Mordecai. Delivrance seems far off, and ruin unavoidable. The order to destroy the Jews is reversed. How many instances of a similar nature might easily be produced. None of us, in truth, can know the evil or the good that lies before him in life. It is altogether impossible for us to pretend to predict with certainty the issue of affairs, however penetrating our sagacity. But the day of judgment cannot be called a probable occurrence; it is fixed with a certainty over which human events can exercise no control whatever. The word of the Lord cannot be broken; the purposes of His heart never can be changed. II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF ITS EXTENT, COMPREHENDING THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE. III. WE COME NOW TO CONSIDER THE CHARACTER OF OUR JUDGE. "The Father," we are told, "judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." God thus has not only made known to us, in His Word, that Christ shall judge the world, but has also given us an unquestionable proof that He shall do so by His resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of Christ proves this, not only because it establishes the truth of the doctrine which He taught, and the declarations which He uttered, but also because His resurrection itself was the first step of His actual and visible advancement to that mediatorial government of which the solemnities of the general judgment shall form the triumphal close. It is, indeed, true that God is called the Judge of all the earth; and it is said that God shall judge the world in righteousness. But this is in perfect consistency with the usual language of Scripture, in which God is often said to do that Himself which He executes by another. There appears to be a peculiar fitness in Christ's discharging the office of Judge of the human race. It was by Christ Jesus that the world was originally made; it was by Him that it was saved; it is by Him that its affairs are at present administered. Is there not a fitness that the same person who had conducted the scheme of mediation should also bring it to a close by openly acquitting His faithful followers? Is there not a fitness in the Judge being of the same nature with those whose conduct He shall try, and whose destiny He shall fix? Is not the triumph over Satan thus rendered more complete, or at least more conspicuous? (*A. Bullock, M.A.*)

The certainty of a future judgment:—I. THERE SHALL BE SUCH AN APPEARANCE AFTER THIS LIFE AS IS HERE SPOKEN OF. 1. It is very agreeable to the nature of God. What can be more agreeable to the nature of the most pure and powerful agent than to draw unto itself whatsoever is like itself, as likewise to remove from itself whatsoever is unlike itself? 2. It is very agreeable to the nature of the soul of man, because otherwise the chief agent, both in good and evil, should have little or no reward for the one, and little or no punishment for the other. 3. It is necessary for the manifestation of the Divine justice: for though whatsoever God doth is just, and that because God does it, yet does it not always appear to be so. And hence it is that this general doom is called in Scripture "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." 4. The strange disproportion betwixt actions and events, merits and rewards, men's parts and their fortune here in this life, doth seem to require that there should be a day of an after-reckoning to rectify this (*Eccles. ix. 2; viii. 14, vii. 15*). This argument, from the seeming unequal distribution of things here below, was urged by the elder Pliny and some others to prove the non-existence of a God. And truly if my conclusions concerning the certainty of a judgment to come after this life were not true, this argument of theirs would shrewdly shake the foundation of all our creed, viz., the being of a God. But supposing such a judgment, we do at once vindicate the power, wisdom, justice, and consequently the very being of God from all contradiction. 5. There is an inborn and inbred notion and expectation which all men have by nature, that there will be a judgment. Whatsoever all men agree in is the voice of nature itself, and consequently must be true: for the dictates of nature are stronger than the probats of reason. II. WHAT MANNER OF THING THIS JUDGMENT OR LAST DOOM WILL BE. 1. The Judge—Christ. (1) He must be our judge as He is God—(a) Because none but God has jurisdiction over all the parties that are to be tried at that judgment. (b) Because none but omniscience can discern the main and principal things that shall be there called in question. (c) Because none but God can give life and execution to the sentence pronounced. (2) But though God only can be our judge, yet nevertheless He must be man likewise; and that—(a) In regard of the judgment itself, to manifest the impartiality of it. (b) In regard to the parties triable at that day. For among the just there is none so good but he might fairly be afraid to appear at that judgment if the Judge were not our Saviour. And as for the unjust, their condemnation pronounced by that Judge, who laid down His life to save sinners, and consequently

cannot possibly be imagined to condemn any but such as would not be saved by Him. (c) In regard of humanity itself—for the dignifying of human nature: that as the nature of man was debased to the lowest degree of meanness in the person of our Saviour, so the same nature, in the same person, might be exalted to so high a degree of power, majesty, and honour, that not only men that had despised Him, and devils that had tempted Him, but even the blessed angels themselves, whose comfort He once stood in need of, should fall down and tremble at His presence.

2. The parties to be judged; and those are all persons of all sorts. 3. The matters that shall be questioned; not our actions only, but our words, thoughts, inclinations, and dispositions. 4. The manner of proceeding. There will be no occasion for examination of witnesses, or reading depositions; for every man shall be indicted and cast or acquitted, by the testimony of his own conscience. 5. The sentence (Matt. xxv. 34–41). Conclusion: Let it be part of our daily business seriously to meditate upon—1. The vanity and shortness of our lives. 2. The certainty and uncertainty of our deaths. 3. The great exactness and severity of the judgment to come after death. 4. The eternity of every man's condition in the other world, whether it be good or evil. (R. South, D.D.) *Human judgment the earnest of Divine*:—I. WHAT IS IT WHICH THROWS SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE OF AWE AROUND HUMAN JUDGMENT? It is not the outward pageantry nor any accident in the administration of justice, but that justice is an attribute of God; that law is the representative of His majestic justice; that all justice here is an earnest of His Divine justice hereafter. The outward course of justice strikes a chord in an inward conscience. Conscience, of which even the Jews spoke under the title, "the Accuser," tells us that we too are amenable to justice—if not to human, to Divine. II. THIS THOUGHT IT AWAKENS ALIKE, WHETHER HUMAN JUSTICE COMES QUICKLY OR SLOWLY UPON THE OFFENDER. The rapidity with which human justice comes down, seems like the lightning discharge of God's displeasure. Yet since this is rare, the slowness of its execution calls forth a yet more awful thought, its dread certainty. "Seldom," said even heathen observation, "has punishment, with limping tread, parted with the fore-hastening criminal." A class of heathenised writers, who but seldom mention God, are even fond of replacing Him with the old heathen goddess, Nemesis. So deeply inwrought in us is the thought of God's persevering justice, which, though it seem to tarry, will surely come. Crime punished here impresses on us God's just judgment on sin; crime which escapes here is an earnest of punishment hereafter. III. GOD'S JUSTICE, BY THOSE UNIVERSAL LAWS WHICH EXPRESS THE DIVINELY-GIFTED REASON OF MANKIND, SPEAKS FURTHER TO THE CONSCIENCE BY ITS MINUTENESS. Men often encourage themselves in sin by the thought, "It is only this; it is only that!" Human law does not leave petty offences unpunished. It imitates herein God, who knows that the truest mercy to the sinner is to arrest him by light punishment (if he will be arrested) in the beginning of his sin. The law of Moses visited very heavily, sins both against the seventh and ninth commandments, which human law is now compelled to leave for the most part to the judgment seat of Christ. Yet mankind has endorsed the thought, that to rob of a good name is a worse sin than to rob of worldly goods; but human law leaves it unchecked, unrebuked. But it will not remain always unpunished, because unpunished now. IV. CONSCIENCE, WHICH "DOETH MAKE COWARDS OF US ALL," IS AN INVOLUNTARY, UNTAUGHT INSPIRED PROPHET OF JUDGMENT TO COME. By "conscience," I mean that eternal law written in our hearts by the finger of God, which unlettered islanders of the Pacific know as "the magistrate within"; that almost unextinguishable voice, which burned in David like a firebrand, drove Cain, self-condemned, a wanderer on the earth, made itself heard amid the murderer's fitfulness of Saul, worked Ahab's passing humility, and Judas' unloving but self-accusing remorse. Why does a word bleach a man's cheek, stop his utterance, or, if he have schooled himself to drive back all outward emotion, strike such a pang into his soul? It has awakened the voice of the silenced judge within. Whence, then, this terror? Whence but that conscience is already, in this world, a judgment seat of God? "Conscience may be o'erclouded, because it is not God; extinguished it cannot be, because it is from God." Judgment to come needs to be nothing new in kind; it needs to be but the intensified concentration of all those acts of judgment which God has passed upon us through ourselves, which He has made us pass upon ourselves. The final judgment is but the summary of all those particular judgments. V. HERE PAUL SPEAKS OF THE DAY OF JUDGMENT AS A "MANIFESTATION." Of what? Plainly of what existed before, but was hidden. Here, some glimpse of us only shines through; there, what all and each of us have been is to be brought to open light. Light from

Him who is Light shall lighten up all the secret corners of the soul of man, all the hidden springs and motives of his outward acts. VI. JUDGMENT TO COME, BESIDES BEING A DIVINE TRUTH, DECLARED FROM JOB TO REVELATION, IS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY. Every man is imperfect; every one is tending to a completion, of good or of evil, which here he does not reach. But more, we have each our individual responsibilities. Creation implies an end and object of that creation. We came forth from God; we return to God. God has left us to be masters over ourselves, to work out—with His grace, if we would have it, or, if not, against it—our own destiny, or alas! our own doom. We return, to give account of ourselves, to have our lives summed up, to be judged. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*)

The final assize :—I. THE STATEMENT RESPECTING THE FUTURE JUDGMENT WITH WHICH THE PASSAGE BEFORE US COMMENCES. "We must all appear before the judgment seat." II. TO THE ACCOUNT WHICH THE PASSAGE BEFORE US GIVES OF THE PERSON WHO IS TO SUSTAIN THE OFFICE OF JUDGE. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

1. The sustaining of the office of future Judge will not on the part of Christ be an assumption, but a right—a right resting on Divine appointment. 2. But not merely on the ground of right—on the score of qualification Christ will sustain the office of future Judge. III. TO THE MANNER IN WHICH THE PASSAGE BEFORE US DESCRIBES HIS MODE OF PROCEDURE. 1. That He will elicit every one's real character. 2. That, by His classification of them, He will impartially discriminate between the characters of all. In the world's society, the good and the bad are so blended together, and in many instances bear so close a resemblance to each other, that the most sagacious human observer is often at a loss to say positively who they are who may be thus designated. But further, and in fine: whilst from the account given of His mode of procedure in the passage before us, it is plain that the future Judge will not only elicit every one's real character, but impartially discriminate between the characters of all, it is also undeniably plain that—3. He will equitably apportion to all their respective allotment. He will apportion the allotment of those who have never enjoyed the light of revelation. (*A. Jack.*)

The great assize :—1. There is no need to prove from Scripture that there will be a general judgment, for it abounds with proof-passages. 2. We infer that it must needs be, from the very fact that God is just as the Ruler over men. In all human governments there must be an assize held. Judge for yourselves: is this present state the conclusion of all things? If so, what evidence would you adduce of the Divine justice, in the teeth of the fact that the best of men are often the most afflicted, while the worst of men prosper? If there be no hereafter, then Dives has the best of it. 3. There is in the conscience of most men, if not of all, an assent to this fact. As an old Puritan says, "God holds a petty session in every man's conscience, which is the earnest of the assize which He will hold by and by; for almost all men judge themselves, and their conscience knows this to be wrong and that to be right."

I. WHO ARE THEY THAT WILL HAVE TO APPEAR BEFORE THE THRONE OF JUDGMENT? 1. "All." The godly will not be exempted, for the apostle here is speaking to Christians. They covet the judgment, and will be able to stand there to receive a public acquittal from the mouth of the great Judge. Who, among us, wishes to be smuggled into heaven? Who is he that shall lay anything to our charge since Christ hath died and hath risen again? Their trial will show that there has been no partiality in their case. What a day it will be for them! For some of them were lying under wrongful accusations. All will be cleared up then. There will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies. 2. What a prodigious gathering! What will be the thoughts of Father Adam as he looks upon his offspring? But the most important thought to me is that I shall be there; to you, young men, that you will be there; to you, ye aged, that you shall be there. Are you rich? Your dainty dress shall be put off. Are you poor? Your rags shall not exempt you from attendance at that court. 2. Note the word "appear." No disguise will be possible. Ye cannot come there dressed in masquerade of profession; off will come your garments. Oh, what a day that will be when every man shall see himself and his fellow, and the eyes of angels, of devils, and of God upon the throne, shall see us through and through! II. WHO WILL BE THE JUDGE? That Christ should be is most fitting. British law ordains that a man shall be tried by his peers, which is just. So at the Judgment. Men shall be judged by a man. He can hold the scales of justice evenly, for He has stood in man's place. I expect no favouritism. Christ is our Friend and will be for ever; but, as a Judge, He will be impartial to all. You will have a fair trial. The Judge will not take sides against you. Men have sometimes been shielded from the punishment they deserved here

because they were of a certain profession or occupied a certain position. It shall not be so there. There shall be no concealment of anything in thy favour, and no keeping back of anything against thee. III. WHAT WILL BE THE RULE OF JUDGMENT? Not our profession, our boastings, but our actions. This includes every omission as well as every commission (Matt. xxv.). All our words, too, will be brought up, and all our thoughts, for these lie at the bottom of our actions and give the true colour to them good or bad. OUR motives, our heart sins, shall be published unreservedly. "Well," saith one, "who then can be saved?" Ah! indeed, who? Those who have believed in Jesus (Rom. viii. 1). IV. THE OBJECT OF THIS JUDGMENT. "That every man may receive the things done in his body." 1. The Lord will grant unto His people an abundant reward for all that they have done. Not that they deserve any reward, but that God first gave them grace to do good works, then took their good works as evidence of a renewed heart, and then gave them a reward for what they had done. 2. But to the ungodly how terrible! They are to receive the things that they have done; that is to say, the punishment due—not every man alike, but the greater sinner the greater doom—Sodom and Gomorrah their place, Tyre and Sidon their places, and then to Capernaum and Bethsaida their place of more intolerable torment, because they had the gospel and rejected it. And the punishment will not only be meted out in proportion to the transgression, but it will be a development of the evil actions done in the evil consequences to be endured, as every man shall eat the fruit of his own ways. Oh, how dreadful it will be for the malicious man to find his malice come home to him, as birds come home to roost; for the lustful man to feel lust burning in every vein, which he can never gratify, &c., &c. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Judged by our acts*:—All things are engaged in writing their history. The planet, the pebble goes attended by its shadow. The rolling rock leaves its scratches on the mountain. The river its channel in the soil, the animal its bones in the stratum, the fern and leaf their modest epitaph in the coal. The falling drop makes its sculpture in the sand or stone. Not a foot steps into the snow, or along the ground, but prints, in characters more or less lasting, a map of its march. Every act of man leaves its mark, and hereafter our life will be judged by these marks. (*S. S. Chronicle.*)

Ver. 11. **Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.**—*Persuasive to the being religious*:—I. THE ARGUMENT WHICH THE APOSTLE MAKES CHOICE OF TO PERSUADE MEN, which is, "The terror of the Lord." In the gospel we find a mixture of the highest clemency and the greatest severity. The intermixing of these in the doctrine of the gospel was necessary in order to the benefit of mankind. And we shall easily see what great reason there is that this judgment shall be called "the terror of the Lord," if we consider—1. The terror of the preparation for it. 2. The terror of the appearance in it. 3. The terror of the proceedings upon it. 4. The terror of the sentence which shall then be passed. II. THE ASSURANCE HE EXPRESSETH OF THE TRUTH OF IT; "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." We have two ways of proving articles of faith, such as this concerning Christ's coming to judgment is—1. By showing that there is nothing unreasonable in the belief of them. 2. That there is sufficient evidence of the truth and certainty of them. 3. The efficacy of this argument for the persuading men to a reformation of heart and life. There is great variety of arguments in the Christian religion to persuade men to holiness, but none more moving to the generality of mankind than this. Especially considering these two things—1. That if this argument doth not persuade men, there is no reason to expect any other should. 2. That the condition of such persons is desperate, who cannot by any arguments be persuaded to leave off their sins. (*Bp. Stillingfleet.*) *The terror of the Lord persuasive*:—I. THE DESIGN AND PRACTICAL TENDENCY OF THE THREATENINGS OF GOD IS TO PERSUADE MEN TO HOLY OBEDIENCE. 1. This will appear if we consider them as a measure of God's moral government. They are not empty threats, but are designed to secure the salutary effects of that government upon its subjects. This is apparent on the very face of them. They are annexed to the laws of that government, and their execution is connected only with the violation of its laws. It is essential to the very nature of a moral government that its authority be supported by threatened punishment. Without it, there is nothing to show that its claims are to be enforced; nothing to show that it may not be violated with impunity. 2. This design has been expressly declared. (1) On Sinai. Here even Moses exceedingly feared and quaked. And why? "That His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." Similar impression was designed at the reading of the law at Ebal and Gerizim. (2) In the gospel commission.

“He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (3) In the facts of Christian history. Look at the trembling jailor falling down before Paul and Silas ; at the trembling and astonished Saul of Tarsus ; at the three thousand pricked in the heart. And now say, whether these men despised the terror of the Lord, or felt it ? The same gospel has produced the same effects in every age. II. THE DIRECT TENDENCY OF THE DIVINE THREATENINGS IS TO PERSUADE MEN TO OBEY THE GOSPEL. Not that the Divine threatenings have such a tendency viewed as denunciations of mere suffering. To tell a man that he is exposed to the fires of hell may disquiet him ; but so far from tending to excite holy affection in the cold heart of man, it tends only to harden in despair, or awaken more violent enmity against God. But if mere terror has no tendency to soften the heart into love, how is it that the threatenings of God have a tendency to subdue the heart into cheerful submission to His will ? I answer—1. By the solemn alternative which they reveal to man. Now, although the mere disclosure of this alternative, of obedience or death eternal, will never of itself convert the sinner, yet no sinner will ever be converted without it. If to array the terrors of the Almighty against the sinner will not weaken the ardour of earthly attachments, and check the ardour of earthly pursuits, nothing can. These, at any rate, are enough to do it. 2. By the manner in which they enforce the necessity of compliance with the terms of salvation. It is only when the sinner sees that the threatenings of God cannot be defied with safety, and that there is no other way of escape than that to which his own heart is desperately opposed, that he begins to stand in awe of his almighty Sovereign. And it is in the threatenings of the infinite God that he sees his helplessness necessity of submitting to His terms. 3. By the evil of sin, which they show to the sinner. The evil of sin must be learned from God’s estimate of it. Man, the sinner himself, is not a safe judge on this question. Now, what should we think of God’s estimate of sin, had He annexed no penalty to transgression ? 4. By this revelation of the character of God in its glory and excellence. This they do as they reveal the full measure of His abhorrence of sin. This is God’s holiness, and His holiness is pre-eminently His glory. As God loves the happiness of His creatures, He loves their holiness as the only means of their perfect happiness. As He loves their holiness He abhors sin. God’s abhorrence of sin, then, is the exact measure of His benevolence. If we would see God in His abhorrence of sin, we must see Him through the medium of His threatenings. 5. By the manner in which they unfold the claims of God for the sinner’s obedience in all their pressure of obligation. By these it is that the sinner is made to see, if he sees at all, who and what that God is with whom he has to do. 6. By the fact that they are not absolute, but conditional. Absolute threatenings would have no salutary influence whatever. But “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Conclusion: 1. What has been the influence of the Divine threatenings upon us ? Saints, as well as sinners, ought to derive practical benefit from them. 2. We see why God threatens sin with eternal punishment. 3. The object of preaching terror is not to agitate with alarm, but to persuade. 4. We see the self-deception, and the hardihood in sin of those who scoff at the Divine threatenings. (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *Persuasion and manifestation of the truth : —I. PERSUASION BASED UPON TERROR.* But is there not a contradiction between terror and persuasion ? When we speak of persuasion, we ordinarily indicate those milder methods of overcoming opposition or producing consent, which often succeed when anything severe would only excite additional resistance. And terror, in itself, is scarcely an instrument of persuasion. One man may be terrified into a thing, and another may be persuaded into that thing ; but though we might try terror when we had failed in persuasion, or persuasion when we had failed in terror, we should hardly in any instance say that we used terror in order to persuade, any more than that we used persuasion in order to terrify. But it might easily come to pass that a person who had been terrified would on that account be better disposed to listen to persuasion. And this is what Paul means. He had no delight in terrifying men ; but he felt that if he could once bring men to the feeling a dread of the punishment of sin, they would be better disposed to hearken to the gentle voice of the gospel. Thus we seek to “persuade men.” We feel that in order to make men shun destruction we must make them aware of its fearfulfulness. With no view of keeping back from them the Saviour, but simply with the view of persuading them to receive Him, do we seek to show the terror of the Lord. And if I could now awaken in one of you an apprehension of God’s wrath, with what eagerness, with what hope,

should I then set before him the Cross! Then, if ever, should I find him disposed to cry from the heart, "Lord, save me, or I perish." And in this his trembling willingness to "lay hold on the hope set before him in the gospel," would there not be the most touching demonstration that the faith which saves may be closely allied with the fear which disturbs. II. THE MANIFESTATION OF TRUTH. Paul expresses a thorough confidence as to the being "made manifest unto God," but he speaks with a measure of doubt as to the being made manifest in the consciences of the Corinthians. Now remember what the truths were to which the apostle thus thought that an echo would be found in the consciences of his hearers. They were evidently the truths of a judgment to come and of a propitiation for sin. 1. We are now before you simply to announce a judgment to come. And when I announce to you "the terror of the Lord," there is a voice heard in the solitude of your own souls announcing that I speak only truth. And it is a great source of encouragement to the preacher to be able thus to feel that he has conscience on his side. But if this be encouraging to the minister, it helps to make the hearer inexcusable if he do not listen to the communications with which he is plied. 2. The apostle, however, implies that the manifestation continued when he went on to set forth the gospel of redemption. And it is a great thing, that stupendous and multiplied as are the external evidences of the gospel, they are not indispensable to the proving its Divine origin to the man who examines it in humility and sincerity. Others may admire the impenetrable shield which the ingenuity of learned men has thrown over Christianity; we, for our part, glory more in the fact, that Scripture so commends itself to the conscience, and experience, that the gospel can go the round of the world and carry with it its own mighty credentials. There is nothing wanted but that you view yourselves as sinners, and you will feel that Christ is the Saviour whom you need. You will have the witness in yourselves. On this account may we justly speak of the attestation in the conscience, as the preacher, after wielding "the terror of the Lord," sets himself to persuade with the announcements of the gospel. Is there one amongst you who trembles at the thought of going before God as a sinner with the burden of all his iniquities resting upon him? Let that man listen. We seek now to persuade him (ver. 21). Does not this vast scheme of mercy commend itself to you? I think it must; I think that its very suitability must be an evidence to you of its truth. I appeal to no miracles; but I feel that in proposing a mode of deliverance through the righteousness of Christ to those who are weighed down by a sense of sin and a terror of judgment, I am proposing that which commends itself to them as exactly meeting their case. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

The terror of the Lord:—We begin in order with the first, viz., the ministerial performance, wherein again two branches more. First, the work itself, and that is to persuade men. Secondly, the ground and principle of this working, or the motive that puts them upon it: "Knowing the terror of the Lord." Before we come to speak of these parts by themselves, it is requisite that we should first of all look upon them in their reference to one another. First, here is an account of their knowledge, what they did with that; we persuade men, we know the terror of the Lord. And this knowledge we do not keep to ourselves, but we communicate it to others, that they may know it as well as ourselves. Secondly, as here is an account of their knowledge what they did with that; so here is likewise an account of their practice, what put them upon that. What needs all this instruction, and exhortation, and admonition? Cannot ye as well let men be quiet? No, says he, we cannot do so. There is very good reason for it; and that is, "Knowing the terror of the Lord." We cannot know that, and not practise this. First, "knowing it" in a way of simple discovery, in opposition to ignorance, it is a great advantage to any man that undertakes to persuade any other to it, for himself to have an understanding of that which he speaks about. We are sensible of the thing itself, the day of judgment, and of the great danger which lies upon those which are neglectful of it. And therefore we cannot but speak of such things as these are. Secondly, knowing in a way of certainty, and in opposition to conjecture; "knowing," that is, knowing perfectly or exactly. There are many things which we have sometimes some kind of hint of, but we are not altogether sure of them, but only by guess. For men to vent their mere fancies, and conceits, and speculations for truths, may carry a great deal of weakness and imprudence in it, to say no worse of it; yea, but St. Paul here went upon a better ground and argument. Third, knowing, in a way of consideration, in opposition to forgetfulness or non-attentancy. There are many things which we know habitually, which yet we do not know actually. And thus have we seen the full emphasis of this word knowing, as it lies here before us in the

text; as a word of intelligence, as a word of assurance, as a word of remembrance. For a further account yet still of the practice of the Apostle is here expressed in these words, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." 1. The principle and foundation, whereupon this practice of the apostles in their persuading of men was laid; and that was knowledge. We then persuade most effectually when we persuade knowingly. Thus in the beginning of this chapter, "we know," &c., that we have a building of God, a house, &c. 2. Here was the matter which this his persuasion was conversant about, and that was of judgment to come, a fundamental point of Christian religion. 3. Here was the order and method of this practice; beginning first with the terror of the Lord, and laying a ground-work there; that is the right method of the ministry, to begin with the preaching of the law, and showing them their lost condition. And this again we may conceive them to have done upon a three-fold consideration. 1. Faithfulness to God, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," that we may discharge the duty to Him who has entrusted us with this message. 2. Affection to God's people. Knowing this terror we persuade men, that so thereby we may thus better secure them. 3. Respect to ourselves; that is another thing in it: and to ourselves, not in a corrupt sense, but in a good and warrantable sense: to ourselves, *i. e.*, to our own souls, as we desire to tender them. This account of the apostle's practice may be further amplified from some other considerations which do likewise lie in the text. As first, from the principle and foundation whereupon it was laid, and that was knowledge. And indeed that is the best persuasion of all which does arise and proceed from hence. This is that which becomes a servant of Christ, as the best principle of all to work upon, namely, his own knowledge and experience of those things which he speaks of. 2. As here is an account of his practice from the principle of it, so likewise from the matter and the thing itself; which is by beginning with terror, and laying judgment before them. 3. We may likewise here take notice of the order and method which is observed by him in all this; which is first of all informing himself, and then instructing of others. First, knowing, and after that persuading. There are some which invert this order. Begin first with persuading, and then come to knowing afterwards. Which will be teachers before they are learners. First, the work itself, and that is, we persuade men. Secondly, the principle of this working, or the motive that put them upon it, "Knowing the terror of the Lord." We begin with the last. 1. I say here is the object propounded, "the terror of the Lord." This was that which the apostle knew, and desired also to make known unto them for their edification. It is called the terror of the Lord, emphatically and exclusively, as hereby shutting out any other terror which does not so well consist with this, for we must know that there are sometimes false terrors as well as true. The devil, as he has his false comforts and raptures, so he has likewise his false fears. What kind of terrors are those? 1. The terror of the Word, in the threatenings and comminations of it, wherein is revealed from heaven the wrath of God against all unrighteousness, as the apostle speaks in Rom. i. 18. 2. The terror of Divine impression upon the heart and conscience. This is sometimes called in Scripture the terror of the Almighty, which Job, and David, Haman, and such as these did sometimes partake of, when God Himself appears as an enemy. 3. The terror of judgment, and more especially of the day of judgment. The second is the apprehension of this object, in reference to the mind and understanding; and that is knowing. We see here upon what terms we proceed in religion; not upon mere fancies only, but upon a certainty and good assurance. But how did Paul know this terror of the Lord? He knew it divers ways—First, by immediate revelation and inspiration from God Himself: "I have received from the Lord that which I have delivered unto you." Secondly, he knew it also by discourse and collection of one thing from another. There is very good reason for it. Thirdly, he knew it also by experience, and by some sense of it upon himself in his own heart. There is no man that knows what sin is but he consequently knows what judgment is. The second is the work itself. We persuade men, where again four things more. First, for the act, or what it is which is done, it is persuading. First, it is a word of endeavour; we persuade, that is, we labour to do so. Secondly, it is a word of mollification. We persuade men; we do not compel them. The work of the ministry it is not a physical work, but a moral, and so is to be looked upon by us. Thirdly, this expression, we persuade, it is moreover a word of efficacy. Last of all, it is a word of condescension. We persuade men; that is, we satisfy them; do what we can to content them, and to remove all occasion of cavil or exception against us. The second is the object, or the persons to whom

this persuading does reach—"men." Men persuade men. This word "men" in the text is at once both a word of latitude and likewise a word of restriction. So that we persuade men—that is, we persuade none but men such as these, as having interest in it. But further, so it is a word of latitude and enlargement, extending itself to all men whosoever they be, and that also in any rank or condition which we may possibly conceive them in. First of all, by taking men in opposition to God Himself, who needs not to be persuaded. And, secondly, in opposition to angels. The third thing here pertinently considerable, is what we persuade unto. 1. If they be as yet unconverted, we persuade them to believe. 2. As for those which are believers, we persuade men. One persuasion reaches to such as these amongst other men, that they would walk answerable to their profession. The fourth is, upon what ground, and that is hinted unto us from the coherence, in the words that went before, "Knowing the terror of the Lord." This is not the only argument; but it is that only which is here expressed. The second is in reference to their acceptance in these words, "But we are made manifest to God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." This is added to prevent an objection. It is true, indeed, Paul, you have told us a fair tale of yourself and of the rest of your brethren; with what great matters you attempt to do: but who thinks the better of you for all this? Who gives you any thanks for your labour? or who gives any great credit to that which you deliver? To this the apostle answers very discreetly—"But we are made manifest to God; and I trust also are made," &c. I begin with the first, viz., his acceptance with God—"We are made manifest unto God." 1. For our calling and gifts; we are manifest to God, so we are manifest to Him, as we are appointed by Him. The ministry, it is not a human invention. But secondly, there is another manifestation—a manifestation of performances, as to the exercise and improvement of those gifts which God has bestowed. The Lord knows our faithfulness and integrity in this business. And the apostle seems to make mention of this for a threefold purpose. First, as his duty in regard of his endeavour; we are manifest to God, and it is that which lies upon us so to be; we could not satisfy ourselves if we did not do so. Secondly, he makes mention of it as his happiness or privilege. Thirdly, here is also his comfort and satisfaction of mind in the reflection. First, I say, in case of concealment and retiredness, which carries an opposition with it to the manifestation of knowledge and discovery; it is a comfort to be made manifest to God, and to be known to Him where we are manifest nowhere else. Again, secondly, it is comfortable likewise, as in men's ignorance, so likewise in their neglect, by taking the word manifestation by way of allowance. We are manifest to God, says the apostle—that is, we are approved of Him. This was that which comforted him, even when it was not so with him in regard of men. And so you have the first part of this acceptance, as it refers to God—"But we are made manifest to God." The second is as it refers to the Corinthians: "And I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." This likewise, as well as the other, is added to prevent an objection; for here some might have been ready to have replied, You talk how you are manifested to God. Well, but what are you to the eyes of men? and what satisfaction do you give to them? To this now he answers, "And I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." First, for the thing itself, "We are made manifest in your consciences." First, in a way of efficacy, from that success which our ministry hath found upon them. This is one way of manifestation. The faith and graces of the Corinthians were a sufficient testimony to the apostle's ministry. The second is in a way of conviction or approbation. We are made manifest in your consciences, that is, your consciences do bear witness with us. This is the privilege of godness, that it shall have men's consciences where it has not their affections. Though they love it not, yet they shall inwardly like it, and in their hearts secretly approve it, and set their seals unto it. Herod, though he loved not John Baptist, yet he revered him, and in his heart did admire him. Secondly, if ye take this your consciences a little more strictly restraining it to true believers, and those amongst these Corinthians which were faithful, that St. Paul and the rest were made manifest in their consciences indeed. Howsoever others may think of us, yet those which are faithful will approve us. "We are made manifest in you," &c. The second is the word of transition or introduction, I trust or hope. We may take notice also of this; and it carries a double notion in it. First, there was his desire in it, as he wished it might be; he desired to approve his ministry, and himself in the execution of his ministry, to the hearts and consciences of those which were faithful, that they might be sure to close with him. Secondly, as there was his desire in it, so there

was also his confidence and expectation. I hope or trust; that is, I believe, and make account of it. It is a word of triumphant expression, as you have another of the like nature with it (1 Cor. vii. 6). (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Sinai sends sinners to Calvary*:—This text has been denounced as cruel. Let us consider its use in secular affairs. A company is about to cross the ocean. The word terror has been suppressed, so they make no provision to escape in case of shipwreck. No life-preserver and no life-boat have been taken on board. The same policy has prevented the erection of lighthouses and the perfection of charts. Now, when out at sea and the storm has come, then they have reason to deplore the mistaken kindness which kept from them a knowledge of the terrors of the deep. The exercise of foresight is the part of wisdom. Knowing the terror, the danger before us, we should be persuaded to make every provision. I. CONSIDER THE MEANING OF THE PHRASE "THE TERROR OF THE LORD."—1. There is a majesty about God which is calculated to inspire holy fear. This we realise if we compare God with heathen divinities. (1) Our God is infinite in wisdom, mercy, justice, and power. Many people have one-sided views of God, and hence fall into great error. Some deem Him all mercy, others all justice; as some have judged the ocean by a day of calm, others by a day of storm. Each view is a one-sided view. We could not revere a God who is all justice, or one who is all mercy. (2) There are no changes in His attributes. It is the same God we see in the Old Testament as in the New. The New Testament does not utter a sound that clashes with those from Sinai. 2. The context will help us understand the language of the text (ver. 10). God has made us know the dangers in the future that we might avoid them. There was an element of terror in the preaching of the apostles. Felix trembled. II. "KNOWING, THEREFORE, THE TERROR OF GOD, WE PERSUADE MEN." Knowing the majesty, the holiness of God, and the necessity of the punishment of evil, we persuade men—1. To abhor sin. There can be no honest repentance save it be founded on hatred of sin. 2. To forsake sin. 3. To flee to Christ for pardon. No man ever came to a Saviour until he felt the need of a Saviour. Sinai points you to Calvary. 4. To labour for the salvation of others. It is a great cruelty not to make known the terrible consequences of sin to our fellow-men. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *The motive powers of the ministry*:—I. THE MOTIVE POWER OF THE MINISTER (vers. 12, 14).—Here we have two different feelings arising from two different circumstances. Terror, a conviction of a judgment to come. Love, a sense of gratitude, kindled by a conviction of the great grace of Him who died. The minister is inspired by his accountability to a righteous Judge and gratitude to a gracious Saviour. The minister stands between the Cross and the judgment. The ocean's tides are caused by the combined influence of sun and moon. Here, then, are the sun and moon of the minister's life. It is the combined attraction of these that fills his life with power and devotion. Consider—1. The love of Christ as forming one of the motive powers of the ministry. (1) He who undertakes it must do so without any regard to worldly gain. But let it be borne in mind that this does not release the churches from their duty to see that those who preach the gospel live by the gospel. (2) It must be carried on without any abatement of zeal in the face of apparent want of success. Men, when engaged in any business which they find does not pay, are at liberty to exchange it for some other. But the minister has not this liberty. What motive is sufficiently powerful to secure this persistent clinging to a work which seems in spite of every effort to bear no fruit? The absorbing love of Christ is alone equal to the task. In success men find a great stimulus to labour; but very often the minister is denied this stimulus. Carey, for seven long years of his missionary life, laboured without seeing one convert to reward his labour or sustain his faith. 2. "The terror of the Lord," as forming another motive. The "terror" here is the deep conviction which Paul had, that he was accountable to God. Having these overwhelming thoughts and convictions, he persuaded men. But it was not alone as a stimulus that this conviction of a judgment served. In the verses following he shows that it was of immense comforting use to him. Men judged him falsely, but he was sustained under such treatment by the conviction that there was another Judge before whom he would have to stand. "We are made manifest unto God." II. THE LEVER POWER OF THE MINISTRY. The ministry is a provision for persuading men to a certain course, by "beseeching" and "praying" them as if God did it. Never were men called upon to work upon materials so intrinsically valuable. The greatest geniuses have deemed it not unworthy of them to spend themselves in labour upon wood, stones, metals, and canvas. But these are all material substances; and even the toughest of them are perishable. What are they compared

with that upon which the minister is called to work—mind, heart, intellect, conscience, and will! Here is work worthy of God; for it is as His substitute you are required to do it. 2. What, then, of the weapons whereby such glorious work is accomplished? Seeing that the work is moral, the weapons must needs be of the same nature and quality. The work, then, must be effected through the instrumentality of motives, and these are, according to the text, the terror of the Lord and the love of Christ—the Cross and the judgment. You may find the thinker, the scholar, and the orator in the same person, but in the absence of the two great truths in question, “the love of Christ” and “the terror of the Lord,” there will be no minister, whatever else there may be. Conclusion: One of the wonders of physical science is an instrument called a concave mirror. If this instrument is held opposite the sun it has a marvellous burning power. Archimedes employed some such instrument as this to destroy the Roman fleet whilst it besieged the city of Syracuse. The gospel ministry is a kind of concave mirror for concentrating the light of the two mighty truths which form its themes upon the hearts and consciences of men. A marvellous example of its power in this respect has been furnished to us in the proceedings of the day of Pentecost. (*A. J. Parry.*)

Vers. 12–17.—**For we commend not ourselves again unto you.**—*Paul's self-commendation.*—1. St. Paul has been magnifying his ministry. It had been, he says, a ministry of the Spirit, not of the letter (chap. iii. 6). Its authority had been that of the truth (chap. iv. 2). It had been a suffering and a martyr ministry (chap. iv. 8, 9, 10); representative, too, of Christ in word and deed (chap. iv. 5 and 10); unworldly (chap. v. 2, 8, 9); and persuasive (chap. v. 11). 2. But when a man speaks thus, we are apt to call it boasting, and Paul anticipates such a charge (chap. iii. 1; v. 12). “You say you commend yourself to our consciences. Now if all this is so plain, why commend yourself?” The reply is: “I do not commend myself for my own sake.” It is not a personal boast. It is the only possible reply to those who require a ministry with splendid external credentials, instead of the inward witness of the heart (chap. v. 12). I. **THE APOSTLE'S DEFENCE OF HIS SELF-APPROVAL.** It was founded on two reasons. 1. We “give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.” The false teachers gloried “in appearance,” in outward demonstration, such as eloquence or spiritual gifts. On the contrary, St. Paul says that the true apostolic credentials are those of the heart—his truth, sufferings, simplicity, boldness, and his life as being an image of Christ's. This corresponds with the fact that Christian ministers are prophets, not priests. The priest said: “I am ordained God's messenger: therefore, what I say is to be received.” The prophet said: “What I say is truth; therefore, I am to be received as from God.” Consequently, the priest was always heard; the prophet's words were rarely believed till he was slain: and this because men glory in appearances, not in heart. Now St. Paul's credentials were those of the heart (chap. iv. 2). “First, we declare our message, and from it we deduce our apostleship.” This is the Christian ministry. 2. “Whether we be beside ourselves it is to God,” &c. (1) The apostle's defence might seem like that of one deranged, as once before it appeared to Festus. “Well,” said St. Paul, “we adopt the words ‘beside ourselves.’ Be it so! it is for God's cause. We boast of our qualifications for the sake of God, to whom they all belong.” Or again, “Whether we be sober”—that is, restrain ourselves—our moderation is an example of humility to you. (2) There are, then, cases in which it is wise for a Christian to vindicate himself; there are others in which it is wiser to remain silent. It is sometimes false humility, and moderation, to lie under an undenied slur on our character or our words. Samuel vindicated himself, “Whose ox have I taken?” &c. On the other hand, some charges are delicate, complicated, and shadowy, that public defence leaves the matter worse than before. It is better, then, to let time and character defend you. For there are cases in which dignified silence is the Christian's only defence. So it was in our Saviour's life. II. **THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF LIFE WITH WHICH THE APOSTLE'S SELF-APPROVAL WAS CONNECTED.** 1. Love, the main principle of Christian life. Christian liberty is a loving servitude to God. Just as if a slave were made free, and then felt himself bound in gratitude to toil with tenfold vigour for a master whom he loved instead of fearing; or just as the mother is the slave to her sick child, and would do almost impossibilities, not because it is her duty, but because she loves her child; so the whole moral law is abrogated to us as a law, because obedience to it is ensured in the spirit. 2. The law of redeemed humanity, “If one died for all, then all died.”

There are two kinds of death—one in sin, before redemption ; the other to sin, which is redemption. Here it is of the death to sin. If one died as the representative of all, then in that death all died. This is the great thought throughout this Epistle. Every Christian is dead in Christ's death, and risen in Christ's resurrection. 3. The new aspect of humanity in Christ, "a new creation." A Christian is human nature revolutionised (chap. v. 17). (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God.—*Missionary enthusiasm* :—I. THE GRAND OBJECT OF THE EFFORTS OF THE APOSTLES, AND OF OURS. The cause in which, as a missionary society, we are engaged, is the salvation of the human race. How much does this sentence comprehend! To emancipate the human race—to raise numerous hordes from barbarism to civilisation, &c. But this object will increase in magnitude if we consider—1. The worth of the human soul. 2. The meaning of the word salvation. Deliverance from an infinite evil, and the enjoyment of an infinite good. 3. The immense multitudes who are hourly passing to their eternal destiny without a knowledge of the Saviour. 4. The lustre which their salvation will throw on the Redeemer's glories to all eternity. II. THE MOST PLAUSIBLE GROUNDS ON WHICH MANY PRONOUNCE THE MEMBERS OF THESE SOCIETIES TO BE ENTHUSIASTS. "We admit the object to be good ; but is it feasible—is it possible? We give you credit for your intentions ; but you are beside yourselves." 1. From what region will you gather a sufficient number of missionaries? Missions to the Ottoman Empire alone would require more men than all your various societies can muster, and yet you talk of filling the world with converts! 2. Where will you find resources sufficient for the magnitude of your enterprise? What all the societies put together raise is but as a drop to the ocean. The finances of an empire would not satisfy your demand. 3. How formidable are your difficulties! from the peculiarities of governments, usages, customs, &c. How will you persuade the Jews to embrace the gospel of Christ ; how break the adamantine barriers thrown across China ; how overturn the venerable establishments of India ; how civilise savages? 4. Look at your own land—here you have Bibles, ministers, means ; and what effects are produced? Physicians, heal yourselves, before you apply your remedy to the maladies of the world. III. THE SOLID REASONS WHICH OTHERS, MORE CANDID, HAVE FOR ESTEEMING THE ZEALOUS MEMBERS OF THIS SOCIETY SOBER-MINDED. The question at issue is—Is this cause the cause of God? If so, all difficulties vanish. They take their stand—1. On the decrees of God (Eph. i. 8, 10). Who shall contend against almighty power? 2. On this earth, which was formed in subserviency to the design of God. It is still preserved as the theatre on which the designs of redemption are carried on. Can that plan fail for which this universe was formed, and for which alone it is preserved? 3. On the hill of Calvary. There they see expiation made for the sins of the world. Now the channel is opened for salvation to the world. Redemption is purchased, and its application to the hearts of men is easy. 4. On the mount of Olives. And there from the lips of Christ they hear His last command, and motive to exertion (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19). 5. With angels before the throne of glory. On the head of Christ is the crown of universal empire, and from all parts the shout is heard, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Cannot He break down every barrier and open the whole world to our labours? Shall He not have the heathen for His inheritance? 6. At Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. And there they see the mighty power, on the success of which all their labours depend. "Not by power," &c. 7. On the hill of Zion, fast by the throne of God ; and looking into the vista of prophecy, they see these wonders actually accomplishing—the whole earth filled with the glory of God ; the idols utterly abolished ; Christ having dominion from sea to sea ; all nations blessed in Him, &c. What, then, becomes of all cavils of sceptics and mere nominal Christians? On whom does the charge of madness rest? IV. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THE FRIENDS OF MISSIONS ARE ACTUATED. 1. Love to God. "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God." 2. Benevolence to man. "If we be sober, it is for your cause." 3. The constraining love of Christ. (*W. Thorpe.*) *Zeal in the cause of Christ* :—Paul's great purpose here is to impress upon us the fact that the cause of Christ should be furthered by every legitimate means ; the soberest wisdom or the most impassioned zeal. He vindicates zeal in the cause of Christ. I. FROM THE CONDITION OF THE WORLD. He speaks of the world as in a state of spiritual death. This is by no means the world's estimate. It is short-sighted, and therefore self-complacent. The discovery of its true position comes only when the mind is enlightened. 1. The Bible concludes all "under sin." And out in the broad world you have abundant confirmation of this testimony. You have it in your own history. There are thousands around you who revel in undisguised

corruption. You have it further away in the countries which own Mahometan rule, and then in the far-off regions of heathenism proper, where the nature, bad in itself, is made a thousand-fold worse by its religion. Death is everywhere. 2. Although a realising estimate of the world's condition comes only when the judgment is enlightened from on high, the wise men of the world have felt an unsatisfactoriness for which they could hardly account. Each in his own way has guessed at the solution of the problem. The people are embroiled; educate them. The nations are barbarous; civilise them. Men grovel in sensual pleasure; cultivate their æsthetic faculty. Amid all this tumult of the human, oh for something divine! And the divine is given—Christ has died for all men. There is hope for the world's life. Oh, tell these tidings to the world, and it will live. "On such a theme, 'tis impious to be calm!" "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God: and if we be sober, it is for your cause." II. FROM THE OBLIGATION OF THE CHURCH, in that He died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, &c. In an age of organisation against idolatry there is one proud, rampant idolatry which retains its ascendancy amongst us—selfishness. Now it is against this principle in human nature thronged within us all, that Christianity goes forth to combat. Have you obtained life from the dead through His name? Then you are bound to spend it for His honour, and watching with godly jealousy for every possible opportunity of doing good, to spend and be spent for them who have not yet your Master known. And then, as gratitude rises and the fire burns, and the heart is full, and the frame quivers with the intensity of its emotions, just remember that there is a world lying in the wicked one. Lift up your voice in the midst of them, lift it up, be not afraid. Say unto the cities of Judah, "Behold your God." Men will call you mad, but you can give them the apostle's answer, "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God: if we be sober, it is for your cause." III. FROM THE MASTER MOTIVE OF THE SAVIOUR'S CONSTRAINING LOVE. "The love of Christ constraineth us." 1. Ye, then, who need rousing to energy in the service of Christ, think of His love to you. 2. Take it as referring to your love to Christ, which the sense of His love has enkindled in the soul. The deepest affection in the believing heart will always be the love of Jesus. Oh, let this affection impel us, and who shall measure our diligence or repress our zeal? If meaner motive can prompt to heroic action—if from pure love of science astronomers dare encounter dangers just that they may watch in distant climes a transit, and if botanists can travel into inhospitable climes to gather specimens, and if, with no motive but love of country, and no recompense save bootless tears and an undying name, a Willoughby could sacrifice himself to blow up a magazine, and a Sarkeld could fire the Cashmere Gate at Delhi, surely we, with obligations incomparably higher, ought to present our life-blood, if need be, for the cause of Christ, and for the good of souls. Let the scoffers spurn at us as they will; we are far superior to such poor contumely. Heaven applauds our enthusiasm, and we can vindicate it in the apostle's words, "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God: and if we be sober, it is for your cause." (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*)

Ver. 14. For the love of Christ constraineth us.—*The love of Christ*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S RULING MOTIVE—The love of Christ. "We love Him because He first loved us." This love leads to service. This principle is—1. Reasonable. 2. Soul-satisfying. 3. Soul-ennobling. All true love is such in degree, but this supremely. II. THE RESTRAINING POWER OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST—"That we should no more live unto ourselves." Paul delighted to call himself the "servant of Jesus Christ." III. THE CONSTRAINING POWER OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST. (*J. Rhodes.*) *The matchless beauty of Jesus*:—I. THE CONSTRAINING MOTIVE—"The love of Christ." Consider it—1. In its objects. (1) Our love is awakened by some excellency or worthiness which the object beloved has in our eyes. But wherein is this to be accounted of, that the Son of God should set His heart upon man? He is likened to a worm, to grass. His foundation is in the dust. How inconsiderable a being is man in comparison with these hosts of heaven. (2) Our love is called out by congeniality—where there is a oneness of mind, a similarity of feeling, a harmony of taste. But how opposite is the mind of Christ and of the sinner! (3) Love is attracted by beauty. But man's original beauty, as created in the image and reflecting the glory of God in righteousness, is wholly departed. And in place thereof, deformity only appears in him. (4) Love is drawn forth by love. Regard in one will produce it in another. But Christ's love found no originating cause in our love (*John xv. 16; 1 John iv. 10*). 2. In its properties. (1) It is a self-denying love. (2) It is a bene-

ficial love. It enriches with righteousness, and peace, and grace, and liberty, and service. (3) His is a cheering, gladdening love. Therefore the church says (Song of Sol. i. 4). (4) His is an intense, inextinguishable love (Song of Sol. viii. 6, 7). (5) It is a boundless, incomprehensible love (Eph. iii. 18, 19). 3. In its effects.

II. THE SPECIAL MANIFESTATION OF THIS LOVE. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." This is the great instance wherein the Lord Jesus demonstrates His love. III. WHERE TO THIS LOVE CONSTRAINS. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." To live to ourselves, to seek our own, is the natural character of all. Self in some form is the predominant and guiding principle. 1. Let the subject humble us. The love of Christ is a powerful thing, being discerned, applied, and realised. 2. Let the subject also instruct us. Our obedience is not to be the result of feeling, but of judgment. 3. Let the subject stimulate us. 4. Let the subject comfort us. 5. Finally, let the subject admonish and persuade those who are yet enemies to God, strangers to Christ and holiness. (*J. T. Parker, M.A.*)

Christ's love constraining:—I. TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THE DYING LOVE OF CHRIST. Here I mean to consider the love of Christ in the four following forms. 1. Pure benevolence. 2. Strong affection. 3. Unsolicited mercy. 4. Marvellous liberality. II. SOME OF THE DUTIES WHICH THIS DYING LOVE EXCITES TO PERFORM. 1. To receive Christ's ordinances. 2. To obey Christ's commands. 3. To submit to Christ's cross. 4. To promote His interest. III. ILLUSTRATE THE MANNER IN WHICH THE DYING LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US. 1. That the dying love of Christ applied and believed, powerfully impresses the human heart. 2. The dying love of Christ singularly guards against practical errors. 3. The dying love of Jesus constraineth us, as it constantly urgeth to holiness. 4. The dying love of Jesus speedily carrieth us on to perfection. Here I mean to convey three distinct ideas, all implied in the word constraineth. (1) The love of Christ moves forward our whole person. (2) The love of Jesus bears us up under our burdens. (3) The love of Christ constraineth us to make swift progress towards perfect holiness. Let us believe the love of God towards us. (*E. Brown.*)

The constraining love of Christ:—We instantly feel that these words express the secret power by which the great deeds of Paul's life were done. But if we connect them with ver. 13 we see that his common acts and judgments were moulded by the same power. Note—I. THE POWER OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST. 1. Paul meant Christ's love to him, not his love to Christ. Many Christian men endeavour to work from their own feelings of consecration to the Lord; hence their energy is fitful, and depends upon excitements. The word "constrain" expresses the contrary of this. It suggests not an emotion in a man, but a power, not his, acting on him—an atmosphere surrounding his spirit, and pressing on it on every side. A feeling we possess is ever feeble and liable to change; a feeling possessing us is strong and enduring. This love, surrounding and resting on a man, takes him out of himself, and becomes a permanent influence. 2. It was the love of the living Christ in the present. "Who died and rose again"—"not knowing Christ after the flesh." The love shown on the Cross was not a transient manifestation, but an eternal revelation of the Christ as He is. 3. How this love constrains. Compare with our text Gal. ii. 20. Here are two elements—(1) Personal sympathy—"who loved me." This is one of the mightiest forces in the world. Through all laws a man may break, but let a criminal once realise that there is some one who feels for him, and you gain a power over him which he cannot resist. Rise now one step—to the consciousness of having the sympathy of a greater soul than ours. Rise yet one step higher—a mighty step—to the love of Christ. The first beam of that love reveals the deadness and coldness of the past; and when the thought enters the man's heart, that amid all his coldness Christ cared for him, then the constraining power begins. (2) The infinite sacrifice: "He died for all." Under the power of this belief, all that tempts us to live for ourselves is instantly swept away. We may hear voices telling us of glory, of gain, and power; but we know that for us He left His throne, and then we are content, for Him, to live unnoticed and unknown. We are allured by the fascinations of pleasure—but we remember that for us He bore pain, and those fascinations fall shattered to the ground. We shrink back instinctively from hardships—but we measure our sacrifice with His, and then we accept it with calm and holy joy. II. HOW THIS CONSTRAINING POWER MANIFESTS ITSELF IN EARNESTNESS OF LIFE. There are three sources of the power that chains us in coldness and cramps our energy:—the monotony of our earthly labour; the depth of our spiritual infirmity; the feebleness of our vision into the everlasting. Now, this constraining love would remove them all. 1. It would con-

secrete our earthly work. No man can always be acting consciously under the power of Christ's love; but a memory of the Cross may unconsciously hallow our life. Is it not possible to accept life's daily tasks as God's discipline, and accept them patiently, because Christ loves us? Is it not possible to fulfil life's common duties right earnestly because Christ died for us? 2. It would strengthen our spiritual infirmity. Trifles exhaust our energy; great forces seem to deaden it; great fears perplex our trust. But if we heard the voice "I loved thee," would not that be like a clarion-call to summon us to heroic effort? Would it not clothe us in celestial power? 3. It would link us with the everlasting world. That love breaks down the barrier between the visible and the invisible worlds. Heaven is no idle dream of happiness, but a present fact; for the Christian's heaven is to be with and to be like the Saviour.

III. THE WAY IN WHICH THE CONSTRAINING POWER OF THIS LOVE MAY BE REALISED. 1. Prayerful meditation. In lonely hours, when the voice of the world is still, that love comes near. Pray on until it flashes across the horizon of your soul, and baptizes you in its glory. 2. Carry into action its first impulses. Avoid all that opposes them. . . . It is dangerous to enter any path of action on which the Cross-light does not gleam. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *The constraining influence of the love of Christ* :—This text is a summary of Christian faith and practice.

I. THE CONDITION TO WHICH SIN HAS REDUCED MAN. 1. Its peculiar wretchedness—"then were all dead." Our souls have lost their spiritual life, and are become incapable of spiritual employments and delights. 2. Its hopelessness. We are not like a tree which, though withered, may be brought into a situation where the sun may shine and the rain descend on it and revive it. II. THE INTERPOSITION OF CHRIST ON THE BEHALF OF MAN. Observe—1. Who it is that is here said to have had compassion on man: the eternal Son of God. 2. How this Being interposed for man: "He died." 3. For whom this death was endured: all men. But the interposition of Christ on behalf of man was not confined to dying for him. He rose again to complete the work which He had begun.

III. THE PRINCIPLE OR MOTIVE FROM WHICH THE INTERPOSITION OF CHRIST ON OUR BEHALF PROCEEDED. It was not an act of justice: we had no claim on the compassion of Christ. Nor did it proceed from a regard to His own honour only. He was "glorious in holiness" and "fearful in praises" long before we were created. It was free and unmerited love alone. To this Divine attribute all the blessings of redemption must be traced. This is the attribute which shines with the brightest lustre in the gospel of Christ. Matchless wisdom devised the stupendous plan, and infinite power executed it; but it was love which called this wisdom and this power into exercise. IV. THE END WHICH CHRIST HAD IN VIEW IN DYING AND RISING AGAIN FOR MAN (ver. 15). This implies that by nature we are all living to ourselves. The selfish and independent principle within us, is one of the sad fruits of our depravity. It is directly opposed to our happiness, and is in the highest degree hateful to God. It is an act of rebellion. Now the design of Christ was to root out this selfish principle. He has bought us with a price; He therefore deems us His own, and calls upon us to glorify Him "in our body and in our spirits which are His." Shall we, then, rob the blessed Jesus of the purchase of His blood? V. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THIS INTERPOSITION OF CHRIST HAS ON HIS PEOPLE. It "constraineth" them. This signifies to bear away, to carry on with the force and rapidity with which a torrent hurries along whatever it meets with in its course. Christ's love—

1. Lays hold of the affections. 2. Influences the conduct. It changes the life as well as affects the heart. Conclusion: These truths suggest various inferences.

1. The conduct of a Christian is closely connected with his principles. 2. They are not Christians whom the love of Christ does not influence. They may call themselves after the name of the Saviour, but they are not living "unto Him which died for them." This devotedness to Christ is essential to the Christian character. Nothing can supply the place of it; no correct system of opinions, no zeal for doctrines, no lively feelings, no tears or prayers. 3. The superior excellence of the religion of Christ, not only as it saves the soul, but as it affords to man a new, a nobler, and a more powerful motive of obedience. This motive is love to a dying Lord; a motive unheard of in the world before the publication of the gospel, but one which appeals to the finest feelings of the soul, and whose efficacy is stronger than that of all other motives combined. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *A perception of Christ's love the effectual source of obedience* :—I. THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO BE THE EFFECTUAL SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE. Let us contrast this motive to moral virtue, with many others by which the majority of mankind are influenced.

1. Perhaps the most general inducement to religious and moral duty is habit. Religion is found to have a kindly influence upon human society. There is therefore in the world a

habit of religion. The son follows the steps of the father. The first, for instance, goes to church, because the latter has set him the example. He sometimes offers up a prayer, because the practice commenced in infancy. There is little of serious reflection in his conduct. He falls easily into the track or mould of custom. It induces a religion of form rather than of influence, a religion of the body rather than of the soul. 2. Scarcely superior to this principle is the desire of reputation. A certain kind of religion is favourable to reputation. To pass through life with honour is certainly the supreme object with many. Now this principle is not merely defective but hostile to religion. Its very aim is the gratification of self-esteem. It tends to exalt man, not God. It forgets the very first feeling of all religion, "God be merciful to me a sinner." 3. Let us examine the next motive to religion, the fear of punishment. There is a natural alarm respecting eternity in the human mind. But this fear of the future is a very inadequate motive to religion. Suppose it to exist to a high degree, and it degenerates into views entirely subversive of all the gracious invitations of the gospel. Suppose it to be weak and momentary, and it can effect little that is medicinal to the heart. In melancholy moments, in hours of sickness, it will produce remorse and misery, but with the departure of these moments, it will lose all its influence. 4. Similar to this principle as to its efficiency is the mere and indistinct desire for future happiness. It will cease to influence whenever self-interest or appetite shall solicit in any violent degree. The pleasure of the life that is, will ever be far more attractive than the dim visions of a joy yet to be. 5. It remains to refer to one other motive to religion, a partial reverence for the Creator. Let experience testify its feebleness and inconsistency as a principle of moral action. How frequently do the same lips which appeared to adore the name of God in the public sanctuary, wantonly desecrate it in private life! 6. Let us now contrast with these low and inadequate motives to religion, the motive contained in the text. "For the love of Christ constraineth us," &c. Is filial affection; is gratitude to a generous benefactor; is the tenderness of fondest friendship; are all these motives powerful to constrain to duty, and to urge to service? See all these motives more than united here! II. THE ACTUAL EXTENT TO WHICH THE PERCEPTION OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO THE SOUL WILL OPERATE. The devotion which arises from every other principle is occasional and limited. It is insufficient to bring us through temptation, to animate the affections and sympathies of our nature. It is insufficient to produce any cordial and active disposition to piety. Such a devotion is not, in fact, of Divine origin; it is not the effect of Divine grace in the heart. It is rather the formal and stinted calculation of a worldly policy. On the contrary, love to Christ is the result of a holy and Divine influence upon the soul. Like the beams of day, it pervades, and warms, and fructifies every inner region, every nobler faculty of the mind. It excites to a religious practice, unlimited and progressive. It renovates the whole character. (*G. T. Noel, M.A.*) *The constraining power of the loving principle*:—It was once a problem in mechanics to find a pendulum which should be equally long in all weathers; which should make the same number of vibrations in the summer's heat and in the winter's cold. They have now found it out. By a process of compensation they make the rod lengthened one way as much as it contracts the other, so that the centre of motion is always the same; the pendulum swings the same number of beats in a day of January as in a day of June, and the index travels over the dial-plate with the same uniformity, whether the heat try to lengthen or the cold to shorten the regulating power. Now the moving power in some men's minds is easily susceptible of surrounding influences. It is not principle but feeling which forms their pendulum rod; and according as this very variable material is affected their index creeps or gallops, they are swift or slow in the work given them to do. But principle is like the compensation rod, which neither lengthens in the languid heat nor shortens in the brisker cold, but does the same work day by day, whether the ice-winds whistle or the simoom glow; and of all principles a high-principled affection to the Saviour is the strongest and most secure. (*J. Hamilton, D.D.*) *Sacred enthusiasm, the rationality of Christian zeal*:—I. WE SHALL FIRST ATTEND TO THE APOSTLE'S DESCRIPTION OF THE MORAL WORLD. He says of man that he is dead. This strong figure of language expresses the inertness as to spiritual duties—the intility—the offensiveness of a soul alienated from the life of God. He intimates, by this allusion, that the nature of man is in that state which no more answers the designs of his creation than the tenant of a grave can promote the purposes and discharge the offices of social existence. II. THE ASSURANCE THAT THE ASPECT OF THE ATONEMENT IS UNIVERSAL AS THE DOMINION OF HUMAN GUILT

AND WRETCHEDNESS. This forms the second motive of the apostle's zeal. This sentiment is not more animating as a doctrine of faith than it has been found efficient as a principle of Christian activity. Its influence on the generous spirit of the apostle elicited an active benevolence so warm that it could not be agreeably employed in an enterprise less sublime than that of applying, in the widest possible sense, the remedy of the gospel to the universal infection. III. SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE OF THIS LOVE SEEM NECESSARY BEFORE WE CAN FIX UPON THE LINE OF ARGUMENT WHICH IT WILL BE MOST PROPER AND INTERESTING TO FOLLOW. 1. The love of Christ may constrain as an example. 2. The love of Christ constrains likewise by the force of gratitude. What bonds of obligations are implied in these expressions, "We live!" "He died for us, and rose again!" Guided by this definition of the subject, we proceed now to illustrate it by the following observations:—1. This love is a principle of self-consecration to the interests of Jesus Christ. 2. The love of Christ is accompanied by a principle of strong anticipation of His mediatorial glory in the world. The Church of Jesus Christ, breathing His Spirit, is naturally concerned in all that relates to His glory. The Sun of Righteousness is not for ever to be clouded: and it does gratify the love we cherish toward our glorious Saviour to be assured that a day is coming in which the whole world shall be the scene of His triumphant influence. 3. The love of Christ implies an habitual reliance on the agency of the Holy Spirit. (*S. Curwen.*) *Constraining love*:—Note—I. WHERE LIES THE POWER OF CHRIST UPON MEN. There is nothing parallel with the permanent influence which Christ exercises all through the centuries. Contrast it with the influence of all other great names. But here is a man, dead for nearly nineteen centuries, to whom millions of hearts still turn, owning His mystic influence and smile as more than sufficient guard for the miseries of life and the agonies of death. The phenomenon is so strange that one is led to ask where lies the secret of the power. Paul tells us "The love . . . constrains," and it does so because He died. 1. If we are to feel His constraining love, we must first of all believe that Christ loved us and loves us still. If He knew no more of the future generations, and had no more reference to the units that make up their crowds, than some benefactor or teacher of old may have had, who flung out his words or deeds as archers draw their bows, not knowing where the arrow would light, then the love He deserves from me is even more tepid than the love which, on the supposition, He gave to me. But if I can believe, as Paul believed, that he was in the mind and the heart of the Man of Nazareth when He died upon the Cross; and if we believe, as Paul believed, that, though that Lord had gone up on high, there were in His human-divine heart a love to His poor servant, struggling down here for His sake; then, and only then, can we say reasonably the love that Christ bore, and bears to me, "constraineth me." 2. If there is to be this warmth of love, there must be the recognition of His death as the great sacrifice and sign of His love to us. "Rule thou over us," said the ancient people to their king, "for thou hast delivered us out of the hand of our enemies." The centre of Christ's power over men's hearts is to be found in the fact that He died on the Cross for each of us. That teaching which denies the sacrificial death of Christ and has brought Him down to the level of a man, has failed to kindle any warmth of affection for Him. A Christ that did not die for me on the Cross is not a Christ who has either the right or the power to rule my life. The Cross, interpreted as Paul interpreted it, is the secret of all His power, and if once Christian teachers and churches fail to grasp it as Paul did, their strength is departed. II. WHAT SORT OF LIFE WILL THIS CONSTRAINING LOVE OF CHRIST PRODUCE? 1. A life in which self is deposed and Christ is King. The natural life of man has self for its centre. That is the definition of sin, and it is the condition of us all; and nothing but Christ can radically eject it from the heart, and throne the unselfishly Beloved in the vacant place. Nature abhors a vacuum, and the only way to keep the devil out is to get Christ in. There is but one power which is strong enough to lift our lives from the pivot on which they turn, and to set them vibrating in a new direction, and that is the recognition of the infinite and so tender love of Jesus Christ for each of us. That love may constrain us, shutting out much that one used to like to expatiate in; but within these limits there is perfect freedom. There is no life so blessed and heroic, none in which suffering is so light, pain so easy, duty so delightful as the life that we live when, by Christ's grace, we have thrown off the dominion of self and held out willing wrists to be enfranchised by being fettered by the "bands of love." A comet—these vagrants of the skies—has liberty to roam, and what does it make of it? It plunges away out into depths of darkness and infernos of ice and cold. But if it came within

the attraction of some great blazing sun, and subsided into a planet, it would have lost nothing of its true liberty, and would move in music and light around the source of blessedness and life. And so we, as long as we make ourselves the "sinful centres of our rebel powers," so long do we subject ourselves to alterations of temperature almost too great to bear. Let us come back to the light, and move round the Christ; satellites of that Sun, and therefore illumined by His light and warmed by His life-producing heat. 2. One that will often look like madness. Paul was evidently quoting some of the stinging-nettles of speech which had been cast at him by his antagonists. "He is mad," they said of him, as they said of his Master. But such enthusiasts are the salt of the earth; and the madmen of to-day are the Solomons of to-morrow. Oh! would that there would come similar "fanatics" once more! They would lift all the level of this hollow Christianity in which so many of us are living. If we once had amongst us men after Paul's pattern—some of us who think ourselves very consistent Christians would begin to feel the red coming into our cheeks. The man who professes to live for Christ and never gets anybody to laugh at him as "enthusiastic," and "impracticable," and "Quixotic," has much need to ask himself whether he is as near the Master as he conceits himself to be. 3. One which, in all its enthusiasm, is ruled by the highest sobriety and clearest sanity, "Whether we be sober it is for your cause." There is more sober sense in being what the world calls fanatical, if the truths upon the pages of Scripture are truths, than in being cold and composed in their presence. The enthusiasts, who see visions and dream dreams about God and Christ and heaven and hell, and the duties that are consequent—these are the sober-minded men. There were many learned rabbis in Jerusalem, and many intimate friends in Tarsus, who, when the news came that Gamaliel's promising pupil had gone over to the enemy, and flung up the splendid prospects opening before him, said to themselves, "What a fool the young man is!" They kept their belief and he kept his. All the lives are over now. Which of them was the wise life? III. WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TO THAT CONSTRAINING LOVE? The outward manner of the apostle's life is not for us, but the principle which underlies it is as absolutely and as imperatively and as all-comprehensively applicable in our case as it was in his. There was absolutely no reason for Paul's devotion which does not continue in full force for yours and mine. 1. Christian men and women, do you believe in that dying and living love for you? Do you repay it with devotion in any measure adequate to what you have received? 2. And for some of us who make no profession, and have no reality of Christian feeling, the question is, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?" Jesus has loved, and does love, thee; died for thee. He stretches out that grasping hand, with a nail-hole in it, to lay hold upon you, and you slip from His clasp, and oppose to His love a negligent and unaffected heart. Is there any madness in this mad world like that? Is there any sin like the sin of ingratitude to Jesus? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The properties and influence of the love of Christ*:—I. HOW A SINNER MAY COME TO KNOW THAT CHRIST LOVED HIM, FOR A VERY OBVIOUS REASON—THAT NO TRUTH NOR FACT CAN HAVE ANY INFLUENCE UPON OUR CONDUCT, UNLESS WE KNOW IT AND HAVE SOME INTEREST IN IT. We come to a knowledge of the love of God and of Christ by faith. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son." II. CONSIDER SOME OF THE QUALITIES OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST. 1. It is eternal love. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." 2. The love of Christ is free love. For it is offered without conditions or qualifications. We are to buy Him without money and without price. 3. The love of Christ to sinners is sovereign love. 4. His love is constant and everlasting love. Like the sun, it may sometimes be obscured to the believer's view by unbelief, ingratitude, and remaining lusts and idols; but the obscurity is in the believer's darkened eye, not in God. III. THE CONSTRAINING EFFECTS OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST. 1. The love of Christ, when truly believed by the renewed soul, carries away the soul by its moral power both to will and to perform our duty earnestly and constantly. The soul when under the influence of this love, may be compared to a bark set down on the cataracts of the Nile: whether the seamen will or not, they are carried down the stream. 2. The love of Christ constrains us to give all diligence to make our calling and our election sure. 3. If we believe that God and Christ love us, it will constrain us sweetly and powerfully to love Him again, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 4. But the love of Christ received into the heart by faith in the record constrains, not only to holiness in general, but to every particular duty required in the holy law. (*F.*

Frew.) *Constraining love* :—1. “The love of Christ”—His to man, not man’s to Him—yet His in its quickening activity, creating its own image in the breast. To constrain is so to shut in as to compel to a given end. Unconstrained, the river would spread out into a marsh, a dismal waste, fruitful only of pestilence and death. Shut in by its constraining banks, it flows a thing of life and beauty, watering garden and field, purifying and gladdening cities, and broadening into the bay on whose fair bosom ships float as they come and go on their beneficent mission of exchange and distribution. So man, constrained by the love of Christ, is so shut in as to be forbidden to wander and spread into a dismal and pestilent waste; is forced rather to move to a divine end, like a river of life flowing from God, hastening to God, in a channel made and moulded by His hand. 2. Now I wish to take Christian missions—the most manifest example of the constraining love of Christ—as a type of this great truth, that the service of God and of man are made one in the service of Christ. Note—*I. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE CHARACTER OF A MAN AND HIS SERVICE OF HIS KIND.* A bad man can never be a minister of good. Eminent intellect without character is mischievous. A statesman with genius but without character is a calamity to the State. The creative genius may leave behind imperishable works in literature and art, but if he be mean and unclean he will leave a heritage of evil. It is inevitable that the service of man be the peculiar prerogative of the good. The man, therefore, that would serve men in the way of Christ must have the spirit of Christ. Mere decent, responsible, respectable, conventional formalism will not do. It is not enough to stand aloof from the man that does evil. It is necessary that we take the man’s soul into our own and save him, if need be, by our very death. *II. BY WHAT MEANS, CONDITIONS, MOTIVES MAY A MAN BE MADE—AS TO CHARACTER, THE BEST POSSIBLE THAT HE MAY BE—AS TO SERVICE, THE MOST FIT AND EFFICIENT.* Take—1. The love of wealth, not of money—the greedy passion of the miser, but love of wealth which treats money as a means of distribution. Look at the immense factory with its thousands of operatives, filling so many homes with comfort, so many mouths with bread. Look at the great ships as they bear from distant lands to this, or from this to distant lands, commodities enriching, gladdening life. There is wonderful power in wealth used as a means; but mark, to be good, it is necessary—(1) That it be in the hands of a good man. A bad man behind wealth uses it only to the deterioration of the world. (2) That it be distributed. Accumulated wealth is not accumulated weal. A few rich men do not make a rich or a contented people. 2. Love of power—the desire both to make and to be a law that men shall obey. A statesman, patriotic, makes laws that he may secure the greatest blessing to the individual and to the collective people. The statesman, ambitious, makes laws to serve his own ends, sacrifices what was meant for mankind to his own personal good. The merely ambitious soldier looks at the army he commands as an immense machine, only to be used that it may be hurled against a similar machine, so as to break it without itself being broken. The soldier patriotic thinks that every man in that vast army is a conscious spirit, a centre of influence, needing, if possible, to be saved. The one says with Napoleon, “Russian Campaign! what of it? It cost me only three thousand men,” careless of the men, careful of himself. The other, like the hero of Sempach, will gather a sheaf of Austrian spears into his breast that the rank of the enemy may be broken and the land saved. Love of power blesses man only when in the presence of a great love it is glorified into patriotism, philanthropy. 3. The love of culture. Its great apostle tells us that its function is criticism of life. What that means we know. A man trained to enjoy the art and literature of past and present, made toward his meaner fellows finical, hypercritical, helping them only by sardonic sarcasm. In culture there may be the training of a character to a nobler, while self-conscious, enjoyment, but not to the large, devoted service that seeks the saving of men. 4. But may you not drill a man into service of his kind by terror? What makes a coward unmake a man of him; what compels a man to a service which he does not love, makes him impotent for good. In fear there is no power to create the man that can regenerate the world. *III. LET US GO ON NOW TO SOME TYPICAL CASES THAT ILLUSTRATE THE ACTION OF THOSE PRINCIPLES AND MOTIVES IMPLIED IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST.* 1. Here are three men. Look at them before the love finds them. Peter is a bronzed, hard-handed, brawny fisherman. He knows Jerusalem, has heard of Rome and, perhaps, of Athens; but cannot tell what they mean. He is a man who owns, perhaps, his boat and his nets, and thinks himself happy indeed if he lands a draught of fishes. There he is—familiar figure. Here now is John—more favoured by nature, radiant of face, clear of brow. Still, he is but the fisherman’s son,

destined fisherman to be—to be a husband, a father; known to his sons and grandsons, then forgotten. And here is Paul, tent-maker, skilled in the law and history of his people. He, left as he is, would become a name with Gamaliel or Hillel.

2. Mark how the love of Christ comes to and acts on these men. It lays hold on that Peter. Suddenly he becomes a leader of men, who stands undismayed before the priests and rulers. And this John becomes a great interpreter, historian, thinker, and ages sit at his feet and dwell on his words. And Paul, converted, made missionary, in prisons oft, stripes many, stoned, afflicted, &c., still snatches moments amid his career to speak over the ages words that live as veritable spirit and power.

3. This love acts in each of the men in its own particular fashion. Peter it makes a legislator and leader of men, and people say, "How great is Peter!" But how different John! The Saviour says, "Son, behold Thy mother." While Peter had charge of the sheep and of the lambs, John had charge of the mother, and that seemed all. But this educated John till, through the mother's love for him and his love to the mother, he came to understand as no other man did the Saviour's love to the world, the Father's love to the Son. Then look at Paul. He, a trained Pharisee, comes and sees all history, all men, all time, in the light of Christ. Law and gospel, first and second man, grace and sin, faith and works, all, as it were, came through him into articulate expression; and he shows the love making the preacher, the missionary, the thinker, all in one.

4. Now these three men are typical men. The love that worked that change in them is a love working still. Other loves lose their presence and potency over men. This love, never. This age has seen no more wonderful discovery than that of the conservation and correlation of the physical forces, no atom ever destroyed, every atom ever in process of change. But think of this grand moral dynamic, one in essence, indestructible in being, infinite in the variety of its forms, which we call the love of Christ. It took shape in the apostles. Since then it has created saints and heroes, who have stood like Athanasius against the world, or like Knox, who never feared the face of men, and thinkers like Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. It has entered into the spirit of reformers, and it has made men like Luther and Zwingle stand up to change the destiny of people and introduce a newer and grander day. It has created great preachers, like Howe and Bunyan and Wesley.

IV. HOW IS IT THAT THIS LOVE HAS ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH? 1. Mark. Love is an old thing. Christ did not make it, but found it the most universal and most potent force in the world. But ere He had come one thing love had never done. Lover to lover had been dear. But man as man had not been served through love. And yet without love men cannot be served. It needs not that we hate—it needs only that we be void of affection, to be unable to serve.

2. But look how hard it is to love. See nations, kin, speaking the same speech, under the same institutions, divided by a strip of silver sea, face to face, but disaffected towards each other. Why come wars and fightings? Nations do not love each other. Classes are divided. Here stands culture contemptuous to ignorance, and *vice versa*. Here is capital looking askance at labour. There is labour making wealth, jealous of the accumulated wealth it has seen made. And see how men, for moral reasons, are unable to love each other.

3. Now mark how Christ accomplished this grand impossibility of love. He came, and He made love to Him become love to all men. Love to persons means the desire to possess the person loved. Love to Christ means a passion to make men possess Him. There is no nation or class in Him. There is humanity. In loving Him you love the very worst as well as the best.

4. But so far we have been only stating fact. We have not yet got the why. Mark, the love that is in Christ is—

(1) God's love, made real, living love on earth for men. Some men think that they could learn God's love apart from Christ. Could they? Did they ere He came? Can they now He has come? "This world is very lovely. O my God, I thank Thee that I live." And 'tis so lovely to stand on mountain peak at break of day, and see from out the east the glorious sunrise bringing light and health and beauty in his beams. But carry to the mountain summit a man who has just left the bed of death, where the dearest of earth to him doth lie. What would the man say? But place him in sight of the love of Christ and you place him in the very heart of God. The Man of Sorrows makes to the man in sorrow God come divinely near.

(2) The very love that made and the very end that was purposed for the world. The love that made the world gave the Son. Is not the giver ever greater than the thing given? The love of God gave its dignity to the gift of God. Without the love how ever was the gift possible? (3) Love to God as a person. To God's Son as a person. There cannot be love to aught but persons. Devotion to a cause is not love to Christ,

not even if the cause be named a church. The cause must be impersonated. (4) God's love sacrificial, painful, pitiful, redemptive. It lifts us into the nature of God and makes us see God, how He feels pity, suffers sacrifice. (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*)

Under constraint :—I. UNDER CONSTRAINT. Here is a man who beyond all others enjoyed the greatest spiritual liberty, glorying that he is under constraint. 1. A great force held him under its power. "Constraineth." (1) Consider the various meanings of the word "constrain." "Restrain." (a) The love of God "restrains" from self-seeking, and forbids the pursuit of any object but the highest. (b) The believer is "coerced or pressed," and so impelled forward as one carried along by pressure. (c) Christ's love "keeps us employed"; for we are carried forward to diligence by it. (d) The Lord's servants are "kept together and held as a band" under a standard. "His banner over me was love." (e) All their energies are "pressed into one channel, and made to move" by the love of Christ. (2) All great lives have been under the constraint of some mastering principle. A man who is everything by turns and nothing long is a nobody: but a man, even for mischief, becomes great when he becomes concentrated. What made Alexander but the absorption of his whole mind in the desire for conquest? Hence come your Cæsars and your Napoleons—they are whole men in their ambition. When you carry this thought into a holier sphere the same fact is clear. Howard could never have been the great philanthropist if he had not been strangely under the witchery of love to prisoners. Whitfield and Wesley had but one thought, and that was to win souls for Christ. (3) Now, this kind of constraint implies no compulsion, and involves no bondage. It is the highest order of freedom; for when a man does exactly what he likes he expresses his delight generally in language similar to that of my text. Though he is perfectly free to leave it, he will commonly declare that he cannot leave it. When the love of Christ constrains us we have not ceased to be voluntary agents; we are never so free as when we are under bonds to Christ. 2. The constraining force was the love of Christ. That love, according to our text, is strongest when seen in His dying for men. Think of this love till you feel its constraining influence. It was love (1) Eternal; (2) Unselfish; (3) Most free and spontaneous; (4) Most persevering; (5) Infinite, inconceivable! It passeth the love of women and the love of martyrs. All other lights of love pale their ineffectual brightness before this blazing sun of love, whose warmth a man may feel, but upon whose utmost light no eye can gaze. 3. The love of Christ operates upon us by begetting in us love to Him. "We love Him because He first loved us." (1) His person is very dear to us: from His head to His feet He is altogether lovely. We are glad to be in the place of assembly when Jesus is within; for whether on Tabor with two or three, or in the congregation of the faithful, when Jesus is present it is good to be there. (2) Your endeavours to spread the gospel show that you love His cause. (3) As to His truth, a very great part of our love to Christ will show itself by attachment to the pure gospel, especially to that doctrine which is the corner-stone of all, namely, that Christ died in the stead of men. 4. This force acts proportionately in believers. We are all of us alive, but the vigour of life differs greatly in the consumptive and the athletic. You will feel the power of the love of Christ in your soul in proportion—(1) As you know it. Study, then, the love of Christ. (2) To your sense of it. Knowing is well, but enjoyment as the result of believing is better. (3) To the grace which dwells within you. You may measure your grace by the power which the love of Christ has over you. (4) To your Christ-likeness. 5. It will operate after its kind. Forces work according to their nature. He who feels Christ's love acts as Christ acted. (1) If thou dost really feel the love of Christ in making a sacrifice of Himself thou wilt make a sacrifice of thyself. (2) If the love of Christ constrain you it will make you love others, specially those who have no apparent claim upon you, but who, on the contrary, deserve your censure. I do not know how else we could care for some, if it were not that Jesus teaches us to despise and despair of none. (3) The love of Jesus Christ was a practical love. II. THIS CONSTRAINT WAS JUSTIFIED BY THE APOSTLE'S UNDERSTANDING. "The love of Christ constraineth, because we thus judge." When understanding is the basis of affection, then a man's heart is fixed and his conduct exemplary. Paul's judgment was as the brazen altar, cold and hard, but on it he laid the coals of burning affection, vehement enough in their flame to consume everything. So it ought to be with us. Paul recognised—1. Substitution. "One died for all." This is the very sinew of Christian effort. Did He die for me? Then His love hath mastered me, and henceforth it holds me as its willing captive. 2. Union to Christ. "If one died for all, then the all died." Conclusions: 1. How different is the inference of the apostle from that of many

professors! They say, "If Christ died once for all, then I am saved, and may sit down in comfort and enjoy myself, for there is no need for effort or thought." 2. How much more ennobling is the apostle's than that of those who do give to the cause of God and serve Him after a fashion, but still the main thought of their life is not Christ nor His service, but the gaining of wealth or success in their profession! The chief aim of all of us should be nothing of self, but serving Christ. 3. Such a pursuit as this is much more peace-giving to the spirit. If you live for Christ, and for Christ alone, all the carpings of men or devils will never cast you down. 4. A life spent for Jesus only is far more worth looking back upon at the last than any other. If you call yourselves Christians how will you judge a life spent in money-making? (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Love and obedience to Christ* :—

Consider :—I. TAKE SOME ACCOUNT OF CHRIST'S LOVE TO US, WHICH IS THE FOUNDATION AND CAUSE OF OUR LOVE TO HIM. Notice the instances of His love hinted at. 1. That Christ died for us (John xv. 13; Rom. v. 6). 2. That He rose again. This was designed for our advantage (Rom. iv. 25). As His suffering and death were for the payment of our debt, so His resurrection was in order to our discharge. He arose and went to heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us, and to prepare a place there for His followers. 3. That He died and rose again that we might live; that is, that we might be acquitted from our guilt, delivered from condemnation, be renewed to a spiritual life of holiness, and be raised at last to heaven. II. OUR LOVE TO CHRIST WHICH IS THE FRUIT OF HIS LOVE TO US. Christ will own none for His friends who love Him not (1 Cor. xvi. 22; Luke xiv. 26; Matt. x. 37). III. THE GENUINE AND POWERFUL EFFECT OF THIS LOVE. It will constrain us to live unto Him, which implies—1. Obedience to His will (John xiv. 15, 21, 23). This obedience must be—(1) Willing and hearty obedience. Not like that of slaves to a tyrant, where the only motive to obey is fear of punishment. Of this sort is all the obedience which wicked men pay to Christ. (2) Sincere and universal to all Christ's commandments, without any exception. I do not mean that it will be perfect; but yet true love will not knowingly allow of any defect in obedience. (3) Like its principle, constant and persevering. We shall not obey Him by fits and starts. Obedience may possibly admit of some interruptions, but it will never be laid aside. 2. Zealous for His interest and honour. Here it will be proper to consider—(1) The nature of zeal for Christ. Zeal is the natural fervour of the mind when it is very earnest in any pursuit. Sometimes it is a very bad thing; but when it is under the influence of Divine grace, and directed to a right object, it is then exceeding good (Gal. iv. 18). Christ Himself was a pattern to us of holy zeal (John ii. 17). Let the same mind be in us which was also in Jesus Christ—particularly (a) Grief and resentment at any injuries which are done to His honour. A warm love to Christ will make His honour and interest as dear to us as our own. (b) Courage in Christ's cause, as Christ's zeal for His Father's honour inspired Him with courage to drive out the profaners of the Temple. Such was the zeal of the apostles (Acts iv. 19, 20; xxi. 13). (c) Diligence in using all proper means to gain over subjects to Christ's kingdom and converts to His gospel. (d) Joy in the advancement of His kingdom and interest. (2) Motives and reasons for this zeal. Consider—(a) How zealous Christ has been and is for you and your interest. He died for you. (b) How little all you can do for Christ will amount unto, and what a mean and poor requital it will be for His love. (c) How zealous the devil and his agents are against Christ, and to hinder the advancement of His kingdom, and should not we be at least as zealous to promote it? (d) How Christ will nobly requite your zeal for Him another day (Matt. x. 32; Luke xii. 8). (D. Jennings.)

The Christian's secret :—When we see a successful life we are always curious to know what is the secret of it. You see a man who is successful in business, and you wonder what are the qualities in him which make him the successful man he is. The motive power of life is love. 1. Some Christians make the secret of their life fear. What a horrible thing to live with nothing but that fear of death to keep a man away from the slough of animalism! 2. And the motive power of a Christian life is not conscience. A few years ago a young man who was going to enter the ministry as an apostle of ethical culture came to see me, and we talked his ministry over. He told me he was going down into one of the wards of New York City to work for the regeneration of men. He said: "I do not want merely to make them happier; I want to make them really better." I asked him: "What is the power on which you rely to make them better?" "I shall appeal to their sense of right; I shall not appeal to anything else, but I shall try to show them that they ought to be righteous because it is righteous, they ought to do right because it is right." He was going to build his

religion on what? Love? No! On conscience. Judaism, Puritanism, and Ethical Culture are incarnate conscience. Christianity is incarnate love. A man may conform to law because it is righteous law; but he cannot love the law. You cannot love an abstraction. 3. Thus over against the life that is keyed to fear and the life that is keyed to conscience Paul puts the life that is keyed to love. "The love of Christ constraineth us." I want to trace the way in which that love grows up in a human soul. The child begins by loving her father or her mother. The child sees righteousness, truth, purity, patience, fidelity, love, in that father, that mother. And this child who sees in the father the Christly quality, but does not know it is Christly, and begins to love, is already loving Christ, though it is the Christ in fragment, the Christ in a hint. This child goes out into life, little by little, and learns that love is larger than she thought. She learns that father and mother do not incarnate all the phases of love. Love is not confined to the few. There are other husbands that love, other fathers that love, other mothers that love, other phases of love. No one soul can teach all the lessons of love. The length and breadth and height of love—how large it is, how multiplex it is! Learning this, she learns to love also, bears burdens and learns the patience of love, finds the opportunity to do good and learns the service of love. For we learn love only by loving. Many stop there. They have learned the love which we call philanthropy. But they do not know that which lies beyond and is greater than all, because it is in all—the love of God, the love of Christ. And so they walk always, it seems to me, in a certain sadness or possibility of sadness. I took my Greek Concordance the other day to see what this word "constrains" means; and, instead of looking up the classical Greek, I looked to see how it was used elsewhere in the New Testament. And at first I said, I am not getting much light from this investigation. I turned to one incident where it is said "the crowd thronged Jesus Christ," and I found the word "thronged" was the same as the word "constrained." And I turned to another passage where it was said that "the soldiers came and took Jesus Christ," and I found the word "took" was the same as the word in our text—"constrained." And I came to another passage where it is said that "a woman was sick with a great fever," and I found the word "sick" was the same as the word here "constrained." This seemed at first strange. But pondering made it clear. Our text is an illustration of St. Paul's genius of talking in metaphor, for Paul was a poet and broke through the rules of rhetoric because his spirit was too strong to be caged by language. Paul is the poet, and it is the poet that speaks here of love. Love is a crowd. Love from father, from mother, from brother, from sister, from brethren, throngs all about Paul, and carries him, as it were, off his feet, as a man is taken by a great crowd and forced along the highway. Love is a soldier; it has come and laid violent hands upon Paul; and he is no longer his own master. Love is his master. Love has captured him, taken him prisoner; Love does with him what he will. Do not be troubled if you do not have the full experience of Paul at the beginning of your life. Have you money, and do you wonder what you shall do with it? Let love tell you. Have you a little time this week, and do you wish to know what you shall do with it? Let love tell you. Have you a friend who has done wrong to you, and you wonder what you ought to do? Let love tell you. Are you questioning what course in life you shall take? Let love tell you. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*) *Christian enthusiasm*:—1. If enthusiasm be right in any case, it is more than justifiable in the Christian. In such a career as his, it is impious to be calm, if calmness be coldness. 2. Now Paul was an enthusiast. Young Saul, the pupil of Gamaliel, the Pharisee, the persecutor, was an enthusiast. And Paul, the convert, preacher, missionary, is an enthusiast still. With this difference, that the fire now burning on the altar of his heart is heaven-kindled, sustained, and attracted. 3. There were two classes who did not appreciate Paul's enthusiasm; men of no religion at all, like Festus, and false brethren. While Festus said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself," persons connected with the Church at Corinth said the same. Paul's defence was that whether sober or mad the love of Christ constrained him. Consider—I. THE LOVE OF CHRIST, *i.e.*, the love in Christ which begets love for Christ. 1. The love which is in Christ is the love of God united with the love of man. Like a stream which starts from inaccessible mountains, and on some distant plain joins itself to some small rivulet, in the love of Christ there is everlasting, self-existent, Almighty love; yet mingling with it is a love begotten and limited by the constitution of human nature. The love of Christ, as Divine, is like the sun, distant, vast, and commanding; yet like the fires that blaze on our hearths in winter, cheerful, accessible, and inviting. It is like a

great mountain almost defying us to climb ; and yet like green pastures at our feet, tempting us to lie down. 2. Oh, that we could comprehend this "love of Christ which passeth knowledge!" In one sense we do know it. We know what Christ did : "went about doing good." We know why Christ suffered : "to bring us to God." But how much is there, even connected with these things, which surpasseth knowledge ; and what less can he who hears of Christ's love say, than, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee" ? As fire spreads fire, if it come in contact with any inflammable material, so love begets love in the hearts which are susceptible of love. 3. Now love to Christ is awakened by the love of Christ. In the first instance our love is simple gratitude ; but very soon it becomes delight, loyalty, friendship, complacency. And then it increases with our faith, and with its own manifestations. II. THE EFFECT IT PRODUCES. What does Paul mean by constraineth ? That it held him to one object of life, that one object being Christ, and it shut him up to one course of conduct. The love of Christ laid hold of the man's mind and kept his thinking faculty moving. It supplied him with motives. It quickened his conscience, commanded his will, lifted up and cast down emotions, formed his character, directed his conduct, and moulded his entire life. 1. Now no man need aspire to the apostleship in order to be a constant and devoted servant of Jesus. Martha and Mary were as much constrained by the love of our Saviour as was Paul. What we need is not a change of sphere, but a change of influence upon us. And the great influence to move you in your sphere, is the love of Christ. 2. How does the love of Christ constrain you ? And are you sometimes misunderstood because of this ? Do you please the men who are trying to make a compromise between ungodly and Christian principle ? Are you at rest in their society, and are they at ease in yours ? If this be the case you are not what Paul was when he penned these words. Your career is not like that of a planet commanded and controlled by the sun ; but that of the iceberg—always ice—only sometimes ice thawing and melting upon the surface. And shall this sort of being put himself forward as a Christian ? Shall this man ever be misinterpreted ? What is there to perplex one ? A man with no religious excitement cannot be a Christian. What is this gospel but feeling, passion, from beginning to end ? It comes gushing out of the very heart of God. "God is love," and God so loved the world, &c. Can I believe this without feeling ? I may make it part of my creed without feeling. But can I live upon it without feeling ? The coldest piece of humanity must be warmed by the gospel if it be believed. Conclusion:—Use this subject for personal examination. Do ask, what have I in this heart of mine ? Have I fire, or have I ice ? Apply the remedy. Believe the good news now. (*S. Martin.*)

One died for all.—The ethical value of the atonement:—I. But first of all I would have you consider the ethical value of the FACT of the atonement. What I mean by that is, the ethical significance of the atonement itself considered apart from our apprehension of it and belief in it. What was there of ethical life and force essentially involved in the atonement ? Is it a merely legal and technical fact, external to 'all life—something that men can brush aside and say, We can do without it ? Or is it a manifestation of the ethical life of God, creation's fundamental ethical fact, replete with ethical forces ? 1. Observe, first, that the act of atonement is deep-set in the ethical life of God. It is the expression, and of course the natural expression, of infinite love. It is simply the ethical life of the Infinite acting out its own inner fulness under the special conditions of a fallen world. The self-sacrificing love of Christ is actually the self-sacrificing love of God. God proves that He can really love by revealing the power of self-sacrifice. The underlying source of all ethical life is the rich self-sacrificing life of God as revealed in Christ. To deny that God is capable of sacrifice is to deny that He is an ethical Being. If God is love, then it must be possible for Him to resort to sacrifice, if necessary, to save the world. 2. The atonement was accomplished through the medium of ethical forces. I want you to notice these fourteenth and fifteenth verses very carefully, in order that you may bear in mind what I mean. So you perceive that the atonement was not merely a legal act ; it was God's life coming into our life. Not God sending His Son to stand outside of our life, and then pouring wrath down upon Him straight from heaven. There is no life, no power in that conception. That is not true atonement. There is yet another step along the path of ethical force. According to the Scriptures there have come into the human race new and infinite ethical forces through the Atonement. After sin had come into the world, man was rendered incapable in himself of ethical life. Sin brought in death and complete moral impotency. Then Christ came and linked Himself to the universal life of

humanity. When He came He stood against the surging tide of human sin, He bore the terrible onset of it in His own life, standing as "the Son of Man" in the centre of the terrible tumult. Then with infinite power He sent the tide back, and brought humanity into the possibility of life again. Herein lies the ethical reality of the atonement—of the great sacrifice in which the Son of God suffered for the sins of the world. Through that expiation, and only through that, has spiritual life and power become possible for man. II. So much for the fact of the atonement, the ethical significance that appertains to it, and the ethical force that pervades the whole of it. If this is true, if the fact of the Atonement is in very deed the basis of all ethical possibility, THEN IT IS NATURAL TO EXPECT THAT BELIEF IN THE ATONEMENT WILL BE A POWERFUL INSPIRATION AND INCENTIVE TO ETHICAL LIFE. And we shall find that it is so. 1. First of all, the consciousness of sin produced by the idea of the atonement is a mighty impulse and incentive to ethical life. Which do you think of two men is likely to struggle with intensity of purpose against temptations to sin—the man that thinks sin means death, the man that believes it was arrested on its path, that it is pardoned, only through the sacrifice of the Son of God, or the man that thinks it is only a little imperfection or immaturity that will gradually whittle itself away? Which do you think of the two is likely to be the stronger morally and spiritually? 2. Then, again, the idea of forgiveness through expiation is a mighty inspiration to ethical and spiritual life. God forgives me at great cost to Himself—that is love indeed! There are people who talk of the love of God that do not know what they mean by it. A love that costs nothing! A love that is utterly incapable of proving its own existence! For these people tell us that the Infinite is incapable of the sacrifices of love. He can be complacent, kind, benevolent; He can let your sin pass away, just because He can do it without trouble or cost to Himself. Is that the inspiration that will send the warm life-throb of gratitude and love to God leaping in our life, that will fire us with enthusiasm to follow after holiness? 3. Then, again, the idea of the proprietary right of Jesus Christ over us is one of the grandest incentives to ethical life and service. Paul has presented it to us very fully here—"If one died, then all died," and "He died for all, that they which live shall not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." If Christ's death was an atonement, an expiation, then you and I died in that death. We have no life to call our own any more; we died on His Cross. What, then, is our present condition? Why, we are Christ's own. The only life we have is the life He has given us. What right have you to serve yourself? Some one may say that we have the conception of God's proprietorship over us apart from the atonement. But we know from experience that in a fallen world like this the conception of God as Creator is of little ethical value until it is set in that of God, the atoning Saviour. There are those that even make their creation into such a world as this a ground of complaint against God. But, taken apart, there is no comparison between their several ethical values. Our obligation to the God that created us is vague and unimportant compared with our obligation to the God that redeemed us through sacrifice. The life we received from the hands of the Creator cost Him but little compared with that we have received from the sacrifice of the atoning God, so the constraining love is vastly greater in the latter case than in the former. 4. Further, the conception of the ever-present living Christ is full of inspiration. But, says some one, even apart from the atonement and apart from the God manifest in Christ, we may feel that we have the presence of God with us. What do you know about the ethical relations of the Almighty except what you know in Jesus Christ? Suppose God had not revealed Himself in His Son, then the vague conception of a Divine presence which would have been left to us would have afforded little inspiration and stimulus to live a holy life. III. Now, in order to make our examination quite complete, it is only fair to see what inspiration we can count upon—WHAT ETHICAL FORCES REMAIN TO US WERE WE TO LEAVE OUT OF ACCOUNT THE INCARNATION OF GOD AND THE EXPIATORY ATONEMENT OF CHRIST. There are left to us the following conceptions—1. We have remaining, first of all, the belief in sin as an imperfection or immaturity—the belief that this sin is not even in itself an unmitigated evil if an evil at all—is only the reverse side of good—that it is as necessary in the economy of God's world as goodness—and we have only to wait a little while and it will pass away. How much inspiration for effort is there in that conception—how much inspiration to struggle against sin? 2. Further, if we leave the atonement of Jesus Christ out of account, we have Jesus Christ left as a pattern for us. I do not undervalue the fact that the life of Christ is an ideal copy. But compare that with the belief that that ideal life is also a

living, infinite force within you. 3. Further, we have remaining the belief in God as the Father of spirits. I really cannot say how much that would mean if we knew nothing about Jesus Christ as God incarnate. It meant very little to the highest thought of man in the Greek world before Christ came. People who reject the atonement of Christ have no right to call God Father. It is only in Christ that we know Him to be Father. Now, you can compare the two sets of ideas as an incentive to ethical life—the atonement of Christ and the ideas that circle around it, and the ideas that are left after we have excluded the atonement. I am sure that you will all agree that there is no comparison whatever between the two. It is the atonement of Christ and faith in that atonement that is alone capable of building up the noblest ethical life of man. It is not for me to determine how far ethical life may co-exist with mutilated notions of sin and atonement, with a superficial and inadequate faith in God. It is not for me to make delicate estimates of all the springs and currents of human life. But it is for me to proclaim this, that no life can ever be ethically perfected and glorified except through the power of the atonement. (*J. Thomas, M.A.*) **Then were all dead.**—*The fruit of Christ's death:*—When Christ died all believers were dead in Him to sin and to the world. I. THIS TRUTH IS ASSERTED IN SCRIPTURE (Rom. vi. 6; 1 Pet. iv. 1; Gal. ii. 20; Col. iii. 3-5). II. HOW CAN ALL BE SAID TO BE DEAD WHEN CHRIST DIED, SINCE MOST WERE NOT BORN? 1. Christ sustained the relation of our Head. It was not in His own name that He appeared before God's tribunal, but in ours, not as a private, but as a public person, so that when He was crucified all believers were crucified in Him, for the act of a common person is the act of every particular person represented by him, as a member of parliament serveth for his whole borough or county. Now that Christ was such a common person appeareth plainly by this, that Christ was to us in grace what Adam was to us in nature or sin (Rom. v. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 21, 45). 2. Christ was on the Cross not only as a common person, but as a surety. In His death there was not only a satisfaction for sin, but an obligation to destroy it (Rom. vi. 6). (1) On God's part Christ undertook to destroy the body of sin by the power of His Spirit (Titus iii. 5; Rom. viii. 13). (2) On our part He undertook that we should no longer serve sin, but use all godly endeavours for the subduing it. Christ's act being the act of a surety, He did oblige all the parties interested. 3. Our consent to this engagement is—(1) Actually given when we are converted (Rom. vi. 13). Till the merit of Christ's death be applied by faith to the hearts of sinners, they are alive to sin, but dead to righteousness; but then they are dead to sin, and alive to righteousness, and as alive yield up themselves to serve God in all things. (2) Solemnly implied in baptism (Rom. vi. 3-5). III. HOW CAN CHRISTIANS BE DEAD TO SIN AND THE WORLD, SINCE AFTER CONVERSION THEY FEEL SO MANY CARNAL MOTIONS? 1. By consenting to Christ's engagement they have bound themselves to die unto sin (Rom. vi. 2; Col. iii. 3-5). 2. When the work is begun, corruption is wounded to the very heart (Rom. vi. 14). 3. The work is carried on by degrees, and the strength of sin is weakened by the power of grace, though not totally subdued (Gal. v. 17). 4. Christ hath undertaken to subdue it wholly, and at length the soul shall be without spot, blemish, or wrinkle (Eph. v. 27; Phil. i. 6; 1 Thess. v. 23, 24). IV. WHAT USE THE DEATH OF CHRIST HATH TO MAKE US DIE UNTO SIN AND THE WORLD. 1. This was Christ's end. He died not only to expiate the guilt of sin, but also to take away its strength and power (1 John iii. 8; Gal. ii. 17). Now shall we make void the end of Christ's death, which was to oppose and resist sin? Shall we cherish that which He came to destroy? God forbid. Paul gloried in the Cross, as by it crucified to the world (Gal. vi. 14). 2. By way of representation, the death and agonies of Christ do set forth the hatefulness of sin. 3. It worketh on love. It should make sin hateful to consider what it did to Christ, our dearest Lord and Redeemer. 4. By way of merit. Christ shed His blood not only to redeem us from the displeasure of God and the rigour of the law, but from all iniquity (Titus ii. 14; 1 Peter i. 18; Gal. i. 4). Our dying to sin is a part of Christ's purchase as well as pardon. 5. By way of pattern. Christ hath taught us how to die to sin by the example of His own death, that is, He denied Himself for us that we might deny ourselves for Him. (*T. Manton, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves.**—*New life in Christ:*—By virtue of Christ's death and resurrection Christians obtain the grace of a new life. I. THERE IS A SPIRITUAL LIFE. Note—1. The correspondence between common life and this life of grace. (1) The natural life supposes generation, so does the spiritual (John iii. 3; 1 John ii. 27). (2) Where

there is life there is sense and feeling, especially if wrong and violence be offered to it, and so is the spiritual life bewrayed by the tenderness of the heart and the sense that we have of the interest of God. Can a man be alive and not feel it? And can you have the life of grace and not feel the decays and interruptions of it, and neither be sensible of comforts or injuries? (3) Where there is life there is appetite, an earnest desire after that which may feed and support this life. So spiritually (1 Pet. ii. 2; John vi. 27). The new nature hath its proper supports, and there will be something relished besides such things as gratify the animal life. In correspondence with this there will be a desire that carrieth us to that which is food to the soul, to Christ especially, and to the ordinances in which He is exhibited to us. (4) Where there is life there will be growth; so do the children of God grow in grace (Psa. xcii. 13). (5) Life is active and stirring. So spiritual life hath its operations; it cannot well be hid. Some only "have a name to live, and are dead." 2. The differences. They differ—(1) In dignity. Natural life is but a "wind," a "vapour," a continued sickness, but this is the life of God, and was a life bought at a dearer rate than the life of nature (John vi. 51). (2) In origin. The natural life is brought down unto us by many generations from the "first Adam." All that our parents could do was to make way for the union of soul and body together. But by this life we and Christ are united together, and He becomes a life-making spirit unto us. (3) In duration. All our labour here is to maintain a lamp that soon goes out, or to prop up a tabernacle that is always falling. But the spiritual life begins in grace and ends in glory. II. THE RESPECT THAT IS BETWEEN THIS LIFE AND CHRIST'S RESURRECTION. Christ's resurrection is—1. An example of it. (1) Christ died before He rose, and usually God killeth us before He maketh us alive. The word is a killing letter before it is a word of life (Rom. vii. 9). (2) The same Spirit of holiness that quickened Christ quickeneth us (Rom. i. 4, viii. 14). (3) Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more (Rom. vi. 9). So is a Christian put into an unchangeable state; sin hath no more dominion over him (John xi. 25, 26). 2. A pledge of it. And therefore He is called the firstfruits from the dead (1 Cor. xv. 20). His resurrection was in our name; therefore we are said to be raised with Christ (Col. iii. 1), and quickened together with Christ (Col. ii. 13; Eph. ii. 4, 5). 3. A cause of it. That Spirit of power by which Christ was raised out of the grave is the very efficient cause of our being raised and quickened (1 Peter i. 3; Eph. i. 19, 20). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The end of Christ's death for all men:*—Now what applies to the Old Testament Church applies also to the New Testament Church, for, if the love which God bestowed of old upon His people were to be compared to a drop, His love as now exhibited might be compared to an ocean. Much more, then, may God now look for fruits from those who compose that Church. Now the nature of the fruit which He expects is specified in the text, and it is this: a life which must be a life not unto ourselves, but unto "Him who died for us and rose again." I. WHAT IS THE MANNER OF LIFE WHICH SHOULD NOT BE; OR, WHAT IS BY NATURE THE LIFE UNTO SELF? The text is pretty clear in its condemnation of such a life, "That they should not live unto themselves." We may, then, usefully inquire, What is life to, or living to, oneself? It may be said to consist in following or pursuing our own wills, glory, ends, and lusts. 1. The will of man is by nature in direct opposition to the will of God. 2. But, besides following his own will, the natural man follows his own glory. 3. But we may be so unambitious, perhaps, as that the word glory may seem to be utterly inapplicable in our case; yet all have ends in view, though there may be no glory in them—plans, or something to which God's great end, for us, and which He sets before us in the Bible, is subordinated. First and foremost is self's end; it may be a lawful or reasonable end in itself, except as it is brought unduly and unlawfully forward. 4. There is a fourth following, which is neither glorious nor profitable, yet common, and the grossest; it is lust. Christ died that they who lived might live to some purpose. II. AS TO THE MANNER OF LIFE WHICH SHOULD BE, OR LIFE NOT TO SELF, BUT TO CHRIST. 1. The pattern Saint—with reverence be it said—whom God proposed for our imitation in the matter of the will, as in all things else, is an example. He was subjected to sufferings that He might, in the entire subjection of His own will to His Father's, teach us by example as well as precept. Our blessed Lord says, "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." 2. To live to Christ, also, they must seek not their own glory, but the glory of God. This did Christ Himself. 3. Living to Christ will also involve seeking the interests of Christ—not our own, but Christ's ends. 4. And there is a fourth pursuit if the believer is to crucify and to mortify the old man with his lusts and affections. "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice."

And among the fruits of the Spirit enumerated by St. Paul in writing to the Galatians (vi.) are "joy and peace." But you will observe an important clause of our text to have been as yet unnoticed—"That they which live." A third and concluding inquiry should be made concerning this life. III. WHAT IS IT? WHENCE COMES IT? It is the Spirit's work, and it is Christ's work, for "the Son quickeneth whom He will," and it "is the Spirit that quickeneth." Christ is called a "quickening Spirit" because of the power He exercises in this matter, and perhaps the first indication of His work is giving liberty to the will. (*O. W. W. Forester, M.A.*) *Self not the chief end of life*:—1. Self is the chief end of every natural man. "That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves"—implying that all men living, who are not under the actual benefit and efficacy of our Saviour's death, do live to themselves. 2. The end of our Saviour's dying and rising again was to change the corrupt end of the creature. 3. Therefore we must be taken off from ourselves as our end, and be fixed upon another, even upon Christ, else we answer not the end of Christ's death and resurrection. 4. It is highly equitable that, if Christ died for us and was raised for us as our happiness, we should live to His glory, and make Him our end in all our actions and the whole course of our lives. The apostle uses this consideration as an argument, and as a copy and exemplar. Therefore, as He rose to justify us, we must rise to glorify Him. (*Bp. Hackett.*) *Fully consecrated to Christ*:—Mr. Moody, in one of his addresses, said, "I see a man on this platform—I do not know if he remembers it—but when I was here in 1867, there was a merchant who came over from Dublin, and was talking with this business man in London; and as I happened to look in, this business man in London introduced me to the man from Dublin. The Dublin man said to the London man, alluding to me, 'Is this young man all O O?' Said the London man, 'What do you mean by O O?' Said the Dublin man, 'Is he Out and Out for Christ?' I tell you it burned down into my soul. This friend said, 'I was a little ashamed,' but I thought I was not, though I was a young man then." *Living to Christ*:—Living to Christ in small things and living for Christ every day is the secret of large fruitfulness. A peach-tree or an orange does not leap into a bounty of fruit by one spasmodic effort; an orchard does not ripen under a single day's sunshine. Every rain-drop, every sunbeam, every inch of subsoil does its part. A fruitful Christian is a growth. To finish up a godly character by a mere religion of Sundays and sermons and sacraments and revivals and special seasons is impossible. A man may be converted in an instant, but he must grow by the year. The tough fibre of the slender branch that can hold up a half-bushel of oranges is very different from a little willow-switch; it is the steady, compacting process that makes that little limb like a steel wire. Such is a healthy and holy believer's life. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *Henceforth*:—In passing over a mountainous country the traveller comes at length to the water-shed. Up till he reached that elevation the brook has been meeting him; but so soon as he has crossed it a new-born rivulet runs dancing along with him. The external features of this ridge may be different in different cases. In one they may be clearly defined; in another they may be so little marked that it may be difficult to say where precisely the transition has been made, and the tourist can only tell that he has made it when he sees the new direction which the water is taking. But however it may be outwardly indicated, the fact remains that at such a ridge a few yards will determine whether the water falling from the clouds will find its destination in one ocean or another. Now the moment of conversion is the water-shed of life. Sometimes the transition is distinctly defined; sometimes it is hardly discernible; yet always it is the turning-point of a man's eternity. This is the point which is indicated by the "henceforth" of my text. Mark—I. WHAT PRECEDES IT. There are three descriptions of the life before conversion given by Paul. 1. In the verse before us. To live unto ourselves is to make self the ruler, and selfishness the motive of our existence. Everybody hisses at the miser, but many actions which are accounted noble are just as selfish as his. 2. In Eph. iv. 7. Walking "as other Gentiles walk" exactly delineates the kind of life which multitudes are leading. They do as other people do; and if a thing is customary, that is held by them to be a sufficient reason for their practising it. They never ask what is the will of God in the matter. Is a man asked to contribute to some good object, then instead of inquiring whether in God's sight he ought to give, and if so, how much, he will say, "Let me see who are subscribing, and what amounts." Is he besought to help some struggling cause, then his inquiry will be, not what Christ would have him do, but whether any persons of respectability are connected with it. Is he in doubt as to the propriety

of some course of conduct, his scruples are removed when you tell him that this one and that one of the fashionables do the same. 3. In Rom. vi. 6. Up to the "henceforth" they had been serving sin; and, indeed, this is said in so many words in the 17th verse. This is the most terrible description of the three—"Ye were the slaves of sin," and the meaning is that in the unconverted sin has the entire mastery. By habitual indulgence in it they have given it the upper hand, and now it holds them in chains which they themselves have formed. II. WHAT FOLLOWS IT. We have no such variety as in the former case, for though error is manifold, truth is one. There are different ways to perdition, but there is only one to glory. There may be diversity of phase, but the same root principle exists in every true believer. "To me to live is Christ"; "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." These profound utterances imply that what before was self in the apostle was now Christ. "What things before were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ." Now it is the same with every real Christian. When a man truly passes this "henceforth," his whole being runs Christward. The volume of the river may be small at first; but, small as it is, its direction is decided, and it gathers magnitude as it flows. He has Christ enthroned in his heart as the Lord of his love; over his intellect as his instructor in knowledge; over his will as the guide of his choice; over his life as the director of his conduct; yea, he can say with truth that he is Christ's, as well as that Christ is his. III. WHAT PRODUCES IT. The influence on a man's heart of the love of Christ as that is manifested in His atoning death for him. Look at the history of Paul's own conversion, and you will see that the change in him was brought about through his belief that Jesus died for his sins and rose again for his justification. Now it is the same with the convert yet. It is his faith that Jesus Christ the Son of God loved him and gave Himself for him, which through the agency of the Holy Ghost brings about this transformation. Christ is only a Saviour, or at most the Saviour, till I appropriate Him, but when I do that He is my Saviour; and that moment is the "henceforth" of my life. Conclusion: But some one may ask, Why should I seek to pass this "henceforth"? What is there about conversion that makes it of such importance? 1. It is essential to your reconciliation with God, and your enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven. 2. It will intensify your happiness. 3. It will increase your usefulness. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ.—*The Christian has new views.*—I. OF MEN. 1. He once estimated them by their earthly circumstances. 2. He now esteems them according to their moral and religious worth. II. OF CHRIST. 1. He once despised and lightly esteemed Him. 2. He now regards Him as his Saviour and Lord. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*)

Spiritual knowledge.—I. OF CHRIST. 1. Is not that the same as wanting to forget the Saviour's humanity? Should we have only a glorified Christ as the object of our contention? No. Paul simply refuses to boast, as did those false teachers who troubled his ministry, of having known Christ in Judæa; he knows Christ only according to the spirit—*i.e.*, as his Saviour, which is the essential thing. 2. Let us draw from this thought an important lesson. Who has not envied Christ's contemporaries? It seems to us that had we seen and heard Him, our hearts would have been more moved, and doubt would have been impossible. (1) Now listen to Christ Himself. A woman cries out, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee." He answers, "Rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." A man says, "Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without." He answers, "My mother and My brethren are those who hear the Word of God and do it." His apostles would like to retain Him. He says, "It is expedient for you that I go away." Mary Magdalene would lay hold on Him. Jesus answers her, "Touch Me not!" What does all this mean if not that it is by the soul, before everything, by faith that Jesus would be known and possessed. This, then, is the consoling conclusion, that neither time nor distance hinders Jesus from being known and His presence felt. And is not all this bright with evidence? Was not the Church which saw Christ feeble, timid, and sluggish, and did not Christ have to leave her that she might receive the baptism from on high? Did His discourses ever produce the wonderful effect which they have produced since? Why, He touches more hearts in a single day now than during the three years of His ministry! (2) You envy the privilege of His disciples. Are you certain that His mean condition would not have turned you from Him? Who knows if you would not have denied Him? Supposing, however, that you had remained faithful to Him, would you have understood His work? Would you not have been attached to His earthly person more than to His Divine mission—would you have loved Him according to the spirit, as He would

have Himself loved? 3. What is knowing Christ after the flesh to-day? This: To melt at the recollection of Jesus with an emotion entirely human; to weep over Him as the victim of human fanaticism; to honour His relics and memory. He is known according to the spirit. When at the foot of His Cross, it is not over Him, but over ourselves, that people weep; when in His death they contemplate not His sufferings merely, but more especially His sacrifice; when they act in union with His work, rejoice in His triumphs, and prepare for His coming. II. OF MEN. 1. A signification has been given to these words which provokes a righteous protest. We see Christians, under the pretext of an imaginary perfection, break in under all the ties of flesh and blood, renounce their families, and, having put before them the wall of monastic vows, say to them, "I know you no longer!" Spiritual heroism, people exclaimed—brilliant triumphs gained over the flesh! Is that what the gospel teaches us? No! St. Paul tells us that the Christian who neglects his kindred is worse than an infidel. If, then, under pretext of renouncing the flesh, people should violate or neglect natural laws, they have against them not only Nature's voice, but God's. There will be cited here the numerous passages in which our Lord unsparingly condemns all those who, before following Him, consult flesh and blood. "If any man hate not," &c. But He speaks of choosing between duty and delight—between the law of God and the affections of the family. Here our conscience gives Christ a full assent. But far from this be the system which condemns the life of the heart, the joys of existence and the flesh, as evil in themselves. 2. What must, then, be understood by "I know no one after the flesh"? In every man there are two natures—flesh and spirit. To the eyes of flesh you are rich, poor—a master, a servant, &c.; to the eyes of the spirit you are a child of God. Now, St. Paul declares to us that henceforth what he would know in every man is the spiritual and immortal nature. Before Christ, what was a poor man, a slave, a publican? Now, to the eyes of Jesus the soul of the lowest harlot weighs as much when put in the scales as the soul of Cæsar. Everywhere He only sees sinners to be saved; to all He offers the same language, grants the same love. In the school of Christ Paul learnt to see in the Festuses and Agrippas only lost souls, whom he will cause to hear the truth which saves without being preoccupied with their sceptre or their crown; it is there that he learnt to preach the gospel to an Aquila and a Lydia, with the very same love as had it been the soul of the Pro-consul Sergius or the Governor Publius. It is thus that we must know men. The world has its distinctions of rank, of learning, of fortune, and they are necessary. Should you overturn them to-day they would reappear to-morrow. Let us respect them. But let us know men by what they have that is great and immortal. (*F. Bersier, D.D.*) *Men not to be known after the flesh*:—Not to know men after the flesh is not to judge of men according to endowments, though never so glittering, which arise only from fleshly principles. To esteem man by inward grace. Men esteem not their fields for the gay wild flowers in them, but for the corn and fruit; "yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." We do not glory in Him, because He was of kin to us, according to the flesh. We look upon Him no more, only as a miraculous man; but we know Him as the great Redeemer of the world. We consider Him in those excellent things He hath done, those excellent graces which He hath communicated, those excellent offices He doth exercise; we know Him, after a spiritual manner, as the Author of all grace. 1. Natural men have no delight in anything but secular concerns; love nothing but for their own advantage; admire not any true spiritual worth. 2. An evidence of being taken off from ourselves and living to Christ is our valuation either of ourselves or others, according to holiness. And as a new creature is framed after the image of God, so his affections and valuations of men or things are according to God's esteem of them. 3. Our professions of Christ, serving Him and loving Him barely for ourselves and for fleshly ends doth not consist with regeneration. Such a love is a love to ourselves, not to Christ. 4. We should eye Christ and arise to the knowledge of Him, as He is advanced and exalted by God. (*Bishop Hackett.*) *The new knowledge of Christ and man*:—Paul had just said, "One died for all, therefore all died"—i.e., according to God's thoughts and purpose, the whole race, when Christ died, ceased to belong to the visible and transient world; and we, entering into the thought of God, "henceforth know no man after the flesh." In death all earthly distinctions disappear. The rich man is rich, the poor man is poor no longer, &c. But further, "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more." There were Christian people then living who had seen Christ, and this was surely a great distinction and blessedness; but it may have been

a peril to them. I can imagine them assuming a certain superiority over their brethren. "We did not receive the gospel from Paul, or Apollos, or Peter, but from the Christ Himself." And I can also imagine that others, when the memory of our Lord's earthly life was so fresh, would feel an absorbing interest in all that they could learn about Christ as a man among men, and would come to think of Him under the common conditions of human life. There are some of us, Paul seems to say, who have known Christ after the flesh; but what does it matter that we remember His face, voice, manner, dress? To us He is not first of all a fellow-countryman, whom we used to see in the Synagogue on the Sabbath, and whose brethren and sisters and friends we knew; or a wonderful religious teacher, who in our presence said many wonderful things and did many wonderful works. To us He is the Eternal Son of God, the Brother of all men. His earthly life has passed into a larger, mightier, and more glorious life. Paul's gospel began where the gospel of those who knew Christ after the flesh ended—with the suffering and the death of Christ. "I delivered unto you among the first things that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures." All that went before Paul passed over very lightly. Consider: I. THE NEW KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. To Paul, Christ was infinitely more than an august and pathetic tradition, and He must be infinitely more to us if we are to preach the gospel with any effect. 1. We shall miss the substance of our message if we know Christ after the flesh. From the materials given to us in His teaching and history, we may construct a beautiful system of ethics and a noble conception of God, but we shall still miss the most animating and effective part of the gospel. Christianity is a historical religion; but the history on which our faith is founded did not come to an end eighteen hundred years ago. Through sixty generations men of every land have discovered for themselves that He is living still. Not in the remembrance of Christ, but in the living, personal Christ—a great multitude whom no man can number have found God. The life of every Christian man adds to the great story new miracles of mercy and power wrought by Christ. The Canon is not closed. Every age contributes material for new gospels. We have not to teach men a mere method of salvation revealed by Christ eighteen centuries ago. The Christian method of salvation is the method by which Christ Himself saves men now. With a dead Christ, belonging to a remote age, and not able and eager to save men now, the Christian method of salvation would be worthless. 2. To have seen the Lord after He had risen, was one of the qualifications for the apostleship; and the apostles were not merely witnesses that Christ had died and had risen again. When Christ rose He passed into new and higher regions of life. His appearances during the forty days had this among other purposes, to bring home to them the immense change through which He had passed, and to discipline their faith in the reality of His presence in the invisible and eternal order. They saw that the limitations of His human life had been dissolved, and they were gradually prepared to receive His own wonderful words, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth." Not till they had this new knowledge of Christ could they be sent to make disciples of all nations. 3. Now, have we that kind of knowledge of Christ which is necessary both for our work at home and for our missions to the heathen? Do we think it enough to know Christ after the flesh? During the last forty years there has been a remarkable awakening of interest in the earthly history of our Lord. There are tens of thousands who have been reading the four gospels from their childhood who feel as if they had come to know Jesus of Nazareth for the first time. They have been able to place Him in His true relations to His age and to His country. The whole story has become real and solid to them. They know Him almost as well as the men and women knew Him who actually saw and heard Him. There is a real value in knowledge of this kind. But if our most effective conception of Christ is a mere historical conception, then we know Christ after the flesh. And our knowledge is rudimentary and imperfect. We must see Him descend into the mystery of death, wait for His emergence from darkness, join in the songs which hail His resurrection, see Him ascending to the throne of God, rejoice that He belongs, not merely to the distant past, but that He is the contemporary of all generations; rejoice that He is here, not under the limitations of His earthly life, but in the glorious fulness of Divine power, surrounded with the splendour of God's eternal kingdom. 4. It was one of the innumerable evils which Romanism inflicted on Christendom that it held constantly before the eyes the exhausted, agonised form of Christ on the Cross, and so deprived men of the animation and courage inspired by the knowledge that He is now on the throne of the Eternal. A similar loss may be

inflicted on ourselves if our thoughts are imprisoned within the limits of His earthly life, and if we do not exult in His resurrection and in His constant presence in the Church. Are we, then, to forget His earthly history? Ah, no! But we know Him, not as His contemporaries knew Him, but with a larger and deeper knowledge. That poverty, that homelessness, that physical exhaustion, that agony—behind them all we see the Divine glory. In Christ, even during His earthly years, we look “not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are not seen and eternal.” 5. And there are times when, if the story of the historic Christ is to command confidence, it must be sustained by the testimony of living men who have been delivered by the living Christ from the consciousness of guilt, from evil passion, and habit, and eternal death. Indeed, according to the ordinary methods of the Divine mercy, it is this personal testimony that moves the hearts of men to repent and inspires them with faith.

II. THE NEW KNOWLEDGE OF MAN. It is not enough that we cease to know Christ after the flesh. The fires of missionary enthusiasm will burn low unless we are also able to say we henceforth know no man after the flesh. We must see men not merely in their place in the visible and temporal order, but environed with the invisible and the eternal order. 1. This man has immense wealth, but has he risen with Christ and made sure of the everlasting inheritance? If not, how poor! That man is poor, ill-clad, lives a hard and cheerless life, but is he in Christ? Yes; then how rich, for he is the heir of God's eternal righteousness and glory! So with regard to princes and paupers, learned and ignorant, moralists and profligates, to achieve the dignity to which the eternal purpose of God destined even the obscurest of mankind. That man is a slave, but is he one with Christ? If he is, eternal glories sit already on his brow, and he may stand at last among the principalities and powers of the kingdom of heaven. This man has learning, keen and vigorous intellect, genius which will give him fame through many generations, but does he know the Eternal? If not, he has missed the knowledge which it supremely concerns him to possess. That man, as men deem, knows nothing, his mind is dull and uneducated, he has never mastered even the elements of science, the songs of great poets have never kindled his imagination, he has never heard even the names of the great teachers of the race; but does he know Christ? Yes? Then he has been taught of God and received the illumination of the Holy Ghost, and has a wisdom transcending all the wisdom of the schools. 2. And in the presence of races degraded through a long succession of generations, we must not despair, for they are living in a redeemed world; every man is dear to God, and by the power of His Spirit may rise to unknown heights of righteousness and glory. We must know no man “after the flesh.” 3. We must not know ourselves after the flesh if we are to have the strength which the great tasks to which we are called demand. Who are we that we should hope to change the religious faith of hundreds of millions of men? What resources have we for so immense a work? We should lose all heart and courage if we measured ourselves against the difficulties, the impossibilities of our enterprise. But we are greater than we seem. We are one with Christ, who descended from the heights of God to seek and to save the lost, and who, now that He has returned to His glory, is seeking and saving them still. And it is He that is seeking, He that is saving them, through us. His power sustains our weakness, and in our very weakness is perfected. Let us be of good courage; all things are possible to us, for we are one with Him. (*R. W. Dale, D.D.*)

How to view our fellow-men:—As a new creature (ver. 17), he who is in Christ takes a new view of almost all the objects by which he is surrounded. The eyes of his understanding being enlightened, he sees them in a new light, and that a true light. He gets a new view of sin, of Christ, of time, of this world, of himself, and, lastly, of his fellow-men. Henceforth he knows no man after the flesh. I. WE SEE THE WORTH OF OUR OWN SOULS, AND THAT THE SOULS OF OTHERS ARE OF EQUAL WORTH. The father realises that his children have souls, which, like his own, will exist for ever. The mother, as she rocks her infant to rest on her bosom, knows that the heart which has begun to beat in that little frame will not find rest till it is laid on the breast of Jesus. We are not surrounded by the mere creatures of a day, but by responsible and undying men, whose souls shall exist as long as God Himself. II. WE SEE THAT AS BY NATURE WE ARE UNDER THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION, SO OTHERS ARE UNDER THE SAME SENTENCE. When is it that we think most of an earthly friend, and are most deeply interested in his welfare? Is it when he is known to be in safety, or is it not rather when he is in peril? When is it that the wife thinks most of the husband, and the sister feels the deepest interest in the brother? Is it not when laid on a bed of distress, or when

fighting with the billows of death? It was to seek and save that which was lost that Christ left the bosom of the Father and came to this cold world, and died amidst the agonies of the Cross. Those who have the same mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus will hasten to be fellow-workers with Him in saving souls from death. III. AS HAVING ATTAINED THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST'S PEACE, WE SEEK THAT OTHERS MAY SHARE IT WITH US. As long as we were without Christ and Christ's peace, we did not know the value of them, and so could not be expected heartily to recommend them to others. But when we have "tasted that the Lord is good," then we can enlarge upon our own experience, and we feel that if we were but the instruments of communicating that peace to others, we would be conveying a greater amount of good than by the largest temporal benefits. IV. WHEN WE LOVE CHRIST OURSELVES, THEN OUR HEARTS ARE DRAWN TOWARDS THOSE WHO, LIKE US, LOVE THE LORD JESUS. Man is, in his very nature, a social being. It is this principle abused which congregates the wicked. It is the same attraction, now sanctified, which brings together the children of God. And how often has it happened that, when holding sacred converse with one another, Jesus Himself has joined us, as He did the two disciples on the road to Emmaus? V. THESE VIEWS AND MOTIVES WILL IMPEL THOSE WHO ARE SWAYED BY THEM TO DO GOOD AS GOD MAY GIVE THEM OPPORTUNITY. All genuine religion begins within, but while it begins within, it does not end there; it begins within only as all streams commence in some mountain where are their heaven-fed fountains; but it flows out like the stream, and carries with it a refreshing and fertilising influence. Watering, in this way, the objects immediately around them, Christian faith and zeal will flow towards more distant objects, towards the world at large. The prayer will be that, beginning at Jerusalem—that is, at home—the gospel be preached to every creature. Conclusion: From this survey we see—1. What is the grand function of the organised Church; it is to proclaim the way, sustain the truth, and propagate the life. 2. The grand aim of Church ordinances. We are to secure, in regard to them, that they be in thorough accordance with the Word of God, and that they be employed to edify the Church, and not for the purpose of gratifying the senses or stimulating the imagination. 3. What is the style of preaching most fitted to advance the kingdom of God? It is preaching founded on Scripture, that speaks of Christ, and speaks to all—to rich and poor, to rich and barbarian, to old and young. It is a great evil in our community, the separation of rich and poor, especially in our great cities. But it is vastly greater when it is permitted to enter the house of God, which is meant to counteract and soften the severances of the world. (*J. McCosh, D.D.*) *St. Paul's gospel* :—I wonder what impression that strange sentence produces upon the mind of an average Englishman. Does it give him any intelligible idea at all? Yet St. Paul undoubtedly regarded that sentence as one of the most important he ever wrote. It reminds us of the striking difference between him and the other apostles. While Christ lived on earth St. Paul never knew Him. Now the apostles and the Jewish Christians generally attached the very greatest importance to the fact that they had thus known Christ. St. Paul, on the other hand, instead of bewailing his disqualification, as they represented it, declared with special emphasis it made no difference at all. You will remember how emphatically in a characteristic passage in Galatians he repudiated the idea that he owed anything at all to the other apostles. They were in no sense his superiors. They were in no sense better qualified for their office because they had known Christ after the flesh and he had not. When he met these apostles who had known Christ in the flesh he declared, "They, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me" (Gal. ii. 6). He declares that their knowledge of Christ after the flesh was no advantage to them; and in the passage before us he goes so far as to say that if he himself had known Christ after the flesh he would have rid himself of the knowledge, for that knowledge at that particular time was a danger and a temptation. It led men to exaggerate the importance of those things about Christ which were seen and temporal, and to overlook to some extent those things which alone were of everlasting importance. As a matter of fact, those who did thus know Christ after the flesh either never realised His true glory, or were many long years in coming to the knowledge of Him. Have you ever realised the startling fact that St. Paul never once refers to the lovely life of our Lord as recorded in the gospels? He never mentions any of His miracles, parables, words, or deeds. His silence teaches us, even more significantly than his speech, that the essence of the gospel lies far below the mere details, incomparable as they are, of the human life of our Lord. You and I are particularly interested in this remarkable feature of St. Paul's experience, for we are like him. We

are not like St. Peter, who was a disciple from the beginning. We never met Christ, we never heard His loving voice. We may have an immeasurably better knowledge of Him. We may know Him as St. Paul himself knew Him, in the deepest sense of the word, better than any one else, except St. John. How did he know Him? His knowledge is expressed in that ever-memorable phrase, "It was the good pleasure of God, who separated me from my mother's womb, to reveal His Son in me." Not outside of me, but *in* me. O, what does that mean? It means that there are two totally different ways of contemplating Jesus Christ. We may dwell on the known incidents of that lovely life just as we might dwell upon Plato's incomparable account of the trial and death of Socrates. Any such study of the mere fragmentary history of the beautiful incidents in the human life of our Lord is as inspiring as it is ennobling. But it is outside of us. It does not stir the depths of our being. Or, on the other hand, we may think of Jesus Christ in a totally different way—as the Risen Christ, the Living Christ, the Christ in whom we all at this very moment live and move and have our being; the Christ who is literally in every one of us. This, indeed, is what St. Paul called "my gospel"—the gospel which God sent to him by revelation, the gospel which he was better qualified to propound, because he was not confused by any knowledge of Christ after the flesh. St. Paul himself was amazed and perplexed and agitated, and said, What is the matter with me? I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews. I have kept all the law, and yet I am as wretched as I can be. Then he discovered that it was Christ who made him wretched. At last, he said, "It pleased God to reveal Himself in me. Then I realised that there could be no happiness for me until I submitted to the Divine Saviour. Thank God, I did not know Him after the flesh, for I might then have been prevented from knowing as I know now, that He is the great light of God, who lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Take the case of an agnostic, who declares that he never felt the least religious emotion, a man of high character and very scrupulous conscience. You say to me, How do you reconcile that case with your theory of Christ being in the heart of every man? Quite easily. If in midwinter you wander with me into the wood, would you say it was dead? Not a leaf, not a bud, not a blade of grass. But you are not deceived by the superficial appearance. You wait for the sunshine and the rain, and you shall see the summer. And in the case of this agnostic, wait until your Father in heaven has sent him the sunshine of His love and the rain of His grace, and you shall find strange stirrings in the depths of his soul, for Christ is in him, as He is in all of us. This is, indeed, what St. Paul meant in the first part of my text, where he says, "We henceforth know no man after the flesh." He not only refused to know Christ after the flesh, but he refused to know anybody else after the flesh. He could not think of any man apart from the Divine Christ. He never thought of any man without realising that Christ was in every man. You are not a mere man or woman to me. You are men and women redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. You are human beings dear to God, dearer than you are to yourself or anybody else. (*H. Price Hughes, M.A.*)

The perpetuity of the Divine incarnation :—I. CONSIDER WHAT THE APOSTLE MEANT. It is very probable that he had in view those who underrated his authority because he had not been one of the original disciples, and so seen Christ face to face. And it was of course but natural, that as years stole on, greater interest and authority would attach to those who, like Peter and John, had held converse with the Redeemer. Whether St. Paul ever beheld the Saviour has been questioned. On the one hand, if he had seen Him, we should expect some mention of it; on the other, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, he could scarcely, we imagine, have failed to have his attention drawn to the miracles and teaching of Christ, and if so would scarcely have failed to obtain a sight of Him. The text sounds as though he were himself uncertain about the matter. And it is quite easy to imagine that he may have been in one of the many crowds which at various seasons gathered round our Lord; and yet have been so situated as to be uncertain whether he had really caught sight of His sacred form. However this be, he declares at any rate that henceforth he would neither build nor exalt himself upon that knowledge. 1. But did the apostle mean that from that time he would cease to think of Him as clothed with flesh and meditate only upon His Divinity? Surely not. So to have done would have been to lose sight of one of the most stupendous truths of the gospel—viz., that Christ Jesus is at this moment in the likeness of man. The Eternal Word when He became incarnate became so for ever. Oh! if we desired to set before you in all its marvellousness the great miracle of the incarnation, it is not

through the dimness of past centuries to the valleys of Judah that we would try to lead your thoughts. Beyond the third heaven, where the cherubim and seraphim are ever waiting, where the song that none can learn is ever swelling, and the unspeakable words which it is not lawful for men to utter are ever sounding, in the centre of the light inaccessible, we would teach you to behold the form of Man. And we cannot but observe how thorough recognition of the present manhood of Christ satisfies the longing of the human heart for a sympathetic being in the object of worship. 2. Think you it was this truth, so rich in consolation for all who are partakers of human nature, that St. Paul resolved to put from his mind? Rather was it this truth on which he purposed to build exclusive of all others. He would not in completing the Incarnation be ever going back to the remembrance of the Saviour in His body of weakness, when he might fill his soul with the thought of that same body radiant in beauty, the centre of the heavenly host. The form of the Son of Man as seen at Jerusalem, was but the first and most transitory revelation of the great miracle of Mary's conception; the nobler and more lasting results of the same Divine child-bearing were the sight by faith of the same form of a man for ever enthroned on high. Who wonders then that the inspired apostle, thus looking to the present and the future, was ready to forget the past, and that as the vision of the excellent glory rose up in his mind, he cast behind him the remembrance of his God in His humiliation? II. THE LESSONS FOR US. 1. There is amongst us a great tendency to view the days of Christ's personal sojourn upon earth as days of extraordinary privilege. 2. Now in opposition to these ideas, we conceive Scripture to intimate that we are the more highly favoured. Christ Himself said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." (1) We can hardly fail to perceive that the sight of God must have been itself a temptation to unbelief. Was there, think you, nothing hard in realising the fact, that the Being to whom they spoke as man to man was very God? If, therefore, His bodily presence was a source of joy, so also was it a source of temptation. Many a man who believes Christ is God, now that He is unseen, would have disbelieved if he had beheld Him in the form of a servant. (2) And this being so, we would remind you that Christ is really present with His redeemed now, as He was with His disciples in Galilee. An object is not less real because it is unseen. What spiritual advantages did the disciples reap from proximity to their Master? He was their counsellor; and will He not teach us? He was their support; and are not His everlasting arms around us? Now, moreover, He is not only present, but omnipresent. They could be separated from Him for awhile; we can never be parted. (*Bp. Woodford.*) *The brotherhood of man*.—"Henceforth know we no man after the flesh." In these words St. Paul is evidently contrasting the view he had been accustomed to entertain respecting his fellow-men before his conversion to Christ, with that he took now that he had been brought under the influence of Christian truth. Then he estimated men "after the flesh," *i.e.*, he judged them by earthly standards. These were the questions he would doubtless have asked himself respecting any upon whom he wished to pass judgment: What is his descent? Where has he been instructed? Has he passed through the schools of philosophy sitting at Gamaliel's feet? What are his professions? Does he fast twice a week? But now that he had been brought into contact with Christ Jesus, and had become the recipient of His salvation, he estimated men according to a very different standard. Then, "after the flesh," but now after the spirit. And these, we may reasonably suppose, are the inquiries which would rise within him: Have they the spirit of Christ? Are their hearts right in the sight of God? Do they love and practice the principles of the gospel of peace? This twofold method of estimating men prevails still. If you judge men after the flesh, the undoubted effect will be to narrow and to contract your sympathies. Adopting such a test as this, society will necessarily be broken up into fragments, each caring only for itself; the man of rank caring only for those of noble descent, the man of wealth for those of large possessions, or the man of culture for those of educated tastes, while the mass of those who possess none of the enrichments will be left to themselves. Only let men be judged, not "after the flesh," but according to their character, and large-heartedness, and world-embracing love will take the place of that exclusiveness which the opposite course engenders. "The Lord looketh at the heart." He recognised in the fallen those who were capable of being raised from their degradation, and of loving and serving Him in holiness and righteousness. And beholding thus their moral and spiritual capabilities, His heart yearned for their uplifting. The fulness of time at length arrived. Or think of St. Paul. He resolved that he would henceforth judge men after their character, and not after

the flesh, and the effect of this decision was that he saw some around him who had clearly become renewed in the spirit of their minds—who had become new creatures in Christ Jesus. And even so with ourselves, if we only view men in the light of their spiritual character and capacities, the effect will unquestionably be that we shall find among all classes in society men whose lives are marked by the principles of righteousness, and beholding what “the truth as it is in Jesus” has wrought for them, and conscious that it can effect similar results wherever it is received, we shall be constrained to labour for its extension throughout the world, that thus the entire moral aspect of the universe may be changed, the desert rejoicing and blossoming as the rose, earth becoming like heaven. And thus we see that the religion of Christ calls forth the sympathy and love of men towards the entire race to which they belong. The apostle adds: “Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” In this early Church gathered in the city of Corinth there were several parties. In condemning the divisions which had thus arisen, the apostle uses the words: “Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.” Now the question is naturally suggested, what could be the meaning of any who said, “I am of Christ.” It would appear that the persons who said this were converts from Judaism, and who claimed some special relationship to Christ, arising from the fact that they had seen Him when He sojourned upon earth. We are now prepared to apprehend the meaning of St. Paul in the words before us. He felt that he might as justly as any of them rejoice in having seen Christ in the flesh; but he would not, in that he felt there was a far higher view of Christ than that of gazing upon His outward form, even the apprehension by faith of the spiritual presence of the Redeemer; the contemplation of His character and spirit, and the so beholding of this as to enter into it, and to be changed into the same from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. It was after this that his noble spirit aspired. It must not be supposed that the apostle was indifferent to the great fact of the humanity of the Son of God; indeed, is there any writer, save the Evangelist John, who refers more frequently or touchingly to this than St. Paul? Does he not remind the Galatians how that in the fulness of time, “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman,” &c. And, in this respect, the apostle presents a worthy pattern to us. Like him, let us not look so much to that which is material, as to that which is spiritual in relation to Christ Jesus. It behoves us, therefore, to be careful that we do not lose sight of that spiritual apprehension of the Saviour which alone can meet the requirements, and satisfy the aspirations of the soul of man. It is even so. He is the eternal One. He is the very Son of God. And having been made perfect through suffering, He has entered into His glory. His humiliation is past, and He is now exalted at God’s right hand. The kingly diadem encircles His brow. We have known Him after the flesh, battling with poverty, and with temptation and sin, with woe and death, but henceforth we know Him thus no more. He is the victor now—the King of glory. (S. D. Hillman.)

Ver. 17. Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature.—In Christ and what it involves:—I. THE NEW RELATION INDICATED. The believer is “in Christ.”

1. As the ground of his acceptance (Phil. iii. 9). Christ by His atoning sacrifice has supplied the grounds whereby sinful men may become objects of complacent regard to God. We are lost in ourselves, but are to find ourselves in Him, surrounded by His merits as with a wall of defence, sheltered by them as by an all-embracing canopy. This alone is the position “wherein we are accepted in the beloved.”

2. As deriving from Him his spiritual life (John xv. 4, 5; cf. Gal. ii. 20). The link of union being faith. Christ is “the living soul” of the spiritual life of the believer. The order is, first the believer enters into Christ by faith, then Christ enters into the believer by power. The branch is in the tree by union with it, and the tree is in the branch by the life it imparts to it in the nourishing sap.

3. As the sphere of his activities. Suppose, *e.g.*, a person hears a glowing account of Australia. He believes every word of the account. By this act of faith Australia enters his heart, and he becomes possessed by an intense desire to get there. Physically, Australia and he are thousands of miles apart, but morally Australia dwells in his heart, and has become a motive power within him, and will not give him rest until it brings him bodily there. He ventures across the ocean, until he finds himself actually in the country which was already in his heart. Here, now, he lives and acts. Thus it is with the believer; the whole fabric of his life becomes permeated by its spirit and purposes. Such expressions as “in sin,” “in faith,” “in wisdom,” “in

love," "in the spirit," mean that the particular things in which the person is said to be, form the sphere of his activity, the circle in which he moves, the atmosphere in which he breathes. And this devotedness of life to Christ is not limited to the religious activities, but includes all secular employments. II. THE NEW EXPERIENCES INVOLVED IN THIS RELATION. 1. He who is in Christ is a new creation. In what sense? Clearly not in any physical or constitutional sense, for in that case he would not be the same person after the change. The latter portion of the text explains the nature of this important process. It is not the person that passes away, but his things, his former principles, motives, aims, and habits: and new ones have been substituted. 2. This change involves an entire reversal of the whole tenor of the life. Take, *e.g.*, the steam locomotive. Its course is in a certain direction, but connected with it is the reversing gear. By the action of this gear the engine which may be seen proceeding with such speed in one direction may in a few minutes be seen moving with equal velocity in the contrary direction. The change does not involve any change in its construction, but only in its course; every wheel, rod, and crank that worked before works now, only in the reverse direction. This represents the change effected upon the believer through his relation to Christ. There has been no change effected in his constitution, only the whole course of his activities has been changed as to direction. And the change in these respects has been so entire as to justify the statement that he who has undergone it is a new creature. The new life is so different from the old, so changed as to its employment and aims, as to be like the life of another person. Paul himself is a striking exemplification of this truth. (*A. J. Parry.*) *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*:—When the Apostle Paul said this, I suppose he was thinking of himself. What a different man he had become since he was a Christian! I do not wonder that he thought himself almost a new creation by the Almighty Maker. How many old things had passed away; how many new things had come! His whole manner of thought had been revolutionised. Before, he was on the highway to position and honour in the Jewish Church; now, he was reviled as an apostate. He had entered a new world of thought and life. But notice the stress laid by the apostle, here and elsewhere, on that little preposition "in." It is to be *in* Christ which makes one a new creature. So he says, "My wish is that I may be found *in* Him"; and in another place, "When God revealed His Son *in* Me." It is one thing to be with Christ, and another thing to be *in* Him. If we had been with Christ when He was walking the streets of Capernaum or Jerusalem, we might not have thought much about it. Nicodemus was with Him, and had a long conversation with Jesus, but does not seem to have come again. Judas was with Jesus during all His ministry, and then betrayed Him. We are all of us with Jesus, in a certain sense, by being taught about Him from childhood, by growing up in the midst of Christian society. But we are not necessarily in sympathy or union with Him on that account. Our purposes may be very different from His. Contiguity is not union. How often parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, live together, side by side, for years, in utter ignorance of each other's inmost thoughts, sorrows, experiences, and hopes. They do not understand each other at all; for it is mutual love, not proximity, which leads to mutual knowledge. Nor is it enough even to be strongly attached to others, and clingingly devoted to them. That does not necessarily produce real union. We may cling to them externally, yet never be in them, never get a glimpse of the real secret of their lives. It was the sort of feeling with which a snail sticks to the rock, or a barnacle to a ship's bottom—because they need something strong and solid to cling to. To cling to another for our own comfort is not to be *in* him. So some persons cling to Jesus—for their own salvation. Weak in themselves, they need something to hold them up. They may cling merely for their own sake, only to be saved. They have not entered into the mind or the heart of Christ at all. Nor is it enough to have a great deal to say or to do about Christ in order to be *in* Him. You may spend your life in talking about Him, using His Name on all occasions, and yet be in no real union with Him. Men may fight for Him, die for Him, and not be in Him. The crusaders who went to Palestine to die under the banner of the Cross were, many of them, in no sympathy with Him. To be in Christ we must love Him. But love means much more than blind affectionate instincts, or clinging attachments, or sudden emotions. Love looks up to receive a higher influence, to be inspired by a purer life. Love must elevate us, or it is not really love. If any man loves, he is in the person he loves. He has entered into his soul, and has something of his spirit. If any man loves Christ, he is in Christ, because he has something of

Christ's spirit, and is a new creature. He has something added to him, or developed out of him, that was not there before. There is nothing sudden, nothing artificial about this. This change is as natural as that by which the blood renews the body; the body seeming to continue the same, but always becoming different. It is a growth, and all growths are gradual. Conversion is always sudden, for it is simply turning round. But regeneration is gradual, for it is a growth. Paul was converted in a moment on his way to Damascus. He changed his mind about Christianity. He began a new life. But it took him a long time to become a Christian. Thus, if we are in Christ, we grow into new convictions. Not into new speculations or beliefs, for these may change suddenly, or may not change at all. Belief puts us with Christ, but not in him. A creed is like a carriage, which may take us to the place where our friend is, but cannot put us into communion with him. But if we are in Christ, we have new convictions. Spiritual things become more real to us. God becomes to us more real. So, also, if we are in Christ, we grow into new affections. A change of heart, as it is called, does not mean any new faculty or power of loving implanted in us, which we had not before. It means having new objects of love. What we did before merely from a sense of duty, we now do with pleasure. So, again, the Bible is a new book if we are in Christ. If you stand outside of the Cathedral of Milan, or the Minster of Cologne, and look on the vast windows of the choir, they seem dark and dingy. But go inside and let the light stream through them, and they turn into emeralds, and sapphires, and rubies, and are gorgeous with the forms of saints and angels. So enter into a book, sympathise with the spirit and aim of its author, and you can understand it. We call the Bible a supernatural book. I call it the most intensely natural book ever written. It is a revelation of human nature, showing its motives and workings. It is like a watch with a transparent dial, through which we look and see the movement. Again, if we are in Christ, life becomes new. Nothing prevents life from seeming old, stale, flat, and weary, like having an object—something we are interested in, something we love to do. The higher and better this object is, the more of interest it adds to our life. There is no end to the joy and freshness of existence, if we can have Christ in our hearts, and be in His heart, by drinking His spirit. And if any man be in Christ, death is new. Death has lost its terrors. (*Jas. Freeman Clarke.*) *The man in Christ, and what he becomes* :—I. THE STATE SUPPOSED. "If any man be in Christ," 1. Any man may be in Christ. For what hinders? Nothing from without the sinner himself. There is no prohibition, no legal barrier interposed to prevent any one being in Christ. 2. Every man must be in Christ in order to be saved. 3. Every believer is in Christ. The sinner, by the first act of faith in Christ, becomes united to Him, or one with Him. In what respects one? Not one in essence, in nature, or person; but one with Christ in law—in the eye of the Divine Lawgiver. The believer is so treated as if he had done what Christ did. II. THE CONSEQUENT CHANGE AFFIRMED. The change is not antecedent to, but consequent on, the state of being in Christ. Every man in Christ is brought into—1. New relations. Every state of being gives rise to corresponding relations. A state of poverty, for instance, has its relations generally among the poor of this world; of wealth, among the rich; of rank, among the noble; of power, among the powerful; of rule and authority, among the rulers of this world; of liberty, among the free; of subjection, among the servile; and of captivity, among the captives. So it is with spiritual relations. Of these Christ is at once the source and the centre. The relations of every one in Christ are all changed. Being in Christ the man is out with Satan; he is severed from the world. 2. Receives a new nature or disposition. New relations tend to the formation of a new character, to fit the "man in Christ," for intercourse with those to whom he is spiritually related. A mere superficial and temporary change will not answer the appellation of a new creature. That can mean nothing less than a real, a radical, a universal, and abiding change over the whole man, over his whole spirit, and soul, and body. The new creature has new views. It is in the new as it was in the old creation; the first element produced to dispel the darkness and disorders all around was light. New inclinations as well as new views. New affections. III. THE EVIDENCE ADDUCED. Old connections with the devil, the world, and the flesh, are broken off; old idols are cast away. "Behold, all things are become new." The man in Christ becomes a Christian, who is become a new man, and comes into a new world. To the new creature, even old and familiar things wear a new aspect. To his eyes, the sun shines with new splendour, the heavens display new glory, "the manifold works of God" present new wonders. "Behold!" which is a note of attention, of wonder, and of admiration. 1. With

attention, for its certainty and importance. 2. With wonder, for its novelty. 3. With admiration, for its excellence. New things may be noteworthy for their greatness and novelty, but not for excellence or usefulness. (*Geo. Robson.*) *Man in Christ a new man* (text in conjunction with vers. 13-16):—We can attach only four intelligible ideas to the expression “in Christ.” 1. In His ever-sustaining energy. This cannot be the idea, inasmuch as Paul uses it to designate the state of a particular class of men; whereas all men, good and bad, live in Him. 2. In His dispensation. Again, as Paul means here the state only of a certain class of men, this cannot be the idea, since all men now during eighteen hundred years have been in Christ in this sense. 3. In His affection. There is propriety in a man saying of his friend, or a loving parent of his child, “He lives in me. He mingles with all my thoughts, sympathies, and plans.” In this sense men are verily in Christ. 4. In His character. Without figure, we live in the character of others. The soul of the artist lives in the genius of his master; that of the pupil in the ideas and mental habits of his admired teacher. The spirit of our heroes, the ideas of our favourite authors, do we not live in them? So all men in a moral sense live either “in Adam,” or “in Christ.” The selfishness, the carnality, the falseness, and the moral atheism, which came into the world through Adam, form that moral atmosphere which the millions breathe as their vital air. To be “in Christ” is to be so thoroughly impregnated with His ideas, so imbued with His spirit, so inspired with His purposes that our spirits live in Him. This connection is most vital. Hence the Bible teaches that what the foundation is to the building, the fountain to the stream, the root to the tree, the head to the body, Christ is to the good. Now he that is so in Christ is a “new creature,” a new man. This man has three things new. I. A NEW IMPERIAL IMPULSE (ver. 14). Love transfigures the lover into the spirit of the object. Now this love in Paul’s case became the dominant passion of his being. It carried him on like a resistless torrent. 1. This new governing impulse is incomprehensible to those who possess it not (ver. 13). The apostle under its influence appeared to be mad to some. They saw him brave the greatest perils, &c., and they could not discover the principle which produced this self-sacrificing conduct. It was not ambition, for Paul repudiated power. It was not avarice, for Paul suffered the loss of all things. The world never has understood the principles that rule the truly good. The world did not understand Christ; even His own relations considered Him mad. “The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” Love alone can interpret love. 2. Arises from reflection upon the death of Christ. The apostle assumes that “Christ died for all.” Now the fact that “Christ died for all,” seemed to suggest to the apostle two strong reasons why he should be zealous in the cause of Christ. (1) That the whole world was in a ruined condition. “Then were all dead,” in a moral sense. With this view of the world, he felt overwhelmed with the magnitude of his work. (2) That the principle of self-sacrifice is the binding principle of action. “He died for all, that they which live,” &c. Selfishness is the death of the world. Christ died to destroy it. II. A NEW SOCIAL STANDARD (ver. 16). “Henceforth” implies that he did once know men after the flesh; that his conduct towards men was once regulated by carnal standards. Such standards, however, Christianity regards as false and evanescent. It estimates man by his righteousness and not by his rank. The fact that this is the true standard serves: 1. As a test by which to try our own religion. What is the kind of sympathy we have with Christ? 2. To guide us in the promotion of Christianity. In our endeavours to convert the world, we are not to inquire if men are rich or poor, &c.; it is sufficient to know that they are men, and that they are morally dead. 3. To indicate the principle on which we should form our friendship with men. It should be not on account of their material condition but of their spiritual character. 4. As a rule to regulate our actions. Paul said, “When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me, I conferred not with flesh and blood.” Spiritual considerations not material ones then ruled him; principles not persons became his authorities. III. A NEW SPIRITUAL HISTORY (ver. 17). In what sense can you call this change a “creation”? 1. It is unlike the first creation in many respects. The first creation—(1) Was the production of something out of nothing. It is not so in the new. No new element or faculty of being is produced; the change is simply in the mode and course of action. When a vessel that has been pursuing her course to some northern port turns directly round and sails to the south there is no change in the vessel, the mariners, or the cargo. The change is simply in the course. (2) Presented no difficulties. The Creator had only to speak and it was done, to command and it stood fast. But in this moral change

there are resisting forces—"the world, the flesh, and the devil." (3) There was nothing but direct force. There was no instrumentality. But in this change you must have Divine argument, suasion, example: God did not "strive" to create, but He strives to save. 2. Wherein then is the propriety of representing this moral change as a creation? In both cases there is the production (1) of something new; a new imperial passion, love! This passion for Christ is a new thing in the universe. (2) Of something new by Divine agency. The architect can rear a cathedral, the sculptor can carve from marble, the painter can depict life on his canvas, the machinist can construct engines, but not one of them can create. God alone can create. It is so in this moral change. He alone can produce it. (3) Something new according to a Divine plan. Everything in the universe is formed by plan. The work in the human soul is also so. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," &c. "We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ." Conversions are accomplished by plan. We may not know the plan. The architect has the outline of that majestic cathedral which is in course of building:—very few, if any, know of it; he has it in the secrets of his own brain. Still the building under his superintendence is advancing. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, are helping to work his plan. Some are excavating the mountains, and some are ploughing the seas, &c. Very few of the workers are known to each other, yet the act of each helps to work out the plan of the architect. So it is in the moral creation. Heaven, earth, matter, mind, even hell is unwittingly working for it. (4) Something new which develops the Divine glory. The universe is a mirror of God, &c. There is more of His glory seen in the free intellect, the pure sympathies, the lofty aspirations, the refined conscience of one regenerate soul than the whole material universe displays. (5) Something new in a gradual way. According to geology unnumbered ages were taken up in bringing this earth to its present form as a suitable residence for man. So man does not become virtuous and great by a bound; it is by a series of efforts and a course of training. 3. These remarks are sufficient to show the propriety of representing man's moral change as a "creation." It is not, however, the things without that change. Material nature, society, events that pass over him—all may remain the same; but the change is within. His consciousness is changed, and with that all has changed. He looks at the forms of the universe with a new eye, with a new judgment. He looks at all through the medium of a new passion, and all assume new phases. If you would have me admire some fine piece of architecture, or some magnificent painting, inspire me first with a love for the artist. The moment we look at the universe through love to Christ, the Great Architect, it becomes new: the old universe passes away, and new heavens and a new earth appear. Conclusion: Such, then, is what Christianity does for us. What a world this will be when Christianity shall have realised its sublime mission! I rejoice to believe that that period will one day come. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Man in Christ a new creature*:—I. WHAT A NEW CREATURE IS. It is a second birth added to the first. 1. The efficient cause is the Holy Ghost; who but God can alter the hearts of men, and turn stones into flesh? 2. The organical cause or instrument is the Word of God (*Jas. i. 18*). 3. The matter is the restoring of God's image lost by the fall. He does not bestow new faculties, but new qualities. As in the altering of a lute, the strings are not new, but the tune is mended; so, in the new creature, the substance of the soul is not new, but is new tuned by grace; the heart that before was proud is now humble, &c. II. WHAT KIND OF WORK THE NEW CREATURE IS. 1. A work of Divine power (*Eph. i. 20*). It is a work of greater power to produce the new creature than to make a world. (1) When God made the world He met with no opposition; but when God is about to make a new creature Satan and the heart oppose Him. (2) It cost God nothing to make the world, but to make the new creature cost the shedding of Christ's blood. 2. A work of free grace. There is nothing in us to move God to make us anew; "By the grace of God I am what I am." 3. A work of rare excellency. A soul beautified with holiness is like the firmament bespangled with glittering stars; it is God's lesser heaven. In the incarnation, God made Himself in the image of man; in the new creation, man is made in the image of God. 4. Concerning the new creature, I shall lay down two positions: (1) That it is not in the power of a natural man to convert himself, because it is a new creation. (2) When God converts a sinner, He doth more than use a moral persuasion, for conversion is a new creation. III. THE COUNTERFEITS OF THE NEW CREATURE. 1. Natural honesty, moral virtue, &c. Morality is but nature at best. Heat water to the highest degree, you cannot make wine of it.

2. Religious education. This is a good wall to plant the vine of grace against, but it is not grace. Have not we seen many who have been trained up religiously, who have lived to be a shame to their friends? 3. A form of godliness. Every bird that hath fine feathers hath not sweet flesh; all that shine with the golden feathers of profession are not saints. How devout were the Pharisees! Dædalus, by art, made images to move by themselves, inasmuch that people thought they were living; formalists do so counterfeit a devotion that others think they are living saints—they are religious mountebanks. 4. Change of opinion. Man may change from error to truth, yet only in the head, not in the heart. 5. Sudden passion, or stirring of the affections. Many desire heaven, but will not come up to the price. King Herod heard John gladly; his affections were moved, but his sin was not removed. 6. Trouble for sin, *i.e.*, while God's judgments lie upon men; when these are removed, their trouble ceaseth (Psa. lxxviii. 34-36). Metal out of the furnace returns to its former hardness. 7. Possession of the Spirit. A man may have some slight transient work of the Spirit, but it doth not go to the root; he may have the Spirit to convince him, not to convert him, the motions of the Spirit, but the walk after the flesh. 8. Abstaining from sin. This abstaining may be from restraining grace, not renewing grace. Men may leave gross sin, and yet live in more spiritual sins; leave drunkenness and live in pride; leave uncleanness and live in malice. IV. WHEREIN THE ESSENCE OF THE NEW CREATURE EXISTS. 1. In general it is—(1) A great change. He who is a new creature is not the same man he was. He is of another spirit. (2) A visible change, one from darkness to light. Paul, when converted, was so altered that all who saw him could scarcely believe that he was the same. (3) An inward change. Though the heart be not new-made, it is new moulded. 2. More particularly it consists in two things. (1) "Old things are passed away." Old pride, old ignorance, old malice; the old house must be pulled down ere you can set up a new, yet though it be a thorough change, it is not a perfect change; sin will remain. If sin then is not quite done away, how far must one put off the old man, that he may be a new creature? There must be—(a) A grieving for the remains of corruption (Rom. vii. 24). (b) A detestation of old things, as one would detest a garment in which is the plague (Psa. cxix. 63). (c) An opposition against all old things; a Christian not only complains of sin, but fights against it (Gal. v. 17). (d) A mortification of old corrupt lusts (Gal. v. 24; Rom. vi. 11). (2) "All things are become new." The new creature is new all over; grace, though it be but in part, yet it is in every part. There is—(a) A new understanding (Eph. iii. 24). The new creature is enlightened to see that which he never saw before. He knows Christ after another manner. He knows himself better than he did. When the sun shines into a room it discovers all the dust and cobwebs in it; so, when the light of the Spirit shines into the heart it discovers that corruption which before lay hid. A wicked man, blinded with self-love, admires himself; like Narcissus, that seeing his own shadow upon the water, fell in love with it. (b) A renewal of conscience. The least hair makes the eye weep, and the least sin makes conscience smite. A good conscience is a star to guide, a register to record, a judge to determine, a witness to accuse or excuse; if conscience doth all these offices right, then it is a renewed conscience, and speaks peace. (c) The will is renewed. An old bow may have a new bias put into it; the will having a new bias of grace put into it is strongly carried to good, and carries all the affections along with it. (d) A new conversation. Grace alters a man's walk; before he walked proudly, now humbly; before loosely, now holily; he makes the Word his rule, and Christ's life his pattern. Conclusion—1. In this, true Christianity consists. It is not baptism makes a Christian; many are no better than baptised heathens. 2. It is the new creature fits us for communion with God. Birds cannot converse with men unless they had a rational nature put into them, nor can men converse with God, unless they partake of the Divine nature. Every one that hangs about the court doth not speak with the king. 3. The necessity of being new creatures. Till then—(1) We are odious to God. (2) Our duties are not accepted with God; they are but wild grapes. When they brought Tamarlane a pot of gold he asked what stamp it had on it, and when he saw the Roman stamp on it he refused it; so if God doth not see His own stamp and image on the soul, He rejects the most specious services. (3) Get no benefit by ordinances. The Word preached is a "savour of death"; nay Christ Himself is accidentally a "rock of offence." (4) We cannot arrive at heaven (Rev. xxi. 27). Heaven is not like Noah's ark—that received clean and unclean. Only the pure in heart shall see God. 4. The excellency of the new creature. (1) Its nobility. The new creature fetcheth its pedigree from heaven;

it is born of God, and is fellow-commoner with angels. (2) Its immortality. The new creature is begotten of the incorruptible seed of the Word, and never dies. 5. The misery of the unregenerate creature; dying so "good were it for that man if he had never been born." (*T. Watson.*) *The new creature*:—Our text is to be viewed—I. AS A REQUISITION UPON THE SINNER. Nothing short of a new creation can constitute any man a Christian. 1. If we consider the extent of the requisition, as applied to individuals, the emphasis rests upon the word "any." It matters not who he may be. No man can become a Christian in any other method. 2. The requisition may be considered in its application to character in each individual. Here the emphasis is on the words "new creature." (1) The object to be obtained marks this necessity for a new creation. This object is not to be in the church. That may easily be secured by conformity to outward ordinances. It is not reform in external conduct merely. This may be accomplished by man's own exertions. It is not to obtain a good reputation among men. But it is to be in Christ, and to be made an heir of everlasting glory. This object no partial change of character can secure. (2) That which separates men from God is a radical perversion of motive and principle; the change required therefore is a change of the heart, a new creation of the soul in its principles and objects of pursuit. They have but one simple want. But that want is a total one. They must be new men. II. AS A PRIVILEGE TO THE CHRISTIAN. He is a new creature—1. In the personal relations which he sustains. (1) In his relations to God his Creator and Judge. He stands in the Divine presence no longer under condemnation. The penalty for his sin has been endured. God is no longer angry, but is a reconciled Father. He enjoys the comfort of this new relation. His conscience is peaceful through the blood of sprinkling, and perfect love has cast out fear. (2) In his relation to Jesus the Saviour. Once, like others, he despised and rejected Him. Now he has embraced Him in the warm affections of his heart, as his comfort, and hope, and portion for ever. (3) In his relations to men around him. To the children of God, wherever they are, he is a brother and a friend. To the unconverted, he feels a bond of pity which he never knew before. He now knows the galling chain which they ignorantly wear. He labours and prays that they may also become new creatures in Jesus Christ. 2. In his personal character. (1) He is released from the dominion of sin. It may dwell within him, but it dwells there as a captive, not as a ruler. (2) He is released from the darkness and confusion of mind, which sin has produced. The image of God which was lost in man's apostasy, has been restored. In the true order of his powers, his whole soul is devoted to the service of God. Thus his heart has become right in the sight of God. (3) He has received a principle of Divine grace within him, which shall flourish and increase for ever. 3. In his associates. There was a time when he avoided the society of the pious, when he loved the associations of the worldly. Now there has been a total revolution in all his intercourse with men. He has forsaken the society of those who fear not God, and he selects for his friends those in whom he can find the mind of Christ. He now regards men according to their character in the sight of God. 4. In his occupation and enjoyments. His desire is in the fulfilment of every required duty, to honour the God whom he delights to serve. Religion sanctifies his daily engagements. His comforts and joys come to him from above. He looks beyond the bounds of sense to find his joy and his crown of rejoicing in eternity. Prayer is no longer a task but a pleasure. The Bible comes to him not so much to remind him of a duty as to call him to a privilege. 5. In his prospects. (*S. H. Tynq, D.D.*) *The believer a new creature*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S POSITION—"in Christ." There are three stages of the soul. First—Without Christ, this is the state of nature, and is a most unhappy condition. It is inconvenient to be without gold; it is miserable to be without health, without a friend, without reputation, but to be without Christ is the worst lack in all the world. The next state, "in Christ," leadeth to the third, with Christ, which is the state of glory. 1. Our business now is with the second, "in Christ," which is the state of grace. I never heard of any persons being in any other man but Christ. We may follow certain leaders, and imitate eminent examples, but no man is said in these respects to be in another. (1) We must interpret this by scriptural symbols. (a) We were all of us in the first Adam. Adam stood for us. Now, as in Adam we all fell, so all who are in Christ are restored. (b) Noah's ark was a type of Christ. Christ is the ark of God provided against the day of judgment, and we are in Him. (c) Christ is God's eternal city of refuge, and we, having offended, flee for our lives and enter where vengeance cannot

reach us. (2) Christ represents us as being in Him as the branch is in the vine. (3) Paul describes us as being in Christ also as the stone is in the building. In some of the old Roman walls you can scarcely tell which is the firmer, the cement or the stone, for their cement held the stones together as though they were one mass of rock; and such is the eternal love which binds the saints to Christ. 2. "How do we come to be there?" (1) By faith. (2) By love. When love and faith come together, then there is a blessedly sweet communion. II. THE BELIEVER'S CHARACTER—a "new creature." The phrase suggests—1. A radical change. (1) A man may undergo many changes, but they may be far from being radical enough to be a new creation. Ahab may humble himself, but he is Ahab still. (a) Conversion is sometimes described as healing; but healing does not rise to the radical character of the text. Naaman washed in Jordan, and came up with his flesh clean like unto a little child; but it was the same flesh and the same Naaman. The woman, bowed down with infirmity eighteen years, was marvellously changed when she stood upright; but she was the same woman. (b) There are great moral changes wrought in many which are not saving. A drunkard may become sober, and many persons of debauched habits regular; and yet their changes may not amount to regeneration. The most startling changes will not suffice unless they are total and deep. The Ethiopian might change his skin, the leopard his spots; but the leopard would remain a leopard, and the Ethiop would still be black at heart. (c) Even the metaphor of resurrection does not go so far as the language of the text. The daughter of Jairus is the same child, and Lazarus is the same man after restoration to life. A new creation is a root-and-branch change; not an alteration of the walls only, but of the foundation; not a new figuring of the visible tapestry, but a renewal of the fabric itself. (2) We are new creatures through being in Christ. People object to the doctrine that men are saved by faith in Christ on the ground that there must be a great moral change. But if those who are in Christ are new creatures, what greater change can be desired? He who believes in Christ, finding himself pardoned, loves Christ, and loves the God who gave Christ, and love to God expels love to sin. 2. A Divine work. If any doubt it, let us bid them make the effort to create the smallest object. (1) Regeneration is God's sole work. In the first creation who helped God? So the sovereign will of God creates men heirs of grace. (2) It was more difficult to create a Christian than to create a world. Unto Him, then, be glory and strength! 3. Remarkable freshness. It is very long since this world saw a new creature. All the creatures we now see are old and antiquated. Any new creature coming fresh into the world would startle us all. And yet the text tells you that there are new creatures upon earth, fruits that have freshness and bloom of Eden about them, life with the dew of its youth upon it; and these new creatures are Christian men. There is a freshness about them which is to be found nowhere else. He that prayed yesterday with joy, shall pray in fifty years' time, if he be on earth, with the selfsame delight. He that loves his Maker, and feels his heart beat high at the mention of the name of Jesus, shall find as much transport in that name, if he lives to the age of Methuselah, as he doth now. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Of the nature and necessity of the new creature:—*That God's creating of a new supernatural work of grace in the soul of any man, is that man's sure and infallible evidence of a saving interest in Jesus Christ. Why the regenerating work of the Spirit is called a new creation. First, the same almighty Author who created the world created also this work of grace in the soul of man (chap. iv. 6). Secondly, the first thing that God created in the natural world was light (Gen. i. 3), and the first thing which God createth in the new creation is the light of spiritual knowledge (Col. iii. 10). Thirdly, creation is out of nothing; it requires no pre-existent matter. So it is also in the new creation (1 Pet. ii. 9, 10). Fourthly, it was the virtue and efficacy of the Spirit of God which gave the natural world its being by creation (Gen. i. 2). Fifthly, the Word of God was the instrument of the first creation (Psa. xxxiii. 6-9). Sixthly, the same power which created the world still supports it in its being: the world owes its conservation, as well as its existence, to the power of God. Just so it is with the new creation (Jude ver. 1, "Preserved in Christ Jesus," and 1 Pet. i. 5). Seventhly, in a word, God surveyed the first creation with complacency and great delight (Gen. i. 31). So this also in the second creation; nothing delights God more than the works of grace in the souls of His people. Next we must inquire, in what respects every soul that is in Christ is made a new creature; and here we shall find a threefold renovation of every man that is in Christ. First, he is renewed in his state and condition: for he passeth from death to life in his justification (1 John iii. 14). Secondly, every man in Christ is renewed in

his frame and constitution; all the faculties and affections of his soul are renewed by regeneration: his understanding was dark, but now is light in the Lord (Eph. v. 8); his conscience was dead and secure, or full of guilt and horror, but is now become tender, watchful, and full of peace (Heb. ix. 14); his will was rebellious and inflexible; but is now made obedient and complying with the will of God (Psa. cx. 2). Thirdly, the man in Christ is renewed in his practice and conversation; the manner of operation always follows the nature of beings. Now the regenerate not being what they were, cannot walk and act as once they did (Eph. ii. 1-3). Thirdly, let us inquire into the properties and qualities of this new creature. First, the Scripture speaks of it as a thing of great difficulty to be conceived by man (John iii. 8). Secondly, but though this life of the new creature be a great mystery and secret in some respects; yet so far as it appears unto us, the new creature is the most beautiful and lovely creature that ever God made; for the beauty of the Lord Himself is upon it: "The new man is created after God" (Eph. iv. 24). Thirdly, this new creature is created in man upon the highest design that ever any work of God was wrought: the end of its creation is high and noble (Col. i. 12). Fourthly, this new creation is the most necessary work that ever God wrought upon the soul of man: the eternal well-being of his soul depends upon it; and without it no man shall see God (Heb. xii. 14; John i. 3-5). Fifthly, the new creature is a marvellous creature; there are many wonders in the first creation (Psa. cxi. 2). But there are no wonders in nature, like those in grace. Sixthly, the new creature is an immortal creature (John iv. 14). Seventhly, the new creature is an heavenly creature; "It is not born of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13); its descent is heavenly. Eighthly, the new creature is an active and laborious creature; no sooner is it born, but it is acting in the soul (Acts ix. 6). Behold he prayeth! Activity is its very nature (Gal. v. 25). Ninthly, the new creature is a thriving creature, growing from strength to strength (1 Pet. ii. 2), and changing the soul in which it is subjected from glory unto glory (chap. iii. 18). Tenthly, the new creature is a creature of wonderful preservation. There are many wonders of Divine providence in the preservation of our natural lives, but none like those whereby the life of the new creature is preserved in our souls. Fourthly, we will demonstrate the necessity of this new creation to all that are in Christ, and by Him do attain salvation; and the necessity of the new creature will appear divers ways. First, from the positive and express will of God revealed in Scripture. Secondly, this new creation is the inchoative part of that great salvation which we expect through Christ, and therefore, without this, all expectations of salvation must vanish. Salvation and renovation are inseparably connected. Thirdly, so necessary is the new creation to all that expect salvation by Christ; that without this, heaven would be no heaven. Fourthly, there is an absolute necessity of the new creature to all that expect interest in Christ and the glory to come, since all the characters and signs of such an interest, are constantly taken from the new creature wrought in us. Fifthly, the last thing is, how the new creation is an infallible proof and evidence of the soul's interest in Christ; and this will appear divers ways. First, where all the saving graces of the Spirit are, there interest in Christ must needs be certain; and where the new creature is, there all the saving graces of the Spirit are. Secondly, to conclude: where all the causes of an interest in Christ are found, and all the effects and fruits of an interest in Christ do appear, there, undoubtedly, a real interest in Christ is found; but wherever you find a new creature, you find all the causes and all the effects of an interest in Christ. Is the new creature the infallible evidence of our saving interest in Christ? From hence, then, we are informed—Inference 1. How miserable an estate all unregenerate souls are in. Inference 2. On the contrary, we may hence learn what cause regenerate souls have to bless God for the day wherein they were born. Inference 3. Learn from hence that the work of grace is wholly supernatural; a creation-work is above the power of the creature. Inference 4. If the work of grace be a new creation, let not the parents and friends of the unregenerate utterly despair of the conversion of their relations, how great soever their present discouragements are. If it had been possible for a man to have seen the rude chaos before the Spirit of God moved upon it, would he not have said, Can such a beautiful order of beings, such a pleasant variety of creatures, spring out of this dark lump? Surely it would have been very hard for a man to have imagined it. Inference 5. If none but new creatures be in Christ, how small a remnant among men belong to Christ in this world! Inference 6. If the change by grace be a new creation, how universal and marvellous a change doth regeneration make upon men! First, because the work of grace is wrought in divers methods and manners in the people

of God. Some are changed from a state of notorious profaneness unto serious godliness; there the change is conspicuous and very evident: but in others it is more insensibly distilled in their tender years, by the blessing of God, upon religious education, and there it is more indiscernible. Secondly, though a great change be wrought, yet much natural corruption still remains for their humiliation. Thirdly, in some the new creature shows itself mostly in the affectionate part in desires after God; and but little in the clearness of their understandings, for want of which they are kept in darkness most of their days. Fourthly, some Christians are more tried and exercised by temptation from Satan than others are; and these clouds darken the work of grace in them. Fifthly, there is great difference and variety found in the natural tempers and constitutions of the regenerate; some are of a more melancholy, fearful, and suspicious temper than others, and are therefore much longer held under doubtings. Inference 7. How incongruous are carnal ways to the spirit of Christians! who being new creatures, can never find pleasure in their former sinful companions and practices. If none be in Christ but new creatures, and the new creation make such a change as hath been described, this may convince us how many of us deceive ourselves, and run into fatal mistakes in the greatest concernment we have in this world. First, that the change made by civility upon such as were lewd and profane is, in its whole kind and nature, a different thing from the new creature. Secondly, that many strong convictions and troubles for sin may be found where the new creature is never formed. Thirdly, that excellent gifts and abilities, fitting men for service in the Church of God, may be where the new creature is not; for these are promiscuously dispensed by the Spirit, both to the regenerate and unregenerate (Matt. vii. 22). Fourthly, be convinced that multitudes of religious duties may be performed by men, in whom the new creature was never formed. Next, therefore, let me persuade every man to try the state of his own heart in this matter. First, consider well the antecedents of the new creature; have those things passed upon your souls, which ordinarily make way for the new creature. 1. Hath the Lord opened the eyes of your understanding in the knowledge of sin and of Christ (Acts xxvi. 18). 2. Hath He brought home the Word with mighty power and efficacy upon your hearts to convince and humble them (Rom. vii. 9; 1 Thess. i. 5). 3. Have these convictions overturned your vain confidences, and brought you to inward distress of soul. Secondly, consider the concomitant frames and workings of spirit, which ordinarily attend the production of the new creature. 1. Have your vain spirits been composed to the greatest seriousness and most solemn consideration of things eternal, as the hearts of all those are whom God regenerates? 2. A lowly, meek, and humble frame of heart accompanies the new creature; the soul is weary and heavy laden (Matt. xi. 28). 3. A longing frame of spirit accompanies the new creation; the desires of the soul are ardent after Christ. Thirdly, weigh well the effects and consequents of the new creature, and consider whether such fruits as these are found in your hearts and lives. 1. Wherever the new creature is formed, there a man's course and conversation is changed (Eph. iv. 22). 2. The new creature continually opposes and conflicts with the motions of sin in the heart (Gal. v. 17). 3. The mind and affections of the new creature are set upon heavenly and spiritual things (Col. iii. 1, 2; Eph. iv. 23; Rom. viii. 5). 4. The new creature is a praying creature, living by its daily communion with God (Zech. xii. 10; Acts ix. 11). If the new creation be a sound evidence of our interest in Christ, then let me persuade all that are in Christ to evidence themselves to be so, by walking as it becomes new creatures. The new creature is born from above; all its tendencies are heavenward. Let every new creature be cheerful and thankful: if God hath renewed your natures and thus altered the temper of your hearts, He hath bestowed the richest mercy upon you that heaven or earth affords. This is a work of the greatest rarity. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." There are unsearchable wonders in its generation, in its operation, and in its preservation. (*John Flavel*). *The new creature delineated*:—Consider this change, on account whereof Christians are new creatures in respect of—I. THE INWARD FRAME OF MIND. And this is what the Scripture calls a new heart, a new spirit, a renovation in the spirit of the mind, a transformation by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. There is a change in their—1. Apprehensions. (1) They had once a notional sight only of the being and perfections of God; but now they appear to them the surest realities. (2) They once saw no beauty in Christ, nor were sensible of any need they stood in of Him; but He is now altogether lovely. (3) They once saw no great evil in sin; but it now appears an evil and bitter thing. (4) They once saw no great beauty in holiness; but it now

appears the most amiable grace. 2. Purposes. Once the bent of their mind was towards the earth; it is now towards heaven. 3. Affections. There is a change in their—(1) Love. They now hate what they once loved, and *vice versâ*. (2) Sorrow. The things which once moved their grief were worldly losses and crosses, pain in their bodies, &c. As for their sins, they were not grieved on account of them. But the new creation has wonderfully turned the channel of their sorrow. (3) Hope. This they once placed on the creature; but they now place it on the Creator. They had once no views beyond this earth; but they now reach to heaven. (4) Fear. The things which once moved their fear, were the threats of men, the frowns of the world, &c. They now fear God's displeasure more than anything else. They dare not now live in sin. (5) Anger. They were once angry with those who were a hindrance to them in sin; but they now love and thank them. Their anger is now turned against themselves.

II. THE OUTWARD COURSE AND MANNER OF LIFE. They do not now live in sin as they once did; but "have put off concerning the former conversation, the old man," &c. And this reformation is sometimes so remarkable that it is taken notice of, and admired by others. But this change carries more in it than what is negative. It is a change not only from sin, but to holiness. That is, they live in the practice of the whole of their duty; all that duty they owe, either to God, their neighbour, or themselves. (*C. Chauncey, A.M.*) *The change which grace makes in the human character*:—I. A VISIBLE CHANGE—"Behold." There is a change without as the expression and effect of a change within. This visibility will appear—1. To ourselves. If a man entertains a hope that it has taken place, and yet is not able to perceive that he is in any wise different from what he was before, that man ought rather to fear than hope. 2. To others. It behoves us so to conduct ourselves that men shall take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. We must seem to be religious as well as be so actually. How otherwise can we be the lights of the world? Must we not show our faith by our works? II. AN ADMIRABLE CHANGE. The interjection is thrown in not barely to attract attention, but to excite wonder and admiration. It is admirable if we consider—1. Its author. It is God. Every work of God is admirable. What a noble piece of work is man, even in his ruins! how much more then in his restoration! 2. The loving-kindness displayed in making it. "Behold, what manner of love" is here! 3. Its nature and connections. It is a singular change, infinitely superior to any other of which the human character is susceptible. Other changes are necessarily superficial; this is deep and radical. It inserts a new mainspring. What evils other changes restrain or abate, this eradicates; and this communicates the reality of the good, of which they do but put on this appearance. III. A THOROUGH CHANGE. "All things are become new." There may be a partial reformation, while the heart remains unchanged; but if the heart is changed, the reformation must be universal. Where one trait of the Christian character is found, there they are all found. Where faith is, there is love, for faith worketh by love; and where these are, in inseparable society is found the whole sisterhood of graces, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance. And so the heart that hates one sin hates all, and is equally disposed to renounce all. Therefore if any of you find that your religion is not universally influential, you may conclude that it is vain. IV. A CHANGE OF THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTION, AND NOT A SUPERADDITION. There is a passing away of the old things, and a coming in their place of new. The new man is not put on over the old man, but the old man is first put off. The soul becomes dead unto sin before it is made alive unto righteousness. V. A GREAT CHANGE. It is hardly necessary to affirm this after what has been already said. It is a work of God; a new creation; a passing from death unto life, a being born again, a translation out of darkness into marvellous light, a resurrection. VI. A PERMANENT CHANGE. It lasts. (*W. Nevins, D.D.*) *Is conversion necessary?*—I. IN ORDER TO SALVATION A RADICAL CHANGE IS NECESSARY. 1. Everywhere in Scripture men are divided into two classes, with a very sharp line of distinction between them—sheep lost and sheep found, guests refusing and guests feasting, wise virgins and foolish, sheep and goats, men "dead in trespasses and sin" and alive to God, men in darkness or in light, "children of God" and "children of wrath," believers who are not condemned and of those who are condemned already, &c., &c. 2. The Word of God speaks of this inward change as—(1) a birth (John i. 12, 13; iii.; v. 4; 1 John v. 1). (2) A quickening (Eph. i. 19; ii. 1). (3) A creation, as in our text, and this also is no mere formality, or an attendant upon a rite (Gal. vi. 15; Eph. ii. 10; iv. 24). (4) A translation (Col. i. 13). (5) A "passing from death unto life" (1 John iii. 14; John v. 24). (6) A being "begotten again" (1 Pet. i. 3; Jas. i

18). Can you conceive of any language more plainly descriptive of a most solemn change? 3. The Scriptures speak of it as producing a very wonderful change in the subject of it. (1) In the character (Rom. vi. 17, 22; Col. iii. 9; Gal. v. 24). (2) In feeling. Enmity to God is exchanged for love to God (Col. i. 21). This arises very much from a change of man's judicial state before God. Before a man is converted he is condemned, but when he receives spiritual life we read "there is therefore now no condemnation," &c. This altogether changes his condition as to inward happiness (Rom. v. 1, 11). 4. It is further represented as the chief blessing in the covenant of grace (Jer. xxxi. 33, *cf.* Heb. x. 16; Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27). II. THIS CHANGE IS FREQUENTLY VERY MARKED AS TO ITS TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCES. Many souls truly born of God could not lay their finger upon any date and say, "At such a time I passed from death unto life." Conversion is often so surrounded by restraining grace that it appears to be a very gradual thing, and the rising of the sun of righteousness in the soul is comparable to the dawning of day, with a grey light at first, and a gradual increase to a noonday splendour. Yet, as there is a time when the sun rises, so is there a time of new birth. If a dead man were restored to life, he might not be able to say exactly when life began, but there is such a moment. There must be a time when a man ceases to be an unbeliever and becomes a believer in Jesus. In many cases, however, the day, hour, and place are fully known, and we might expect this—1. From many other works of God. How very particular God is about the time of creation! "The evening and the morning were the first day." "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." So in the miracles of Christ. The water turns at once to wine, the fig-tree immediately withers away, the loaves and fishes are at once multiplied in the hands of the disciples. Miracles of healing were as a rule instantaneous. 2. From the work itself. If it be worthy to be called a resurrection, there must manifestly be a time in which the dead man ceases to be dead and becomes alive. 3. From the conversions mentioned in Scripture. Paul was one moment an opponent of Christ, and the next was crying, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and this conversion was to be a pattern (1 Tim. i. 15, 16). Let us look at other instances. The Samaritan woman, Zacchæus, Matthew, the three thousand at Pentecost, the Philippian jailer. It would be much more difficult to find a gradual conversion in Scripture than a sudden one. 4. From experience. The matter is one about which I feel it a weariness to argue, because these wonders of grace happen daily before our eyes, and it is like trying to prove that the sun rises in the morning. III. THIS CHANGE IS RECOGNISABLE BY CERTAIN SIGNS. 1. A sense of sin. True conversion always has in it a humbling sense of the need of Divine grace. 2. Faith in Jesus. 3. The change of his principles, objects, desires, life. A convert once said, "Either the world is altered or else I am." The very faces of our children look different to us, for we regard them under a new aspect, viewing them as heirs of immortality. We view our friends from a different stand-point. Our very business seems altered. We learn to sanctify the hammer and the plough by serving the Lord with them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Regeneration is*—I. A CHANGE. 1. A real change; from nature to grace, as well as by grace. 2. A common change to all the children of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." 3. A change quite contrary to the former frame. What more contrary to light than darkness? (Eph. v. 8); flesh to spirit (John iii. 6); translation from one kingdom to another (Col. i. 13). 4. A universal change of the whole man. It is a new creature, not only a new power or new faculty. Understanding, will, conscience, affections, all were corrupted by sin, all are renewed by grace. 5. Principally an inward change. It is as inward as the soul itself. It is a clean heart David desires, not only clean hands (Psa. li. 10). If it were not so, there could be no outward rectified change. The spring and wheels of the clock must be mended before the hand of the dial will stand right. II. A VITAL PRINCIPLE. This new creation is a translation from death to life (1 John iii. 14). It is not, then, a gilding, but a quickening; not a carving, but an enlivening. III. A HABIT. It is impossible to conceive a new creature without new habits. Nothing can be changed from a state of corruption to a state of purity without them. IV. A LAW PUT INTO THE HEART. Every creature hath a law belonging to its nature. Man hath a law of reason, beasts a law of sense and instinct, plants a law of vegetation, inanimate creatures a law of motion. A new creature hath a law put into his heart (Jer. xxxi. 23; *cf.* Heb. viii. 10). It is called the "law of the mind" (Rom. vii. 23), it beginning first in the illumination of that faculty—as sin began first in a false judgment made of the precept of God, "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." It consists in an inward conformity of the heart to the law. The soul hath a likeness

to the word and doctrine of the gospel within it (Rom. vi. 17). As melted metal poured into a mould loses its former form, and puts on a new shape, the same figure with the mould into which it is poured; the soul, which before was a servant of sin, and had the image of the law of sin, being melted by the Spirit, is cast into the figure and form of the law. **V. A LIKENESS TO GOD.** Every creature hath a likeness to something or other in the rank of beings: the new creature is framed according to the most exact pattern, even God Himself. The new creature is begotten; begotten, then, in the likeness of the begetter, which is God. Were not a real likeness attainable, why should those exhortations be, of being "holy as God is holy, pure as He is pure"? (1 Pet. i. 15; 1 John iii. 3). (*S. Charnock, B.D.*)

Vers. 18-21. **And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.**—*High doctrine*:—Whatsoever the Christian can desire is to be found in the "all things." But lest even that should not be comprehensive enough, our summary contains a still greater word, "God." If we be thirsty, here are streams that never can be exhausted. If we be poor, here are riches inexhaustible. **I. THE DOCTRINE ITSELF.** 1. What is meant here by the term, "all things"? Do we call that man an infidel who should teach that some things of the old creation were of man? What name shall I give to him who will say that anything in the new creation of grace is of man? This is of God as to—(1) Its first implanting. If thou hast but one good thought in thy heart it is of God; for "all things are of God." (2) Its subsequent outworking. Has the believer strength—it is of God. Is he preserved in the midst of temptation—his integrity is of God. (3) Its privileges, pardon, justification, sanctification, adoption, communion. Who will dare to think of these things apart from the unspeakable grace of the Most High? (4) Its actions. See yonder missionary venturing even unto death? Let us give him his meed of tribute; he hath done valiantly. But let us remember that everything in him that was good, was of God. Does the martyr burn at the stake? Is there a Christian, generous, thoughtful of the woes of others, mighty in prayer and diligent in service? All these things are of God. Set down no virtue to man. Good things are exotics in the human heart. 2. How and in what respect are all things of God? (1) In the planning. Nay, in all the work of salvation God is the sole designer. (2) In the purchase and procuring. One price hath bought His people. (3) In the applying and bringing of it home to each individual conscience. God will make men willing in the day of His power. (4) In the maintaining. Leave the Christian to himself to maintain the grace already begun, and he is gone. (5) In the completing. The last steps shall be of God as much as the first. 3. Why is it that "all things are of God"? Because—(1) There cannot be anything of man. What can a dead man do towards his own resurrection? Till the stone shall of itself fly upwards, till the sea shall beget fire, and until fire distil the shower, then and not till then shall depraved humanity breathe goodness within itself. (2) It is expressly told us not that some good gifts, and some perfect gifts are from above, but every one. God were only in part the world's benefactor, if there were other fountains out of which the world could draw. (3) All the glory is God's. Now if that be so the work must have been His; for where the work is, there must be the merit. (4) You as Christians are compelled to feel—"Thou hast wrought all our works in us." **II. THE EXCELLENT TENDENCIES OF THIS DOCTRINE.** 1. It compels men to think. 2. It rouses enthusiasm in the minds of those who believe it. 3. It humbles men. 4. It affords consolation for the troubled heart. If all things be of God, let not thy spirit be ruffled and affrighted by the tempest. 5. It encourages the sinner. You are naked; the robe in which you shall be dressed is of God. You are filthy; the washing is of God. You are unworthy; your worthiness must be of God. You are guilty; your pardon is of God. All you are bidden to do is simply to be a receiver. Come with your empty pitcher, and hold it now to the flowing fountain. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **God the new Creator**:—**I. GOD IS THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR OF THE NEW CREATURE, AND ALL THINGS WHICH BELONG THEREUNTO.** That will appear—1. From the state of the person to be renewed. Can a stony heart of itself become tender? (Ezek. xxxvi. 26), or a dead heart quicken itself? (Eph. ii. 5.) 2. From the nature of this work. Creation is a work of omnipotency, and proper to God. 3. From its connection with reconciliation. We can no more convert ourselves than reconcile ourselves to God. Renewing and reconciling grace are often spoken of together, as in the text. There must be a supernatural work upon us, to cure our unholiness, as well as a supernatural work without us, to overcome our guiltiness. 4. From the effect of this renovation, which is the implantation of

the graces of faith, hope, and love, which are our light, life, and power. 5. From the fact that all things belonging to the new creature the Scripture ascribeth to God (Phil. ii. 13). 6. What is the true use to be made of this doctrine? (1) To make us sensible that it is a hard task to get the change of the new creature. (2) To check despair. He that can turn water into wine can also turn lions into lambs. (3) To keep us humble—"All things are of God" (1 Cor. iv. 7). (4) To make us thankful. Give God the praise of changing thy nature, if from a bad man thou art become good. (5) To inflame our love to God in Christ. (6) To encourage a cheerful and continual dependence upon God for that grace which is necessary. If we did keep the stock ourselves the throne of grace would be neglected. II. GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF THE NEW CREATURE, AS RECONCILED TO US IN CHRIST. 1. He would not give this benefit till justice be satisfied; not set up man with a new stock till there was satisfaction made for the breach of the old. All grace floweth from this, that God is become a God of peace to us (Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Thes. v. 23). 2. God is never actually reconciled to us, nor we to Him, till He give us the regenerating Spirit; that is receiving the atonement (Rom. v. 11). Nothing but the new creature will evidence His special favour (Rom. v. 5). Other things may be given us during His anger, but the regenerating Spirit is never given in anger. 3. Apply all this. (1) Let us seek after this reconciliation with God by Christ; then we may comfortably look to obtain every good thing at His hands. (2) It showeth us how much we are obliged to Christ, who by His death hath satisfied God's justice and merited all the mercies promised. (3) Let no breach fall out between God and you, lest it stop grace; the continual sanctification and perfection of man once regenerate dependeth upon this reconciliation, as well as the first renovation, God's sanctifying power, and the abode of His Spirit, is still necessary to renew us more and more. (T. Manton, D.D.) *God the author of reconciliation*.—I. WHAT RECONCILIATION IS. 1. It implies that there was a former friendship. There were once good terms between God and man. 2. It implies an enmity on one or both sides. On man's part this enmity is by sin; on the part of God—(1) From the righteousness of His nature (Hab. i. 13; Psa. v. 5, 6). (2) From the righteousness of His law made against sin, whereby He cannot but according to His veracity punish it. 3. It implies that God is the prime Author of this reconciliation, yet no man is actually reconciled to God till he complies with those conditions whereupon God offers it. "God was in Christ" when He was "reconciling the world"; we must be in Christ if we be reconciled to God. We must distinguish between reconciliation designed by God, obtained by Christ, offered by the gospel, received by the soul. 4. This reconciliation is—(1) Very congruous for the honour of God. (a) For the honour of His wisdom. Had not a mediator been appointed, mankind had been destroyed at the beginning, and God had lost the glory of His present works. (b) For the honour of His truth and justice. (2) Necessary for us. II. GOD THE FATHER MUST NEEDS BE, AND IS, THE AUTHOR OF THIS RECONCILIATION. If God be the first cause in all things, He is the first cause in the highest of His works. No creature could originate this work. 1. All human nature could not. Man was so depraved that he knew not how to desire it, and had no mind to cherish any thoughts of it (Rom. i. 29, 30; 1 Cor. i. 21). 2. Nor the unblemished wisdom of angels (1 Pet. i. 12). III. WHEREIN THE AGENCY OF THE FATHER IN THIS AFFAIR DOTH APPEAR. "God was in Christ reconciling the world." 1. As choosing and appointing Christ (Isa. xlii. 1, xliii. 10; Heb. iii. 2). (1) He was appointed by the Father to this end (Psa. xl. 6, 7; Rom. iii. 25). (2) God appointed Him to every office in order to this: as a priest, to offer sacrifices; a prophet, to declare His mercy; a king, to bring men to the terms of reconciliation. (3) God chose Him to this work with a high delight, as one fully fit for the work, in whom He could confide. 2. God the Father solemnly called Him (John x. 36). 3. God gave Him a particular command concerning our reconciliation (John x. 18; Phil. ii. 8; Rom. v. 19). 4. The Father did fit Christ for this great undertaking. (1) He is fitted with a body. (a) This was necessary. Man, as constituted of soul and body, had violated the articles of the first covenant; therefore man, as constituted of soul and body, must answer the violations of it. It was also necessary that He might be nearly related to us in all things (sin excepted), and redeem us by His passion. Yet He was to have a whole body, free from any taint of moral imperfection, fit for the service He was devoted to, for which the least speck upon His humanity had rendered Him unfit. (b) Therefore the Holy Ghost frames the body of Christ of this seed of the woman (Gen. iii. 15), and makes the union between the Divine and human nature (Luke i. 35). (2) He is filled with His Spirit by the Father, *i.e.*, with all the gifts and graces of the Spirit

necessary to this work (John iii. 34). (a) Habitual holiness. This was necessary. It became Him and us, as our High Priest, to be undefiled (Heb. vii. 26). (b) Wisdom and knowledge (Isa. xi. 2-4). (c) Tenderness to man. (d) Mighty power to go through this undertaking. He had a "spirit of might" (Acts x. 38). 5. God commissioned Christ to this work of reconciliation. He gave Him a fulness of authority as well as a fulness of ability. He is therefore said to be sealed, as having His commission under the great seal of heaven (John vi. 27). The end of this commission was the reconciliation and redemption of man. (1) Satisfaction for our sins (Gal. i. 4). (2) Testification of the love of God (Isa. xliii. 10, 11). (3) Final and perfect salvation (Gal. i. 4) (*S. Charnock, B.D.*)

The ministry of reconciliation:—I. CHRIST'S WORK—THE RECONCILIATION OF GOD TO MAN. Reconciliation is identical with atonement. In Rom. v. 11 the word "atonement" is the same word which is here translated "reconciliation." 1. God needed a reconciliation. (1) The Unitarian view is that God is reconciled already, that there is no wrath in God towards sinners. Nothing can be more unphilosophical and unscriptural. First of all, take Gal. iv. 9, which is decisive. St. Paul declares that the being recognised of God is more characteristic of the gospel state than recognising God. "Know God": here is man reconciled to God. "Are known of Him": here is God reconciled to man. Next, it is perilous to explain away those passages which speak of God as angry with sin. We feel that God is angry; and if that be but figurative, then it is only figurative to say that God is pleased. Then, again, Christ was the representative of God. Now Christ was "angry." That, therefore, which God feels corresponds with that which in pure humanity is the emotion of anger. If we explain away such words, we lose the distinction between right and wrong; and you will end in believing there is no God at all, if you begin with explaining away His feelings. (2) It is said that God needs no reconciliation, because He is immutable. But remember that, God remaining immutable, and the sinner changing, God's relation to the sinner changes. "God is love," but love to good is hatred to evil. If you are evil, then God is your enemy. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." 2. The way in which the text speaks of the reconciliation of God to us is, "Not imputing their trespasses"; for the atonement is made when God no longer reckons the sinner guilty. God is reconciled to humanity in Christ; then to us through Him; "God was in Christ." It was a Divine humanity. To that humanity God is reconciled: there could be no enmity between God and Christ: "I and My Father are one." To all those in whom Christ's Spirit is God imputes the righteousness which is as yet only seminal, germinal—a spring, not a river; a righteousness in faith, not a righteousness in works.

II. THE WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY—THE RECONCILIATION OF MAN TO GOD. Distinguish Christ's position from ours. It was Christ's work to reconcile God to man. That is done for ever; we cannot add anything to it. That is a priestly power; and it is at our peril that we claim such a power. Ours is ministerial. We can offer no sacrifice. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Therefore the whole work of the Christian ministry consists in declaring God as reconciled to man, and in beseeching, with every variety of illustration, and every degree of earnestness, men to become reconciled to God. All are God's children by right; all are not God's children in fact. All are sons of God; but all have not the Spirit of sons, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father." All are redeemed, all are not yet sanctified. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*)

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.—*Reconciliation*:—Christianity is eminently a remedial dispensation; it supposes disorder and confusion, and it seeks to introduce order and harmony. Now, it is this peculiar feature of the gospel as the religion of sinners that the apostle adverts to in this passage. I. Consider the NECESSITY of reconciliation. Sin has broken the friendship between God and man. When God created man at first, He created him holy and happy. Adam was the friend of God. Ever since the Fall man has vainly endeavoured to hide himself from God, and to widen the distance between him and his Maker. Hence the fear of death, the terrors of an accusing conscience, the various bloody sacrifices among heathen nations. And this breach of friendship is mutual. On the one hand, God is justly offended with the sinner; He hates all the workers of iniquity; His justice, His holiness, and His truth, are directed against the transgressors of His law. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." And, on the other hand, the sinner is filled with enmity against God—he is averse to the spirituality and strictness of the Divine law. It is very true that God is a God of infinite mercy, and that the sinner

is the object of His compassion; but He cannot possibly be merciful at the expense of His justice. But, behold, there may be reconciliation; the offended Majesty of heaven is willing to be reconciled. He who is the offended and injured party is the first to make the overtures of reconciliation. From the depths of His mercy proceeds a plan by which His justice might be satisfied, and yet the sinner saved. II. Consider the NATURE of the reconciliation. The great ground upon which the reconciliation rests is the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. "God has reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ; for He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Christ is the Mediator of reconciliation; He comes in between the two parties; He is the Day's-man betwixt us, who can lay His hand upon both. And it must ever be remembered that it is on the ground of His atonement that the reconciliation rests. The atonement of Christ has reconciled these opposing claims of justice and mercy. Here, in the words of the Psalmist, "Mercy and truth have met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The death of Christ has satisfied the claims of justice. The grand effect of the atonement of Christ is the non-imputation of sins to all who believe. "God," says the apostle, "is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This, of course, arises directly from the substitution of Christ; it is its immediate effect: we and He, as it were, change places; our sins are imputed unto Him, and His righteousness is imputed unto us. Further still, God hath given us the gospel as the word of reconciliation. "He hath committed to us the word of reconciliation." III. Consider the MESSAGE of reconciliation. "We are ambassadors for Christ." Christ is the chief ambassador; but we are the delegated messengers of this peace—we are in Christ's stead. God might have sent angels as His ambassadors; they would be more worthy of so great a King and of so important a message. But, in condescension to human weakness, He has sent us weak and fallible men. He would rather allure us with love than terrify us by His greatness. Oh! how high and how responsible is our office! But what is the message? It is to treat with sinners on peace and reconciliation. The embassy is one of infinite grace. God promises that He is ready to receive sinners into His favour. And can it be that such a gracious message should be rejected? There are two motives which we would present before you—motives which the apostle uses in this very chapter: the one of fear, arising from a consideration of Christ on the throne of judgment; the other of love, arising from a consideration of love on the Cross of suffering. (*P. J. Gloag, D.D.*)

Reconciliation.—I. PREMISE THREE THINGS IN GENERAL. 1. That to reconcile is to bring into favour and friendship after some breach made and offence taken (Luke xxiii. 12; Matt. v. 23, 24). 2. That the reconciliation is mutual; God is reconciled to us, and we to God. The alienation was mutual, and therefore the reconciliation must be so. The Scripture speaketh not only of an enmity and hatred on man's part (Rom. v. 10), but also of wrath on God's part, not only against sin, but the sinner (Eph. ii. 3; Psa. vii. 11). 3. That reconciliation is sometimes ascribed to God, to Christ, and to believers. (1) To God the Father, as in the text and ver. 18, and Col. i. 20. (2) To Christ (Eph. ii. 16; Col. i. 21). (3) To believers (2 Cor. v. 20). II. MORE PARTICULARLY NOTE THREE THINGS. 1. The foregoing breach. (1) God and man were once near friends (Gen. i. 26, 27.). (2) Man got out of God's favour by conspiring with God's grand enemy. (3) Man fallen drew all his posterity along with him; for God dealt not with him as a single, but as a public person (Rom. v. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 47.). (4) The condition of every man by nature is to be a stranger and an enemy to God (Col. i. 21; Rom. viii. 7). 2. The nature of this reconciliation. (1) As the enmity is mutual, so is the reconciliation; God is reconciled to us, and we to God. His justice is satisfied in Christ, and He is willing to forgive. Our wicked disposition, too, is done away, and our hearts are converted and turned to the Lord. God offereth pardon, and requireth repentance. When we accept the offer, and submit to the conditions, and give the hand to the Lord, to walk with Him in obedience, then are we reconciled. (2) This reconciliation is as firm and strong as our estate in innocency, and in some considerations better (Isa. lvii. 4). A bone well set is strongest where broken. (3) This active reconciliation draweth many blessings along with it. (a) Peace with God (Rom. v. 1). (b) Access to God with boldness and free trade into heaven (Rom. v. 2; Eph. ii. 18). When peace is made between two warring nations, trade revives. (c) Acceptance both of our persons and performances (Eph. i. 6). (d) All the graces of the Spirit. (e) The sanctification of all outward blessings (1 Cor. iii. 23; Rom. viii. 28). (f) A pledge of

heaven (Rom. v. 10). 3. How far Christ is concerned in it, and why. (1) God was resolved to lose no honour by the fall of man, but to keep up a sense of—(a) His justice. (b) His holiness. (c) His truth. (2) Christ was a fit Mediator. (a) Because of His mutual interest in God and us (Job. ix. 33). He is beloved of the Father, and hath a brotherly compassion to us. (b) He is able to satisfy. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The word of reconciliation*:—We owe the word “reconciliation” and the conception of the gospel as a reconciliation to the Apostle Paul. Whether it was that the circumstances of his own conversion so coloured all his thought that henceforth there was nothing more wonderful in the gospel than the new relation it created between God and man, and between man and God, we cannot, perhaps, tell. In this chapter, for example, five times over he dwells on the word, as if it were some sweet memory from which he was loth to part. Nor is this conception of the gospel confined to the earlier period of St. Paul’s ministry. In the two great Epistles written when he had reached the fullest revelation of the glory of Christ, the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, he still loves to dwell on the reconciling work of Christ. “For He is our peace who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that He might create in Himself of the twain one new man, so making peace.” I. THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION. It has been maintained by some theologians that “the word of reconciliation” concerns only man in his relation to God, and has no meaning for God in His relation to man. The New Testament—it is said—never once speaks of God as being reconciled to man, or as needing to be reconciled: it does speak of man being reconciled to God, and the reason is clear. On the side of God there was no enmity, no alienation: these were all on our side; we were “enemies by reason of wicked works,” and “the word of reconciliation” is therefore a message to man. On the other hand, it is said—and in this many of the profoundest Evangelical theologians are agreed—that this purely subjective view of reconciliation unduly narrows the message we have to bear; that the sin of man not only affected his relation to God, but necessarily altered God’s relation to man; that the death of Christ has a Divine significance as well as a human meaning; that it has made peace between God and man, as well as between man and God: God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself”—And how? By that great objective reconciliation involved in the forgiveness of sins, “not imputing their trespasses unto them.” There are four great positions underlying the message in “the word of reconciliation,” on which all men who believe in the gospel of Christ will be agreed. 1. It is a word, first, concerning God. In the address delivered by Dr. Dale, at the opening of the International Council, he said, “In Christ God is the Father of all men. This is the glorious discovery of the Christian gospel, and although he went on to warn us that the universal Fatherhood of God did not involve the universal sonship of man, he did not hesitate to say it was “the very foundation of the order of the world and of human life.” And to those words of Dr. Dale let me add one word more, that this eternal Fatherhood of God is not only the foundation of the order of the world and of human life, but it is the foundation of the gospel of Christ: the first word in the message of reconciliation we are sent to proclaim. The Fatherhood of God is a greater thing than even His sovereignty, for it contains in it all that sovereignty means. The Father must be a ruler, but the ruler need not be a father; and the eternal fatherhood is as awful in its justice as it is tender in its pity; as infinite in the wonder of its holiness as it is in the wonder of its love. And yet Love is its chief word, its all-embracing word. The Love of God for all men, even for the worst, is the first word in the message we have to proclaim. It is even before the Cross of Christ; for if there had been no love there would have been no Cross. 2. It is a word about Christ. And that word is contained in the chapter from which I take my text, “He died for all.” 3. The word of reconciliation is a word concerning the Holy Spirit. There is a gospel of the Spirit as well as of the Cross. Pentecost had a meaning for the world as well as for the Church. 4. It is a word concerning man: “Be ye reconciled to God.” And this word is as sad as the former words were glorious. His alienation from God, that alienation that is at once the result of sin and the punishment of sin, his guilty fear of God, his inward hostility to God—all are here, or men would not need to be “reconciled to God.” It is the human side of our message, the word of reconciliation so far as it concerns man; but I ask you to remember all the power of this appeal to man depends on our first uttering the word concerning God. One

word about God has more power over the human heart than all the words one can speak concerning man. The tides which swept around the shores of this earth are all moved by attraction far up in the heavens, and the great tides of emotion which carry the soul back to God are all lifted by the Cross of Christ. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." II. THE GREATNESS OF THE TRUST COMMITTED TO US. All work that is the service of man is honourable work, and all true service of man is work for God. The artist who fixes on canvas the dream of beauty; the scientific man who spells out letter by letter the secrets of nature; the philosopher who discovers to us the mysteries of our own minds—nay, the humblest toiler at the bench or in the shop—all of them just so far as they make the will of God the law of their life are "fellow-labourers with God"; and all may share the honours of a Divine reward. But this is not all the truth. There are degrees of glory even in Divine work, there is some work that lies nearer the heart of God, that touches Christ more than any other work; and of all work done for God on this earth there is none so dear to God, none that confers such unspeakable honour on the servant who does it, none that will receive so glorious a reward at last as the work of saving men. And our responsibility is as great as the honour laid upon us. 1. We must be faithful to the word "committed to us." We have a message from God to deliver, not a science of religion to discover. 2. And, finally, it is not enough for us to be ourselves faithful to the word of reconciliation; we are responsible also for speaking that word to others. (*G. S. Barrett, B.A.*) *The incarnation; God's work in Christ*:—God is a great worker. He is the mainspring of all activity in the universe but that of sin. There are at least four organs through which he works: material laws, animal instincts, moral mind, and Jesus Christ. By the first He carries on the great revolutions of inanimate nature; by the second He preserves, guides, and controls all the sentient tribes that populate the earth, the air and sea; by the third, through the laws of reason and the dictates of conscience, He governs the vast empire of mind; and by the fourth, namely, Christ, He works out the redemption of sinners in our world. There is no more difficulty in regarding Him in the one person—Christ, for a certain work—than there is in regarding Him as being in material nature, animal instinct, or moral mind. The text leads us to two remarks concerning God's work in Christ:—I. IT IS A WORK OF RECONCILING HUMANITY TO HIMSELF. "He is reconciling the world unto Himself." 1. The work implies—(1) Enmity on man's part; and the existence of this enmity is patent to all. "The carnal mind," &c. (2) A change of mind in one of the parties. 2. Paul speaks of the human world as being reconciled to God in contradistinction—(1) To fallen angels. Hell hates God, but He does not work for its reconciliation. (2) To any particular class of the human family. Some would limit the redeeming work to the few; but it is not so restricted. "He is a propitiation, not for our sins only," &c. II. IT IS A WORK INVOLVING THE REMISSION OF SINS. "Not imputing their trespasses unto them." Three facts will throw light on this. 1. A state of enmity against God is a state of sin. There may be virtue in disliking some persons, but it is evermore a sin to dislike God; He is infinitely good. 2. A state of sin is a state exposed to punishment. 3. In reconciliation the enmity is removed, and therefore the punishment obviated. What is pardon? A remitting of just punishment—a separating of man from his sins and their consequences. This God does through Christ. III. FROM THIS SUBJECT FOUR THINGS MAY BE CONSIDERED IN REGARD TO THIS WORK OF GOD IN CHRIST. 1. It is a work of unbounded mercy. Who ever heard of the offended party seeking the friendship of the offender, especially if the offender was sovereign and the other subject? But this is what the Infinite God is doing in Christ, and doing earnestly every hour. 2. It is a work essential to the well-being of humanity. It is impossible that the creature can be happy whose thoughts, feelings, and purposes are directly opposed to the being, purposes, and procedure of the Absolute. 3. It is a work exclusively of benign moral influence. No coercion on the one hand, no angry denunciations on the other, can produce reconciliation; it is the work of loving logic. 4. It is a work which must be gradual in its progress. You cannot force mind; it must have time to reflect, repent, and resolve. (*Ibid.*) **NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES TO THEM.**—*The non-imputation of sin*: The pardon or non-imputation of sin. I. THE NATURE AND WORTH OF THE PRIVILEGE—"not imputing" (*Rom. iv. 8*). 1. It is a metaphor taken from those who cast up their accounts; and so it implies—(1) That sin is a debt (*Matt. vi. 12*). (2) That God will one day call sinners to an account, and charge such and such debts upon them (*Matt. xxv. 19*). (3) That in this day of accounts God will not impute the tres-

passes of those who are reconciled to Him by Christ (Psa. xxxii. 2). 2. Now this is—(1) An act of great grace and favour on God's part, because—(a) Every one is become "guilty before God," and obnoxious to the process of His righteous judgment (Rom. iii. 19). There is sin enough to impute, and the reason of this non-imputation is not our innocency, but God's mercy. (b) He would not prosecute His right against us, calling us to a strict account, and punishing us according to our demerits, which would have been our utter undoing (Psa. cxxx. 3; Psa. cxliii.). (c) He found out the way how to recompense the wrong done by sin unto His Majesty, and sent His Son to make this recompense for us (ver. 21; Psa. liii. 4; Rom. iv. 2). (d) He did this out of His mere love, which set-a-work all the causes which concurred in the business of our redemption (John iii. 16). And this love was not excited by any love on our parts (Rom. iii. 24). 3. This negative or non-imputation is heightened by the positive imputation of Christ's merits. (1) A matter of great privilege and blessedness to the creature. This will appear if we consider—(a) The evil we are freed from; guilt is an obligation to punishment, and pardon is the dissolving this obligation. (b) The good depending upon it in this life and the next. II. THE MANNER HOW THIS PRIVILEGE IS BROUGHT ABOUT AND APPLIED TO US. 1. The first stone in this building was laid in God's eternal decree and purpose to reconcile sinners to Himself by Christ, not imputing their trespasses to them. 2. The second step was when Christ was actually exhibited in the flesh, and paid our ransom for us (1 John iii. 5; John i. 29; Heb. x. 14). 3. The next step was when Christ rose from the dead; for then we had a visible evidence of the sufficiency of the ransom, sacrifice, and satisfaction which He made for us (Rom. v. 25, viii. 34). 4. We are actually justified, pardoned, and reconciled when we repent and believe. 5. We are sensibly pardoned, as well as actually, when the Lord giveth peace and joy in believing, "and sheddeth abroad His love in our hearts by the Spirit." 6. The last step is when we have a complete and full absolution of sin—that is, at the day of judgment (Acts iii. 19). III. IT IS A BRANCH AND FRUIT OF OUR RECONCILIATION WITH GOD. 1. Because when God releaseth us from the punishment of sin, it is a sign His anger is appeased and now over. 2. That which is the ground of reconciliation is the ground of pardon of sin (Eph. i. 7). 3. That which is the fruit of reconciliation is obtained and promoted by pardon of sin, and that is fellowship with God and delightful communion with Him in a course of obedience and subjection to Him (Heb. x. 22; 1 John i. 7). (*T. Manton, D.D.*)

Ver. 20. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ.—*Of the nature and use of the gospel ministry as an external mean of applying Christ* :—First, Christ's ambassadors commissioned. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ." Secondly, their commission opened; wherein we find, first, the work whereunto the ministers of the gospel are appointed, to reconcile the world to God. Secondly, their capacity described: they act in Christ's stead, as His vicegerents. He is no more in this world to treat personally with sinners. Thirdly, the manner of their acting in that capacity; and that is by humble, sweet, and condescending entreaties. Doct.: That the preaching of the gospel by Christ's ambassadors is the means appointed for the reconciling of sinners to Christ. First, we will open what is implied in Christ's treaty with sinners by His ambassadors or ministers. 1. It necessarily implies the defection of man from his estate of friendship with God. If no war with heaven, what need of ambassadors of peace? The very office of the ministry is an argument of the fall. 2. It implies the singular grace and admirable condescension of God to sinful man. 3. It implies the great dignity of the gospel ministry. We are ambassadors for Christ. 4. Christ's treating with sinners by His ministers, who are His ambassadors, implies the strict obligation they are under to be faithful in their ministerial employment (1 Tim. i. 12). 5. It implies the removal of the gospel ministry to be a very great judgment to the people. The remaining of ambassadors presages an ensuing war. 6. And, lastly, it implies both the wisdom and condescension of God to sinful men in carrying on a treaty of peace with them by such ambassadors, negotiating betwixt Him and them. Secondly, we are to consider that great concernment about which these ambassadors of Christ are to treat with sinners, and that is their reconciliation to God. First, that God should be reconciled after such a dreadful breach as the fall of man made is wonderful. No sin, all things considered, was ever like to this sin; other sins, like a single bullet, kill particular persons, but this, like a chain-shot, cuts off multitudes which no man can number. Secondly, that God should be reconciled to men and not to

angels, a more excellent order of creatures, is yet more astonishing. Thirdly, that God should be wholly and thoroughly reconciled to man, so that no fury remains in Him against us (Isa. xxvii. 4) is still matter of farther wonder. Fourthly, that God should be freely reconciled to sinners, and discharge them without the least satisfaction to His justice from them, is, and for ever will be, marvellous in their eyes. For though Christ, your Surety, hath made satisfaction in your stead, yet it was His life, His blood, and not yours, that went for it. Fifthly, that God should be finally reconciled to sinners, so that never new breach shall happen betwixt Him and them, so as to dissolve the league of friendship, is a most transporting message. In the last place, we are to inquire what and whence is this efficacy of preaching to reconcile sinners to Christ. First, this efficacy and wonderful power is not from the word itself; take it in an abstract notion, separated from the Spirit, it can do nothing: it is called "the foolishness of preaching" (1 Cor. i. 21). Secondly, it derives not this efficacy from the instrument by which it is ministered, let their gifts be what they will. Thirdly, but whatever efficacy it hath to reconcile men to God it derives from the Spirit of God, whose co-operation and blessing gives it all the fruit it hath. First, admire and stand amazed at this mercy. "I will praise Thee, O Lord," saith the Church (Isa. xii. 1). "Though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me." Secondly, beware of new breaches with God. God will speak "peace to His people and to His saints, but let them not turn again to folly" (Psa. lxxxv. 8). Thirdly, labour to reconcile others to God, especially those that are endeared to you by the bonds of natural relation. Fourthly, Let your reconciliation with God relieve you under all burdens of affliction you shall meet with in your way to heaven. (*John Flavel.*) *Ambassadors for Christ:*

—1. The dignity of an ambassador is measured—(1) By the grandeur of the power he represents. Compare a minister from Paraguay with one from Prussia. The former may have more personal wealth and dignity of character than the latter; but how difficult their official dignity! The apostle's official exaltation was the very loftiest in the world. (2) By the grandeur of the State to which he is sent. An ambassador to Russia is a greater personage than one to Liberia. Now, Paul was sent, not to one State or kingdom, but to the world. (3) By the subjects about which they are commissioned to treat. Compare the Treaty of Ghent with the settlement of the "Alabama Claims." The object of the apostle's mission was not to make peace between contending nations, not to adjust spoliation claims, but to restore a world of rebels to their prime allegiance, and to wrest from hell its ill-gotten spoils. 2. The apostle says, "We are ambassadors for Christ." 3. Behold here an evidence that God delighteth not in the death of the sinner. Not content to commission a body of men simply to announce, He condescends to plead through them (Ezek. xviii. 23-32; Isa. i. 18; 2 Pet. iii. 9). I. LET US ANALYSE THIS WONDERFUL DIVINE SOLICITATION. It assumes—1. A state of alienation from God on your part and offence on His. 2. That God has been propitiated. 3. That without the sinner's own consent the interposition made by Christ can be of no avail. II. HOW IS MAN'S AVERSION TO RECONCILIATION TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR? 1. While conscious of sin, they are really unconscious of peril. When danger is realised no man is indifferent. Hence the necessity for preaching about law and hell. 2. Sinners love their sin. Sin has its pleasures. You see no pleasure in holiness. Admit that the life of the sinner reconciled is a gloomy journey, nothing to compensate him for the life of revelry that he is to abandon. Is it not better to experience temporary unhappiness for the sake of immortal bliss? Now God, who knows the unsatisfying nature of sinful pleasures, beseeches you by us, "Be reconciled to God." (*J. W. Pratt, D.D.*) *Ambassadors for Christ:*—I. THE OFFICE IN WHICH

THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST APPEAR. 1. An ambassador holds an office of distinguished honour. He represents the king who sends him. Ambassadors may, or they may not, be talented men. It may be of importance to the sovereign that they should be so; but they are not to be respected for their talents, but for their office, and any disrespect shown them in a foreign court is levelled at the office. Now all this is true of the ministers of Christ. Christ accounts every kindness shown to them as shown to Him, and every unfriendly act towards them as done to Him. Talents and piety commend ministers; but it is their office which is the ground of their honour. 2. The ambassador's is an office of important trust. They are not sent to make laws, but simply to convey instructions. Now the apostle says that he was "put in trust with the gospel," and God "requires in stewards that a man be found faithful." They have, therefore, simply to deliver that to the people which they have received of the Lord Jesus. 3. This office is one requiring great skill,

diligence, and labour. What tact, and ingenuity, and application does it often require to conduct the king's business at a foreign court! And oh! how much more to negotiate the affairs of Christ's kingdom among them! "Who is sufficient for these things?" "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews," &c. II. THE OBJECT AT WHICH THEY AIM—that men may be reconciled to God. III. THE MESSAGE THEY HAVE TO DELIVER. 1. It is free. 2. Full. 3. Final. IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH THEIR OBJECT IS TO BE PROSECUTED. Not by compulsion, not by punishment, but "we pray you"—"God beseeches you by us." 1. Such a mode answers to the character of God and His gospel. "God is love"; His gospel is "goodwill toward men." Methinks it is very easy to be reconciled to love. 2. The method corresponds with the character of man. Men are more easily drawn than driven. Love wins the heart, when terror would often drive it away. (*J. Sherman.*) *God beseeching sinners by His ministers*:—Man became God's enemy without the slightest provocation; but man did not make the first overtures for peace. Consider—I. THE AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION. 1. They themselves were once enemies to God. God might have sent angels to you, and you might have been awed by their glory; but their sermons must have been unsympathetic compared with ours, for they could not know your misery as we do. 2. They are now reconciled, and therefore can speak not theoretically, but experimentally. They were reconciled, too, by Jesus Christ, in the same way as other sinners. Again, Paul tells us—3. They have a message to deliver which has been given to them. Their mission is not to invent a gospel. I send my servant with a message, and if she, in her wisdom, alters my message to suit her own views, I discharge her, for I want some one who will bear my message, and not make one of her own. God would have His ministers be like transparent glass, not like painted windows, which colour all the rays after their own nature. II. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF OUR MESSAGE. 1. That reconciliation is only to be obtained towards God on the ground of substitution. You cannot reconcile yourself to God by lamentation on account of your past sins, by any future arduous service, nor by any ceremony of man's invention, or even of God's ordaining. This is the plan:—Men were all lost and condemned; then Jesus took upon Himself our manhood, that He might be our brother; and in His death He bore the burden of human sin. 2. That this reconciliation was not apart from God, but that God was in Christ. You must never fall into the idea that God is revengeful, and that the death of His Son was necessary to pacify the Father. God was love before Jesus died. The substitution made on Calvary was a substitution provided by God's love. It is not Jesus, a stranger, who hangs there to gratify the Father's vengeance; it is God who, in one of His Divine Persons, bears the penalty which justice demanded of sinful men. 3. That in consequence of God's having reconciled the world to Himself in Jesus Christ, He is able now to deal with sinners as if they had never sinned. "Not imputing their trespasses unto them." "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Aye, and something more. God treats us who are reconciled to Him as if they were full of good works; "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 4. That the atonement of Christ is for the "world" (John iii. 16). 5. That there is nothing whatever needed in order to their reconciliation and acceptance with God, except what Christ has already wrought out. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS MESSAGE IS TO BE DELIVERED. The text tells us very plainly—1. By beseeching and praying men. We are not merely to convince the intellect; neither are we alone to warn and threaten, though that has its place. 2. By beseeching men as though God did beseech them. Now how does God beseech them? Read Isa. i., lv.; Ezek. xxxiii. 11; Jer. xlv. 4; Hosea xi. 8. 3. By praying souls in Christ's stead—*i.e.*, we are to preach as if Christ were preaching. That would not be in a light or trifling manner, or in a cold official style, but with melting eyes and burning heart. Sometimes He prayed—(1) By setting before them the evil of their ways. "For which of these works do you stone Me?" And so I inquire, "For which of God's works are you His enemy? Are you His enemy because He keeps you in life, gives you your food, or sends you the gospel?" (2) By showing them the uselessness of their rebellion (Luke xiv. 31). Why will you be God's enemy when you cannot win the battle? (3) By displaying the result of their sin, as He did when He stood on the brow of the hill and looked down on Jerusalem. Remember the passages where He speaks of dividing the sheep from the goats, where He treats of the virgins who had no oil in their vessels with their lamps. Whoever puts the doctrine of hell into the background, Jesus never did. (4) By pleading the love of God—*e.g.*, in the parable of the prodigal son. And, oh, how He implored man to be reconciled, in such words

as, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." 4. By bringing this matter home and pressing it. We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. It comes to this with you: God says to you—1. Throw down your weapons; why dost thou contend with thy Maker? What has Christ done that thou shouldst not love Him? What has the Holy Ghost done that thou shouldst resist Him? What wilt thou gain by it in time or in eternity? 2. Accept the Lord Jesus. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Christian ambassador*:—I. THE CHARACTER THAT BECOMES MINISTERS AS AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST. 1. Intelligence.

No wise prince would employ as his representative at a foreign court a man destitute of good sense and of acquired knowledge; otherwise the interests of the empire might be compromised, and the lustre of the sovereign's reign tarnished. Surely, then, the care of souls, every one of which is more valuable than worlds, ought only to be entrusted to men gifted by nature, whose minds have been roused by cultivation, and whose conduct gives evidence that they have been taught by God. 2. Attachment to Christ and His cause. In the early stages of society ambassadors were chiefly chosen from among the personal friends of the prince, and, being often bound to him by the ties of consanguinity or marriage, afforded the best guarantees of fidelity and zeal. And so love to the Saviour, arising from the heartfelt power of His religion, and from the workings of a devoted gratitude, is the highest qualification of a Christian minister. 3. Fidelity. When an envoy is sent to a foreign court he bears with him not only credentials, but written instructions, defining the conditions on which a treaty of peace may be ratified; and should he exceed his instructions the treaty so negotiated would not be sanctioned by his king. And so when ministers entreat sinners to be reconciled unto God, they should always remember that they are acting for Christ, and should only propose salvation in the manner and on the terms in which it is offered in His gospel. "Thus saith the Lord" should be distinctly attached to all their announcements. 4. Zeal. The man to whom is committed the dignity of a prince and the interests of an empire should subordinate every personal feeling to the glory of his sovereign; and so the ambassador for Christ should spend and be spent in his Master's cause. 5. Wisdom. The ambassador of an earthly monarch behoves not only to maintain a courteous deportment, but to mark, with eagle glance, the ever-shifting relations of the kingdoms with which he negotiates, and to adapt his policy to their changing circumstances; and so the minister of Christ requires to display much wisdom, both in maintaining an inoffensive conversation and adapting his lessons to the existing state of society. 6. Diligent and persevering exertion. A superficial observer, who gazes on the splendid attire and retinue of an envoy, and who observes his attendance upon the levées and gala-days of royalty, is apt to imagine that his duties are light and his post nearly a sinecure; but a person who peeps behind the curtain, who notices the thousand channels by which he gleans information, his anxious consultations with confidential advisers, his sleepless nights, devoted to unravelling the mysteries of the passing masquerade, and his frequent interchange of correspondence with his sovereign—the man who looks to the details of all these labours must admit that his employment is most arduous and harassing. In the same manner, many suppose that the station of a minister is one of indolence; but those who survey their ministrations in the sanctuary, their diligence in study, their hours devoted to prayer, their painstaking visitations, and their sympathy with the sick, must admit that the employment is most harassing, and need feel no surprise that so many fall as martyrs who devote themselves with zeal to the duties of this profession. 7. Great dignity. If the envoy of an earthly monarch, whenever he presents his credentials, has a portion of the respect due to his sovereign awarded to him, so the man, however humble, who acts for Christ as the "legate of the skies," derives a dignity from his office before which all worldly honours sink into insignificance.

II. THE MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD ROUSE US TO INCREASED ZEAL. 1. Should souls perish through our negligence, their blood will be required at our hands. 2. The example of the apostles should stimulate us to exertion. 3. The example left us by the Luthers, Calvins, and Knoxes, of the reforming era, and by the fathers of this Church at a later period, should rouse and ashame us. 4. Were the motives derived from religion forgotten, patriotism and humanity should rouse us. 6. It becomes us to recollect that our lots have been cast in critical and perilous times, which demand from us extraordinary zeal and watchfulness. (*J. Brown, A.M.*) *A merciful embassy*:—There has long been war between man and his Maker. Our federal head, Adam, threw down the gauntlet in the garden of Eden. From

that day until now there has been no truce between God and man by nature. But though man will not make terms with God, God shows His unwillingness any longer to be at war with man. He Himself sends His ambassadors. Consider—I. THE AMBASSADORS. All nations, with one accord, have agreed to honour ambassadors. Strange, then, that all nations and all people should have conspired to dishonour the ambassadors of God! But the ambassador of God may be very welcome to some of you, who have bitterly felt your estrangement, and are prepared by a sense of ruin for the good tidings of redemption. Ambassadors are welcome—1. To a people who are engaged in a war which is beyond their strength, when their resources are exhausted and the peril of defeat is imminent. Ah, man! thou hast bid defiance to the King of heaven, whose power is irresistible. How canst thou stand against Him; shall the stubble contend with the fire? Happy for thee that terms of peace are proclaimed. Wilt thou not gladly accept what God proposeth to thee? 2. When the people have begun to feel the victorious force of the King. Certain cities have been taken by the sword and given up to be sacked. Now the poor, miserable inhabitants are glad enough to get peace. Doubtless there are some here who have known the power of God in their conscience. Surely you will rejoice to hear that there is an embassy of peace sent to you. 3. To those who are labouring under a fear of total and speedy destruction. 4. If the people know that he brings no hard terms. When a certain king sent to the inhabitants of a town that he would make peace with them provided he put out their right eyes and cut off their right hands, the ambassador who brought those tidings could not expect a cordial welcome. But there are no hard terms in the gospel. They are simply, "Believe and live"; not "Do, and live"; not "Feel this, and live"; but simply "Believe, and live." And should not the fame of the King increase the zest with which the embassy is received? No temporary peace is proposed that may presently be broken, but a peace that shall stand for ever and ever. This peace is proclaimed to all men. "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude. II. THE COMMISSION OF PEACE WHICH GOD HAS ENTRUSTED US TO PROCLAIM—"To wit, that God," &c. Let us open the commission. Our commission begins with the announcement that God is love, that He willeth to forgive. Our commission goes on to disclose the manner as well as the motive of mercy. God has been pleased to give His only-begotten Son that He might stand in the room of those whom God has chosen. Thus the justice of God should be satisfied, and His love flow over to the human race. But the proclamation needs something more to give us any satisfaction. Are there any tidings in it for you and me? Well, our message goes on to announce that whosoever in the wide world will come to Christ shall forthwith be at peace with God. Though only some will accept it, the preacher is not warranted in showing any partiality. When Charles II. came back to England there was an amnesty, except for certain persons, and these were mentioned by name—Hugh Peters and others were proscribed; but there is no exception here. III. THE DUTY WE HAVE TO DISCHARGE—"As though God did beseech you by us," &c. Then we have not merely to read our commission, but to beseech you to accept it. Why?—1. Because You are men, not machines. 2. Your hearts are so hard that you are prone to defy God's power and resist His grace. 3. You are unbelieving, and will not credit the tidings. You say it is too good to be true that God will have mercy on such as you are. 4. You are so proud and self-satisfied that you will sooner follow your own righteousness and cling to your own works than accept a peace already sealed and ratified, and now freely proffered to you for acceptance. 5. You are careless. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.—*The arguments by which men should be persuaded to reconcile unto God:—*Man hath an indisposition Godward, which doth expose him to the greatest danger. 1. That the motion of reconciliation begins with God. 2. Though the motion of reconciliation begins with God yet God expects our concurrence and consent. Reconciliation is never accomplished without us. 3. God in this motion of reconciliation accommodates Himself to humane principles, which are two: intelligence and freedom. To show you wherein this reconciliation doth consist, and whereby you may come to be reconciled to God. (1) Rectify your wrong apprehension of God. To lay aside false opinion, this is the first; but it will not be the last. We find in ourselves, that if we have had wrong apprehension of a person, if we have a better representation of him, we begin to change in our minds. Wrong apprehensions of God are very mischievous; they keep us off from Him, at the greatest distance. The first

step to reconciliation is to lay aside wrong apprehension. 2. Let your affections be inflamed toward God, for this is due order; let understanding go before and affections follow after. If we apprehend God to be good and lovely, we cannot but adore, love, and magnify Him; the second will follow upon the first. 3. Be reconciled to God by savouring the things of God. Through reconciliation we come to harmonise with the nature, and mind, and will of God: to think of things as He thinks; to relish them as He doth. Friends that are of a familiar acquaintance, they come so to harmonise, that you may know one by the other. 4. Be reconciled to God by imitating Him in acts of goodness, acts of mercy, acts of love. 5. Let us direct all our intentions towards Him. 6. Acknowledge His grace and goodness in Christ. Now to apply this—1. This doth highly recommend religion to us, in that it is a reconciling principle. (1) The reconciliation of man to God. (2) The reconciling of man to man. (*B. Whichcote, D.D.*)

Reconciliation with God:—I have a special errand; I bring a message from the King. When the President of the United States sends a message to the national legislature it takes precedence of all other business. When the ambassador of England or Germany presents his credentials, he has behind him the authority and prestige of a mighty empire. How much more authoritative the voice of him who is the ambassador of the King of kings. I have no theory to propound, but only the command of my Master. "I beseech you on the behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." Notice:—I. HOW POSITIONS HERE ARE REVERSED. It is not the rebel pleading for pardon, but the King asking the rebel to fling down his weapons; not the returning prodigal seeking the father, but the loving Father entreating the return of the wayward son. A son once quarrelled with and stole from his father, then fled to London, where he wasted his substance in sin. A detective discovered him in a haunt of vice—health and money gone. The father was notified, and hastened to the wretched abode. He climbed to the attic, and found his sick son in a broken, troubled sleep. He bent over him and was recognised. "My poor boy, I've come for you; will you go home with me?" "Go home! yes, if you'll forgive me, father." He lifted up the invalid, and took him home repentant and forgiven. So God says to you, "Poor son, daughter, come home, come home!" II. THE CAUSE OF THIS CONTROVERSY. Sin; it affects the whole nature. If I should let fall a single drop of ink into this glass of water it would discolour the whole. There is also a penalty to be met. Christ becomes our substitute. It is His grace that bridges the gulf between us and heaven. III. THE ONE CONDITION OF RECONCILIATION—that is, submission to God's government. "Unconditional surrender" is the message. We remember how the large-hearted Lincoln pleaded, "be ye reconciled." But he held to the one condition, YIELD! So God says, "Put away the evil of your doings." You cannot pass over this bridge till you have left at the gate your evil ways and thoughts. IV. THE FRUITS OF THIS RECONCILEMENT are sweet and precious. You may be lying like a rosebush beaten by the blast and pelting rain. Your heart is crushed and bleeding, but as the sun comes and talks, as it were, with the flower; covers its petals with warm kisses and lifts it up to drink in the sunshine, and to be beautiful again, so will He give you beauty for ashes and joy for heaviness when you repentingly and lovingly open your heart to Christ. Conclusion.—You have heard of the Highland mother whose daughter had long led a reckless life in Edinburgh, sunk in sin. Her eyes were opened. She returned home to the hut by the hillside, finding her way in the darkness. The daughter entered and found her old "mother" crooning over the ashes of the fire. The penitent was clasped in her mother's arms. "I came home in the dead of night and found the cabin door unlocked!" "It's never been locked since you went away, for I didna ken when you might come back." So God keeps the door of mercy ajar and waits to welcome you. Think of that Saxon word, well-come—that is, "It is well for you to come." To stay away is hell! (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*)

Reconciliation to God:—I. WHAT MINISTERS, AS CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS, ARE TO DO IN ORDER TO SINNERS BEING RECONCILED TO GOD.—They are not to be silent, but to speak; and as they are ambassadors of Christ, He should be the principal subject of their ministrations. But more particularly—1. In order to sinners' reconciliation to God, it is necessary for ministers boldly to declare (1) The natural enmity of their hearts against Him. Every sin is an act of rebellion against God. (2) That though the groundwork of our reconciliation was laid in the eternal counsels of God, yet that it is actually brought about in time (Eph. ii. 13). (a). The law being fulfilled, and justice satisfied in the person of Christ, the offended Deity now says, "Fury is not in Me." This is reconciliation

on God's part, with respect to which we have nothing to do but to cordially embrace it. (b) Reconciliation on our part is begun and completed by the grace of the Spirit. He slays the enmity of the heart, subdues the obstinacy of the will, and sanctifies the carnal affections, so that we are made to resign ourselves up to Him as our lawful Sovereign, and at the same time choose Him as our supreme good.

2. Christ's servants are likewise to declare that there is need of a farther reconciliation in those who are already reconciled to God. Be ye particularly reconciled—

- (1) To the absolute sovereignty of God. Deny Him not that right which you yourselves exercise in disposing your favours as you please.
- (2) To the providences of God, so as neither to quarrel with Him for what He has done, nor prescribe to Him what He shall do.
- (3) To all the requirements of God. His laws are founded upon the highest reason, as well as enforced by the highest authority.
- (4) To the methods of Divine grace, and "the way of salvation" by Jesus Christ. Be ye then reconciled to the gospel, as a mystery far above your comprehension: yet a mystery of godliness, the manifest design of which is, to make you more like God, and meet for heaven.

3. Ministers are faithfully to denounce the terrible judgments of God against those who live and die unreconciled to him. They are to tell their hearers that if reconciliation do not take place in this world, it will not in the next.

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH MINISTERS THUS TREAT WITH SINNERS ABOUT THEIR RECONCILIATION TO GOD.

1. With a perfect unanimity. However various their gifts and abilities may be, yet the subject of their ministrations is the same.
2. With warmth and affection. We not only direct and exhort, but "we pray you" (Acts xx. 31).
3. With spiritual power and authority, "as though God did beseech you by us."
4. With meekness, gentleness, and all the means of persuasion, "We beseech you." Conclusion.—The subject teaches us—I. The dreadful corruption and depravity of human nature. Nothing worse can be said of the devil than that he is an enemy to God.
2. The necessity of a Divine change; not a change of the conduct only, but of the inward frame and temper of the mind.
3. How much are we indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom this reconciliation never would, nor ever could have taken place! (B. *Beddome, M.A.*)

On reconciliation :—I. This earnest entreaty of the apostle supposes ALIENATION FROM GOD, AND ENMITY AGAINST HIM, AS THE NATURAL CHARACTER OF MANKIND. That they are naturally averse from God may be proved from the general tendency of their desires and affections. The desire of knowledge is natural. The philosopher, the scholar, the artist, are all in earnest pursuit of knowledge. But of what kind?—on questions and speculations which natural objects suggest, and which are all of temporary importance. In no class of men, indeed, do we perceive a natural desire after the best of all knowledge, the knowledge of God, and of the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ. That knowledge is the last and the least desired. Again, we are all desirous of happiness; but where is it generally sought? Look at the young, and you find them pursuing their happiness among trifles and amusements that are ever shifting with the hour. Look at those of maturer age, in what do they place their happiness? In pursuits as idle as the play of children, but more dangerous. Again, we take much pleasure in social conversation. We are made for society, and the social principle belongs to our nature. If then no alienation from God has taken place, the most delightful topics of conversation would be His nature, His works, our relation to Him, the duties we owe to Him, and the blessedness of communion with Him. Our experience, however, tells us that these are by no means the favourite themes of social conversation.

II. THE POSSIBILITY, NOTWITHSTANDING MAN'S NATURAL ENMITY, OF HIS RECONCILIATION TO GOD. Observe what wisdom and grace appear in the exact adaptation of the gospel to our actual condition! If reconciliation be proposed at all, it is not for the inferior and offending party to determine the way. God well knew that His wisdom alone was adequate to this. But in making known the purposes of His grace, how conspicuous does His wisdom, how glorious does His majesty, appear! His offended justice requires satisfaction, and His truth declares that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." But further, in this work, in this combination of might, wisdom, and grace, we see each Person of the Godhead harmoniously engaged.

III. That our text SUGGESTS THE LEADING OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY—to beseech men to be reconciled to God.

1. We beseech you by the imminent dangers of a state of enmity against God.
2. We beseech you by the mercies of God.
3. We beseech you by the blood of Christ shed for the remission of sins. Think of the costly sacrifice made for this gracious purpose.
4. We beseech you by the pro-

mised influences of the Holy Spirit, "be ye reconciled to God." We know that your own efforts cannot effect this object; but we call upon you to put into diligent use the means with which Divine grace has furnished you. 5. Finally, we beseech you, by the awful importance of eternity, and the value of your never-dying souls. (*T. Lewis.*) *Reconciliation with God, man's truest interest*:—I. I SHALL ENDEAVOUR TO PROVE THAT A STATE OF SIN IS A STATE OF HOSTILITY AGAINST GOD; THAT THE IMPENITENT OFFENDER IS AT ENMITY WITH GOD. That obstinate sinners are the enemies of God, we have His own unerring word for our confirmation. This is the very name which He gives them, speaking by the prophet Isaiah, "I will avenge Me," says He, "of Mine enemies, and render vengeance to Mine adversaries." Nor is He unjust in branding them with this title, since their constant practice proves them to be no other, for they live in a direct opposition to His will, in a presumptuous violation of His laws. But the greatest instance of enmity is when we enter into a strict alliance with avowed adversaries. The first and greatest enemy of God is the devil, and the wicked man is entered into a close covenant with him. A second enemy of God is the world, and therefore the apostle positively assures us that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. But how dear and tender a union is there between this and the wicked man! A third enemy of God is the flesh. I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind. Friendship is generally founded upon a resemblance of dispositions, and enmity is often caused by a contrariety of humours. But what inclinations can be more opposite than those of God and the sinful man? Holiness and justice are the delights of the one; uncleanness and iniquity the darlings of the other. II. TO INQUIRE INTO THE DISMAL CONSEQUENCES OF BEING GOD'S ENEMIES, AND HAVING HIM FOR OURS. 1. By considering the nature and probable effects of this enmity. How is it possible to taste any enjoyment of our lives, our fortunes, or any other friendship, whilst we thus continue out of favour with our God. 2. From the consideration of our own weakness and infirmity, and the vast power and ability of our formidable enemy, we may learn how miserable a thing it is to be at enmity with our God. We cannot resist His anger. 3. The great misery of this condition will yet further appear if we consider that he who has God for his enemy is thereby deprived of the only cordial which can sweeten the bitterness of this present life. For what is there that can carry a man comfortably through all the troubles and disappointments of this turbulent world, but a sober consideration of his living under the protection of Almighty God? III. THE INVINCIBLE NECESSITY WHICH LIES UPON US OF COMPLYING WITH THE ADVICE WHICH THE APOSTLE HERE GIVES US, "That we should be reconciled unto God." Having just laid before you the miserable consequences of continuing in a state of enmity with God, one would think any other arguments useless. Shall the traitor at the gallows need to be importuned to accept of pardon and be restored to his Prince's favour? One would think there should need no entreaty in such a case. 1. The infinite condescension of Almighty God in vouchsafing to make such a passionate address to us, should prevail with any grateful and ingenious soul to lay hold of the reconciliation which is offered by his God. 2. We should be prevailed with to be reconciled to God, because no just reason or pretence can be alleged for our continuing to stand out in hostility against Him. The causes which are wont to occasion our continuance in any enmity are either our hopes of victory, or our despair of peace, or the difficulty of the terms of our reconciliation, but none of these hindrances can fairly be pretended as the obstruction of our agreement with Almighty God. 3. We ought heartily to close with a reconciliation to our God, because otherwise we shall be unable to resist those enemies which we must expect to encounter in this troublesome world. 4. Let us reconcile ourselves to God, because then we shall be sure of such a friend as is able to deliver us out of all distresses, and to impart to us both temporal and eternal advantages. When once we have entered into a friendship with Him, we are placed beyond the reach of any other enemies; for who is he that will harm you if ye be the followers of that which is good? (*N. Brady.*)

Ver. 21. **For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.**—*Christ being made sin for us*:—In every age of the world mankind seem to have been conscious to themselves of guilt. Now guilt is universally accompanied with a sense of demerit. The altars have groaned under the victims that were heaped upon them; and the temples have been filled with the most costly perfumes. Men have even given the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls. We are now no longer

permitted to wander in ignorance, uncertainty, and error, respecting the method of our acceptance with God. I. Consider THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST AS UPRIGHT AND INNOCENT. Not only was He free from original sin; throughout the whole course of an active and eventful life, He kept Himself unspotted from the world. Immediately before entering upon His public ministry, His innocence was put to a severe trial. But though the words of the text speak only of our Saviour's innocence, we ought not to overlook His high dignity and excellence. He was the everlasting God. II. ILLUSTRATE THE DOCTRINE OF HIS BEING MADE SIN FOR US. The original word, here rendered sin, is also employed to signify a sin-offering; in which signification it is frequently used in the Septuagint. This phrase is borrowed from the Jewish ritual, of which the sin-offering formed a part. The design of this offering was to take away the guilt of the offerer by the substitution of a victim in his place. 1. That Christ suffered and died in our stead, and consequently expiated our guilt, appears from the nature of His sufferings themselves. Whence proceeded those groans that indicated the agony of His soul? It is impossible to account for this anguish upon the supposition that His sufferings were the same as those of any other man. Many who were thus witnesses for the truth have met death in its most terrible forms with composure, and even with transports of joy. If Christians, then, in such circumstances have triumphed, why did Christ tremble? Not surely because their courage and constancy were greater than His. The causes were completely different. They suffered from men, who can kill the body but cannot injure the soul. He suffered from God, before whose indignation no created being is able to stand. 2. That Christ suffered in our stead appears from the nature and design of sacrifices. That sacrifices were of a vicarious nature is plain from all the accounts we have of them. The Jewish sacrifices were unquestionably of this nature. But not only were the ancient sacrifices of a vicarious nature—they were instituted as types of Christ, our great High Priest. They must have originated with God, as a proper means of directing the view of men to Him, who was to appear in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Viewed in this light, sacrifices were worthy of God to appoint, and reasonable for man to perform. Since these sacrifices were of a vicarious nature, and since they were also types of Christ, when He offered Himself as a sacrifice upon the Cross, He must have borne the punishment of our sins, and thus have expiated our guilt. 3. That Christ died in our room and stead, appears from the express declarations of Scripture. In Isaiah liii. 4, Christ is said to have "borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows"; and in the 12th verse, "He poured out His soul to death, and bore the sins of many." III. THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT. 1. To the faithful follower of Jesus this subject is full of consolation. His guilt is expiated. Not so the impenitent sinner, who will not come to Christ that he may be saved. 2. From this subject we may learn the dreadful nature of sin. 3. From this subject we may learn the amazing love of God to man. (*John Ramsay, M.A.*) *The incarnation from the human side—Christ conversant with sin:—*1. These are bold words of Paul. So much so that the great majority of interpreters are tempted to alter them. For "sin" they take the liberty of reading "sin offering." I suppose if Paul had meant sin offering he could very easily have said so. The ideas conveyed by "sin" and "sin offering" are exceedingly different. No man carefully expressing himself would now use the one term, when he intended to give the idea contained in the other. We know no man without sin. He who has had no experience of sin, has not had a human experience. If Christ had been man in every other respect, but without being in some way conversant with sin, men would not have felt the power of His sympathetic love reaching to the worst extremities of their case. The problem is clear enough; Christ to establish His thorough sympathy with my heart must be conversant with sin, which forms so very large a part of my experience; and yet to deliver me from sin He ought to be above it, and in no way involved in its entanglements. He knew no sin, and He was made sin. Here Paul affirms as real those very two things that I have felt to be a necessity. 2. Let us try and find our way through this difficulty, and understand some of the important conclusions in which we may be landed. The difficulty may come up in three different forms. (1) As an intellectual difficulty; arising from the apparent impossibility of the infinite entering into the experience of the finite. Christ is not the manifestation of the infinite and absolute, which in its infiniteness is incapable of being manifested. He is the manifestation of all that is intelligible and conceivable in God, which can be pictured to the mind. (2) There is the moral difficulty which we are necessitated to consider. How then is it morally possible that the sinless should

have the experience of sin? Here careful reflection is necessary. The experience of sin, so common to men, is more complete than may at first seem. There are three things to be carefully distinguished in it. (a) There are all those inducements that lead to it, and that may for a long time be operating on the mind before its commission. (b) Then there is the deliberate, wilful act of sin, which for the most part is momentary; and (c) There is that long course of sorrow, in numerous forms, which flows out of sin. Into how much of this can the sinless enter? Into the deliberate determination and act of wrong, it is clear that Christ the sinless cannot enter; nor can He have the slightest sympathy with it. But this forms the very least part of the experience of sin; and in every case, as we may see, forms the greatest barrier to all sympathy. But the inducements to sin, the prompting occasions and influences, as they are not in themselves morally wrong, becoming so only when they are wilfully ripened into action, in themselves arising from weakness and suffering, into all these the sinless can enter, without the least moral contamination. I admit that Christ could not Himself feel any inclination to do wrong; therefore neither could He personally feel the difficulty of resisting. But He could feel for those in whom that inclination and difficulty are greatest. His feelings can go with us up to the point of actual commission, where our guilt begins. Can we not see at once the truth of this? There may be strong temptations to a child that are none at all to an adult. That does not prevent a parent from entering into the difficulties that beset his child's path. In Christ this sympathy was immensely strong, so strong that we can scarcely realise its power. So too was His experience of the general condition of humanity wonderfully deep and comprehensive. Hence into all this experience of sin He could enter sinlessly, to an extent that would make the realisation of temptation in Him far greater than in any one single human being. Then again on the same grounds He could enter as fully into all that after experience of sin in bodily sufferings and bitter mental agonies, with which we are all so well acquainted. He could enter into these because they are not themselves morally wrong; and though He could not know personally the reproaches of conscience and the dreadful remorse of a soul under self-condemnation, He could enter into it all, and that most intensely, through that strong sympathetic love and that perfect knowledge of our human condition which we know Him to have possessed. Still in putting this view before thoughtful men, I have found them clinging yet to the notion that Christ's sympathy and temptation could not be perfect without His actually committing wrong, being a sinner, and overcoming it, which leads me to another remark or two. (i.) It might be so if sin (actual) were a misfortune that we could not avoid, a calamity and woe in which we were plunged against our will. Then our sympathising Saviour would go with us there. And I think the difficulty greatly arises from taking that view. But sin is not that. It is a deliberate intentional act, which at every point we are perfectly conscious of the ability to avoid. Temptation is not doing wrong. Many men are most powerfully and sorrowfully tempted in those cases in which they triumph. It would not lessen the reality of that temptation if they should conquer in every case. Nor does it in Christ who enters perfectly into our temptations so far as they are suffering and wrestling; but who cannot go with us, even in sympathy, when we turn the temptation into actual crime. (ii.) As a matter of fact, it is by no means true that we either get or expect most sympathy, as sinners, from those who have committed most crimes. Quite the opposite. Nothing so destroys sympathy as wrong doing. And that for a very obvious reason. Every commission of crime destroys the sensibility of the soul and makes us comparatively indifferent both to the suffering of temptation and to the after sorrows which form so large a part of the experience of sin. All our instincts as sinners teach us that it is not in the guilt of another that we shall find the ground of his sympathy with us; but quite apart from that, in the moral tenderness of His nature (which the commission of sin destroys), and in that general humanity of disposition which enables him to make another's case his own. This is just what we see so wonderfully manifest in Christ. We may say then that it is His entire freedom from sin in act that gives that fine tone to His sympathy. (iii.) I only add one remark on the practical view of the matter. If you can feel the force of what I have put before you in removing objections, then you can unhesitatingly fall back on the simple narrative as it stands in our Scriptures. And in doing that I may confidently assert that as a matter of fact we do in our deepest sinfulness feel the sympathy of the sinless Jesus, as we feel no man's sympathy. 3. I have now only briefly to notice the concluding part of this verse. The entire power of Christianity over us rests in the love, or the loving sympathy of Christ, towards and with us; just that

which we have been looking at. It is the love of a holy Saviour to us, that breaks our bonds, that gives us hope that all evil may be conquered, and strengthens us to enter upon the warfare. Most beautifully has Paul put this fact into its sublimest form, when we thus understand his words. Christ the sinless, he teaches, came down into the midst of our sinful humanity, took it and us into his warmest heart of love, became conversant with all the forms of sin that oppress us and make us miserable—though without ever allowing Himself to be in the least degree conquered by them. Herein He awakens our hearts to love, He strikes to the very depths of the soul with His loving sympathy, till His conquest over us is complete. (*S. Edger, B.A.*)

Christ made sin :—I. CHRIST WAS ABSOLUTELY SINLESS. Not that He was unacquainted with sin, for no man knew it so well as He did. He knew its origin, growth, ramifications, and all the hells it ever had created or ever would create. It was His knowledge of sin that caused Him to fall prostrate in Gethsemane. What then does it mean? That personally He was free from sin. It never stained His heart. 1. He was without sin though He lived in a sinful world. Everywhere sin surrounded Him as a dense, pestiferous atmosphere. But it did not taint Him. His generation failed to corrupt Him. 2. He was without sin, though He was powerfully tempted. II. THAT THOUGH SINLESS, HE WAS, IN SOME SENSE, MADE SIN BY GOD. 1. This cannot mean that God made the Sinless One a sinner. This would be impossible. 2. Two facts may throw light upon the expression. (1) That God sent Christ into a world of sinners to become closely identified with them. "He was numbered with transgressors." (2) That He permitted this world of sinners to treat and punish Him as if He were the greatest of all. III. THAT THE SINLESS ONE WAS THUS MADE SIN IN ORDER THAT MEN MIGHT PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. The grand end was the moral restoration of man to the rectitude of God. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

The sinless made sin, and the sinful made righteous :—I. CHRIST WAS PERSONALLY SINLESS. The conception and birth of Jesus, while they linked Him to human nature, did not connect Him with human depravity. He was the second holy man, but unlike the first He continued so. He understood the nature of sin, and knew what it was to be tempted; yet in His own experience He was sinless—He knew no sin in His desires, motives, volitions, or acts. His heart never knew self-disapprobation. II. AS THE VOLUNTARY REPRESENTATIVE OF SINFUL MEN, CHRIST WAS THROUGH A LIMITED PERIOD ACCOUNTED BY GOD A TRANSGRESSOR. In this sense God "made" Christ sin. Christ was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He did not come into this condition by His own misconduct. Free from exposure to suffering on all personal grounds He consented to suffer for us. But Christ held this position only for a time—and Christ is the only suffering substitute of a guilty race for the purpose of redemption. III. THE OBJECT OF GOD IN TREATING CHRIST AS A SINNER WAS TO PLACE HIMSELF IN A POSITION WHENCE HE MIGHT ACCOUNT SINFUL MEN RIGHTEOUS, AND REALLY WORK RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHIN THEM. Generally the "righteousness of God" means that provision which God has made in the sacrifice of Christ for the justification of the ungodly. To be made the righteousness of God by Christ is to have our guilt removed by His sacrifice, and our persons sanctified. Conclusion: Behold—1. The riches of the goodness of God! God made Christ sin to make us righteousness. 2. The unutterable love of Christ. He who knew no sin made sin for us, and this not by constraint, but willingly, not for self interest, but of a ready mind. 3. An absolute human necessity provided for. But for this interposition—(1) We are lost. (2) We have no meeting place with God. (3) We have no offering wherewith to come before God. 4. The hopeful circumstances in which mankind are placed, and the security of such as participate in Christ's mediation! 5. The lessons which by Christ's mediation God reads to His intelligent universe (*Luke xv.*). (*S. Martin.*)

Christ made sin for us :—I. THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF CHRIST. "He knew no sin." The virtues of others are only comparative: their excellencies are counterbalanced by defects. How seldom do men appear to the same advantage in public and in private. There are virtues which are in some degree incompatible: the circumstances which go to form the contemplative character, are unfavourable to the active; and contrariwise. Some virtues border closely on defects:—courage degenerates into temerity; caution becomes timidity. It not unfrequently happens that men, after having established their claim to some particular quality, fail in those points in which their chief excellence consists. It was thus with the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, and the patience of Job. Even where there is no flaw in the character which strikes the eye of the public, or which is noted by private friendship, the individual himself is deeply conscious of his deficiencies. Confessions of this kind are found in the diaries of Luther. In all the particulars

referred to, our Lord stood out in marked contrast to the most distinguished servants of God. His virtues were not comparative, but absolute: there was no inconsistency—no disproportion. His was not the excellence which arose from the predominance of some one virtue, but from the union and harmony of all: in the active and contemplative, He was alike eminent. In none of His virtues was there any exaggeration or excess. This purity did not arise from the absence of temptation. Some who have risen superior to greater trials, have been overcome in smaller. To lighter trials our Lord was not less exposed than to severer ones; nor was His conduct in regard to the one, less admirable than in regard to the other. Jewish fishermen would never have drawn that character if they had not seen it. II. HIS MEDIATORIAL OFFICE—"He was made sin for us." To assert, and to found the assertion on the text, that Christ, having the guilt of our sins imputed to Him, may be considered as the greatest sinner on earth, is language utterly indefensible. It is not to explain the language of Scripture, but to distort it. Guilt is a personal quality: it is incapable of being transferred. At the very time that Christ was expiating the guilt of sin upon the Cross He was the Holy One of God—the just suffering in the room of the unjust. He who was not guilty suffering in the room of those who were. Some understand the word "sin" to mean sin-offering. The word rendered sin-offering, as the marginal reading indicates, strictly signifies sin. The terms are singularly emphatic. God made, or treated, or permitted Christ to be treated, not merely as sinful, or a sinner, but as sin itself. Look in proof of this to the records of His life. Consider the estimate which His enemies formed of His character. They did not speak of Him merely as a sinner, but as a friend or favourer of sinners. They did not impute to Him merely gluttony and intemperance, but the indictable offence of blasphemy. "Away with Him," was their cry, "let Him be crucified." Had there been nothing more in the treatment of Christ than what has been here mentioned, the propriety of the language in the text would have been sufficiently vindicated. But whence the agony in Gethsemane? III. HIS BENEVOLENT UNDERTAKING. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." This clause is to be explained on the same principle with the former. If by the expression, being made sin for us, is to be understood His being treated as a sinner, the corresponding expression, being made the Righteousness of God in Him, must imply, that we, on His account, are treated as if we were righteous. The sinner on believing in Christ is acquitted, and treated as if he were righteous. This view of the design of Christ's sufferings, independently of the direct testimony of the text, follows from the fact of His innocence. If suffering and death are the penalty of sin, as He could not have suffered for His own sins, He must have suffered for the sins of others. (*R. Brodie, M.A.*) *Substitution*:—Note—I. THE DOCTRINE. There are three persons mentioned here. 1. God. Let every man know what God is. (1) He is a sovereign God, *i.e.*, He has absolute power to do as He pleaseth. And though He cannot be unjust, or do anything but good, yet is His nature absolutely free; for goodness is the freedom of God's nature. (2) He is a God of infinite justice. This I infer from my text; seeing that the way of salvation is a great plan of satisfying justice. (3) He is a God of grace. God is love in its highest degree. 2. The Son of God—essentially God; purely man—the two standing in a sacred union together, the God-Man. This God in Christ knew no sin. 3. The sinner. And where is he? Turn your eyes within. You are the person intended in the text. I must now introduce you to a scene of a great exchange. The third person is the prisoner at the bar. As a sinner, God has called him before Him. God is gracious, and He desires to save; God is just, and He must punish. "Prisoner at the bar, canst thou plead 'Not guilty'?" He stands speechless; or, if he speaks, he cries, "I am guilty!" How then shall he escape? Oh! how did heaven wonder, when for the first time God showed how He might be just, and yet be gracious! when the Almighty said, "My justice says 'smite,' but My love stays my hand, and says, 'spare the sinner'! My Son shall stand in thy stead, and be accounted guilty, and thou, the guilty, shalt stand in My Son's stead and be accounted righteous!" Do you say that such an exchange as this is unjust? Let me remind you it was purely voluntary on the part of Christ, and that it was not an unlawful thing is proved by the fact that the sovereign God made Him a substitute. We have read in history of a certain wife whose attachment to her husband was so great, that she had gone into the prison and exchanged clothes with him; and so the prisoner has escaped by a kind of surreptitious substitution. In such a case there was a clear breach of law, and the prisoner escaping might have been pursued and again imprisoned. But in this case the substitution was made by the highest authority. II. THE USE OF THIS DOCTRINE. "Now, then, we are ambas-

sadors for God," &c., for—here is our grand argument—"He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." I might entreat you to be reconciled, because it would be a fearful thing to die with God for your enemy. I might on the other hand remind you that those who are reconciled are thereby inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. But I shall not urge that; I shall urge the reason of my text. I beseech thee, be reconciled to God, because Christ has stood in thy stead; because in this there is proof that God is loving you. Thou thinkest God to be a God of wrath. Would He have given then His own Son? God is love; wilt thou be unreconciled to love? III. THE SWEET ENJOYMENT WHICH THIS DOCTRINE BRINGS TO A BELIEVER. Are you weeping on account of sin? Why weepest thou? Weep because of thy sin, but weep not through any fear of punishment. Look to thy perfect Lord, and remember, thou art complete in Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ our sin-offering* :—I. WHAT IS THE ESSENTIAL IDEA OF SIN? Some people desire to minimise sin; some evaporate it entirely away; some sneer at the idea. As men grow superficial and heartless they lose all true conception of sin, as a real, abiding, universal, awful fact; but, with Luther, we want no painted sin or painted Christ, we have to do with realities. If sin is not a reality, the Bible is inexplicable. At the outset we say that sin is not merely an individual, personal act. It involves the transgression of the law, but more. No man lives to himself. No act stops with the act or the actor. Your gun is fired in the air, the blaze goes from your chimney, but there is grime left in each. So the channels of our nature grow sooty. The act of sin leaves a stain which we and others see. Sin sinks into us. The sinner is powerless. The fibres of his will are unstranded, unravelled. The impure become infected through and through. Sin is not a merely personal act, for it affects others. It scalds and scars the souls about us. We breathe our speech into the delicate membrane of the phonograph, turn the handle, and hear again the same. Had we instruments delicate enough we might grind out again from yonder post the sounds it has recorded here. No, sin is not an individual, isolated act, stopping with the act. Sin is a debt. We owe something to the laws of our being, those of the universe. We may overdraw, but we have got to pay sooner or later, though there be a delay. Sin is also spoken of as a disease. Sin is transmissible to posterity. Furthermore, we cannot say that it is a natural incident in the process of evolution, as did Emerson, so that the thief or the man in the brothel is on his way to perfection. Such a statement is an insult to conscience, an affront to God. Some flippantly say that Adam's fall was a fall upward, which is absurd. Dives went down into the pit and Lazarus upward, borne to Abraham's bosom. Some talk of a lie as but an incomplete form of truth. Then the devil, the father of lies, is the grandfather of truth! Darkness is partial light! It is folly to excuse our sin by subterfuge. II. THE REMEDY AND CURE IS A CRUCIFIED CHRIST. "Sin for us, who knew no sin." Christ, once for all, has been made a sacrifice for sin. He instead of the sinner dies. His death for sin is a real matter. He alone can deliver and purify those who are polluted by sin. (*J. B. Thomas, D.D.*) *The substitution of one for all* :—Note—I. THAT THE SAVIOUR WAS PERSONALLY FREE FROM ALL SIN. "He knew no sin." 1. And of whom can this be said, but of Him? There is not one who must not acknowledge with David, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." And if our Saviour had been born, like others, after the flesh, such would have been His state also. But He knew no sin. Though He assumed our nature He did not partake of its corruption. Before His incarnation He was known as the Holy One of Israel; before His birth, He was declared to be a holy thing; and when He was born, He was born "without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin." Thus the Lord created a new thing in the earth. Christ then was born into the world holy, perfectly holy; did He continue so till He left it? The disciple who betrayed Him, confessed that he had betrayed the innocent blood. 2. And this was necessary in order to His being the Saviour of sinners. If He had once sinned, His obedience would not have been commensurate with the demands of the law which we had broken (Heb. vii. 26). II. THAT GOD MADE HIM, WHO KNEW NO SIN, TO BE SIN FOR US, *i.e.*, a sin offering. Sin is a great evil, and required a great sacrifice. It is a breach of God's law which is holy, just, and good; and subjects the unhappy transgressor to the heavy curse of that law (Gal. iii. 10); and to us sinners there was no hope of deliverance, unless some one should be found who could make a sufficient atonement. We could never have done this. Neither repentance, nor future obedience would have been sufficient to repair the breach which sin had made. No personal sufferings of ours could ever have expiated our offences. Even the sacrifices under the law could not make the comers thereunto perfect. Christ redeemed us from the

curse of the law by being made a curse for us. He left no demand of the law unfulfilled, and no claim of Divine justice unsatisfied. His work is perfect. There needs no righteousness of our own to be added to His, nor any sufferings of our own to be joined to those which He endured. III. THE END WHICH GOD HAD IN VIEW. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 1. God, the moral Governor of the world, requires righteousness from all the children of Adam. But we have all come short of the glory of God, and of the righteousness He requires. How then can man be just with God? There is no answer but that of the gospel. There we read that the Son of God in human nature—the nature which had sinned—became obedient to the law for man, obedient unto death, and thus brought in perfect and everlasting righteousness. We read also that this righteousness is imputed to us of God, for our complete justification before Him, the very moment we believe in Christ; which is therefore called believing unto righteousness. There is thus a reciprocal imputation; the believer's guilt is transferred to the Saviour, and the Saviour's righteousness made over to the believer. And as that Saviour is a Divine Saviour His righteousness may, with the strictest propriety, be called the righteousness of God. 2. This happy and glorious change of state is attended with the most blessed and transforming effects on the spirit and conduct. He who frees from the guilt and consequences of sin, delivers also from its love and power. Christ is made of God sanctification as well as righteousness. The very faith which justifies, sanctifies also. In particular, it secures the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, by whose powerful operations we are renewed in righteousness and true holiness, after the image of God. Conclusion: 1. How glorious does the character of God appear in all this! Mark—(1) His love. Was there ever such love? (2) His wisdom in providing a Saviour so exactly adapted to our wants. (3) His holiness and justice. 2. How anxiously should we inquire whether we are made the righteousness of God in Christ! 3. How studious should we be to grow in grace and in holiness, and thus evince that our faith is a lively and active principle, working by love, and bringing forth much fruit to the glory of God! (*D. Rees.*) *The heart of the gospel*:—1. The heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They who preach not the atonement, whatever else they declare, have missed the soul and substance of the Divine message. In the days of Nero there was great shortness of food in Rome, although there was abundance at Alexandria. A certain man who owned a vessel went down to the sea coast, and there he noticed many hungry people, watching for the vessels that were to come from Egypt. When these vessels came to the shore there was nothing but sand in them which the tyrant had compelled them to bring for use in the arena. Then the merchant said to his shipmaster, "Take thou good heed that thou bring nothing back with thee from Alexandria but corn, for these people are dying, and now we must keep our vessels for this one business of bringing food for them." Alas! I have seen certain mighty galleys of late loaded with nothing but mere sand of philosophy and speculation, and I have said, "Nay, but I will bear nothing in my ship but the revealed truth of God, the bread of life so greatly needed by the people." 2. The doctrine of substitution is set forth in the text. I have found, by long experience, that nothing touches the heart like the Cross of Christ. The Cross is life to the spiritually dead. There is an old legend that when the Empress Helena was searching for the true Cross they found the three Crosses of Calvary buried in the soil. Which out of the three was the veritable Cross; they could not tell, except by certain tests. So they brought a corpse and laid it on one, but there was neither life nor motion, but when it touched another it lived; and then they said, "This is the true Cross." I. WHO WAS MADE SIN FOR US? "He who knew no sin." 1. He had no personal knowledge of sin. Throughout the whole of His life He never committed an offence against the great law of truth and right. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Even His vacillating judge enquired, "Why, what evil hath He done?" 2. As there was no sin of commission, so was there about our Lord no fault of omission. He was complete in heart, in purpose, in thought, in word, in deed, in spirit. 3. Yea, more, there were no tendencies about our Substitute towards evil in any form. 4. It was absolutely necessary that any one who should be able to suffer in our stead should Himself be spotless. II. WHAT WAS DONE WITH HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN? He was "made sin." The Lord laid upon Jesus, who voluntarily undertook it, all the weight of human sin. Instead of its resting on the sinner it was made to rest upon Christ. Christ was not guilty, and could not be made guilty; but He was treated as if He were, because He willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yea, He was not only treated

as a sinner, but He was treated as if He had been sin itself in the abstract. Sin pressed our great Substitute very sorely. He felt the weight of it in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the full pressure of it came upon Him when He was nailed to the accursed tree. The Greek liturgy fitly speaks of "Thine unknown sufferings": probably to us they are unknowable sufferings. The Lord made the perfectly innocent one to be sin for us: that means more of humiliation, darkness, agony, and death than you can conceive. I will not say that He endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it; but I do say that what He endured rendered to the justice of God a vindication of His law more clear and more effectual than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of the sinners for whom He died. The Cross is under many aspects a more full revelation of the wrath of God against human sin than even Tophet. III. WHO DID IT? "He," *i.e.*, God Himself. The wise ones tell us that this substitution cannot be just. Who made them judges of what is just? Do they say that He died as an example? Then is it just for God to allow a sinless being to die as an example? In the appointment of the Lord Jesus to be made sin for us, there was a display of—1. The Divine Sovereignty. God here did what none but He could have done. He is the fountain of rectitude, and the exercise of His Divine prerogative is always unquestionable righteousness. 2. The Divine justice. 3. The great grace of God. God Himself provided the atonement by freely and fully giving up Himself in the person of His Son to suffer in consequence of human sin. If God did it, it is well done. If God Himself provided the sacrifice, be you sure that He has accepted it. IV. WHAT HAPPENS TO US IN CONSEQUENCE? "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Every man that believes in Jesus is through Christ having taken his sin made to be righteous before God. More than this, we are made not only to have the character of "righteous," but to become the substance called "righteousness." What is more we are made "the righteousness of God." Herein is a great mystery. The righteousness which Adam had in the garden was perfect, but it was the righteousness of man: ours is the righteousness of God. Human righteousness failed; but the believer has a Divine righteousness which can never fail. How acceptable with God must those be who are made by God Himself to be "the righteousness of God in Him"! I cannot conceive of any thing more complete. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER VI.

VER. 1. We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.—*Workers together*:—Once when a number of employés were invited down to Mr. George Moore's country house, Mrs. Moore, going out one morning, met a venerable man standing and staring about him with astonishment at the gardens and buildings. "Are you looking for somebody?" asked Mrs. Moore. "No," said he, "I am just looking round about, and thinking what a fine place it is, and how we helped to make it; I have really a great pride in it." Then, with tears in his eyes, he told how he was the first porter for the firm forty years ago, and how they had all worked hard together. (*H. O. Mackey.*)

The preaching and reception of the Gospel:—Consider—I. THE ADMONISHERS. 1. Not loiterers, but labourers; therefore they are often compared to husbandmen, builders, soldiers, and fishermen. They who imagine that the ministry of the gospel is an easy work are greatly mistaken. 2. "Workers together." (1) With God. They are engaged in the same cause with Him who "would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Without Him they can do nothing. Melancthon began with too much confidence in himself, and after many fruitless exertions, said, "Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon." But old Adam is not too strong for the God of all grace, who hath said to His ministers, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." (2) But the words "with Him" are in italics, and may be omitted. As if He had said, we differ in our abilities, modes of preaching, &c., and there are some who take advantage of this to form divisions, and say, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas"; whereas we are fellow-workers. II. THE SUBJECT OF THEIR ADDRESS. 1. What are we to understand by "the grace of God"? (1) The source of the gospel. Was it not "free" in every sense of the word! (2) Its subject. The

gospel is an offer of free, full, and everlasting salvation to sinners. 2. The gospel is received in vain when it is received—(1) Partially. If you regard it as a system of doctrine only, or as a system of duty only, you only receive one-half of it, and the one cannot live without the other. (2) Speculatively. I mean in distinction from experience and practice; for such a reception does not accord with the nature and design of it. (3) Unperseveringly. “He only that endureth unto the end shall be saved.” III. THE REASONS OF THEIR ANXIETY AND EARNESTNESS. They “beseech you.” 1. They apprehend the event which very commonly follows. In all ages God’s servants have been compelled to complain, “Who hath believed our report?” Four soils received the very same seed. Only one of the four yields anything to the purpose. 2. They dread the event as deplorable. They are affected by the thought of it—(1) On God’s account. They know how He is dishonoured; Christ is made to have died in vain. (2) On your own account: they knew that hence will arise your chief sin and condemnation. (3) On their own account. It is painful in the extreme to plant and not to gather, to sow and not to reap. (*W. Jay.*) *Receive not the grace of God in vain:*—I. WHAT THIS GRACE OF GOD IS. In the language of the schools it is *auxilium speciale*, “that special and immediate furtherance” by which God moves us to will and to do. And this is that which St. Paul mentioneth (1 Cor. xv. 10–11). But this is not the grace meant in the text, which is “the grace of” reconciliation by Christ, the doctrine of “the gospel,” which Christ commanded to be “preached to all nations.” II. AND WHAT IS A GIFT, IF IT BE NOT RECEIVED? Like a meal on a dead man’s grave, like light to the blind, like music to the deaf. What is the grace of God without faith? The receiving of it is that which makes it a grace indeed—gospel. We usually compare faith to a hand, which is reached forth to receive this gift. Without a hand a jewel is a trifle, and the treasure of both the Indies is nothing; and without faith the gospel is nothing. Without this receipt all other receipts are not worth the casting up. Our understanding receives light, to mislead her; our will, power, to overthrow her; our affections, which are “incorporeal hands,” receive nothing but vanity. Our moral goodness makes us not good: our philosophy is deceit. Our habits lift us no further than the place where they grow. But with this gift we receive all things: we receive the favour of our Creator, who in Christ is well pleased. III. THIS GRACE MAY BE RECEIVED IN VAIN. The philosopher will tell us: “All is not in the gift; the greatest matter is in the manner of receiving it.” The gospel is grace indeed; but it will not save a devil, nor an obstinate offender. Seneca tells us: “A foul stomach corrupts all that it receives, and turns that meat, which should nourish the body, into a disease”; and a corrupt heart poisons the very water of life. The grand mistake of the world is in the manner of receiving Christ. “To one it is the savour of life unto life; and to others the savour of death unto death” (chap. ii. 16). Great care then must be taken that we may not receive it in vain. We must receive it to that end it was given. We must receive it as law as well as physic. God gives us this gift, that we may give Him our obedience; and He hath done this for us, that we may do something, even “work out our salvation with fear and trembling.” This grace, then, we must receive both to save us and instruct us; as a royal pardon, and as a “royal law” (James ii. 8). To interline the pardon, and despise the law, makes a nullity: and this is “to receive in vain.” 1. A pardon we must not interline. For to blend it with the law of works, or our own merits, is to make it void (Gal. ii. 21; Eph. ii. 8, 9). Works, though they be a condition required of a justified person, yet cannot be brought in as a part or helping cause of our justification. 2. It is equally vain when we receive the grace of God only as a pardon, and not as a law. It is our happiness by grace to be freed from the covenant and curse of the law; but it is our duty, and a great part of our Christianity, to square our lives by the rule of the law. Therefore religion was called in her purer times “The Christian law.” (*A. Farindon, B.D.*) *Receiving the grace of God in vain:*—I. THIS TAKES PLACE WHEN IT IS NOT USED AT ALL—when the great salvation is neglected (ver. 2). In vain is it here, within the sphere of our knowledge and the grasp of our faith, if it be simply ignored. Here is gold in a casket or bag, and I am poor, and yet I will not unloose the strings or open the casket. Of what avail to me is that locked-up wealth? Here is seed-corn, and I have fields where it might be sown, yet I will not sow it. Of what avail to me is the seed, or the soil, the sun, or the shower? I am going on a journey through an unknown country, and here is a guide-book, yet I never open it, but go wandering on. That guide-book is as utterly “in vain” to me as if it were in the depths of the ocean. “Ah yes,” you say, “but the grace

of God is not so definite, so available, as the money," &c. Yes it is. It shines out in the light of every Sabbath day; it is the keynote of every true sermon; it is in every providence, whether dark or bright; it is everywhere, and always abundant, sufficient, and free. It is sad that many will not be persuaded of this. When the sleeping mind begins to awake; when the dull heart begins to feel, and the glad discovery breaks on the soul that all this is a present and sure gift of eternal love, then begins the actual reception of the manifold blessings of the gospel; but until then "the grace of God," with all its riches which we proclaim and set forth as common property, and free alike to all, is "in vain." II. A THING IS RECEIVED IN VAIN IF IT IS PERVERTED AND TURNED TO SOME ALIEN USE. 1. It may be made a cloak for sin. The danger is that we magnify God's grace and slur over the evils of our own hearts. 2. It may be made a tent for indolence. Somehow we get the comfortable conviction that what has to be done in and by us will be done soon or late, and that we shall have full entrance at length into perfect purity and eternal life. 3. It may be made the signal for perpetual controversy. We are glad of controversy, in proper spirit and measure—it braces the soul; it clears the air; it defends and instrumentally perpetuates the truth among men. But there is hardly anything which runs more easily to excess, and becomes a perversion, and no longer a defence of the grace of God. The grace of God is gracious; and in its prevailing influence ought to lead us into gracious ways, and words, and dispositions. III. IT IS RECEIVED ALMOST IN VAIN IF IT IS USED VERY LITTLE AND VERY IMPERFECTLY. This is the case with many Christian people. The plough is taken to the field, but does not plough the whole day; or it ploughs one little field, and leaves all the rest fallow. The seed-corn is cast in only in patches, and some of these but thinly sown. Here is a great world of grace brought down to us, waiting for us, and we may have as much or as little as we will. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The grace of God received in vain:*—This is to be understood as—I. THE GOSPEL OF HIS GRACE (Tit. ii. 11), or "the word of His grace" (Acts xx. 32; xiv. 3), termed the grace of God, because it proceeds from that grace (Luke i. 78, 79), displays it, and is the instrument whereby we receive it and its fruits. II. REDEEMING GRACE. III. ENLIGHTENING GRACE. IV. JUSTIFYING GRACE. V. REGENERATING AND RENEWING GRACE. VI. STRENGTHENING AND QUALIFYING GRACE (2 Tim. ii. 1). VII. COMFORTING GRACE, which is given that we may be supported amidst all our trials; but in vain, if we are still cast down and decline from God: and that we may comfort others (chap. i. 3-6), but in vain, if this end be not answered. (*J. Benson.*) *Grace received in vain:*—Note—I. HOW THE GRACE OF GOD HAS BEEN MANIFESTED IN REVEALING UNTO MAN THE WHOLE COURSE OF THIS METHOD OF SALVATION. This is seen—1. In the fact that the great God Himself speaks to men. It is grace that He should have anything to do with us. Why did He not, since we put out the light, leave man to grope his way in the dark? What a wonder that God should speak in this way to sinners. 2. In the suitability of the gospel to those to whom it is sent. Here we are vile; there is mercy for the vilest. How beautifully this suits the case of men! 3. In the way God has revealed His holy truth. (1) By degrees. The great truths that are now taught you the world was not always ripe for. You don't get daylight coming in all its bright glory at once. The Lord gave the first glance of the light of the morning in that sweet promise about the seed of the woman. (2) At first by types and symbols. When you teach children you don't often make use of abstractions, but you get pictures. Now the Book of Leviticus is God's object lesson of the gospel. Every lamb was a picture of that true Lamb, and every priest of that true Priest. That whole Temple service pointed to Calvary. (3) By adapting it to different types of mind. 4. The revelation which God makes of Himself. Suppose you are standing over against some palace, and it is near midnight, and the gates are opened. Forth from that palace gates there comes a procession. The prince has come forth attended by many of his train. He has not gone far, however, before you hear that the prince has dropped a beautiful gem. He is anxious about that gem, not simply for its intrinsic value, but it was the gift of one he loved, and he calls for lights. Now, the light which falls on the road where that gem is lying goes up also into the face of the prince, and while he finds his gem you see him as you never would have seen him but for that loss. Now, it is like that with the revelation of God. When God came forth from the shrouding darkness that had been about Him in His own eternity, to the salvation of men, there was light which, while it was thrown on the poor, lost sinner that he might be found, was thrown upon the face of God, who came to seek him and to save him. II. WHEN MAY WE BE SAID TO RECEIVE

THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN? When men—1. Do not believe it. Suppose that during the time of that Indian revolt I had been sent by Her Majesty with a commission—say to the Nana Sahib, and I had been told to proclaim to him that if the rebels would come and yield themselves up entirely to her mercy, she would entirely forgive them. But suppose that that fierce ringleader had said to me, “Ah, if they can only just get hold of me, I know what mercy they will give me; I know it is too far gone for that.” Well, now, he has to surrender in three months, or the law is to take its course. The time passes, and the man is captured, and he is brought to the gallows. Now, whose fault is that? You see he received the Queen’s grace in vain. Now, it is like that when I come and tell you of God’s readiness to pardon, and you won’t believe it. You might as well expect a man to be fed by bread that he will not eat as expect a man to be saved by a gospel that he will not believe. 2. Despise it. Yonder there are a number of suffering poor, and of course some are of a very independent spirit. Now suppose I go to some pale, haggard man, and say to him, “Here is a ticket for you; if you will apply at yonder office you will get the relief you need,” and the man says, “Sir, what right have you to talk to me as if I were a pauper? what right have you to suppose I want any man’s charity?” That poor man is too proud to take help, and to-morrow he is dead on his cottage floor for want of food. Now, whose fault is that? He despises the grace that was offered! That is just how it is with many sinners. They will not have God’s salvation because they cannot buy it. If they could take their little petty, paltry doings, and buy it with their deeds, they would have it. If they could go and purchase it, they would have it; but because they must have it as a gift they despise it. 3. Neglect it. Now suppose that there had been during the time of the great fire at Moscow some miserly wretch up at the top storey of some tall house. There is great trouble in the town, but all he cares about is his gold bags. The alarm bells are ringing in all directions, and everybody is trying to escape; but that old man never listens to the alarm bells, and while he is counting his cash the fire is creeping up the stairs from chamber to chamber till at last it is burning the very joists of the floor on which he stands. You see he neglected the alarm. That is very like the worldling. We go and tell him of danger and salvation. You know if you go and stand by a blacksmith’s smithy and you talk to him, he is so busy with the sound of his hammers that he can’t hear what you say, and he keeps on hammering in spite of all your remarks, and does not hear a word. So it is with the busy worldling. Busy with the din of their worldliness, they never seem to hear the message. They neglect the great salvation. They do not deny it, but they just leave it alone. Now if you neglect this great salvation you will perish. (*S. Coley.*) *Grace received in vain.*—I. THE MEANING OF THE APOSTLE’S CAUTION. 1. What is meant here by grace? Sometimes it denotes the free and unmerited love of God in redemption (Titus ii. 11). Sometimes the gospel generally (John i. 17). Sometimes all the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit (chap. xii. 9). But in the text the word includes not only all the overtures of grace which God has made, but all those ministries by which those overtures may be most easily accepted. 2. Now such is the perverseness of man’s will that all these means and ministries may be offered to him to no purpose. The injured Father of our spirits may stretch out His hand, and find there is none to regard it. (1) Take the instrumentality of the Word. Grace is received in vain. (a) When the Word is not received in the love of it. Now no place is left for any possible deficiency in the Word itself; in its evidence, that it is not strong enough; in its statements, that they are not clear enough; in its motives, that they are not encouraging enough. It is of no use saying, “I cannot see these things in the same light as others do,” for we answer, “You do not see them because you have never honestly tried to see them, never put up the prayer in earnest, ‘Lord open Thou mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law.’” (b) When we neglect to apply the gospel message to our own heart and conscience. To have received the incorruptible seed in barrenness is to have received the grace of God in vain. (2) And so of those communications of divine grace which come to us apart from the agency of the Word. The Holy Spirit speaks to the ear of the inner man by the lessons of Providence, by the ministries of friendship, and the incidents of common life, &c. And to check these inner convictions, as Agrippa did, or to dismiss them, as Felix did, is to receive the grace of God in vain. II. IT IS A REAL OPTION WITH US WHETHER THIS GRACE OF GOD BE RECEIVED IN VAIN OR NOT. It is practically competent to every one to use such means as shall facilitate the effectual influence of grace upon our minds. The best answer to the man who should

object that he could do nothing towards his own salvation because he is not the subject of divine grace, is that he does not believe in his own objection, would not act upon it if accident or sudden sickness should threaten him with the probability that he might die to-morrow. And herein it is that the sinner will be condemned out of his own mouth. Never mind how much or how little he could do towards the making of his peace with God, has he done all he could? He could not cause the glorious light of the gospel to shine into his heart, but was he compelled to close the door against the entrance of that light? Though the ordinances and instrumentalities of grace have the most perfect adaptation to our state and character, they yet demand all the concurrence of our own moral effort, to work within us a saving result. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The dignity of life* (cf. 1 Cor. iii. 9):—We are fellow-workers with God. The one thing which increased learning proves to us is the absence of caprice in the government of the world. The one thing forced upon us is the inevitable sequence of cause and effect. If, on the one hand, we seem to sink into the inconsiderable atoms of a whole too vast for the mind to grasp, on the other we rise to the majestic conception that we are fellow-workers with God. Where can we find a thought more fit than this to stir the heart and rouse the courage within us? The false and frivolous view of life that lies at the root of all our evils, shrivels up the worth of our manhood. It is not our own little interests alone, it is the weal and the woe, the growth and perfection of the whole human family around us, which rests upon us. It is nothing short of world-wide interests which hang upon our doing, with truth and honesty, and hearty energy, that little morsel of God's work we find placed before us. Our own little fragment of it is no longer the sordid shred of a chance struggle for existence, but the distinct though humble portion of God's great redeeming work. Let us see how this consciousness of the solemnity and reality of life touches all our commonest actions and employments. Our natural business here is intellectual work. To some it becomes merely an interesting amusement for the mind. To many it is a half distasteful necessity which is undergone in obedience to the dictates of society, to fit us to occupy our proper place in life. To still more, perhaps, it represents the preparation for the future struggle of the world. Regard it in its true light, and all these views seem trivial. It is the search for truth. It is the development of ourselves, because it is fitting to improve to its uttermost the gifts we have received. It is something holy; it is the work of God. What is not given here to intellectual training is chiefly given to social intercourse. Now what is that to most of us? A mere seeking of pleasure for pleasure's sake, or perhaps an exaggerated recreation-time far beyond our requirements. Such things in the light of the reality and seriousness of life it cannot be. For our social intercourse is then the chosen ground in which our wits clash with those of our fellows, that part of our lives where intercourse with them gives us our only chance of drawing from them good for ourselves or of implanting good in them. It is a time when we may in the most natural way be helping forward the great work of God. Yet certainly some of you will say, "according to this, the very fact which makes our calling so high deprives it of all virtue. The very argument on which the glory of our position as fellow-workers with God with all the coercive force it might exert, is rested, is upon necessity. We are workers with Him because everything, for good and evil alike, is like a piece of mechanism of which He keeps the key. Necessity excludes responsibility: we, like the rest, must do as He bids us do." To such an answer neither I nor any other man can give a full reply. We cannot but know that with each of us there lies the momentous choice whether we will consciously give our work to further God's work, or put ourselves as hindrances to check its way. Hitherto we have found the dignity which hangs about us as the fellow-workers with God in the fact of His universal presence. It is the all-pervading character of His work—and the consequent serious and holy character of life—which has supplied us with the belief of the grandeur of our calling. Can we not find something which shall raise us with respect to our inner selves to the same height which we have to reach with respect to our outward energy? Now the imagery of my second text seems to give us such a thought. For it leads us to recollect that we are at once the workers and the work, at once the labourers and the husbandry, the builders and the house built. If we grasp the idea of the unity of the world, and of the presence of God in it all, it is plain that while we are acting as God's fellow-workers upon others, those others will act upon us—that while we are helping the world onwards we shall ourselves be helped. In the general unity it is impossible but that we shall play both parts. While we ourselves are building we must become a portion of the edifice built.

And that building is nothing less than the home and temple of Christ. (*J. F. Bright, D.D.*) *Grace received in vain*.—I. IN WHAT SENSE IS A MINISTER "A FELLOW-WORKER WITH GOD"? 1. In the same way that the husbandman, in the fields, works with the elements. Can he do anything without them? And yet, has not God covenanted to send them, to give effect to his labour? 2. In the same way as the mariner works with the wind. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," but as he sits at the helm and holds the canvas in his little boat, he is conscious, "I am working with the wind." 3. As ambassadors. The ambassador has no pretension to be the king, he is only a favoured subject. Nevertheless, so long as he is an ambassador, he carries the king's credentials, dignity, and power. II. THIS GREAT THOUGHT OF THE FELLOWSHIP WHICH HE HAD IN HIS WORK WITH GOD, ST. PAUL USED TO ENFORCE THE EXHORTATION NOT TO RECEIVE THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN. It was as though he said, in reference to his Master, what his Master said in reference to His Father, "The words that I speak unto you are not mine, but His that sent me." When he added "also," it was because he himself had "not frustrated the grace of God," for, as he said to these Corinthians, "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain," so that he was the better prepared to urge upon others not to receive it in vain. III. WHAT IS IT TO RECEIVE GRACE IN VAIN. 1. We must look at this discriminatingly. No word of God, under any circumstances, is ever "vain" (*Isa. lv. 10*). But every word does not comfort, convince, save. What, then, does it do? It cannot do nothing. Does not it harden, condemn? Is the light not light, when it blinds the eye that is not fitted to receive it? Or is warmth not warmth when it hardens, but does not melt? No; God's word "cannot return void"—it must glorify God either in His mercy or in His justice. Therefore the words must be taken only in relation to man, for that which has not produced holiness and peace to us has evidently been "in vain." 2. There are several ways by which this sin may be committed. (1) Many "receive the grace of God in vain," in the same sense in which that word is used in the third commandment—in the trifling, irreverent, inconsiderate manner in which they deal with God's truth. Men go to church almost as if they went to any other assembly. The mind is not set to the sacred tone of the services in which they are mingling. The message of mercy is to them just as a pleasant tale, or a mere matter of criticism and of conversation. (2) But there are serious people who see the dignity and gravity of religion. But "grace" has only reached their understanding; it has not gone down into their hearts. They can define faith, but they cannot use faith. (3) There are those who have felt the power of Christ's grace in their hearts; but they have lost it. The force of early convictions has passed away. Many an influence of the Holy Spirit is now being quenched in them. Consider what it will be to have once carried such a treasure, and then to have dropped it!—to have known and loved such a Saviour, and then to have denied Him! (4) There are those of you who have "received the grace of God," but you have never yet known what it is to rest, with a quiet assurance that you are forgiven. Now, when God's "grace" came to you it had this express purpose. If, then, you do not quietly accept His love, and settle down in a happy sense of your pardon, then "grace" is of no effect to you! What use is it, then, to talk of your faith; if you have no confidence? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Grace received in vain*.—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE GRACE OF GOD? The doctrine of the gospel (*Eph. iii. 2*; *Col. i. 6*; *Acts xx. 32*; *Titus ii. 11*). And it is so-called because—1. It is graciously, and out of the free favour of God, bestowed. 2. Its subject-matter is grace. Whatever saving benefit is contained in the gospel, is all from grace. (1) Forgiveness of sin (*Eph. i. 7*). (2) Eternal life (*Rom. vi. 23*). (3) Calling (*2 Tim. i. 9*). (4) Faith (*Phil. i. 29*). (5) Repentance (*2 Tim. ii. 25*). 3. It is the instrument, under the Spirit of God, of bestowing the benefits of free grace upon us. It is an invitation to the benefits of free grace, and it is our warrant of receiving those benefits, and of applying them. II. THE RECEIVING THEREOF IN VAIN. The word signifies to receive it "emptily, unfruitfully, unprofitably." The gospel cannot save us unless it be received; and therefore you read of receiving it (*Matt. xiii. 23*; *Acts ii. 41*; *xi. 1*; *xvii. 11*; *1 Thess. i. 6*). But the gospel may be received ineffectually. 1. In regard of the manner of receiving. When we receive it—(1) Not with an empty hand. When it is not so received as to be empty of the opinion of our own works and righteousness (*Luke i. 53*). (2) Not with the highest estimation. When it is not looked upon to be "worthy of all acceptation" (*1 Tim. i. 15*); when it is not received as a pearl of greatest price. If all be not sold for it, soon will it be left for any thing. (3) Not with the greatest ardency of desire. (4) Not with a particular

fiducial application of Christ, but only by a general assent—*i.e.*, when we receive it into our heads by light, but do not receive it into our hearts by faith. When we receive it only into our ears, lips, and professions; but do not receive it in the soul.

2. In regard of the issue. (1) When it is not received so as to purify the heart; when men will have an angelical gospel, but will live diabolical lives. (2) When it doth not quicken us to new obedience. When there is a receiving without returning; when there is no “delight in the law of God;” “when faith is not made incarnate,” as Luther speaks, “by maintaining good works” (Titus iii. 8). (3) When we so receive grace as that it doth not sustain us in our troubles, nor bear us up in our sufferings. When it is not a “word of patience” (Rev. iii. 10). (4) When we so receive grace as not to impart it, and communicate it unto others. If we be living we shall be lively Christians; if we have the life of grace in us, we shall warm others. If we do no good, it is a sign we have got no good. (5) When it is so received as that thereby we do not obtain salvation. “The gospel of salvation,” received into your houses, heads, or mouths, brings not any to heaven (Matt. vii. 23). (*W. Jenkin, A.M.*) *Divine grace received to profit* (Text and ver. 2):—We have here the privileges of the Christian dispensation. 1. Connected with the heart of God. 2. Associated with the services of the ministers of Christ. 3. Looked at as in the hands of confessed Christians. 4. Regarded as the blessing of the present time. We can, however, only deal with two of these topics. I. WHAT IS MEANT BY “THAT YE RECEIVE NOT THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN”? 1. Merely to hear, is to be like a sick man who is told of a physician, but who does not apply to him; or a poor man who is told of a treasure and does not seek it. They receive the communications “in vain.” 2. Only to comprehend intellectually the word of God’s grace is to receive it “in vain.” It is to be like a man who devotes himself to the study of the chemistry of food, but who neglects to eat. Of what advantage is his knowledge? 3. Only to be pleased with the Christian manifestations of the grace of God, is to receive it “in vain.” This is like a man who, delighting in good advice, follows his own counsel. 4. To believe what is said of the grace of God without a personal application of those words, is to receive it “in vain.” It is to be like a man in a house on fire, who sees a way of escape, but does not flee. He will be burned. 5. Anything short of a complete use and enjoyment of the grace of God, is in measure, to receive it “in vain.” If present pardon, *e.g.*, be not enjoyed as well as possessed, then, in a certain limited sense, it is received “in vain.” II. IF “THE GRACE OF GOD” COME TO US IN A TIME ACCEPTED, AND IN A MANNER THAT SALVATION, IT CANNOT BE RECEIVED PREMATURELY, AND THEREFORE WE ASK YOU TO RECEIVE IT. Open your mouth wide, open your hands and stretch out your arms and “receive.” 1. This is God’s giving time. 2. This is God’s redeeming time. He is working out your personal salvation on the basis of the sin offering, which His own Son has made. 3. This is your needy time. You will never be more needy than you are now. God seeks to drive that need away, and to fill you with blessings. It is true that you are guilty and most unworthy, but you may receive. Receive, then, to the highest purpose. Receive to the largest extent. Some professing Christians are like cups turned upside down. They will have to be converted before they can be filled. Your capacity to receive will have to be directed heavenward. Let a cup or any vessel be placed on the angle, and can you fill it? Just so with your religion. It must be true to God, to the Saviour, to the Spirit, or you cannot be filled with the fulness of God. (*S. Martin.*) *The needful caution*:—I. THE EXHORTATION EXPLAINED. The subject is “the grace of God.” The great plan of reconciliation is “the grace of God” in question. 1. This is called “the grace of God” by way of eminence, because—(1) The gift of Jesus Christ is the highest display of the goodness of God to man (1 John iv. 10; iii. 1; Rom. viii. 32). (2) It is that which procures for us all other blessings. 2. Now this grace is to be “received”—(1) The mind must have a clear perception of it. Many call this head-knowledge; but is not our religion to be “in all knowledge and spiritual understanding”? If we knew more, we should love more. (2) The heart must receive the Saviour. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” (3) There must be a practical reception of this grace—an adorning of it in the conduct; not talking, but working. Thus the judgment, the affections, the life, all receive the grace of God. 3. Now this grace must not be received “in vain.” Many have so received it. (1) The light within has become darkness, and “how great is that darkness.” (2) The love they once had, where is it? Their hearts are a moral icehouse. (3) Their ways now have no tendency to glorify God. II. THE EXHORTATION ENFORCED. 1. From

a consideration of the value of the benefit—God's greatest gift!—the astonishment of heaven! We value a thing occasionally—(1) By the amount it cost us. But, ah! we know not what was the value of this, for, though it was bestowed freely, it cost heaven all! (2) From what it purchased for us. It redeems from death and purchases heaven. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" 2. From the fact that if this be received in vain, every other benefit is in vain. All the sermons you have heard, all the prayers, all your afflictions, convictions, all the strivings of God's Spirit, &c. In vain pious parents, a religious education, early impressions, good resolutions, &c. 3. From the punishment awaiting such a one. 4. Because this is the only day in which you can receive the grace of God. When time ends with thee, then eternity. Time is the term for thy salvation. (*J. Summerfield, A.M.*) *Grace given in vain*:—In the Eastern country, as I dare say you have heard, there are great deserts of sand. For many miles in every direction, you can see nothing but bare and barren sand. You might dig down and down, and you would still find nothing but sand until you came to the hard rock. Nothing grows in these deserts, as you may imagine; nothing can grow there. When the rain which brings greenness and fertility, grass and corn and palm trees, everywhere else, falls on this barren, sandy tract, it does no good at all. It just sinks in for a time until the surface is baked again by the hot sun, and then it rises up again in vapour. Anywhere else it would clothe the soil with greenness; but here it is useless—it does no good. Now what a picture this is of the heart that receives and does not obey God's grace! As the rain would render the soil fertile with grass and corn, so God's grace would inspire the heart of man with good thoughts and good actions. As the raindrops, when they fall upon the sand, are wasted and made useless, so the divine grace, the pleadings of the Blessed Spirit, falling upon a heart that obstinately neglects them, or refuses them, or resists them, not only bring forth no fruit, but lay up for the impenitent sinner a heavy load of guilt and of punishment. (*The Literary Churchman.*)

Ver. 2. For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted . . . behold now is the accepted time . . . the day of salvation.—*Now*:—God never says "Behold," without telling something worth listening to. I. SALVATION THE THING TO BE SOUGHT. 1. Greatly needed. 2. Graciously provided. 3. Gratefully proffered. II. NOW IS THE TIME TO SEEK IT. Double "Now." 1. Commanded by revelation. 2. Commanded by reason. Conscience, reason, gratitude, self-interest, say "Now." Why delay? (1) Unnecessary. "All now ready." (2) Unreasonable and wicked. Rebellion. 3. Unnatural. (1) Dangerous. May be last offer. (2) Destructive. Ruinous to conscience, character. (*Hom. Monthly.*) *The imperative "Now"*:—I. YOU CAN GAIN NOTHING BY DELAY. 1. As to God's terms. 2. As to your own circumstances. Your difficulties may change but will never cease. 3. As to pleasures of sin. II. YOU WILL LOSE MUCH BY DELAY. 1. Fervour and freshness of feeling. 2. Opportunity for usefulness. Delay daily narrows in this possibility. 3. Fulness of reward in heaven. III. YOU MAY FORFEIT YOUR SALVATION BY DELAY. (*Ibid.*) *The day of salvation*:—I. THERE IS A SALVATION SO IMPORTANT THAT IT GIVES ITS NAME TO A WHOLE PERIOD CALLED A DAY, but signifying all the era through which that salvation is made accessible to us. It is called, by way of eminence and distinction, "the day of salvation." 1. The salvation which marks this day is the salvation of the soul. Not the salvation of a captive, a criminal under a human law—not of a hopeless patient from a bodily disease—not of an empire—but the salvation of the immortal soul. Men do not believe that their souls are in this danger; they make a mock of sin. 2. Consider that this salvation is effected expressly and exclusively by the power and grace of God. To Him belongs the entire glory of it, and it is His grace that makes any period of our lives a day of salvation. He is therefore the author of eternal salvation. All the resources necessary for carrying it into effect were of God, and not of us. 3. But we ought more particularly to notice Him on whom devolved the work of salvation—who is described by the name of our Saviour, and to whom the honour of it will be for ever rendered. 4. It is necessary to observe that all the effects of this salvation are eternal, all the blessings it confers are for ever, the felicity to which it brings us is immortal. The effects of it will not only extend to, and penetrate through eternity, but they will give a character to that eternity. II. THAT THIS DIVINE BLESSING HAS GIVEN A CHARACTER AND A NAME TO A PERIOD OF OUR TIME, HERE CALLED THE DAY OF SALVATION. 1. It signifies the day or time when salvation is attainable by us—when it is revealed and published, or urgently set before us. In this sense it seems to be

used by the prophet Isaiah (chap. xlix. 8; lii. 7; lxii. 1), as quoted by the apostle Paul. 2. The gospel age may indeed be more emphatically designated the day of salvation, since the doctrine of salvation by a crucified surety and Saviour has been more fully illustrated and proclaimed, and since there has been no lack of those means which might encourage and help us all towards the attainment of the happy consummation. It is light that makes the day as distinguished from the night. The night of Judaism is past, it has been succeeded by a clear shining of the light of life, which makes ours indeed a day of salvation. 3. Times of special privilege when salvation is brought near to us. 4. We may especially denominate the Sabbath the day of salvation. It rises up most resplendent with this heavenly light. III. CONSIDER, IF GOD HAS GIVEN US THIS DAY OF SALVATION, AND WE NOW ENJOY IT, THERE IS SOMETHING FOR US ALL TO DO. We must execute the work of salvation in the day of salvation. 1. The day of salvation requires faith in the blessings then brought nigh. "This is the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent." 2. The day of salvation requires of you diligence, haste, serious application without delay to this work which you have to do. IV. OBSERVE, THE DAY OF SALVATION WE ALL ENJOY NOW MUST HAVE AN END. (*The Evangelist.*) *The day of salvation*:—The Lord has had His days of vengeance. How terrible was the hour when He opened the sluices of the firmament that the rain might descend in torrents, and bade the fountains of the great deep rise to meet the descending floods. I. THE GRAND REASON FOR THIS DAY—"Now is the day of salvation." Read the context in order to understand why there is a present day of salvation. This is the day of salvation because "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." There could have been no day of salvation if a Saviour had not appeared. 1. Notice that according to the context this is the day of salvation, because we may now be reconciled to God. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2. The plain statement of the twenty-first verse explains it all: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Here is the grand doctrine of substitution. 3. To help us to understand mercy's great expedient still better, the Holy Spirit tells us that the Divine design in Christ Jesus is to make us the "righteousness of God" in Christ. II. THE GLORIOUS DAY ITSELF—for the day of salvation is rich with blessing. 1. I would commend that day because of its fourfold excellence. Read again the verse in which our text stands. Although the words must be regarded as spoken, in the first place, to our Lord, the best expositors say that they are also addressed to His Church in Him. (1) So then, in this day of salvation our prayer will be heard, "I have heard thee in a time accepted." (2) We are further told that this day help will be given. What does it say? "In the day of salvation have I succoured thee." (3) And then it is added, "Behold, now is the accepted time," so that the third blessing is that coming sinners will be accepted. If you will come to God He will not reject you, whoever you may be. (4) And then the fourth excellence is that it is a time of salvation. You need saving; be glad then that it is salvation's own day. 2. Now, let me notice that this ought to be peculiarly pleasant news to those who are heavily laden with guilt. 3. The truth of our text should also be very encouraging to those who are fighting against inward sin. 4. While this is very encouraging to penitents and to those who are fighting with sin it should be equally cheering to tried believers. 5. And do you not think this truth should encourage all who are at work to win souls for Jesus? III. SOMETHING ABOUT A DARK CLOUD WHICH MAY DAREN THE CLOSE OF THIS DAY OF SALVATION. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The accepted time*:—1. It is the wish of most men to obtain salvation; and therefore it is their resolution at some time or other to repent. Now they are engaged in some important business; they have met with some worldly disaster; they are in pursuit of some pleasure; they feel an indolence of temper which indisposes them for exertion; but they are determined not to let life pass away without securing salvation. Some favourable opportunity will occur. 2. Thus lulled into security many go on to disregard the secret remonstrances of conscience, and to despise the warnings and invitations of the Word of God, till at last they die as they had lived. 3. Now to be convinced of the folly, guilt, and danger of this conduct, consider—I. THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE AND THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD CONCERNING IT. 1. Repentance is turning from sin to holiness. With what propriety, then, can we put it off? Can it be reasonable to delay? 2. Consider the commandment of God concerning repentance. If we admit God's authority to be supreme, and that He has enjoined the duty of repentance, we cannot discharge it too soon. II. THE LONGER REPENTANCE IS DELAYED, THE MORE PAINFUL AND DIFFICULT WILL IT BECOME. 1. Remember the power of habit. Thoughts and

practices which we have long indulged acquire such a seat in the heart and character as to become a part of our system. And hence habit is spoken of as a second nature. Now if habit, simply considered, is powerful, its power must be increased in proportion to the length of time during which it prevails. The person, therefore, who resolves to repent hereafter, is not only careless of the obstacles which habit lays in the way of his repentance, but waits till these obstacles are augmented. What folly! thus to allow habit to acquire additional force. 2. But the extreme folly of delay appears farther, when we consider the nature of the habits. These are not those to which they are naturally averse. On the contrary, they are highly agreeable to them; cherished by the natural corruption of the heart, operate with a reciprocal influence, and give to that corruption a greater efficacy. The roots of natural depravity and those of evil habit are thus interwoven, and therefore to eradicate evil habits is like tearing the heart in pieces. 3. It is true that Divine grace can, and alone can, subdue all opposition; but it is also true that Divine grace has not promised to work miracles in your behalf—that God will not deal with you as mere passive machines in whom there is no will, no affections, no habits to be conquered by ordinary means. III. CIRCUMSTANCES MAY OCCUR TO RENDER REPENTANCE IMPRACTICABLE, and consequently to secure your ruin. 1. Every sin renders you guilty; but when warned of your guilt, and danger, you go on to aggravate the one and to despise the other, you provoke God to give you over to a reprobate mind, and to harden your heart. And will you risk this for all that the universe can give? 2. But supposing that God does not shut up His mercy, may you not be placed where there shall be nothing to secure your return to Him? 3. Again, the power of disease may lay you low on the bed of languishing and pain. That, indeed, you may flatter yourselves, will be a fit occasion for attending to your spiritual interests. Alas! you know little of the nature of repentance if you think that the time of bodily distress is the time for repentance. "Sufficient unto that day is the evil thereof." 4. And is there not soundness of mind, which is still more necessary than health of body for attending to the concerns of the soul; but of which you may be deprived when you are least expecting it? 5. But though none of these things should take place, we know that we must die, and we know not when. We may be cut off in the midst of health, and youth, and gaiety. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) *The tremendous importance of "now"*:—This language implies a need and an opportunity of being saved on the part of those addressed. And, if we understand the Scriptures, to be saved is the supreme good for men. 1. One feature is suggested by the text—namely, a limited period of grace. But why should there be any limit to the period of probation? Why should the door of recovery from sin ever be closed? Plainly, because it would be useless to keep it open for ever; because choice has a tendency to become irrevocable, and character to become permanent. God's methods are never arbitrary. The amazing longevity of the antediluvians appears to have resulted in equally amazing wickedness. 2. Another feature in the economy of grace is seen in God's withholding from the sinner a knowledge of the duration of his earthly life. As a rule no man knows the hour of his own death. 3. Another feature in the economy of grace is the influence of an animal body upon a sinful soul. An animal body is weak, perishable, exacting, and in certain respects heterogeneous to the soul. It renders a little service and requires much. With a large part of mankind the business of life is to provide for the body. How, then, can he give much attention to the wants of his spirit? But this is less than half the truth. The influence of a frail and exacting body may be favourable to the recovery of man from the terrible fascination of selfishness. For a body whose preservation must be purchased by so much toil and care reminds them by its frailty of the one coming event which can be postponed, but not averted. Again, it must be considered that care for physical life or health is a duty, though not the highest; it is right in itself, though not religious. We may exercise it, therefore, with a clear conscience. Moreover, it is safe to assume that the moral natures of men who are engaged in doing what is felt to be right will not deteriorate so rapidly as they would have done if the same men had been either idle or doing what was seen to be in itself wrong. Susceptibility to high influences will not be so quickly destroyed. And, therefore, the day of grace can be made longer than would otherwise have been safe or useful. "But look once more," you may perhaps reply, "to the other side of the picture. Does not the body drag the soul downwards? Is it not a source of strong temptations rather than a spur to honest toil?" They are not, however, so numerous as the calls to useful service which are presented by the body, nor are they so powerful as to silence these calls. "But is

not the mind clogged in its search after the highest truth by the body which it inhabits? And is not the possibility of its return to God dependent on its clear apprehension of that highest truth? Must not this weak and exacting body, then, be a serious impediment at the very outset to religious life?" I freely admit that our present bodies are not perfect organs of the spirit. But let it not be forgotten that the search for truth which is rendered toilsome by a body whose senses are dull and whose energies are limited, leaves only a modicum of power to be worse than wasted in self-indulgence. Nor let it be forgotten that a little truth may have infinite value to the soul which receives it as a friend, or that effort to obtain truth because it is loved is a part of the blessed life itself. The great difficulty experienced by men in obtaining knowledge, because their bodies are now adapted to animal life more exactly than to spiritual life, is therefore a circumstance favourable to their prospect of recovery from sin and death. 4. Another feature of human probation on earth is the influence of domestic life upon sinful beings. This influence is very pervading and beneficent. The domestic affections, whether conjugal, parental, filial, or fraternal, must be contemplated with a reverence second only to that which we owe to Christian love. They are not indeed identical with love to God, nor do they imply or produce that love. They do not regenerate man, but they keep alive his power to enjoy fellowship, and to believe in the possibility of love. For of all natural avenues to unrenewed souls these affections are probably, next to conscience, the surest and the best. While they continue open, the way of salvation is rarely closed. They tend to prevent a final and utter hardening of the spirit against "sweetness and light." Thus all the features of human life, in so far as they are ordered by our Heavenly Father, reveal His wisdom and goodness. In every instance they appear to have been chosen with a view to human salvation. (*A. Hovey, D.D.*) *The day of salvation* :—Here you find—1. A note of attention—Behold! 2. An object to which the attention is called. 3. The period in which to act—now, not yesterday, that is past; not to-morrow, that is to come. I. **THE GOSPEL PERIOD IS HERE CALLED A DAY.** The gospel period is called a day, because—1. It discovers that which would have been otherwise concealed in darkness. In this day we discover the perfections of the Deity, the nature of sin, the worth of a Saviour, the only way by which sinners can be delivered from hell, and brought to heaven. The world has had many sorts of days, but never one like this before. 2. It is affected by some bright luminary. What makes a day—the stars, the moon? No; the sun. And what makes the spiritual day—ministers, the church? No; the Sun of righteousness. The man that is without Christ is in a state of darkness and death, and, if he dies, must perish. 3. It is time for people to work. "Go, my son, work in my vineyard." 4. It is a limited time. "Oh, Jerusalem, if thou hadst known, at least in this thy day," &c., &c. There is an end to days. II. **THE PROPERTY OF THIS DAY.** God has had many sorts of days; He had a day to create, a day to preserve, a day to afflict, a day to redeem, a day to judge; but the day in my text is a day of salvation. It would not have been a surprising thing if it had been a day of destruction, of affliction; but it is a day of salvation. And this implies the existence of sin; there would have been no need for such a day if sin had not caused it. This day includes the gracious provision of the Father's love—the Son's merit, and the Spirit's grace. Make much of this day. 1. It is a necessary salvation. It is not necessary for a man to be rich, to have health, to be surrounded with friends, but it is necessary to have this salvation, or he is lost for ever. 2. It is a spiritual salvation. Not such as the Jews had in the Red Sea—not such an one as Daniel in the lions' den. This saves the soul from sin, and raises man to the enjoyment of God. 3. This salvation is a suitable one. It is just what we stand in need of. It required infinite wisdom to contrive it, infinite merit to procure it, and infinite grace applies it to the soul. 4. This salvation is a free one. Christ is free, and the grace of the Spirit is free. 5. This salvation is a great one. It is as great as the requirements of Divine justice; as great as the misery of man. It is adequate to all its objects. It was the great God contrived it, it had a great Saviour to accomplish it, a great Spirit applies it, and a great multitude will be saved by it. 6. It is a glorious salvation. God saves without a spot on His throne; without a speck on His character; here is God glorified in justifying the man. 7. This salvation is a perfect one; there is no deficiency in it. It does not save from some sin, but from all sin. There is nothing wanting for God, for man, for life, for death, and an eternal world. 8. This salvation is an everlasting salvation, grace, and glory. Conclusion: From our subject we see—1. The goodness of God in providing such a salvation. 2. The misery of man, that required or

rendered it necessary. 3. The awful state of the man that despises or neglects this salvation. (*Theo. Jones.*) *The accepted time* :—"Behold" is as a larum bell of attention, "now" is as a finger of indication or application to a season. 1. To awake our faith (Isa. vii. 14). 2. To awake our hope (Apoc. xxii. 12). 3. To awake our love (1 John iii. 1). 4. To awake our fear (Apoc. i. 7). 5. To wake our joy (Luke ii. 10, 11). 6. To awake our thankfulness (Psalm cxxxiv. 1). 7. To awake our compassion (Lam. i. 12). 8. To awake our diligence. "The accepted time." The season is that in time which light is in the air, lustre in metals, the flower in plants, cream in milk, quintessence in herbs, the prime and best of it. Now there being a threefold season—1. Natural, which husbandmen observe in sowing, gardeners in planting and grassing, mariners in putting to sea. 2. Civil, which all humble suppliants observe in preferring petitions to princes and great personages. 3. Spiritual, which all that have a care of their salvation must observe in seeking the Lord while he may be found. (*D. Featly, D.D.*)

Vers. 3-5. **Giving no offence. . . . that the ministry be not blamed.**—*Ministers cautioned against giving offence* :—To preach and to act so that none shall be offended would indeed be an impossible task ; and that can never be our duty, which is wholly out of our power. The tastes of our hearers are so opposite and so changeable. The captious will censure our not doing what was either impossible or unfit to be done. Even truth and holiness give offence. But if men take umbrage at us for doing our duty, it becomes us to offend man rather than God. It is evident, therefore, the duty of giving no offence only means the giving no just cause of offence. **I. OUR LIFE AND CONVERSATION SHOULD BE INOFFENSIVE.** Many eyes are upon us ; and the same allowances will not be made for our miscarriages as for those of others. When our practice is manifestly inconsistent with our doctrines, the finest accomplishments will not screen us from deserved reproach. We move in a more exalted sphere than others ; and, if we would shine as lights of the world, we had need to avoid every appearance of evil. The world expects that we should do honour to our profession. Many things, abstractly considered, may be lawful, which yet are not expedient. **II. WE SHOULD GIVE NO OFFENCE BY CHOOSING INJUDICIOUSLY THE SUBJECTS OF OUR SERMONS.** **III. WE GIVE OFFENCE IF WE DO NOT INSIST ON SUBJECTS SUITED TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE OF OUR FLOCKS, AND TO THE DISPENSATIONS OF PROVIDENCE TOWARDS THEM.** A well-timed discourse bids fairest to strike and edify. In many cases we will instruct and admonish in vain, if we stay not till men's minds are in proper temper to give us a fair hearing. **IV. WE MAY GIVE OFFENCE BY A NEGLECT OR UNDUE PERFORMANCE OF THE OTHER PUBLIC OFFICES OF OUR STATION.** In leading the devotions of the Church, we give offence when either the matter, expression, or manner, is unsuitable. As to the discipline of the Church, we give offence if we exercise it with respect of persons ; and, through a mistaken tenderness for any, or a fear of incurring their displeasure, allow them to live without due censure, who live inconsistently. **V. WE GIVE OFFENCE BY THE NEGLECT OR UNDUE PERFORMANCE OF THE MORE PRIVATE DUTIES OF OUR CALLING.** (*J. Erskine, D.D.*) **In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions.**—*Ministerial duties* (Ordination charge) :—**I. THE NATURE OF OUR OFFICE.** We are "the ministers of God." This implies—1. That we are sent by God. 2. That you are to labour for God. If for God, then not surely for yourself. Some serve themselves by entering upon it merely with a view to temporal support ; others, by entering it chiefly with a view to literary leisure and scientific pursuits. Draw by all means the waters of the Castalian fountain, cull the flowers of Parnassus, explore the world of mind with Locke, and the laws of matter with Newton ; but not as the end of your entering the ministry. Not a few make the ministerial office tributary to the acquisition of mere popular applause. They ascend the pulpit with the same object which conducts the actor to the stage. 3. That you are responsible to God. **II. IN WHAT WAY THE DUTIES OF OUR OFFICE SHOULD BE DISCHARGED.** Approve yourself the minister of God—1. By faithfully preaching His Word. The pulpit is the chair neither of philosophy nor of literature, and therefore never act there the pedant. Nor is it merely the seat of the moralist, but it is the oracle of heaven. (1) As to the matter of your preaching, take care that it is truly and faithfully the word of God. Beware of substituting the inventions of ignorance for the doctrines of inspiration. Pray to be led into all truth. Preach the whole counsel of God. Elucidate its histories ; explain its prophecies, &c. As a steward of the mysteries of the kingdom you have access to exhaustless stores. Still, as a minister of the

New Testament, remember that Christ's Cross is the centre of the whole system, around which all the doctrines and the duties of revelation revolve; from which the former borrow their light, and the latter their energy. (2) Now as to the manner of your preaching. It should be characterised by—(a) Deep seriousness. (b) A holy and moral tendency. The truth as it is in Jesus is "according to godliness." (c) Instructiveness. The preaching of some men reminds us of the breaking open of the cave of Æolus, and letting loose the winds. To a thinking mind, nothing is more ridiculous than to see a man blustering about in a perfect vacuity of ideas. (d) Plainness. "Use great plainness of speech." 2. By the manner in which you preside over the Church. 3. By the character of your visits to the houses of your flock. As an under shepherd of Jesus labour to say, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." Let all your visits be—(1) Appropriate. Go as the minister of God, and go to approve yourself such. (2) Brief. Avoid the character of a lounging and a gossip. You are to teach the value of time, and will do this best, practically. (3) Impartial. Especially remember the sick and the poor. (4) Seasonable; and certainly not late in the evening. 4. By your general conduct, spirit, and habits. (1) By the unsullied purity of your outward conduct. (2) By the prosperous state of your personal piety. Seek to have all your intellectual attainments consecrated by a proportionate growth in grace. (3) By exemplary diligence. (4) By prudence. (5) By a kind, affectionate disposition. (6) By a habit of importunate prayer. (*J. Angell James.*)

Vers. 6-9. **By pureness.**—*Pureness*:—The Greek word—like the cognate form, "holiness"—seems to come from a root denoting reverence. It suggests the thought of the awe with which nature herself regards the presence of purity. All kinds of purity carry an awe with them. Whether it be the purity of aim and motive in all things—the singleness, disinterestedness, unselfishness, which we see rarely but certainly manifested in social, political, ecclesiastical life—that high and noble principle which carries a man straight to the mark of truth and duty, without one side-look to the convenient, the remunerative, or the popular; or whether it be—and probably this is the thing more directly in view—that chastity of the heart and of the soul, which alone can see God, and alone move unscathed and unscathing on an earth rife with temptation—in either case we have here the primary condition of a blameless ministry, lay or clerical; in either case we have here the quality which wins reverence—which makes men feel, and the more closely they approach it, that here is a Divine presence—that here, in this man of like passions as they are, there is, moving and working, a Spirit not of man but of God—a Spirit which has a further message for them, whether they will hear it or whether they will forbear. (*Dean Vaughan.*) **By knowledge.**—*By knowledge*:—A remarkable, yet most just, transition. St. Paul anticipates here a coming abuse and distortion. Pureness cannot be over-estimated. But there is a pursuit of pureness which is not according to knowledge. Witness the monastery and the confessional; witness the narrow, the enthralling, the degrading processes by which "ministers of God" have "given offence" in this matter—making purity the whole of grace, and debasing purity itself—as St. Paul saw some would debase charity—into a negative and a self-neutralising virtue. I read here the Divine warrant for the expansion of the human intellect; the assurance that the gospel is the friend and the nurse of enlightenment; that the true gospel never runs into corners, or hides its head in the sand, by reason of a fear of knowledge. I read here the benediction of God upon education—upon all that braces and adorns the intellect; upon all that enables a young man to judge of truth by truth, to exercise a sound mind upon doctrine presented to him, to try the very "spirits of the prophets," whether they are of God, by ascertaining the vigour, and the consistency, and the satisfactoriness to conscience, of the language they speak. Above all, I read here the solemn, the awful duty of each minister and of each Christian to gain a clear and a piercing insight into the gospel as a whole, into the Bible as the Book of Books. The knowledge of which St. Paul wrote was pre-eminently a gospel knowledge. He lived in days when that title, so honourable, so easily assumed, was beginning to be fraught with mischief and ruin to the Church of God. He himself said elsewhere, "Knowledge puffeth up; it is love which edifieth." And therefore we may be quite sure that the "knowledge" by which he "approved himself," was distinctly a knowledge of revelation—yet a knowledge no less checked and tempered by other knowledge, than prompted and inspired by a Spirit not of the world. In these days the importance of knowledge, side by side with pureness,

is asserting itself as perhaps never before. The necessity of Christian people being also an educated people. That they should be able to hold their own against all comers. That they should be able to refute—and not to be frightened at—the gainsayers. The timidity of conscious ignorance is the cause of half our compromises and our cowardices. We Christians flee where no man pursueth, because we have not taken the measure of the possible capacities of the imagined pursuer. But not less is it necessary that Christian men should “know” their own gospel. We snatch up, here and there, a text or a word, a phrase or a clause, detach it from its context, never define, never balance, and then, following some party leader, fight for the name and never “know” the thing. And so it may happen that, under the banner of the name, we may even be fighting against the thing. We may have a zeal for God Himself—and “not according to knowledge.” I speak fearlessly the praises of knowledge. Only let us take heed, first, that we be not bringing a “science falsely so called” into antagonism with Him who is “the truth”; and secondly, that we be quite sure that our Divine truth is the whole of truth—in other words, is Christ Himself—in His Deity, and in His Humanity—in His holiness, and His wisdom, and His love! (*Ibid.*)

By kindness.—Kindness:—If there be one virtue which most commends Christians, it is that of kindness: it is to love the people of God, to love the Church, to love poor sinners, to love all. But how many have we in our churches of crab-tree Christians, who have mixed such a vast amount of vinegar, and such a tremendous quantity of gall in their constitutions, that they can scarcely speak one good word to you. They imagine it impossible to defend religion except by passionate ebullitions; they cannot speak for their dishonoured Master without being angry with their opponent; and if anything is awry, whether it be in the house, the church, or anywhere else, they conceive it to be their duty to set their faces like flint, and to defy everybody. They are like isolated icebergs, no one cares to go near them. Imitate Christ in your loving spirits; speak kindly, act kindly, and think kindly, that men may say of you, “He has been with Jesus.” (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

By the Holy Ghost.—Power:—This clause might be so interpreted as to include the rest. Pureness, knowledge, and love, are all gifts of the One Spirit. This reflection shows that when St. Paul wrote, “By the Holy Ghost,” amongst a number of particulars, he must have meant something more precise and less comprehensive. A man might have pureness and knowledge, and yet lack two things. We have known men of clean hands and a pure heart, of extensive knowledge and well-defined doctrine, who were singularly deficient in power. That elevating, transforming, re-creating influence, which brings a glow, and a force, and a rush into the whole being, and turns the commonplace into the original, and the natural into the spiritual, and the earthly into the heavenly, has not yet passed over them. They are clean and sound, but they are not illuminated and transfigured. Their life is not a motive life. It does not kindle, because it is not alight. No one catches fire at sleeping embers. These men are like a fire laid, to which the match has not yet brought the life-giving spark. Something of this kind is often made the special office of the Holy Ghost. The cleansing water is one of His emblems; but the rushing wind is another, and the enkindling fire is a third. And though the miraculous gifts are gone—gone because their work is done, and they would but impede the gospel progress in this nineteenth century—still power remains, as one of the proofs, and not one of the meanest or least convincing proofs, of the Divine origin of the gospel. Only let your mind receive into it, in answer to prayer, the real presence of God Himself in the Holy Spirit—and you are a man of power at once. The energy communicated to your soul must act and influence. The grace of pureness, the grace of knowledge, pass on into the grace of power. Multitudes, even of sincere Christians, stop short of this; and, though safety may be theirs, it is a half-selfish safety—they go for next to nothing in the real battle-field of the gospel. Let us be Christians through and through. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

By love unfeigned.—Love unfeigned:—Pureness, and knowledge, and power—not even in this combination is the Christian character perfected. There might be a hardness, coldness, self-complacency, censoriousness, still—showing some lamentable deficiency in the presentation of the mind that was in Christ. Love, as the Greek says, un hypocritical, is an indispensable part of the “approving,” of the “not offending,” of the minister, of the Christian. What is purity without love? Cold, stern, how unlike the holiness of Jesus! What is knowledge without love? Self-engrossing, contemptuous—how opposite to that Divine insight of which St. Paul says, “If any man love, the same knoweth,” or “is known”! What is power without love?

Imperious, exacting, perhaps cruel—how, how incongruous with the position of a creature, of a sinner! Nature herself is witness that there is yet a more excellent way. Love—love unfeigned. Yes, that love which at the altar of God's own love has kindled alike the love of God and the love of man. That love which is the handing on of love; the transmission, the transfusion—as of course, as that which must be, which could not be coerced or cabined—of a forgiveness, of a peace, of a joy, felt first, and felt as a gift, within. That love which has no stint and no limit, because it is the reflection of a love infinite, inexhaustible. Who does not know, who does not feel as he but listens, that the man who has this love in him is indeed “approved as God's minister”? And without this love unhypocritical, what are gifts of intellect, of eloquence, of insight into truth, of scrupulosity in duty? Where is the attestation, in all these, of the ministry, or of the gospel? “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God”—men feel that God is in him, as a light, as a strength, as a love, as a consolation. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **As unknown, and yet well known.**—*A catalogue of contradictions:*—In these and preceding verses we have the grand characteristics of apostolic life.—**I. Their difficulties and dangers.** 2. The methods of their ministry. 3. The seeming contradictions that made up their life. Examining these in order, notice—**I. CONSPICUOUSNESS IN OBSCURITY.** 1. God's people are “hidden ones.” “The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” What comes within the range of the senses the world can understand; but what is only spiritually discerned the world cannot know. 2. But these hidden ones occupy a most prominent position before God, and all spiritual intelligences. “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous.” The entirety of their inner and outer life is well known in heaven. Their names are registered in the Book of Life. **II. LIFE IN DEATH.** 1. The life of the old man dies by the painful, lingering process of crucifixion. 2. A new Divine life is planted in the soul which develops in proportion as the old man is crucified. **III. SAFETY IN AFFLICTIVE PROVIDENCES.** 1. The primal spring of the chastisement of a child of God is parental love (Heb. xiii.). Without it, we should be condemned with the world; the dross of our many sins and corruptions would remain, and should not be wrought for us. We should fail to be conformed to the Lord Jesus, who was made perfect through sufferings. 2. But observe the safety guaranteed. “Not killed.” That is impossible, for omnipotence upholds them (Rom. viii. 35–39). **IV. JOY IN SORROW.** 1. The sources of a believer's sorrows. (1) In his heart and life there is much to cause depression, much that grieves the Holy Spirit. (2) In his circumstances. 2. But he can look beyond all these to the counterbalancing joy. “The joy of the Lord is his strength.” **V. MUNIFICENCE IN POVERTY.** 1. God's people are often poor as to this world. “God hath chosen the poor rich in faith.” Christ Himself was a poor man. But apart altogether from external circumstances, God's people are, and feel themselves to be, spiritually poor. In the fall man lost everything. 2. But a rich connection has been formed on the part of God's chosen ones with the Lord of all, who has “unsearchable riches.” Hence it follows that he who is poor can “make many rich.” A true saint, who has nothing in himself, but all things in Christ, is the greatest benefactor of his race. **VI. BOUNDLESS POSSESSIONS IN UTTER DESTITUTION.** (*P. Morrison.*) *Opposite views of a good man's life:*—**I.** To the secular eye he was UNKNOWN; to the spiritual, WELL KNOWN. 1. The world has never yet rightly understood the real life of a Christian. To the world, Paul appeared a fanatic. John says, the “world knoweth us not.” The world does not understand self-sacrificing love. It understands ambition, greed, revenge, but not this. 2. This explains martyrdom, ay, and the crucifixion of Christ. But though thus unknown to men, they are well-known—(1) To Christ. Christ knows all about His disciples; their inner life and outward circumstances. (2) To heavenly spirits. They are famous in heaven. At their conversion heaven rejoiced, and over every step of their subsequent history heaven watches with a loving care. “He giveth His angels charge over thee.” **II.** To the one DYING; to the other LIVING. 1. To worldly men Paul appeared as mortal as other men; with a frame scourged, wasted, he was nothing but a dying man. 2. But, spiritually, he was living. The soul within that dying body was living a wonderful life—a life of Christly inspirations and aims. **III.** To the one, MUCH TRIED; to the other, NOT DESTROYED. The word chastened here refers to his scourgings. For a catalogue of his sufferings, see chap. xi. 23–27. To worldly spectators he, with all his wounds, would appear a dead man; but his spiritual purposes, enjoyments, and hopes were not killed.

IV. To the one, **VERY SORROWFUL**; to the other, **ALWAYS REJOICING**. V. To the one, **VERY POOR**; to the other, **WEALTH-GIVING**. 1. Paul and his colleagues had suffered the loss of all things. Often breadless, homeless, and clad in rags. 2. Yet spiritually they were not only rich, but made others rich. (1) The highest work of man is to impart spiritual riches to his brother man. The most dignified and delectable work is this. (2) Worldly poverty does not disqualify a man for the discharge of this sublime mission. The gospel is to be diffused not by man as a scholar, philosopher, but by man as man. VI. To the one, **DESTITUTE**; to the other, **ENORMOUSLY RICH**. "All things are yours." Christliness gives us an interest in all things. They are given to man to enjoy. Conclusion: Do not estimate life by appearances. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Literary altruism*:—In the Scriptures we continually come upon double statements of this kind:—unknown, yet well known; possible, yet impossible; absent, yet present; on earth, yet in heaven; knowing nothing, yet judging all things. So we are at liberty to apply the words, which in their first meaning were restricted to personal experience, to the illustration of profounder truths and wider doctrines. Suppose we suggest future time. That is unknown, yet well known. Futurity is the mystery of life. We live for the future, even whilst we may deny its broader aspects. What is this magnet that draws us on? Its name is To-morrow. No man hath seen To-morrow at any time, any more than any man hath seen God at any time. Yet we cannot deny it, though we have never seen it, we have never lived it, we have no experience of it; we have a symbol by which we represent it, we acknowledge its inspiration, its mysterious, elevating, animating influence; but what it is, whence it comes, what it will bring, in what shape it will accost us, in what tone of voice, how grim its silence, how eloquent its salutation, none can tell. So we say the future is unknown, yet well known. Thus, in detail, for one moment. The farmer speaks of next harvest: will there be a harvest time? No man doubts it. What will it be in yield and in value? None can tell. It is known, yet unknown—known as a broad fact, unknown in all the minuteness of its detail, and the palpitation of its immediate results. Take the grim certainty of death. We now call it a commonplace when we say "all men are mortal." That is undoubted. By what gate will you go out of this little land into the unknown territory? Will you begin to die in the feet or at the head? Will your heart suddenly stop like a hindered pendulum? So we have the known and the unknown. Is there anything else that combines these marvellous features of being at once unknown, yet well known? Take life. Who knows it? No man. It is as mysterious as God. The man who can accept life ought to have no difficulty in accepting the Triune God. What is life? No man has ever told. Where is it? No man has seen its sanctuary. Is there any other illustration open to the general mind which confirms this altruism, which the apostle so graphically represented? Take character. What is character? How is it made up? Can you handle it and say, Behold, such is its figure? Can you weigh it in pounds troy, and assign its weight, to the utmost ounce or carat? Can you walk around it? Have you ever seen it? Only in incarnation, just as you have seen God. What do you know about "a beautiful character"? You say how mild, how modest, how genial, how courteous. How do you know? We know nothing about character. Call no man good until he is dead, and even after death there may come revelations which will "fright the isle from its propriety." So we come to the great mystery of all—God. He is unknown. We acknowledge it. The Bible says so. Yet God is well known. We cannot tell how we know Him, but we do know Him; imagination knows Him, the heart knows Him, reason feels Him near, conscience hushes the whole being into silence, because of a mysterious presence. We know some realities by the power of love, not by the power of genius. So we enlarge the whole sphere of altruistic vision, and come upon such words as "possible, yet impossible." "With God all things are possible," says Jesus Christ, and one of His apostles wrote in an epistle, "it is impossible for God." Both statements are true, and both are needed to complete a statement of the truth. We refer to this now, because it helps us to a most practical point. It is possible for you to pull down your house, brick by brick, stone by stone, and to begin immediately to unroof the family dwelling; you have strength, you cannot procure instruments, all needful aids are at your service; you could in one short day dismantle and destroy your dwelling; yet you could not, you could do nothing of the kind. What hinders you? An invisible power. What is its name? Reason, common-sense, a correct apprehension of justice and righteousness. Then we are under spiritual control, notwithstanding our irreligiosity? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing**—*Sorrowing,*

yet always rejoicing:—I. WE ALL WANT TO FIND A WAY OF SO MINGLING SORROW AND JOY TOGETHER, THAT NEITHER SHALL CONTRADICT OR WEAKEN THE OTHER. You see people hugging a sorrow, feeding upon it. The wild cry of Constance, "Grief fills the room up of my absent child," has been the cry of many a mother. You perceive that such indulgence is morbid and dangerous; but you take, in general, very unsatisfactory methods of curing it. You try to dissipate the patient's mind, to present other objects which may cause the object on which it dwells to be forgotten. Often you succeed. But something is destroyed which should have been preserved. The waters of Lethe are not those which purge the spirit. They take away much that is best and strongest in it; they leave weeds and mud behind. Depend upon it, sorrow has that in it which we need and cannot afford to part with. He is a thief and an enemy who would take it from us. This is so, whatever be the occasion of the sorrow. Do not say, "This is a poor, mean occasion for a man to grieve about." The loss is a calamity. The grief for it is a gift which you may turn into a curse or into a blessing. An illustrious historian said that he could discover in eminent men, of various periods, an impoverishment and decay of heart and intellect, dating from a crisis of their lives, when they had wilfully thrown off some great sorrow which might have given them consistency and depth. The question is, whether we shall merely nurse sorrow as if it were a warrant for misanthropy, or accept it as a message from above to teach us more of our relations to other men and of our relation to God. In this sense Paul was always sorrowing. There is not a trace in any of his Epistles of morbidness. He is always in action. He is thinking, feeling for others. In one sense he "forgets the things that are behind." He determines that they shall not impede him. But in another sense, nothing is forgotten. All is coloured and shaped by his own previous experiences. What he has suffered enables him to look with straight eyes upon the suffering of the world. He regards it as a sign of derangement in that which is divinely good; therefore it makes him mourn. He regards it as one of the instruments for removing that which is deranged; therefore it cannot make him despair. St. Paul learnt to sorrow when he learnt to hope. He knew the anguish of conscience before; but he did not know sorrow till he had a revelation of One who cared for him, mourned for him, died for him. There then arose upon him the vision of a Man of Sorrows; and now he could desire nothing better than to enter into the mind of Christ.

II. A MAN WHO IS ALWAYS SORROWING IN THIS WAY, MUST BE ALSO ALWAYS REJOICING. Such a weight of sorrow could only have been sustained by a joy that was commensurate with it. 1. We all confess this truth in one way or another. The most frivolous person says, "I have had much trial of late; I must have more than ordinary pleasure that I may endure it." We often denounce such language, but there is a meaning in it, though an inverted one. The joy which we seek for to quench sorrow, is on the whole a poor flimsy joy; not the joy which penetrates far below the surface. That joy which lies at the very root of our being, which is as necessary for human life as moisture is for vegetable life—that joy which, amid the frosts of the world, would perish utterly if Heaven did not watch over it—that joy does not seek to escape from sorrow, but encounters it and finds its own strength in enduring it. 2. As Paul found in the Son of Man the climax of all human sorrow, so he owned in that same Son of Man and Son of God the source and climax of all human joy. As he recollected what the work of the Sorrower on earth had been—how every act He had done was to take away some disease, some death-anguish, it was not possible but that he should believe that there was another cup besides that which His Father had given Him, and which He drained to the dregs. Every hour that Jesus was walking among men He was giving them some foretaste of this joy, some token that He came to make them inheritors of it. But there was a special hour in which we are told He rejoiced in His own Spirit (Matt. xi. 25-27). I think I read here the secret of St. Paul's continual joy in the midst of his continual sorrow. (F. D. Maurice, M.A.)

The sorrows and pleasures attendant on true piety:—I. THE CAUSES OF THE BELIEVER'S SORROW. 1. The painful sense he entertains of his remaining imperfections, sinfulness, and weakness. 2. The difficulty of maintaining a steadfast belief in the great and essential truths of the gospel of our salvation. 3. The prevalent impiety, the wide-spreading moral wretchedness, with which he sees himself continually surrounded. 4. The natural evil, the physical suffering, which prevails to so wide an extent in the world around him. II. THE SOURCES OF HIS JOY. 1. The blessed hope that when he shall have accomplished his day, he shall find admittance into that blissful region where "all tears shall be wiped from all eyes, and sorrow and

sighing shall flee away for ever." 2. The privilege of drawing near to God in acts of public and private devotion. 3. Christian fellowship with persons of a kindred spirit with his own. 4. Grateful and sincere obedience to his heavenly Father's will—more especially in kindness to those whom our Redeemer calls His brethren. (*C. Townsend, M.A.*) *Rejoicing in sorrow* :—Joy lives in the midst of the sorrow; the sorrow springs from the same root as the gladness. The two do not clash against each other, or reduce the emotion to a neutral indifference, but they blend into one another; just as, in the Arctic regions, deep down beneath the cold snow, with its white desolation and its barren death, you shall find the budding of the early spring flowers and the fresh green grass; just as some kinds of fire burn below the water; just as, in the midst of the barren and undrinkable sea, there may be welling up some little fountain of fresh water that comes from a deeper depth than the great ocean around it, and pours its sweet streams along the surface of the salt waste. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

AS POOR, YET MAKING MANY RICH.—Poor, yet rich, and enriching others:—I. WEALTH WITHOUT THE RICHES OF THE WORLD. "Having nothing, yet possessing all things." 1. This may be true of men as men. (1) Knowledge is wealth. A child well educated is better endowed, though his parents do not give him a single penny, than the child who is uneducated, and who is heir to a large fortune. (2) Wisdom is wealth. The prudence and sagacity which enable a man to see what is best is the most valuable capital with which a man can conduct business. (3) Contentment is wealth. To make the best of things as things are. (4) Hope is wealth. Because a man has but brass to-day, and is looking forward to gold to-morrow. (5) Cheerfulness is wealth. (6) Love awakened by all that is true, beautiful, and good, is wealth. 2. But look specially at the wealth of a true Christian. He possesses—(1) The Spirit of God, and in Him light and life and love. (2) In the Son of God a Redeemer who is devoted to him, to save him from his sins. (3) In the God to whom he is reconciled, a Father. He is "an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ." (4) In salvation the greatest good which God can bestow and a title to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." (5) As a saved and sanctified man, knowledge, wisdom, contentment, cheerfulness, hope, love. (6) All the most useful things—"living bread," "living water," raiment that waxeth not old—"robes of righteousness and garments of salvation." (7) All the most enduring things—"an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away." (8) All the most precious things, "for all things are yours." "My God shall supply all your need from His glorious riches by Christ Jesus." "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." II. THE

POWER OF ENRICHING OTHERS CO-EXISTING WITH POVERTY. The "making many rich" is not dependent on material wealth. 1. Well doing is required of all, irrespective of poverty or of riches. Multitudes have done good without material wealth. The chief benevolent and religious works are done by those who live by their daily labour. Look through our Sunday and Ragged Schools, &c., and the evidence is complete. Some of you who "possess all things," in another sense, are keeping back from "making many rich." 2. True riches cannot be purchased with money, and the rich are not God's elect to make others rich. "God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith," &c. Conclusion: 1. Rich Christians who have been brought low may learn a cheerful lesson. I want such to see that they "possess all things"—a Saviour enthroned, a Father in heaven, the Holy Ghost the Comforter. 2. The poor, who are kept poor, may learn a lesson of contentment. It is God's arrangement. God is using this as a means of discipline; He is teaching you certain things by poverty that you could not so well learn from any other tutor. 3. Let Christians learn—(1) Their responsibility. Now there are some who are ever ready to sing, "How vast the treasure we possess!" But it would puzzle some of you to find anybody enriched by you—by your instruction or consolation. (2) Their privilege. To "possess all things" is a privilege, but it is a far greater privilege to make others "rich." Oh! to make one poor neglected brother rich. But to make "many rich," this is to share the joy of heaven—this is to taste that satisfaction of the Saviour which rewarded Him for the travail of His soul. Let this stimulate you. If God put money into your hand, He does so prudently and properly to scatter, not to hoard. You may do as much good in circulating your money in employing labour as by bestowing it in what is called charity. There is like danger of covetousness with regard to our spiritual privileges. If we do "possess all things," we should certainly be moved by such a possession to strive to make others "rich." (*S. Martin.*) *The affluent poor* :—Note—1. That the gospel is a system to enrich

man. Some religious systems impoverish both mind and body. The enrichment of the gospel gives man a property in "all things." This spiritual wealth is inalienable, whereas the wealthiest carry not a fraction of all their possessions to the grave. Moral goodness is worth, everywhere and for ever. 2. The gospel enriches man through the agency of poor men. The poor can receive the gospel, and do indeed receive it to a greater extent than any other class. Heaven has placed no obstacle in the way of any class. But if the poor can receive it they can also propagate it. It came into the world through a poor man. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. He elected to carry on His work by poor fishermen. These He sent forth without "purse or scrip." The same order has been more or less observed up to the present day. Our great reformers, theologians, missionaries, and ministers have, with but few exceptions, sprung from the ranks of the poor. I infer from all this—I. THE KIND OF INSTRUMENTALITY ON WHICH THE DIFFUSION OF GOD'S GOSPEL NECESSARILY DEPENDS. If the poor can propagate this system, then legislative enactments, worldly influence, high intellectual culture, may be dispensed with. But what of worldly wealth? All that money can do is to furnish machinery—temples, Bibles, and preachers; and these we have in abundance now. The necessary instrumentality is Christ-like thought, spirit, and life. II. THAT NO CHRISTIAN MAN IS FREED FROM THE OBLIGATION TO DIFFUSE THE GOSPEL OF GOD. If the poor can promote the gospel, how much greater is the obligation of every higher grade in society! 1. The wealthy. Though wealth is not an indispensable qualification, it is undoubtedly a talent suited to augment man's power for this glorious mission. 2. Men of leisure. The poor are doomed to toil for the mere means of subsistence, and can scarcely snatch an hour for spiritual usefulness. How will those amongst us who "kill time" by idle amusements stand in the Last Judgment? 3. The educated. III. THAT THERE IS NO GROUND FOR SELF-GRATULATION IN THE SUCCESS OF OUR EVANGELICAL EFFORTS. Had angels been employed we might have referred its triumphs to their brilliant talents. But finding that the poorest can achieve the grandest spiritual results, there is no alternative but to trace success in all cases to God. IV. THAT THE HIGHEST HONOUR IS WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL. This is not to have lordly inheritance or a famous name, but to be the regenerator of souls. V. THAT THERE IS GOOD REASON TO HOPE FOR THE UNIVERSAL DIFFUSION OF THE GOSPEL. The poor can spread it, and therefore the gospel is not dependent upon any class. And then, moreover, the poor have the largest amount of power; they have always been and still are the millions—the muscles of the world. My poor brother! repine not because of thy worldly lot. Luther was the son of a miner; Bunyan was a tinker, Carey a cobbler, Morison a last-maker; and Knibb, who smote slavery in Jamaica; Williams, who bore the gospel to the Coral Islands; Moffatt, the apostle of Africa, were the children of the sons of toil. Who was John Pounds, the originator of Ragged Schools? He earned his miserable pittance as one of the humblest cobblers in Portsmouth. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Rich poverty* :—I. "AS HAVING NOTHING." Learn—1. That the truly great are not essentially the visibly rich. We live in an age so material that this needs to be proclaimed with trumpet blast. 2. That it becomes us to make greater self-denials. How seldom do our poverities arise from self-sacrifices! 3. That God does not reward His servants with material pay. If any man had a claim for such reward, it was Paul. But why is this? (1) God does not attach the false importance to material possessions that we do. (2) He will let us do and dare for Him without a bribe. 4. That God's poor are the best off. For see the heritage to which they know that they are begotten! II. "AND YET POSSESSING ALL THINGS." A good man owns all things. 1. By holding a true relation to things—(1) He is instructed by them. Because a man has a lot of works of art in his gallery, and books in his library, it does not follow that he is their truest owner. (2) He gets enjoyment from them. And what more can any owner do? There are men that sit in their lordly mansions that might as well be immured in a dungeon for aught of joy they get. (3) He gets growth in the midst of them. If a man's nature is ripened, enriched by things, what can make him in such a great sense their owner? 2. By holding a true relation to Christ he becomes possessor of all things (Rom. viii. 17; Rev. iii. 21). (*H. Martyn.*)

Vers. 11–13. O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.—A *Christian minister's appeal* :—I. THE APPEAL OF A REVIVED MINISTER. 1. It consists of a full exhibition to you of all the truths which the gospel teaches for your salvation. 2. It comprises an affectionate desire for your enjoyment of all the blessings which the gospel offers. This enjoyment—(1) Comes from God. (2)

Is maintained by devout meditation and prayer. (3) Is encouraged by examples. (4) Expresses itself by earnestness of spirit in self-denying labours. II. THE RESPONSE OF A REVIVED CHURCH. 1. Take a firm and steady hold of the simple gospel, as divinely suited to the ends for which it has been given. 2. Meet the ministers of the gospel in the spirit in which they come to you. 3. Extend your own views, plans, and hopes in connection with the enlargement of the Church. (1) What can you do? (2) What is the wisest way of doing it? (3) What are your encouragements and hopes? Address—1. Those who have no disposition to respond to this appeal—why not? 2. Such as have. 3. Those confirmed by the meetings. 4. Those who are awakened. (*W. H. Stowell, D.D.*) *The apostle's love and its desired recompense*:—I. THE APOSTLE'S AFFECTION overflows in an exuberant apostrophe (ver. 11). His love was deep, and this flow of eloquence arose out of the expansion of his heart. 1. "Our heart is enlarged." This remark is wonderful considering the provocations Paul had received. The Corinthians had denied the truthfulness of his ministry, charged him with interested motives, sneered at his manner, &c. In the face of this his heart expands!—partly with compassion. Their insults only impressed him with a sense of their need. How worthy a successor of his Master's spirit! And this is the true test of gracious charity. Does the heart expand or narrow as life goes on? If it narrows, if misconception or opposition wither love, be sure that that love had no root. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye?" And this love is given to all, partly from looking on all as immortal souls in Christ. The everlasting principle within makes all the difference. Hold fast to love. If men wound your heart, let them not sour or embitter it; let them not shut up or narrow it; let them only expand it more and more, and be always able to say with Paul, "My heart is enlarged." 2. "Our mouth is open unto you." He might have shut his lips, and in dignified pride refused to plead his own cause. But instead he speaks his thoughts aloud, and, like Luther, lays his whole heart open to view. Paul had no afterthought, no reservation—he was a genuine man. II. THE RECOMPENSE DESIRED. 1. The enlargement of their heart towards him. 2. To be shown in their separation from the world and from all uncleanness. It was not simply affection towards himself that he desired, but devotion to God. 3. This is the only true recompense of ministerial work. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Heart expansion*:—I. THE NATURE OF HEART EXPANSION. 1. It is not mere mental expansion. History supplies too many examples of intellectual greatness associated with moral degradation. 2. It is not mere liberality of sentiment. 3. It consists in enlarged views of men as the subject of moral government, and enlarged desires for promoting their well-being. It is Christianity only that inspires those views and those feelings. It gives to man enlarged expectations, and teaches him the way to realise them. II. THE MEANS OF HEART EXPANSION. 1. Examine the present state of the heart. 2. Meditate upon the great evangelical facts. "God so loved the world," &c. 3. Commune with men of enlarged souls. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, he that walketh with good souls may participate in their goodness. 4. Hold fellowship with the Son of God. Be much with Him, drink in His sentiments, imbibe His spirit. III. THE NEED OF HEART EXPANSION. Why should we seek it? 1. The heart is capable of it. How the gospel makes little souls great! 2. We are representatives of Christ. How great in soul should Christians be who have to stand between the loving Son of God and the fallen world! 3. Enlargement of heart is essential to our usefulness. It is only the heart expanding with love that can turn time, talent, property, acquisitions, to spiritual use. 4. We are responsible for the condition of the heart whether contracted or enlarged. (*Caleb Morris.*) *Tendency of the gospel to enlarge the heart*:—The gospel had enlarged the heart of the apostle, and he supposed it had a tendency to enlarge the hearts of the Corinthians. His views and feelings were once confined to himself, and to objects connected with his personal interests. But after he had understood and loved the gospel his heart expanded, and he felt interested in everything comprised in the great and benevolent scheme of man's redemption. I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE HEART'S BEING ENLARGED. 1. The heart is something different from the faculties of the mind, and consists in free voluntary exercises, emotions, or affections. 2. Every moral agent has some supreme object in view. Self is the object in the unsanctified heart, but the renewed heart has a regard to the interest of others. 3. The heart is large or small in proportion to the largeness or smallness of the objects upon which it terminates. 4. Men's hearts enlarge as their capacities, relations, connections, and spheres of action increase. When David was

a shepherd his mind and heart were as small as his flock; when he became a general they were as large as his army; when he ascended the throne they were enlarged in proportion to the interests of the nation. 5. It is true, indeed, the heart does not always keep pace with the progress of capacity and knowledge. If a man's supreme object be mean or unimportant it will contract his mind and feelings. The man who makes property his supreme object sees nothing in the universe superior to property, and esteems nothing important but what tends to property. So with amusements, &c. As a man's heart is always where his treasure is, so his heart is as large and no larger than his supposed treasure. II. THE GOSPEL HAS A DIRECT TENDENCY TO ENLARGE THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO EMBRACE IT. The gospel comprises the highest good of the universe, and those who embrace it cordially approve of this design. They love the good that God loves, and desire to have it promoted in the way proposed in the gospel. As soon, therefore, as any become cordially united to Christ, the discovery of this great good immediately expands their hearts. The gospel tends to enlarge men's hearts—1. Towards God. It gives the fullest and brightest display of His glory. 2. Towards Christ. The great and glorious Saviour is nowhere revealed but here. Nature discovers none such. As men's knowledge of the gospel therefore increases, their love, gratitude, and whole hearts are enlarged towards Christ. 3. Towards the Church of Christ. 4. Towards all mankind. 5. Towards all created beings, whether holy or unholy, and towards every living creature, from the highest angel to the smallest insect. These all belong to God, and are a part of His interest. 6. To take an interest in all events. They all stand inseparably connected with the extensive design of the gospel, which assures believers that all things are theirs, whether past, present, or to come, and shall eventually work together for their good. If the gospel tends to enlarge the views and hearts of those who embrace it, then—1. Unbelievers have no just ground to object to it as enfeebling the minds and contracting the hearts of men. 2. We see why the Scripture represents believers as far more amiable and excellent than unbelievers. 3. They sincerely desire that the gospel may be universally known and embraced. 4. They know by experience that they cannot serve God and mammon. 5. They ardently desire to know more and more about it. 6. It enables them to perform all the duties which it requires with great pleasure and delight. "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." (N. Emmons, D.D.)

Be ye also enlarged.—*Spiritual enlargement*:—Consider the text—I. AS IT MAY BE APPLIED TO THE SINNER. Be enlarged—1. In understanding and wisdom. 2. In the affections of the heart. 3. In the blessedness of the future. "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good." II. AS IT APPLIES TO BELIEVERS. 1. Be ye also enlarged in the knowledge and love of Christ. 2. In prayer and holy effort. III. AS IT REMINDS OF HEAVEN. Heaven will be an eternal enlargement, for—1. There will be perfect comprehension. Nothing to perplex, nothing to obscure. 2. The soul will be released from its earthly prison-house. 3. The bliss of the redeemed will be ever increasing. (*Congregational Pulpit.*)

The enlargement of Christian benevolence:—I. IN WHAT THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE TEXT CONSISTS. 1. Negatively. (1) Not in expansion of intellect, for there are many in whose character moral deficiencies form a striking contrast to brilliancy of intellect. (2) Others flatter themselves that they possess superior enlargement because they entertain an equal indifference to all the varieties of human opinion in religious subjects, and feel no regard for any sect or creed. This would, no doubt, be a very cheap and easy doctrine to embrace; by those who are indifferent concessions are easily made to almost any extent, and there can be no great liberality in sacrificing truth where no real attachment to truth is felt. 2. Positively it consists in a real benevolence to the whole Church of Christ, as opposed to any selfish views of our own salvation, or of our own Church, as exclusively concerned. There are some who live solely to themselves, others limit their benevolence to the circle of their own family or of their acquaintance, and others extend their benevolent interest to every case of distress that falls within their view. And this is the utmost extent of human benevolence, apart from the religion of Christ. The proud Roman confined all his benevolence to Rome. That all nations were of one blood never entered into the views of the most enlightened men in the pagan world. But suppose us enabled to open our eyes to a comprehensive view of mankind as one vast family; suppose God to have clearly discovered Himself as the universal Father, from whom all have alike departed by sin; suppose Him to have shown us that one great method of recovery has been provided for all, what should be the effect of such a revelation

but first to attach us to God as our common centre, and then to the whole family of man as called to form the Church of God? II. ITS MOTIVES AND REASONS. 1. It is perfectly reasonable and in harmony with nature. We are so circumstanced that we are perpetually and inevitably led out of ourselves. There are natural emotions that are purely benevolent; pity, *e.g.*, identifies us with others. In all our social affections, supposing them genuine, we act on the ground of a disinterested benevolence; it is their happiness, not our own, that we primarily seek. 2. It agrees with the genius of Christianity, the grand display of the Divine benevolence, "Herein is love," &c. Hence the apostle declares, "The love of Christ constrains us." Such an example of compassionate benevolence—of enlargement of heart—once perceived and felt absorbs the soul. 3. It is conducive to our own happiness. The more we identify ourselves with the interest of others the more we consult our own happiness. In the pursuit of any merely solitary schemes we shall reap only disappointment. When the barriers of selfishness are broken down, and the current of benevolence is suffered to flow generously abroad, and circulate far and near around, then we are in a capacity of the greatest and best enjoyment. 4. It tends to promote all public good. III. THE MODES OF ATTAINING IT. 1. Acquaintance with God. First draw near to the Father in that new and living way, for "whoso loveth Him that begot will also love all those that are begotten." Once taste for yourself that the Lord is gracious, and then you will find that you "cannot but speak of what you have seen and heard." 2. Prayer for the Holy Spirit's influence; by this alone can our hearts be truly enlarged in love to man. 3. Connection with great objects of beneficence. The mind takes a tincture from the objects it pursues. If you engage your attention in the concerns of Christian philanthropy your mind will be dilated in proportion to your ardour. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *The influence of religion to enlarge the mind:*—Of this enlargedness of mind the apostle was an eminent example. All his worldly prospects he cheerfully relinquished for the service of Christ. I. ITS NATURE AND OPERATIONS. The enlarged Christian—1. Entertains comprehensive and connected ideas of the religion of the gospel, and regards the several parts of it according to their comparative usefulness and importance. (1) There are some who confine their zeal to certain favourite sentiments and usages, and these not the most important, like those primitive believers whose attachment to the rites and ceremonies almost excluded charity to their more liberal brethren. (2) The enlarged Christian imbibes his religious sentiments fresh and pure from the deep fountain of Divine truth, not from the shallow, variable stream of human opinion. Contemplating the perfect character of God, he concludes that all religion must consist in rectitude of heart and holiness of life; that love to Him and benevolence to men must be its leading principles. 2. Judges freely and independently in matters of religion. He will not receive doctrines as the commandments of men, nor, on the other hand, will he cavil and object against them to show his superiority to the opinions of men. 3. Yields an unreserved submission to the Divine government. To a contracted mind the ways of God are subjects of daily complaint, but the man of an enlarged heart contemplates the ways of God on a more extensive scale. He therefore acquiesces in all the allotments of providence, and rejoices that his interests are in better hands than his own. 4. Is of a humble mind. The man of a narrow heart thinks highly of his own worth, is tenacious of his own opinions, and devoted to his own interest; but the man of liberal sentiments thinks soberly, speaks modestly, and walks humbly. Influenced by this spirit, the Christian reveres the word of revelation, and receives its instructions with submission. 5. Has a benevolent heart. He whose feelings are contracted within himself views with indifference the misfortunes of a neighbour, or takes advantage from them. But the enlarged Christian considers all men as his brethren. He can sacrifice his own interest to the superior happiness of his fellow-men, like Paul, who sought not his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved. II. THE PROPER MEANS OF OBTAINING AND IMPROVING IT. 1. An intimate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. It is not any and every kind of knowledge that will enlarge the mind, but only that which is great in its object and useful in its tendency. 2. Submission to the power of the gospel. Knowledge is highly useful, but this alone will rather swell than enlarge the mind. It is charity which edifies. 3. Social intercourse, especially social worship. 4. Prayer. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*)

Vers. 14-16. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.—*Unequally yoked:*—This peculiar word has a cognate form in the law which forbids the breed-

ing of hybrid animals (Lev. xix. 19). God has established a good physical order in the world, and it is not to be confounded and disfigured by the mixing of the species. It is that law, or perhaps another form of it, which forbids the yoking together of an ox and an ass (Deut. xxii. 10), that is applied in an ethical sense in this passage. There is a wholesome moral order in the world also, and it is not to be confused by the association of its different kinds. The common application of this text to the marriage of Christians with non-Christians is legitimate but too narrow. The text prohibits every kind of union in which the separate character and interest of the Christian lose anything of their distinctiveness and integrity. This is brought out more strongly in the free quotation from Isa. lii. 11 in ver. 17. These words were originally addressed to the priests, who, on the redemption of Israel from Babylon, were to carry the sacred temple vessels back to Jerusalem. But we must remember that though they are Old Testament words they are quoted by a New Testament writer, who inevitably puts his own meaning into them. "The unclean thing" which no Christian is to touch covers, and doubtless was intended to cover, all that it suggests to the simple Christian mind now. We are to have no compromising connection with anything in the world which is alien to God. Let us be as loving and conciliatory as we please, but as long as the world is what it is the Christian life can only maintain itself in it in an attitude of unbroken protest. There always will be things and people to whom the Christian has to say No! But the moral demand is put in a more positive form in chap. vii. 1. (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

Unequally yoked:—I. THERE IS AN ESSENTIAL SPIRITUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE CONVERTED AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT. The line of demarcation is broad and conspicuous. It is between—1. "Righteousness and unrighteousness." 2. "Light and darkness." 3. Christ and Satan. 4. Faith and infidelity. 5. The "temple of God" and the "temple of idols." II. NOTWITHSTANDING THIS DIFFERENCE THE CONVERTED ARE IN DANGER OF BEING ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNCONVERTED. Alas, we find such association in almost every department of life. III. FROM SUCH AN ASSOCIATION IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CONVERTED TO EXTRICATE THEMSELVES. 1. The nature of the separation. "Come out from among them." It must be—(1) Voluntary. Not to be driven out, but you must break away from all ties that bind you. (2) Entire. "Touch not the unclean thing." Sin is an unclean thing, unclean in its essence, its phases and its influences. 2. The encouragement to the separation. "I will receive you," &c. As a Father, what does God do for His children? (1) He loves them. (2) He educates them. He educates the whole soul, not for temporal purposes, but for ends spiritual and everlasting. (3) He guards them. (4) He provides for them. "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Amusements and companies of the world:—I. THERE SEEM TO BE TWO CAPITAL REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT BY CHOICE ASSOCIATE WITH THOSE OF A WORLDLY OR IDOLATROUS SPIRIT. 1. There is really no congeniality between the two spirits. As there is the want of a common taste, so there is the want of common topics. For a man to delight in the conversation of an irreligious party, bears on it the evidence of his own irreligion. And, if it be the symptom of having passed from death unto life that we love the brethren and their society, then may the love of another society, at utter antipodes, administer the suspicion of a still unregenerated heart, of a still unsubdued worldliness. 2. So to consort with the ungodly not only proves the existence of a kindred leaven in our spirit, but tends to ferment it—not only argues the ungodliness which yet is in the constitution, but tends to strengthen it the more. And who can doubt of the blight and the barrenness that are brought upon the spirit by its converse with the world? II. BOTH THESE CONSIDERATIONS ARE DIRECTLY APPLICABLE TOUCHSTONES BY WHICH TO TRY, we will not say the lawfulness, but at least the expediency, of—1. The theatre and all public entertainments. Think of the degree of congeniality which there is between the temperament of sacredness and the temperament of any of these assemblages. The matter next to be determined is, will the dance, the music, the merriment, the representation, and the whole tumult of that vanity attune the consent of the spirit to the feelings and exercises of sacredness? If there be risk of being exposed to the language of profaneness or impurity, this were reason enough why a Christian should maintain himself at the most determined distance from them both. There may be a difficulty in replying to the interrogation—What is the crime of music? yet would you feel yourself entitled to rebuke the scholar whose love for music dissipated his mind away from all the preparations indispensable to his professional excellence. 2. And, as it is with this world's amusements, so may it be with this world's companies. There may be none of the excesses of intemperance, of the execrations of

profanity, of the sneers of infidelity. All may have been pure and dignified and intellectual, affectionate and kind. And then the question is put—where is the mighty and mysterious harm of all this? The answer is that, with all the attractive qualities which each member of the company referred to may personally realise, it is quite a possible thing that there be not one trait of godliness on the character of any one of them. They may all be living without God in the world, and by a tacit but faithful compact during the whole process of this conviviality, all thought and talk of the ever-present Deity may for the season be abandoned. And thus is it a very possible thing that, in simply prosecuting your round of invitations among this world's amiable friends and hospitable families, you may be cradling the soul into utter insensibility against the portentous realities of another world—a spiritual lethargy may grow and gather every year till it settles down into the irrevocable sleep of death. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*)

Unequally yoked :—When travelling in America, as we neared Montreal the Ottawa river joined that of the St. Lawrence, upon which we were sailing. The former is remarkable for its muddiness, the latter for its cleanness. For a while they flowed side by side, so that they could easily be distinguished the one from the other. Eventually, however, they coalesced, and the one stream was dirty, not clean. So is it too often, alas! I thought, with those who wed unbelievers. For a time they run together smoothly, but at last one is changed by the other, and it is generally the unbeliever that gains the day. Not without abundant cause was the apostolic injunction given, "Be not unequally yoked." **What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?**—*Religious separation* :—I. ITS GROUNDS. 1. Immorality. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" Let a man amass enormous wealth, and he will find at his board the noblest in the land. It matters not that he became rich in some questionable way—no one asks about that. Again, talent breaks down the rigid line of demarcation. The accomplished man or woman who, though notoriously profligate, is tolerated—nay, courted—even in the Christian drawing-room. Now I do not say that the breaking down of conventional barriers is undesirable. If goodness did it—if a man, low in birth, were admired for his virtues—it would be well for this land of ours! But where wealth and talent, irrespective of goodness, alone possess the key to unlock our English exclusiveness, there plainly the apostolic injunction holds, because the reason of it holds: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" 2. Irreligion. "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" There is much danger, however, in applying this law. It is perilous work when men begin to decide who are believers and who are not, if they decide by party badges. Nevertheless, there is an irreligion which "he who runs may read." For the atheist is not merely he who professes unbelief, but, strictly speaking, every one who lives without God in the world. And the heretic is not merely he who has mistaken some Christian doctrine, but rather he who causes divisions among the brethren. And the idolater is not merely he who worships images, but he who gives his heart to something which is less than God. Now there are innumerable doubtful cases where charity is bound to hope the best; but there is also an abundance of plain cases: for where a man's god is money, or position in society, or rank, there the rule holds, "Come ye apart." II. THE MODE OF THIS SEPARATION. It is not to be attained by the affectation of outward separateness. Beneath the Quaker's sober, unworldly garb, there may be the canker of the love of gain; and beneath the guise of peace there may be the combative spirit, which is worse than war. Nor can you get rid of worldliness by placing a ban on particular places of entertainment and particular societies. The world is a spirit rather than a form; and just as it is true that wherever two or three are met together in His name, God is in the midst of them, so, if your heart be at one with His Spirit, you may, in the midst of worldly amusements—yet not without great danger, for you will have multiplied temptations—keep yourself unspotted from the world. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) **What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?**—*The nature, sources, and results of infidelity* :—I. ITS NATURE. An infidel is one who does not believe, and who avowedly rejects the testimony of Divine revelation. 1. Infidelity has existed in all ages. It was displayed when our first parents listened to the tempter in paradise. It appeared in the unhallowed building of Babel. It rancoured in the heart of the Jew who rejected and crucified the Messiah. It directed the judgment of the Greek who pronounced the gospel foolishness, and laughed at the resurrection from the dead. 2. In more modern times, how numerous and varied have been its different systems! We may, however, arrange them in two classes. (1) The Deists who believe in the Divine existence

and a future state of being, but who refuse the authority of the Bible. (2) The atheists, who deny the Divine existence; who proclaim that the world was formed by chance, or that it is eternal; who assign to man nothing but a refined material organisation, and who pronounce that death is the end of all being. II. ITS SOURCES. The great source is the depravity of the human heart. No doubt some have embraced infidel opinions after inquiry into the evidences of the Christian revelation; but have they carried an unbiased judgment to such inquiries? I hold that the evidences of the Christian religion are so full, so plain, and so powerful, that they cannot be weighed with a proper judgment without at once receiving the homage of the heart. There are two dispositions, however, in the heart of man, to which infidelity may be more particularly assigned. 1. Pride. This is the principle which prominently prevailed in the first act of infidelity. And so it was when the lawgiver was denied and the Redeemer was rejected. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." If you will examine the doctrines and principles of Christianity, you will see much that is humiliating. 2. Sensuality. The whole system of the gospel is intended to put down the sensuality of depraved human nature. On the other hand, infidelity never yet promulgated one principle which could present a barrier against the gratification of lust. If it spoke of moral principle, of what force could that moral principle be when it suggested no motive for promoting it, no sanction for its exercise? Did not the Epicureans recognise that the chief good was pleasure? Did not Herbert teach that the indulgence of lust and anger were as innocent as the gratification of hunger and thirst? Did not Bolingbroke teach that lust was lawful if it could be indulged with safety? Did not Hume teach that adultery was only a crime when it was known? Did not Voltaire admit that the sensual appetites were to have a full and unrestrained gratification? When you consider the sentiments of its chief advocates, do you not perceive that it opens wide the flood-gates of licentiousness that it may rush upon the world? III. ITS RESULTS. 1. On the life that now is. (1) As they affect individuals. The true dignity of man is destroyed by the dogmas which infidelity embraces. And where is comfort to be found in connection with infidelity? The infidel has gone away from his Father's house, and what can he expect but to be fed on the husks which the swine do eat? He is gone away from the haven of peace, and what can he expect but to be tossed by the storm? He may join in the festive dance, but it is the emblem of raving madness; when he sinks in sickness, he is oppressed with the weight of sorrow; and when he falls in death, he is precipitated to the regions of despair. (2) As they affect communities. Infidel opinions are hostile to that which constitutes a nation's prosperity and grandeur. The withering effects of infidelity have been exemplified in France. Her efforts for freedom might have been brilliant and successful; she might have led the way of the empires of the earth in the march of true emancipation; but her impious dethronement of God and her nameless abominations have taught the lesson that if infidelity dwell in the bosom of the empire, it can only be as the most malignant destroyer. 2. On the life that is to come. While men continue in the avowed rejection of Christianity, it is impossible for them to be saved. (*J. Parsons.*) **What communion hath light with darkness?**—*Communion with God*:—We need not refer to the special cases which may have been contemplated by St. Paul when giving utterance to these emphatic questions. They may be taken in the most general sense, as indicating the impossibility of there being any agreement or fellowship between God and man unless a great moral change pass over the latter. We need not tell you, that in regard of the associations of life, there must be something of a similarity of disposition and desire. Unless there be congeniality of character, there may indeed be outward alliance; but there cannot be that intimate communion that the alliance itself is supposed to imply. And further than this—a sameness of tendency or pursuit appears evidently to form an immediate link between parties who would otherwise have very little in common. You observe, for instance, how men of science seem attracted to each other, though strangers by birth, and even by country. But this is not communion or fellowship in the sense or to the extent intended by St. Paul. This is only agreement on one particular ground. Take the parties away from that ground, and they will probably be inclined to move in quite opposite directions. We shall first glance at what is mentioned—fellowship or communion with God; and we shall then be in a position to press home the energetic questions of the apostle—"What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" Now, you can require no proof that God and the wicked man cannot be said to have fellowship or

communion, though God be about that wicked man's path, and about his bed, and spieth out all his ways. There is no proposing of the same object or end, for God proposes His own glory, whereas the wicked man proposes the gratification of his own sinful propensities. You see at once the contradiction between the assertions that a man is in fellowship with God and yet loves the present world. In short, it must be clear to you that the phraseology of our text implies a state of concord, or friendship—a state, in fact, on man's part, of what we commonly understand by religion—the human will having become harmonious with the Divine, and the creature proposing the same object as the Creator. And therefore we conclude that the questions before us imply that there can be nothing of religious communication between man and his Maker unless there have been some process of reconciliation. You are to remember that man is by nature in a state of enmity to God, born in sin, shapen in corruption, and far gone from original righteousness. Take away the work of the Mediator Christ, that work through which alone the alienation of our nature, its unrighteousness, its darkness, can be corrected, and the Creator and the creature can never meet in friendship. Now you will readily understand that up to this point we have confined ourselves to the urging the necessity for a great change on man's part from unrighteousness to righteousness, from darkness to light, in order to his having fellowship with God. We would examine how God and man may be at peace, now that reconciliation has been made. You are to remember that whatever the provisions made by Christ for our pardon and acceptance, we retain whilst yet sojourning on earth a depraved nature, fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, sinful propensities which may indeed be arrested but not eradicated. And can a being such as this have communion with that God who is a consuming fire against every form and degree of iniquity? Is this fellowship possible even though certain causes of separation have been removed—because the debt has been paid, or because punishment has been vicariously endured? You are to take heed that you do not narrow the results of Christ's work of mediation. There was a vast deal more effected by this work than the mere removal of certain impediments to the outgoing of the Divine love towards man. The process of agreement, as undertaken and completed by Christ, had a respect to continuance as well as to commencement. God and man are brought into fellowship if man accept Christ as his Surety, for then the death and obedience of Christ are placed to his account, and accordingly he appears as one on whom justice has no claim, and on whom love may therefore smile. But how are they to continue in fellowship, seeing that man as a fallen creature is sure to do much that will be offensive to God, and that God in virtue of His holiness is pledged to hostility with evil? Indeed the communion could not last if it were not that the Mediator ever lives as an Intercessor. It could not last if it were not that the work of the Son procured for us the influence of the Spirit. But combine these two facts and you may see that Christ made not only provision for uniting God and man, but for keeping them united. The question as to what fellowship, what communion there can be between things in their own nature directly opposed, is of course to be considered as only a forcible mode of expressing an impossibility. There cannot be fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness, there cannot be communion between darkness and light. Now we wish you to consider this impossibility with reference to a future state: we cannot conceal from ourselves that there is a great deal of vague hope of heaven which takes little or no account of what must necessarily be the character of the inhabitants of heaven. But the great thing to be here impressed upon men, who in spite of their musings on heaven give evident tokens of being still worldly-minded—it is, that they are altogether mistaken as to the worth, the attractiveness of heaven. They are not indeed mistaken as to heaven being a scene of overwhelming splendour and unimagined blessedness, but they are utterly mistaken in supposing that it would be so to themselves. They forget that in order to anything of happiness there must be a correspondence between the dispositions of the inhabitants of a world and the enjoyments of that world; otherwise in vain will the Creator have hung a scene with majesty and scattered over its surface the indications of His goodness. It is nothing, then, that we have a relish for descriptions of heaven. The question is whether we have any conformity to the inhabitants of heaven. Eternally to be in communion with God, eternally to have fellowship with God—why this suggests the most terrible of thoughts—thoughts of being for ever out of my element, unless God and myself are to be of one mind—if I am to remain unrighteous while He is righteous, if I am to be darkness while He is light. We have no right to think that this friendship between God and man is effected unless at least commenced on this

side of the grave. Go not away with the thought that you may indeed have nothing here of the character which is necessary to the happiness of heaven, but that such character will be imparted to you hereafter. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 16. Ye are the temple of the living God.—*The soul temple*:—From this analogy between the Christian's soul and the old Jewish temple we learn concerning Christians that—I. THEY ARE THE OBJECTS OF SPECIAL DIVINE REGARD. At the beginning of the promises which God made concerning the old temple, He said, "Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually," I will gild its glories with My smile, scathe its defilers with My frown, "Mine heart" too, shall be there, as a proprietor with his most treasured possession, a king with his most valued province, a father with the home of his family. So with good men. "With that man will I dwell," &c. "Lo, I am with you always," &c. II. THEY ARE THE SCENE OF SPECIAL DIVINE MANIFESTATION. It was not the magnificence of the building, nor the fragrance of the incense, nor the solemn order of the services, that revealed God's presence. It was the Shekinah. And so with men. It is not the gold or intellect that tells us God is with men, but it is Christ's Spirit in the heart. III. THEY ARE THE SUBJECTS OF ENTIRE DIVINE CONSECRATION. Solomon's prayer shows to what perfect devotedness to God the temple was dedicated, and Christ's expulsion of the traders from its sacred precincts, at the beginning and at the close of His ministry, proves how thoroughly He recognised that consecration, and suggests, moreover, how it was the grand purpose of His incarnation to purify and hallow the living temple of men's souls, of which that temple was but a type. In our hearts, then—I. There must be no worldly merchandise, lest we make it "a den of thieves" instead of a "house of prayer." 2. There must be no idol; it is the temple of the living God. 3. There must be an altar. And yet, how many of us are there in whose hearts an altar for self-sacrifice is a strange thing! Conclusion: Let us beware lest the doom of the old temple should be ours. Our souls through sin must incur a still more terrible ruin. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Temples of God*:—1. If we be the temples of God, let us be holy: for "holiness, O Lord, becometh Thy house for ever." 2. The temple is the house of prayer. Wouldst thou pray in God's temple? Pray in thyself. 3. The sound of the high praises of God must be heard in these temples. Even in the midst of ourselves, in our own hearts, let us think upon His mercies, there echo forth His praises. 4. The inhabitant disposeth all the rooms of his house: if God dwell in us, let Him rule us. Submit thy will to His Word, thy affections to His Spirit. It is fit that every man should bear rule in his own house. 5. Let us be glad when He is in us, and give Him no disturbance. Let not the foulness of any room make Him dislike His habitation. Cleanse all the corners of sin, and perfume the whole house. 6. If we be the Lord's houses, then nobody's else. The material temples are not to be diverted to common offices; much more should the spiritual be used only for God's service. Let us not alienate His rights: thus He will say, "This is My house, here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein." Oh, may we so adorn these temples with graces, that God may take delight to dwell in us! (*T. Adams.*) **I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**—*The covenant relationship between God and His people*:—I. LET US CONSIDER THE RELATION ALLUDED TO IN OUR TEXT, IN SO FAR AS MAN IS CONCERNED. "They shall be My people." That to man, the inferior party, such a connection is honourable, is self-evident. Is it a good ground of honest pride to be connected with the illustrious? How honourable, then, must it be to stand in any relation to Him, whose fingers formed the heavens and the earth, and who in wisdom made them all? Is it a ground of honest pride to be connected with the mighty, who, while they are revered for their power, are admired for their goodness? But if we would have any adequate idea of the extent to which the believer is honoured in his relation to God, we must penetrate more deeply into the nature of the connection, and consider its mysterious intimacy. Between the Head of the universe and the inhabitants of the earth many relationships subsist, and not a few of these extend to all created intelligences. All are related to Him as the great Creator, as a preserving God. All are indebted to Him as a general benefactor. All are related to Him as a resistless Governor. In a word, all, without exception, are related to Him as a Judge. But mark the honourable relation in which the Christian stands to a Being so great, so powerful, so glorious. In the best, the most extensive sense of the appropriation, he can humbly add, "God is my friend. His consolations are mine in the hour of sickness—His approval is mine as I sojourn toward heaven—His guidance is mine in every perplexity—His blessing shall be

mine for ever." They know that however much their God may afflict them, He is their God, and afflicts them for their good. But while the relation referred to in our text is thus honourable to the inferior party, it is just as evident that it is highly advantageous. When we consider what God can do for those in whom He is interested, when we consider how much He has already done for them, the advantage of the favoured man in whom He is thus interested admits of no controversy. II. THAT IT IS ALSO GLORIOUS TO GOD. And here we cannot fail to remark that it throws a halo, exquisitely brilliant, on the beauty of the Divine grace and condescension. We have only to contemplate the majesty of the Most High and the meanness of the human family, in order to adore the condescension of our covenanted God. Does the master condescend who admits his servant to his confidence, his friendship and esteem? Had Adam and all his sons continued to reflect the heavenly image, it would have been less an object of wonder that God should have said to the holy men, I am your God, and ye are My people. Had rebellion never entered into this province of the universe, a fatherly relation to us had been less magnificently manifested. But here, perhaps, it may be urged that although the relation with Himself into which the Deity introduces His people, may be glorious to His condescension, it cannot be equally so to all the rest of His perfections. How, it may be asked, can it consist with the holiness of Him who is immaculate, that He should give to the polluted the adoption of sons? The gospel affords us a luminous reply to these disputing questions. It tells us that the Most High in becoming His people's God, and in constituting them His children, fulfils a purpose, as glorious to His justice as it is to His compassion, as illustrative of His majesty as it is of His condescension, as honourable to His holiness as it is to His love. III. THAT IT IS MAINTAINED AND ENDEARED BY MUCH MUTUAL FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTIES IN THIS WORLD, WHILE IT IS DESTINED TO ISSUE IN CLOSE AND UNINTERRUPTED COMMUNION IN THE NEXT. The believer enjoys it and he rejoices in it, while engaged in humble prayer. But more particularly, we remark that the Word of God is one of the means by which the intimacies of relationship are maintained between Him and His people in this world. We might refer you to the ordinances of the gospel, and the dealings of God with man at large, for a fuller illustration of the topic now under review. But we have said that while the relationship that subsists between God and His people is closened by much endearing fellowship on earth, it is moreover destined eventually to issue in uninterrupted communion in heaven; and so assuredly shall it be. (*W. Craig.*)

Vers. 17, 18. *Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate.—*
Separation from the world :—When a person conversant with the vegetable productions of the earth, observes in the forest a plant whose properties he is desirous of improving, he removes it from its native wild into his garden. There, rooted in luxuriant soil, sheltered from inclement blasts, secured against immoderate humidity, duly watered in seasons of drought, defended from the encroachment of worthless herbs which even in that cultivated spot are continually springing on every side; it testifies by a conspicuous transformation the fostering care of its protector. Its growth enlarges; its juices are meliorated; its tints are heightened; its fragrance is exalted; its fruits are multiplied. It is no longer a barren weed; but the delight of him who has appropriated it to himself. In correspondence with the general outlines of this similitude, the God of mercy purifies unto Himself a peculiar people. Between the objects of favour, however, in the two cases, there exists a very important difference. The plant is unconscious, senseless, passive. Choice has no concern in its improvement. Not so the human being addressed by the gospel. Him God has created a moral agent. From him God requires active concurrence; co-operation of the will manifested by exertions of obedience. He does not hurry the man by arbitrary force from amidst the thorns and thistles of iniquity. Come out from among them, He cries, and be separate. Bestowing on the helpless individual adequate powers by the influence of His Spirit, He commands him to exert them and come forth. (*T. Gisborne, M.A.*)
Separation from the world, Christian service :—I. IS A DISTINCT ACT. 1. It is a change of masters. 2. It is a change of companion. Worldly men are not suitable, healthy, or possible companions for Christians. 3. It is a change of views, and habits, and ways. II. IS A DISTINCT EXISTENCE. It involves a separateness. The Church is separate. 1. As an institution. 2. As a community. 3. As a moral influence. III. IS A HOLY CONDITION. "Touch not the unclean thing." Although

this at the first applied only to idolatry, we may take it as applying to every unclean thing. 1. Evil is offensive to God. 2. Evil hinders all good in the soul. It is as the thorns which destroy and choke the wheat. 3. Evil is incompatible with good. Fire and water cannot coexist. IV. BRINGS THE ACCEPTANCE AND REWARD OF GOD. Acceptance involves—1. Reconciliation. 2. Restoration to privileges. 3. Complete forgiveness, peace, and happiness. (*J. J. S. Bird, M.A.*)

Renouncing the world:—I. WE MUST RENOUNCE ITS CORRUPT MAXIMS AND DOCTRINES. II. WE MUST FORSAKE THE UNHALLOWED PLEASURES AND AMUSEMENTS OF THE WORLD. III. WE MUST BE SEPARATED FROM THE WORLD IN ITS GENERAL SPIRIT AND CHARACTER. (*J. Richards.*)

Separation and adoption:—I. THE PRECEPT. In order to a Christian position there must be a special act which determines on which side of one fixed line the rest of our actions shall stand. 1. This act is the same deep necessity now that it was in Corinth. The human heart is the same, and the same temptations, with only slight variations in their form, still beset men. Every age brings its new brood of vices and adds to the funded stock, but very few that have once got a foothold die out. History hardly tells of one extinct species in the flora of guilt. If civilisation multiplies the refinements of culture, so does it the refinements of iniquity. Nay, men are just as eager to climb up some other way, instead of entering by the lowly door of repentance and faith. And therefore the responsibility of choice is just as pressing. It is impossible to evade it and slip into any third way. On one side we must be—Christ's or Belial's. We do assort with the unbelievers, or come out from among them and be separate, and the Judge knows which we do. 2. The Church has sometimes made a mistaken use of this truth. It has done so whenever it has stood, a Pharisee, aloof from the throng of humanity, saying scornfully, "I am holier than thou." It has done so whenever it has made dress, badge, ritual, feeling, professions the line of distinction rather than a principle ruling the life. The right way for the Church to distinguish itself from the world is as its Head distinguished Himself—by a purer holiness and a warmer zeal to help and save the world. Christian men should be known by every nobler disposition, lovelier trait, and holier deed. 3. Nevertheless, it will be true that there is a distinction or a "coming out," that mankind are of two armies under two leaders, that outward decency cannot be taken for inward renewal, self-cultivation for the upward-looking faith which works by love and through Christ receives the Spirit. 4. Till each individual soul has chosen to clear itself of all entangling alliances with the one of these two opposing forces and pledged itself to the other, how can it imagine it is safe? 5. A beginning and a continuing, a revolution and a habit, a new principle and a new life is this great decisive act. A "coming out" from irreligious associations is one part. It implies energy of purpose kindled by faith. Being "separate" implies the maintenance of the ground thus taken against all opponents, whether they frown or laugh, sneer or slight, reason or threaten. "Touch not" the renounced pollution, is an adjuration to the sanctified conscience. And these are the three daily heroisms in the discipline of the soldier of Jesus Christ. II. TO THE STERNNESS OF THE LAW IS ADDED THE TENDERNESS OF GRACE. 1. If man will do his part, God does His. God "worketh within us to will and to do," prompting holy desires and stirring the stagnant fountain. "No man can come to Me except the Father who hath sent Me draw him." When that dinner of husks is fairly ended and the prodigal's penitence has directed his feet towards home, the first form his lifted eyes see is his father's, meeting him "while yet a great way off." An infinite benediction falls on the returning child; you feel the power of the promise, "I will receive you," &c. Sons and daughters! Not "children" merely, losing individual consolation in the generality of the family! God uses names that come nearer to personal affection and meet a personal want. He calleth His own by name. And whereas it was the Lord that said, "Come," it is the Lord "Almighty," with His omnipotence the guarantee of His promise, that says, "Ye shall be My sons and My daughters." 2. The practical results upon character. (1) Confirming, and chiefly by fostering in the heart a keener abhorrence of sin. Under the witnessing of that Divine Guest impurity, selfishness, uncharitableness grow insupportably hateful. (2) Supporting: by supplying heavenly arms under the agitations of sorrow. (3) Quickening: by fresh spiritual communications out of His own fulness, giving to your growing holiness an increasing power of life. (*Ep. Huntington.*)

Soul salvation consists in:—I. WORLD RENUNCIATION. "Come out from among them." The renunciation must be—1. Voluntary. 2. Entire. "Touch not the unclean thing"—*i.e.*, sin, in all its forms and phases. II. DIVINE ADOPTION. "I will receive you," &c. As a father, what does He do

for His children? 1. He loves them. 2. He educates them. 3. He guards them. 4. He provides for them. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The greatest revolution*:—The text demands a change in human life, of all changes the most urgent and glorious—the change without which all other changes are not only worthless, but disastrous. It involves—I. AN URGENT SEPARATION. “Come out from among them.” “Them”—the carnal, idolatrous, corrupt men of the world. 1. How? Not by personally withdrawing from all communication with them. This, if possible, would neither be right, generous, nor useful. It means “come out from them” in spirit. Let your intercourse with them be like that of angels, who had no sooner discharged their errand than they flew back with rapid wing to the pure heavens again. 2. The Divine command implies—(1) Urgency. So long as you mingle in sympathy with the ungodly you are degrading your nature, imperilling your interests, incurring the displeasure of your God. (2) Strenuous effort. Heaven will not drag you out against your will; you must marshal your own energies and struggle away from the magic dominion of evil. He who would be free, himself must strike the blow. “Come out” from this moral Egypt; flee from this Sodom; forsake this Babylon! II. A GLORIOUS IDENTIFICATION. “I will receive you,” &c. Here is—1. A Divine reception. Here is a compensation for all the sacrifices you may be required to make. What matters it that you leave old fellowships, even father, mother, children? 2. Divine affiliation. (*Homilist.*) **And will be a Father unto you.**—*The Fatherhood of God*:—I. THE PROMISE. 1. “I will be a Father unto you.” Some may inquire, “How is it that God here promises to be what He is?” The text is an assurance that God will act the part of a Father. There is, alas! many a parent who does not act the part of a father to his children. “But can God, the Father of spirits, act in an unpaternal way toward any of His children?” (1) No. He treats none with unkindness or injustice. His offers of mercy are to all; for all Christ died. (2) Yes. In so far as His children refuse to allow Him to act a parental part. Consider the Prodigal Son. The father is still the father, but he does not act the part of a father, just because that child has chosen to betake himself to the far country. So soon as he penitently returns, the parent in loving welcome shows himself to be what he really is—a father. So God remains under all circumstances the Father of our spirits; and the question is, whether we will permit Him to be a father to us. It is one thing to have the conviction that God made us, and another to be assured that He loves us with as much individual tenderness as if no other created being existed. Do any ask, “How can this be?” How can it not be? If a man has seven children, does he love each only one-seventh as much as he would do if he had but one? Nay, if there be any difference, he will love each the more, because of the expansive influence on his heart of the love of the many. The infinite God does not love me less because I am one of millions. Let me place myself where I may rejoice in its manifestation. 2. “And ye shall be My sons,” &c. Is not this a needless tautology? No, God may be a father to us; but except we act as His children we cannot be happy. The love that a mother lavishes upon her wayward children avails not for his joy, but rather acts as a painful rebuke so long as he returns it not and leads an unfilial life. So with regard to God and man. How gracious, then, this twofold promise! He will not only show us parental affection, but give us a filial heart. II. ITS CONDITION. Some ignore this, and then complain that in their experience the promise is not fulfilled. 1. Separation unto God is demanded (ver. 17). This does not imply a monkish seclusion. If the Church be so withdrawn from the world, how shall it leaven it with a holy influence? “Touch not the unclean thing.” Contagion is the idea conveyed. In time of plague it were cruel indeed if all were to flee, but it would be equally their duty to avoid, if possible, contracting the malady, for then their ability to help would be gone. The physician should attend the sufferers, but it would not be well for him to sleep in the infected apartment. “But exactly from what amusements, societies, and occupations are we to separate ourselves?” Each must be guided by conscience and Scripture. From all that is condemned by God’s Word, that is injurious to our spiritual welfare, that which, though not unlawful, is not needful for us, and may set a bad example, and that about the lawfulness of which we are in doubt we must withdraw ourselves. If the mother is uncertain as to whether some berry for which her child cries is poisonous or not, she will assuredly withhold it; and if we are undecided as to whether some occupation or amusement for which inclination clamours will prove harmful to our soul, let us give God, not our hearts, the benefit of the doubt. 2. “Wherefore,” thus referring to what he has already said—(1) “For what fellowship hath

righteousness with unrighteousness?" None, and the believer removing not therefrom is involved in contention which belies his Christianity. (2) "What communion hath light with darkness?" None. If there be, it is to the detriment of the light. How has the brightness of many a Christian life been dimmed by intimacy with the ungodly! (3) "And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" None. So is there none betwixt those who are Christ's disciples and Satan's servants. The withdrawal is not to be comprised in a single act, but must be the habit of the life. Pliable found it easy to run from the City of Destruction, hard to continue his journey. (*Homilist.*) *Sons of God*:—1. We have here one of the many instances in which the apostle quotes from the O. T. and applies it to Gentile Christians. "Now having these promises"—we, you, "having" them! The apostle identified the Jewish and Christian churches, and considered the Scriptures of the first, the inheritance of the second, and that promises addressed to the Jews, and having relation to local and temporary circumstances, have yet an eternal principle in them which makes them applicable to the church in all time. 2. Every thoughtful person is conscious, immediately the idea is suggested of men being the children of God, of the feeling that this relationship is common to all men. Paul himself adopts the saying of the Greek poet, "And we His offspring are." Simply considered in their human character men are the children of God, but some men are the sons of God in a sense different from others. I. THE ORIGIN AND SOURCE OF THIS PECULIAR RELATIONSHIP. Christianity is a supernatural intervention of God, and it teaches that men become the sons of God in a sense which cannot be predicated of them in their previous natural condition (John i. 12, 13). They are not born "of blood," of one particular race; it is not because of being either Jew or Gentile, of the family of Seth or of Shem, which makes men sons of God. "Nor of the will of the flesh." This privilege is not an inherent element in humanity which only requires development. "Nor by the will of man"—*i.e.*, in respect to external acts, rites, or sacraments, which a man has power to dispense or to keep back; neither of caste, induction, or ritualism, but of God—you are born of Him. There is through Christ, and in connection with the truth of Christ, a direct influence and operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul of a believing man, infusing a new spiritual life into the conscience, and that spiritual living man is a son of God, and shelters himself under the Divine Fatherhood in a sense altogether unique. II. ITS PRIVILEGES. 1. Honour, nobility. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" 2. The conscious utterance of sentiments and feelings appropriate to this relationship. "Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." 3. The indwelling of the Spirit—the Spirit which regenerates and sanctifies, not only enters, but makes the heart His home, filling it with light and peace. 4. A life of filial confidence; the belief that they shall have from their Father what is necessary, both for temporal and spiritual life. Why take you thought for raiment, &c.? 5. Heirship. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." III. ITS DUTIES. 1. A perpetual, calm, grateful joy. I think it a great thing to be born into this world—to be a man. To be possessed of these senses and faculties, to have God's universe spread before us with all the intellectual and moral force that we have within us, even life, with its warfare, its work, and its vicissitudes—about all these things there is joy. Aye, but to be born again, to have the spiritual eye opened to those things which are only realised by faith, to be born into this new and spiritual world, to awake up to a consciousness that through Christ we are the sons and daughters of God—how we ought to rejoice in that! 2. A ready acknowledgment of the relationship. Men are not ashamed to own a relationship with illustrious ancestors. And there is something wrong when Christians are ashamed of their relationship to God, of that highest nobility that God can confer. 3. Obedience. (1) The obedience of children. A little child does not ask reasons, or if it does it is told to wait. Christians should apply this to themselves, and remember that part of the duty of sons to their Divine and loving Father is prompt obedience. (2) But added to that there must be the obedience of men—I mean that with enlightened reason, and with high and glowing purpose, you shall determine that, God helping you, you will live and act worthy of your parentage. 4. Contentedness with our lot, and a using of our spiritual privileges—delight in the intercourse with our Father, acquiescence in chastisement, and an exercise of filial faith in what is to be the end proposed by Him. 5. A gradual preparation for that great day when the Son shall appear in the presence of the Father, and when there shall be a blessed

realisation of the hope which has sustained the child from the beginning. IV. ITS ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION. 1. The glorification of your entire nature. You look for your Saviour to sanctify your souls, and you look for Him to change your body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. This is to be the beginning of the consummation, and will lead to the period when there will be the whole family in heaven. 2. Positive and conscious association with the elder sons of creation, who "kept their first estate," and who "rejoice over one sinner that repenteth." Their joy will be full when the two races—the fallen and the unfallen—shall be brought together in visible companionship before the throne of God. (T. Binney.)

CHAPTER VII.

VER. 1. **Having these promises . . . let us cleanse ourselves . . . perfecting holiness.**—*Having the promises of God*:—Under what notion have we the promises of God? 1. We have them as manifest tokens of God's favour towards us. 2. We have them as fruits of Christ's purchase. 3. They are plain and ample declarations of the good-will of God towards men, and therefore as God's part of the covenant of grace. 4. They are a foundation of our faith, and we have them as such; and also of our hope, on these we are to build all our expectations from God; and in all temptations and trials we have them to rest our souls upon. 5. We have them as the directions and encouragements of our desires in prayer. 6. We have them as the means by which the grace of God works for our holiness and comfort, for by these we are made partakers of a Divine nature; and faith, applying these promises, is said to work by love. 7. We have the promises as the earnest and assurance of future blessedness. (Matthew Henry.) *Personal purification*:—I. THE GROUND OF THE APOSTLE'S REQUEST—"Having these promises" (chap. vi. 16-18). Observe the gospel principle of action: it is not, Separate yourself from all uncleanness in order that you may get a right of sonship; but, Because ye are sons of God, therefore be pure. It is not, Work in order to be saved; but, Because you are saved, therefore work out your salvation. "Ye are the temple of God": therefore cleanse yourself. The law says: "This do, and thou shalt live." The gospel says: "This do, because thou art redeemed." We all know the force of this kind of appeal. You know there are some things a soldier will not do, because he is a soldier: he is in uniform, and he cannot disgrace his corps. There are some things of which a man of high birth is incapable: he has a character to sustain. Precisely on this ground is the gospel appeal made to us. II. THE REQUEST ITSELF. St. Paul demanded their holiness. In Jewish literalness this meant separation from external defilement, but the thing implied was inward holiness. We must keep ourselves apart, then, not only from sensual but also from spiritual defilement. The Jewish law required only the purification of the flesh; the gospel demands the purification of the spirit (Heb. ix. 13). There is a contamination which passes through the avenue of the senses, and sinks into the spirit. Who shall dislodge it thence? "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." The heart—there is the evil! And now what is the remedy for this? 1. The fear of God. An awful thought! a living God, infinitely pure, is conscious of your contaminated thoughts! So the only true courage sometimes comes from fear. We cannot do without awe: there is no depth of character without it. Tender motives are not enough to restrain from sin; yet neither is awe enough. 2. The promises of God. Think of what you are—a child of God, an heir of heaven. Realise the grandeur of saintliness, and you will shrink from degrading your soul and debasing your spirit. To come down, however, from these sublime motives to simple rules—(1) Cultivate all generous and high feelings. A base appetite may be expelled by a nobler passion; the invasion of a country has sometimes waked men from low sensuality, has roused them to deeds of self-sacrifice, and left no access for the baser passions. An honourable affection can quench low and indiscriminate vice. (2) Seek exercise and occupation. If a man finds himself haunted by evil desires

and unholy images, let him commit to memory passages of Scripture, or passages from the best writers in verse or prose. Let him store his mind with these, as safeguards. Let these be to him the sword, turning everywhere to keep the way of the Garden of Life from the intrusion of profaner footsteps. III. THE ENTIRENESS OF THIS SEVERANCE FROM EVIL—"perfecting holiness." Perfection means entireness, in opposition to one-sidedness. This expression seems to be suggested by the terms "flesh and spirit"; for the purification of the flesh alone would not be perfect, but superficial holiness. Christian sanctification, therefore, is an entire and whole thing; it is nothing less than presenting the whole man a sacrifice to Christ. "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless." (F. W. Robertson, M.A.) *The Christian in various aspects*:—I. AS POSSESSED OF MOST GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES—"Having these promises." Not promises in reversion merely, but in actual possession. 1. The promises referred to are—(1) Divine indwelling. (2) Divine manifestation. (3) Divine covenanting. (4) Divine acceptance. (5) Divine adoption. 2. These promises are already fulfilled in our experience. II. AS LABOURING TO BE RID OF OBNOXIOUS EVILS. 1. The matter has in it—(1) Personality: "Let us cleanse ourselves." (2) Activity; we must continue vigorously to cleanse both body and mind. (3) Universality: "From all filthiness." (4) Thoroughness: "Of the flesh and spirit." 2. If God dwells in us, let us make the house clean for so pure a God. 3. Has the Lord entered into covenant with us that we should be His people? Does not this involve a call upon us to live as becometh godliness? 4. Are we His children? Let us not grieve our Father, but imitate Him as dear children. III. AS AIMING AT A MOST EXALTED POSITION—"Perfecting holiness." 1. We must set before us perfect holiness as a thing to be reached. 2. We must blame ourselves if we fall short of it. 3. We must continue in any degree of holiness which we have reached. 4. We must agonise after the perfecting of our character. IV. AS PROMPTED BY THE MOST SACRED OF MOTIVES—"In the fear of God." The fear of God—1. Casts out the fear of man, and thus saves us from one prolific cause of sin. 2. Casts out the love of sin, and with the root the fruit is sure to go. 3. Works in and through love, and this is a great factor of holiness. 4. Is the root of faith, worship, obedience, and so it produces all manner of holy service. Conclusion: See how—1. Promises supply arguments for precepts. 2. Precepts naturally grow out of promises. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Holiness inculcated on gospel principles*:—1. The tender compulsion by which these Corinthians are here addressed—"dearly beloved." However deficient some of them were in affection for this apostle (1 Cor. iv. 14, 15), and with all their faults, he retained a paternal affection for them. How careful should both ministers and people be to guard against everything that tends to impair their mutual affection. 2. The duty to which the Corinthians are here exhorted, and we together with them. 3. The manner in which the apostle urges the exhortation. He speaks not in the second person, but in the first, "let us cleanse." The same exhortation that he gives to them he also takes to himself. We must recommend by our example the duties which we doctrinally inculcate. 4. The manner in which the exhortation is to be complied with, and the duty performed: "in the fear of God." Not slavish fear. 5. The motive by which this exhortation is enforced: "Having these promises," &c. It is the duty of public teachers in the Church to make known to their hearers both the precepts and threatenings of the law, as well as the promises of the gospel. I. The first thing to be spoken of is THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED. This, in general, is self-sanctification. 1. Because the law of God necessarily requires it. That law, even before sin entered into the world, prohibited every species of moral pollution, and required the utmost perfection of holiness in heart and life, in nature and practice. Through the entrance of sin God neither lost His authority to command, nor did the law of God lose its binding obligation. 2. Because, when the Holy Ghost comes to accomplish this work, He always does it in a way of stirring up the person to diligence in the duty which is incumbent upon him in this respect. Thus we are made a kind of instruments in promoting His gracious design in ourselves. In justification we are wholly passive; because, this being a judicial deed, none can be active in it but He whose prerogative it is to forgive sins. In regeneration also, which, indeed, is the beginning of sanctification, we must be passive; because we can perform none of the functions of spiritual life while we continue dead in trespasses and sins. But the moment that the principle of life is implanted the soul begins to be active; and it continues to be a co-worker with God in every part of its own sanctification. Now, sanctification consists of two parts, usually called mortification and vivification; and we must be active in both.

(1) To the duty of mortification, which is here expressed by our cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. By all sin we contract filthiness as well as guilt. The guilt of sin exposes us to condemnation and punishment; and the filth of it renders us hateful in the sight of God. This filthiness has infected every part of human nature. Both body and soul are polluted. With regard to the body, being a piece of matter, it may be thought incapable of spiritual or moral pollution. And doubtless so it would if it subsisted by itself. But, being united to a rational soul, it is a part of a human person, who is a subject of moral government; and every part of the rational person is defiled. A great part of the filthiness of our corrupt nature consists in a disposition to gratify our appetites in a manner prohibited by the law of God, and ruinous to the dearest interests of the immortal soul. With regard to the soul or rational spirit, that also is become altogether filthy. Its whole constitution is depraved, its extensive desires are all perverted, being set upon sinful and vain objects. All its faculties are depraved. Though the cleansing of the whole man from this spiritual filthiness must be a work beyond the power of any mere creature, yet there are various things incumbent upon us by which we may actively contribute to the gaining of this desirable end. To this purpose let us betake ourselves, by renewed acts of faith, to the blood of Jesus Christ, in its sanctifying as well as in its justifying efficacy. Let us carefully abstain from all those outward acts of sin by which our corruptions might be gratified. Let us earnestly pray to God for His sanctifying Spirit. Let us confidently trust in God, that, according to His promise, He will cleanse us from all our filthiness. And if we are favoured with the motions of the Holy Ghost to this effect, let us cherish them with the utmost care. (2) We are exhorted to the duty of vivification, or living unto righteousness, here expressed by "perfecting holiness." Concerning this we may observe the following things. Holiness is that perfection which is opposed to moral impurity. In Scripture it is represented as the glory of the Divine nature (Exod. xv. 11). Among creatures it is that which renders a rational being agreeable in the sight of God, and fit to be employed in His service. It consists not barely in freedom from spiritual filthiness, but is opposed to it, as light is opposed to darkness. Every corruption has an opposite grace. And grace does not barely consist in freedom from corruption, but includes something positive in opposition to it. Thus holiness is not only something required of us by the law of God, it is something highly ornamental to our nature. Hence we read of the beauty of holiness (Psa. xxix. 2). This holiness is not only a thing absolutely necessary to the happiness of a rational being, but is itself a principal branch of happiness. That it is necessary to happiness is clear from various considerations. There is no happiness adequate to the desires of a rational soul without the enjoyment of God; and this can never be attained without holiness. As happiness can never be perfect without the gratification of all the person's desires, it is manifest that an unholy person never can be happy. While he continues possessed of a rational soul his desires must be infinite; nor can anything satisfy them but an infinite object. Impure desires can never find an infinite object to fix upon; for nothing unholy can be infinite. The original standard of all holiness is in the nature of God. What is conformable to that infinite nature is holy; and what is contrary to it must be impure and unholy. But as the nature of God is not perfectly understood by any creature, nor is capable of being so, it is impossible for us to judge of our holiness immediately by that standard. For this reason God has given us in His holy law a transcript of His nature adapted to our capacities; and this is the rule of all holiness to mankind. As broad as that law is, so extensive is holiness. It must reach to the inward as well as the outward man. To perfect holiness every genuine Christian will aspire. In the text we are expressly required to "perfect holiness." "But why require of us an impossibility? For us to perfect holiness is not only impossible by any strength of our own, but it is impossible by the help of any grace that we can expect in this world." Every argument that enforces holiness at all pleads equally for the perfection of it. The broad law of God requires it; and without it we never can be conformable to that unerring rule. It is absolutely necessary to perfect happiness; and as no man can satisfy himself with an imperfect happiness, no man can act as becomes a rational creature without aiming at perfect holiness. As much as our holiness is imperfect, so much pollution must remain about us, and it must be so far unfit for the full enjoyment of God. As our cleansing from filthiness, so, more especially, the perfecting of holiness in us must be the work of God. There are various things which you ought to do in order to your making progress in holiness. Make con-

tinual application by faith and prayer to that infinite fulness of grace and strength, that God has made to dwell in Christ, for all those supplies that are necessary to enable you to be holy. Strive to live in the constant exercise of all those graces which constitute that inward holiness of heart in which you wish to grow. The weapon that is seldom used gathers rust. Continue in the exercise of that love to God which is the principle of all practical holiness, and is therefore called the fulfilling of the holy law of God. Attend carefully and regularly upon all the ordinances of God's worship in their appointed seasons. Frequent the society of holy persons, and maintain communion with them in holy duties. Think much of the obligations that you lie under to be holy. Of all the different species of spiritual filthiness none is more hateful to God than the filth of legality. Bear it always in mind that no holiness of yours can ever be a righteousness to answer the demands that the law of works has upon you. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS DUTY IS TO BE PERFORMED—"In the fear of the Lord." 1. There is a slavish fear of God, such as a slave entertains of the whip in the hand of a rigorous master. Though this is not the fear mentioned in the text, it is in danger of being mistaken for it; and therefore it is proper that Christians should know something of the nature of it. It may be distinguished by the following marks. It is always the fruit of a legal principle, *i.e.*, a disposition to seek righteousness as it were by the works of the law. It is always accompanied with a servile hope. In proportion as his fear prevails when he is under the conviction of sin, his hope preponderates when he can persuade himself that his services are regular. In proportion as he fears the punishment of his sin, he vainly hopes for happiness as a reward for his obedience. Where it reigns the person is neither affected with God's displeasure nor the dishonour done to him by sin. He fears for himself only. In a word, it is always accompanied with torment; and the degree of torment is always in proportion to the measure of fear. 2. There is a holy filial fear that God puts into the hearts of His people when He implants every other gracious habit in the day of regeneration. It includes a holy reverence of God and a profound awe of His omniscient eye. There may be reverence where there is no fear; but this fear cannot subsist without reverence. Neither can there be due reverence to God in any person who has sin about him without a mixture of fear. It includes a holy caution and circumspection in the person's walk. Knowing how ready he is to turn aside, he examines every step of his way before he takes it, and reflects upon it after he has taken it, comparing it with the Word of God. If it is asked, What influence this fear of God may be expected to have in exciting us to sanctify and purge ourselves? we answer, much every way. Where no fear of God is all manner of wickedness is indulged in the heart, and all kinds of immorality abound in the person's life. The fear of God impresses our minds with a sense of God's presence, which is always with us, and of His omniscient eye upon us in all that we do. III. THE ARGUMENT BY WHICH THIS EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED—"Having therefore these promises." And here two things are to be inquired: 1. What promises are they to which the Spirit of God here refers? All the promises of the gospel are left to all that hear it. And there is no promise belonging to the covenant of grace that may not have influence to excite us to the duty here enjoined. And particularly—(1) We have a promise of God's gracious presence in the Church and in the hearts of believers—I will dwell in them, and walk in them, or among them, as some read it. In the literal temple there was but one particular apartment where God was peculiarly said to dwell, *viz.*, the most holy place within the veil. But He dwells in every part of this spiritual temple, and is as really present in the heart of every Christian as He was upon the mercy-seat between the cherubim. His presence in the Church is neither inactive on His part nor unprofitable to her or to her members. He not only dwells, but walks in her, and among them. If a man sits still in any place and does nothing, His presence can be of little use. But if he walks up and down he sees everything as he passes. (2) We have a promise that He will be our God, and we shall be His people. This imports that God will graciously bring us within the bond of that covenant by which alone He can be so related to any of mankind, bringing us into a state of union to Christ, and of favour with God through Him. That He will do all that for us, which any people expects their God to do for them; subduing our enemies, delivering us from spiritual bondage, guiding us through the wilderness of this world, and bringing us at last to possess a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By the same promise we have security that His property in us, as His people, shall be acknowledged both on His part and on ours;

on our part by a solemn dedication of ourselves to Him, and on His part by a gracious acceptance of that dedication; for, as He will have none to be His people but such as are made willing in the day of His power, so neither could our consent make us His peculiar property without His acceptance. (3) We have a promise that God will graciously receive us. By nature we are all unclean and hateful in the sight of God. This promise is conditionally expressed, though the others run in an absolute form. It is upon our coming out from among a wicked world, and abstaining from the practice of sin, here called touching the unclean thing, that we may hope to be graciously accepted of God. If any man, therefore, thinks that he is accepted of God, and yet indulges himself in the practice of sin, or in keeping society with sinners, or hopes to be accepted, while that continues to be the case he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him. (4) We have a promise of being received into God's family and made His sons and daughters. To be the people of God is much, but to be the children of God is more. Yet this honour have all His saints. Adam was the son of God, in his original estate as being created by Him, after His own image and likeness. But Christians, after having been the children of the devil in their natural estate, are created anew in Christ Jesus after the image of Him that made them.

2. What influence these promises, and others connected with them, should have in exciting us to comply with the exhortation in the text. Our having such promises left us is itself a benefit calling for such a return. The promises of men, especially of great men, are often made without any resolution to perform them. And often where there was such a resolution it is changed or forgotten. Hence the making of such promises, instead of being a benefit, proves a very great injury to those who trust in them. But none of these things can take place with God. Never did He make a promise without an unfeigned intention to perform it to all who trusted in it. Never did any change of circumstances produce a change of mind in Him. And surely our warmest gratitude is due to Him who has given us this security. We ought to be grateful for what we hope to enjoy, as well as for what we already possess. And there is no way in which we can express our gratitude to God acceptably, without endeavouring to cleanse ourselves and be holy; for there is nothing else in which He has so much pleasure. Besides, by the promises of God we are furnished with security that, if we are sincerely employed in what is here recommended, our endeavours shall be crowned with success. God has graciously promised to make you both willing and able to do what He requires of you in every other respect. He is ready to accomplish His promise. In a word, every particular promise contained in the gospel of Christ furnishes a corresponding argument for the study of holiness in both its branches. If we have a promise of God's dwelling in us and walking among us, shall we not endeavour to prepare Him a habitation? Being infinitely holy Himself, He cannot dwell with pollution. The promise that He will be our God, and that we shall be His people includes an engagement that we shall serve Him, and live to Him as our God, and shall walk as becomes His people. This we cannot do without being holy. We are now to conclude with some application of the subject. The subject affords us much useful information. It sets before us the polluted state in which all mankind are by nature. We could have no need of cleansing if we were not defiled. From this subject it appears that the doctrine of salvation by Divine grace through faith is so far from being inimical to holiness, that it sets the necessity of it in the clearest light, and affords the most powerful motives to it. (*J. Young.*)

Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.—*The difference between fearing God and being afraid of Him:*—"I was afraid . . . and hid thy talent" (Matt. xxv. 25); "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 8). "I was afraid." Why? "Because I knew thee that thou art a hard man." Then our thought of God determines the character of our emotion, and shapes and regulates our lives. "Thou art a hard man . . . I am afraid." The emotion follows upon the conception; the terror waits upon the severity; the life takes shape from the thought. What think ye of God? The thought you make of God is the thought which makes you. That is not a matter of chance and caprice; it is a fixed law. Your thinking colours your living. If you think God hard, you will live a life of terror and gloom. If you think God effeminate, your life will be characterised by moral laxity. Mark, then, how deeply vital is the occasion when we give ideas of God to little children. We are putting into their lives germs of tremendous power. I have met with old men who in their later years have not been able to shake themselves free from the bondage of a false idea received in the days of their youth. In the days of Isaiah social life was putrid and corrupt. Men and women were passionate and licentious.

Drunken carousals and luxurious indolence were the daily delight of ruler and ruled. Yet, even when life was most debased, religious worship was most observed. Their idea of God permitted and encouraged immorality in life. Such is the blasting potency of a false idea. But now what is the idea of God which begets this paralysing terror recorded in our text? The Scriptures tell us the servant had thought of God as a "hard man." Was the idea a true one? No; it was a false idea. Why? Because it was only partially true, and partial truth is falsehood. Is God severe? No. Is severity an element in His character? Yes. Is a ray of light of violet colour? No. Is violet colour an element in the composition of a ray of light? Yes. "God is light." You must not pick out the violet element, the darker element, the severity, the justice, and say, "This is God." He is these in combination with others, and only of the resultant combination can you say, "This is God." And yet that is how many people profess to know their God. They know an isolated feature, but not their God; and features, when torn from their relationship, may become repellent. Take a most beautiful face, a face in which each feature contributes to the loveliness of the whole. All the features combine to form a countenance most winning. Now lay the face on the surgeon's table. Dissect it; separate its various features. Immediately each feature loses its beauty and becomes almost repulsive. It is not otherwise with spiritual dissection. Yet how many men base their religion upon a feature, and not upon a face! One of the most religious men I have ever known is also one of the gloomiest. His mind is fixed upon God's severity and justice, and all things are regarded from their sombre and terrible side. The Bible is to him a book of terrible judgments. When I turn away from separate features and gaze upon God's countenance as portrayed in this book, I see it wears, not a threat, but a promise; not a scowl, but a smile; not a look of hardness, but the attractive look of love. But when a man has isolated a feature of God's countenance, and by isolation made it dark and forbidding, and then regards it as his idea of God, see what happens. It makes him afraid of God. It fills his life with terror and gloom. It paralyses his spiritual growth. All the most luscious "fruits of the Spirit" find no place in his life. God's severity is an element to be mixed with the soil, to help us in resisting the vermin of sin, but is never intended to constitute the bed in which we are to rear our flowers. If your leading, uppermost thought of God is His hardness, you will grow no flowers; they will every one be scorched; you will bring nothing to fruition. Your talents will never blossom into flower or ripen into fruit. To be afraid of God means a flowerless garden, an empty orchard, a barren heart. Now turn away from this hard conception of God, with its accompanying terror, to consider a life which is full of spiritual activity and growth. Here is a man, the aged Paul, at work "perfecting holiness"; that is to say, he is busy consecrating everything to his Lord. He wants every little patch in his life's soil to be used and adorned by some flower growing for his Lord. He wants no waste corners. Let us read the whole clause: "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Then is Paul afraid of God? The man of the parable was afraid of God, and so brought nothing to perfection. Paul is seeking to bring everything to perfection. Can these two attitudes be the same? Is it the same thing to be afraid of God and to fear Him? One was afraid of God because he thought Him "a hard man." What was Paul's idea of God? He uses an exquisitely tender word in telling us his conception of God, "the Father of Jesus"! Listen to his jubilant saying: "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Was he afraid of Him? "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Why, then, to fear the Lord is not to be afraid of the Lord, but to be afraid of sin. The fear of God is the God-begotten fear of sin. Beware of any conception of God which does not create in you a fear and hatred of sin. That is the only fear which God wishes our hearts to keep. Any other fear is powerless to accomplish His will. Men may be afraid of God, and yet may love their sins; and that is not living in the fear of the Lord! Now, how can we obtain this sensitiveness which will recoil with acute fear from all sin? You remember when Peter's eyes were opened to behold the foulness of sin, how he cried, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He had seen the King in His beauty, and he felt the awfulness and the fearfulness of sin. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Perfecting holiness:*

—I. OUR BUSINESS ON EARTH IS TO ACT WITH OUR LORD IN HEAVEN IN ATTAINING COMPLETE DELIVERANCE FROM SIN. One great reason why many Christians come so far short of what God requires is, because they do not aim at, or care for, any eminent degree of sanctification. They are satisfied with a decent mediocrity in the service of God, and aspire to nothing more than abstinence from grosser incon-

sistencies. How unlike is their spirit to that of St. Paul, who, after years of earnest endeavour, is still found exclaiming, "I count not myself to have apprehended," &c. If you ask an unfailing test of a true believer, it is that he is always aiming after higher attainments in the Divine life. Now what destruction is it to all such attainments to have in our minds the conclusion that it is not necessary to aspire after any very extraordinary sanctity. If one aims not high he cannot shoot high. Your attainments in holiness are proportionate to the standard you have adopted. The soul that pants not to be like God can be none of His. II. THE MEANS OF ATTAINING IT IS—1. Mutual exhortation. The Word of God speaks frequently of "exhorting one another." When I am in the country, I find that my watch is apt to get very much out of the way; but when I am in the city, where there is a dial-plate on every church, all regulated by a good standard, I am reminded of the incorrectness of my time if it varies, and set it right by that of others. So Christians, where they are faithful in their intercourse, regulate themselves by the common standard of God's Word, and help to regulate each other. 2. Faithfulness in private prayer. This is the thermometer of your souls, suspended in your closet of devotion, and as it stands so is it with you in the sight of God. Look at it by day, and see how it is between you and your God. 3. Gladness in service. We must not set about our religious duties as a sick man does about his worldly employments, without life, relish, or vigour. God loathes a lukewarm service. Do not let your devotions be like the turning of a chariot-wheel that needs oiling, betraying its every motion by a painful creaking and laboured progress; but as that which revolves on the moistened and well-polished axle, silent, swift, and with scarce an effort. Love makes all labours light. 4. Watchfulness against everything which is opposed to the smallest whisper of conscience. The finer and more perfect the instrument, the more carefully must it be kept for the work to be done with it. The heavy cleaver may be knocked about against wood and stone, but the surgeon's implements must be nicely locked, where nothing shall dim their polish or blunt their edge. Conscience must not be blunted if we would have its office faithfully performed. Sensual appetites, engrossing worldliness, and especially evil tempers, indulged, will ever prevent any high attainments in holiness. All the prayer in the world would never make one eminent in holiness who habitually gives way afterwards to evil tempers. To kindle devotion in the closet, and expose it to the gusts of unhallowed tempers, would be like lighting a candle in the house and carrying it out into the wind of the open air. We must shield the flame with watchfulness which we kindle by prayer. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*)

Vers. 2-7. Receive us; we have wronged no man.—*The apostle's request*.—I. THE GROUND ON WHICH HE URGED IT—viz., that he deserved it. 1. It was a simple matter of justice. "We have wronged no man," &c. The apostle meets the charges against him by an assertion of his innocence, which appealed to their own witness. No one who read those words could doubt whether he was guilty, for there is a certain tone in innocence not easily mistaken. There are some voices that ring true. This reminds us of Samuel's purgation of himself when laying down his judgeship. 2. There is, however, a touch of graceful delicacy in the way he made this assertion of his innocence. A coarser man would have cared for nothing but the proof of his own integrity. Now St. Paul perceived that the broad assertion of this might give pain. It might seem to them as if this were spoken at them, and might wound those who had not suspected him. Therefore he adds, "I speak not this to condemn you"—i.e., "I am not defending myself against you, but to you, and only to assure you of my undiminished love." There was one thing in the character of St. Paul which often escapes observation. Besides his integrity, there was a refined courtesy which was for ever taking off the edge of his sharpest rebukes. Remember the courtesy with which his request to Philemon is put; the delicate exception in his answer to Agrippa—"except these bonds"; and how he pours love over one of his strongest condemnations in Phil. iii. 18. It is only love which can give this tender tact. It was not high breeding, but good breeding. High breeding gracefully insists on its own rights; good breeding gracefully remembers the right of others. It is not "gentility," but gentleness. It is the wisdom from above, which is first pure, then gentle. There is a rough way and a gentle way of being true. Do not think that Christian polish weakens character, as polish thins the diamond. The polish of the world not only saps strength of character, but makes it even unnatural. II. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH HE HOPED IT. He rested it on his candour: "Great is my boldness"—i.e., freedom—"of speech

toward you." A scandalous crime had been committed. Now consider Paul's difficulty. If he rebuked the Corinthians, he would probably destroy his own interest, and irreparably offend them. If he left the crime unnoticed, he might seem to gloss it over. Besides this, the subject was a delicate one. Might it not be wise to leave the wound unprobed? Moreover, we all know how hard it is to deal harshly with the sins of those we love. Any of these considerations might have made a less straightforward man silent. But St. Paul did not hesitate; he wrote, calling wrong, wrong, and laying upon those who permitted it their full share of blame. Scarcely, however, had the apostle written the Epistle than misgivings began to cross his mind, as we see in ver. 8, where he says, "I did repent." To some persons this would be perplexing. If he regretted an act done under God's guidance, just as any common man might regret a foolish act, how could the apostle be inspired? But inspiration does not make a man a passive machine, as a musician might use a flute. When God inspires, His Spirit mixes with the spirit of man. These misgivings lasted a considerable time (chap. ii. 12, vii. 5). Here I make a remark by the way: It is by passages such as these alone that we can appreciate the real trials of apostles and missionaries. It is a low estimate of the depth of apostolic trial to say that physical suffering was its chief element; and how much more degrading is it so to treat of the sufferings of Christ, of whom the prophet said, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied." It was not the nails that pierced His hands which wrung from Him the exceeding bitter cry, but the iron that had entered into His soul. To return. In Macedonia St. Paul met Titus, bearing a letter from the Corinthians, by which it appeared that his rebuke had done its work. Instead of alienating, it had roused them to earnestness; they had purged themselves of complicity in the guilt by the punishment and excommunication of the offender. This was the apostle's comfort; and on this ground he built his sanguine hope that the Corinthians would receive him (ver. 7). Conclusion: Learn—1. The value of explanations. Had St. Paul left the matter unsettled, or only half settled, there never could have been a hearty understanding between him and Corinth. Whenever, then, there is a misunderstanding the true remedy is a direct and open request for explanation. In the world's idea this means satisfaction in the sense of revenge; in the Christian sense it means examination in order to do mutual justice. The rule for this is laid down by Christ: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee," &c. It is the neglect of this rule of frankness that perpetuates misunderstandings. Words are misconstrued, and two upright men, between whom one frank, open conversation would set all right, are separated for ever. 2. The blessing of entire truthfulness. The affectionate relations between St. Paul and the Corinthians, though interrupted, were restored again, because he had been true. Learn, then, never to smooth away, through fear of results, the difficulties of love or friendship by concealment, or a subtle suppression of facts or feelings. The deadliest poison you can instil into the wine of life is a fearful reserve which creates suspicion, or a lie which will canker and kill your own love, and through that your friend's. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) **Without were fightings, within were fears.**—*Fightings and fears*:—The apostle's course was remarkably varied. Note—I. THE TROUBLES WHICH ASSAIL THE CHRISTIAN WORKER FROM WITHOUT. 1. Opposition to his doctrine. 2. Persecution. II. THE TROUBLES WHICH ASSAIL HIM FROM WITHIN. We can only conjecture the apostle's "fears." Fear lest—1. There had been a want of wisdom or devotion in Christian service. 2. The work of God should have suffered through any insufficiency on the part of the worker. 3. At last the labourer should fail of approval. III. THE SUPPORT AND CONSOLATION PROVIDED. 1. The testimony of a good conscience that, however imperfect the service, it had been rendered in sincerity. 2. The assurance that an over-ruling Providence has permitted all that has taken place, even to the temporary discouragement of the toiler for Christ. 3. The conviction that in each trouble the servant has had fellowship with his Lord. 4. The hope and expectation that light affliction will work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (*Prof. J. R. Thomson.*)

Vers. 6, 7.—Nevertheless, God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only.—*Comfort for the careworn*:—1. This barometrical subjection to the depressions and upliftings in life is the token of a noble nature and a big human heart. A cold, selfish man, of narrow views and no sympathies, goes on the calm and even tenor of his way. There is a miserable monotony about him. But wherever there is a generous and

manly soul, there is a proportionate capacity for grief and for joy. 2. There is never a rose without a thorn, never a sky without a cloud, so there is never a gladness without a "but," and never a record of enjoyment without a "nevertheless." Oh, those "buts," they are flies in our most fragrant pot of ointment, skeletons at our rarest banquets, cloud-spots in our brightest sky. But that is a matter we can turn round. Suppose we read it thus—There is no thorn without flower or fruit, nor sky without star or rift of blue; so there is never a sadness without an ameliorating "but," and no sorrow without a compensating "nevertheless." This latter is quite as true as the former, and whatever thing we have to carry that has two handles, let us take hold of the easiest and the handiest, for our neighbours' sake as well as for our own. I. THERE WERE MANY THINGS THAT CONSPIRED TO CAST PAUL DOWN. He had temporal trials of no ordinary magnitude and strength. His own people hated him, the heathen persecuted him; and, worst of all, there were those in the Churches whose conduct caused him sharp and constant pain. Then, too, he had a grievous disappointment. Titus did not turn up until long after he was expected, and in those perilous times Paul was anxious about the young man's safety and about the news he had to bring. He was a good man and true, yet he was "cast down." You don't think that his Lord loved him any less, or had withdrawn from him. The sun shines, whatever be the density of the November fog. Nature's vital machinery is moving, though nature be bare; and so, despite appearances, all through your course, O Christian, be sure that God ruleth all things well. He has but poor confidence in the captain who thinks he isn't on the ship because he can't see him on the bridge. II. NOTE THE DISTINCTIVE TITLE THE APOSTLE GIVES TO GOD: "God that comforteth," &c. 1. I cannot find any god that mortals worship who is at all given that way. The worshippers of Baal were cast down low enough, but it was cold comfort they got from him. The gods of money, of honour, of show, of pleasure, may delude their worshippers with fancied joys while their devotees are up and about; but I have never heard that any of them are of much use when their worshippers are cast down. Oh no, it's down you go, and down you stay. 2. Neither does the character which Paul gives his God belong to the world. Men as a rule do not trouble themselves with people who are cast down. "All men will speak well of thee when thou doest well by thyself"; that is when thou art lifted up. Nothing succeeds, they say, like success. But let a man be "cast down," he's likely to lie there. Besides, if the world had the best intentions it cannot minister to a mind diseased, cannot comfort the souls that are cast down. 3. There is but one hand that can lift up those that are cast down—God can, will, does. He will not break a bruised reed. III. THOSE THAT ARE "CAST DOWN" IS A VERY INCLUSIVE DESCRIPTION. He does not ask who or what we are; nor how far we are down, nor what has cast us down, nor how often we have been down and lifted up before; nor how far we deserve to lie just where we have fallen, nor whether we are likely to be cast down again. No, our prostration is our certificate, and if we will but present that before Him He will lift us up and comfort us. IV. WHILE THE COMFORTS OF GOD COME TO US DIRECT, THEY ALSO COME THROUGH MANY A MEDIUM. At times the angels have been made the messengers of His mercy, the almoners of His bounty, the comforters of His saints. On errands of comfort ravens were sent to Elijah, a little flower to Mungo Park in an African desert, a little singing-bird to Martin Luther, and the sweet tones of David's harp to the sad and moody Saul. But God specially comforts man by man. So Jethro cheered the heart of Moses; so old Eli gave comfort to sad-hearted Hannah; so the dejected David's soul was strengthened by Jonathan; and here Paul was "comforted by the coming of Titus." (*J. J. Wray.*) *God cheering the dejected:*—What dissimilar things God executes! He telleth the number of the stars and healeth the broken in heart; He has created and controls every living thing; He "comforteth those that are cast down." We wonder not that a good man should be known as "the son of consolation," but God Almighty desires to be known as the Consoler of men. Our notions of God are too stiff and earthly-grand. Note—I. THIS AILMENT. 1. Not being cast down as when a building is rased or a tree is felled, or as when one is slain—"cast down, but not destroyed"; only cast down as withered grass, which may be revived by rain, or as a man who is sick, but has every prospect of recovery. 2. In this state of depression—(1) The soul has lost all its elasticity. Time was when it was like spring, or like a palm-tree whose growth pressure is said to promote; but now it is like a broken spring, or like a palm whose power is sinking away. (2) The soul has also lost its buoyancy. The day was when it was like the light sea-bird floating upon the stormy waters; but now upon

those very waters it floats half submerged. All that makes the heart light has gone, and all that renders it heavy dominates. Where is hope? Fear has mastered it. Where is joy? Sorrow has quenched it. 3. This is a common state of soul. Many more suffer from it than appear. Those who are cast down will try to appear joyous, in order to quiet the suspicions or evade the inquiries of their companions. Even great and strong men are liable to be cast down. The hero of a hundred battles, the statesman who presents himself to the criticism of Parliament with the appearance of a statue, and the monarch whose face in public appears full of satisfaction—even these are often cast down. The musician cannot drive depression hence by music; the wit cannot dispel it by the laughter he evokes. Even believers in Christ are subject to it. 4. Yet it is not a desirable state—it is not a state that you must cherish or even allow. You must deal with it as with a disease, as something to be got rid of. It is not the normal state of human nature nor of redeemed man, but a low estate to which our sinfulness has brought us, and in which our infirmities and unbelief often keep us. II. ITS CAUSES. Men are cast down—1. By grievous circumstances, sickness, bereavement, poverty, and approaching death. 2. By fears—useless, groundless, foolish, sinful fears. 3. The same causes do not, however, operate upon all persons alike. One man smiles at a storm of outward sorrow or of inward distress, which is more than enough to cast another down into the lowest depths. III. THE PATIENT. Paul, a constitutionally strong, fearless, sanguine, enterprising man; a man full of life, not a languid man, whose blood circulates like molten lead, an educated man, not an ignorant man full of silly superstitions; a disciple of Christ at peace with God; a wondrously successful preacher of Christ's gospel; an apostle, perhaps the greatest that God ever commissioned; a man who had been the comforter of men—and yet cast down. Can you wonder at your being sometimes cast down? you, with your feeble constitution and imperfect training, at the distance you stand from your Divine Master, with the little spiritual exercise that you take, who scarcely know what it is for the air of heaven to play upon your spirits? If depression attack the strong, are the weak likely to escape? IV. THE PHYSICIAN—GOD. 1. What a wonderful word is this of three letters! To some it is only a name to take in vain; to others it represents a foolish belief; to others it is the centre merely of a creed; to others it is a terror. God, saith Paul, is a comforter. The Eternal God, who never has been cast down—the all-knowing One, who is acquainted with all who are cast down—the Almighty, who is able, the merciful and gracious One, who is ever ready to lift them up. He is the Physician of the depressed. There are men, you know, who assume to be great and strong who would not stoop to this; but what man is too proud to do God delights to do. 2. Note the means by which God comforts. (1) By things temporal as well as things eternal—by a gleam of sunshine, a shower of rain, a sunny morning, the advent of spring, the blooming of a flower, the singing of the birds, the success of an enterprise, the service of a benefactor, the visit of a friend, a smile of approbation, a tear of sympathy, good news in a letter, &c. (2) By the Bible—the Psalms, with their complainings, their rejoicings and triumphings; the Gospels, with their exhibition of our loving Redeemer; and the Epistles with their doctrines and promises! (3) By the Sabbath, with its holy calm, sweet rest, and sacred assemblings! (4) By prayer, when desire is relieved by supplication, and oppressive care is cast upon God. (5) By the Church, with her ordinances of instruction, devotion, and communion! (6) By the Holy Ghost, the Comforter! (7) By the medium of all comfort—the Son of God—Jesus—our Saviour. V. THE REMEDY. Comfort. Now if you would be comforted you must allow God to comfort you. David was cast down, and God set him inquiring about it. "Why art thou cast down?" And He comforted the man by bidding him look into the causes of his depression. When a man of God begins to look into the causes of his depression, he sees that there is far more to lift him up than to cast him down. Why art thou cast down? 1. Is it the burden of guilt? "If we confess our sins He is faithful," &c. 2. Is it sorrow following sorrow? "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." 3. You have said, "All things are against me." Listen! "All things work together for good to them that love God." 4. Is it fear of death? "Death! where is thy sting? Grave! where is thy victory?" 5. Is it some blighted hope—some disappointment? "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him." Your hopes have fallen; and why? Because they were built on sand. Now build on rock, and you shall never be disappointed. 6. Are you weary? Weary of pleasure, of everybody and everything, weary of life?

“There remaineth a rest for the people of God,” and every weary step leads you to it. Conclusion: 1. Yield to comfort and not to depression. Some, when they find themselves sinking in the slough of despond, allow themselves to sink. Do you rather lay hold of any of those good things which will hold you up. Lay hold of the Almighty arm. It is always within reach. Put off your sackcloth when He offers you beautiful garments. 2. Lift up each other. Wear a cheerful countenance—do not look gloomy. And you who are seldom dejected give special attention to those who are cast down. Depression will be contagious if you go to the dejected unaccompanied by Christ. It is no small thing to make a heart now shivering with fear glow with hope. (S. Martin.) *The depression of good men:*—I. GOOD MEN ARE OFTEN GREATLY CAST DOWN IN SOUL. Paul had been disappointed at not meeting with Titus at Troas. 1. Why was he so anxious? Paul had met with perils by sea and by land, &c. These things tried him greatly, but it was suspense of mind concerning the state of the Corinthian Church that cast him down. It is not temporal trials, toils, or perils that break down the spirit of a man, so much as cankering cares and anxiety. 2. There are many things that “cast down” the spirits of good men. (1) The prosperity of the wicked. (2) The triumphs of wrong—fraud in trade, corruption in politics, errors in science, moral filth in popular literature. (3) The non-success of Christly labour. II. GOD SOMETIMES COMFORTS A GOOD MAN BY THE VISITS OF A FRIEND. “Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” 1. God does comfort His depressed servants. 2. God sometimes comforts by the instrumentality of good men. David, dejected in the wood, had his heart strengthened by Jonathan (1 Sam. xxiii. 16). Conclusion: 1. Christliness does not remove the constitutional infirmities of human nature. 2. That the vicarious sufferings of love are amongst the most depressing. 3. A genuine Christian carries comfort into the house of his distressed friend—Titus to Paul. (D. Thomas, D.D.)

Vers. 8-11.—For though I made you sorry with a letter I do not repent, though I did repent.—*The spirit of apostolical rebuke:*—It was marked by—I. UNFLINCHING SEVERITY. St. Paul rejoiced in the pain he had inflicted, because the pain was transitory, while the good was permanent; because the suffering was in this world, but the salvation for eternity: for the sinner had been delivered to “Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Learn the misfortune of non-detection. They who have done wrong congratulate themselves upon not being found out. Boys are disobedient; men commit crimes against society, and their natural impulse is to hush all up; and if they can do so they consider it a happy escape. It is not so. If this scandal at Corinth had been hushed up, then the offender would have thought it a fortunate escape, and sinned again. Somehow, like a bullet-wound, the internal evil must come out in the face of day, be found out, or else be acknowledged by confession. Let me ask then, who here is congratulating himself, My sin is not known, I shall not be disgraced nor punished? Think you that you will escape? Your sin is rankling in your heart: your wound is not probed, but only healed over falsely; and it will break out in the future, more corrupted and more painful than before. II. BY THE DESIRE OF DOING GOOD. It is no rare thing for men to be severe in rebuke. They tell you of your faults, not for your reformation, but their own vainglory. Now St. Paul was not thinking of himself, but of the Corinthians (vers. 9, 11, 16). He was trying to save their souls. It is often a duty to express disapprobation strongly and severely, but then we do it not in St. Paul’s spirit, unless it is done for the sake of amelioration. III. BY JUSTICE (ver. 12). His inference was no taking of a side, no espousing the cause of the injured, nor mere bitterness against the criminal, but a godly zeal, full of indignation, but not of vindictiveness. Now this is exactly what some of us find most difficult—those especially who possess quick, sensitive, right, and generous feelings. We can be charitable, we can be indignant, we can forgive; but we are not just. Again, this justice is most difficult when religious interests are involved: as, for example, in the quarrel between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant, who judges fairly? IV. BY JOYFUL SYMPATHY IN THE RESTORATION OF THE ERRING. Very beautiful is the union of the hearts of Paul and Titus in joy over the recovered—joy as of the angels in heaven over “one sinner that repenteth.” (F. W. Robertson, M.A.) Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance.—*Godly sorrow:*—I. THE MENTAL STATE HERE EXHIBITED. This sorrow was not of an ordinary kind. He afterwards defines it as sorrow “after a godly manner,”

or "according to God." The emotion was connected with certain local circumstances and events; but it must be regarded as forming an integral part in those arrangements of Divine mercy which are associated with the transformation and the final well-being of the human soul. 1. It arises from the truth brought home to the mind with regard to the extent and spirituality of the Divine law. When we compare the character of the Divine law with our own characters and habits, we must perceive how infinitely we fall short of our obligations, and what a vast amount of transgression we have committed. Well will it be if such a contrast humbles you in the dust, and leads you in brokenness of heart to confess, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned"; and to supplicate, "God be merciful to me a sinner." 2. It is also produced by the truth displayed and admitted to the mind respecting the awfulness of future punishment. What language will you find sufficient to depict the abomination which deprives man of his immortality of bliss? 3. It is also produced through the display and admission to the mind of the truth regarding the sufferings of Christ as all endured for sin, "He was wounded for our transgression," &c. Some among you may recollect the history of the first mission of the United Brethren. They taught the duties of morality, and spoke of the sanction of a future world, without producing aught like conviction or repentance; but no sooner did they begin to lift up the Cross than the stony hearts were melted, and men began to inquire, "What shall we do to be saved?"

II. THE CONNECTION EXISTING BETWEEN THIS MENTAL STATE AND THE PERMANENT CONSTITUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. In the original there are two different words translated by repentance, the former signifying mere regret. This is sometimes applied to God: "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," or regret. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent." It is sometimes applied to man, in order to denote those imperfect notions in religion which have no connection with the salvation of the soul, and is the term used in regard to the repentance of Judas (Matt. xxvii. 3). The latter term, which signifies an enduring change which is always for the better, is that which we usually denote by the term evangelical repentance. "Repent, and believe the gospel." "Repent, and be converted." It is the one which is employed in the text. "Though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not regret, though I did regret; I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance"—your sorrow produced an enduring change for the better. 1. This verse is a graphic record of the practical nature of repentance, which is a change of mind from unbelief and alienation against God and His law, to faith and love towards both; and a change of habit and of life from the pursuit and practice of sin, to the pursuit and practice of holiness. 2. Its blessings. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation." Elsewhere it is mentioned as being "repentance unto life," because connected with everlasting happiness (2 Pet. iii). III. THE MINISTERIAL EMOTIONS WITH WHICH THIS MENTAL STATE IS VIEWED. The reasons why a minister may rejoice in the repentance of his hearers are—1. Because of its bearing upon the holiness of men. 2. Upon the glory of God. The glory of God must rightly constitute an object of ministerial desire; and the glory of God, through our instrumentality, can alone be secured by the conversion of souls. 3. Upon the happiness of ministers themselves (chap. i. 12-14; 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20). Conclusion: Observe—1. How much of encouragement there is for those who have been brought into this state. 2. How much of solemnity gathers round the state of those who have not been susceptible of this state at all. (*J. Parsons.*) *The power of sorrow*:—Distinguish between sorrow and repentance. To grieve over sin is one thing, to repent of it is another. Sorrow is in itself a thing neither good nor bad; its value depends on the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay. I. THE FATAL POWER OF THE SORROW OF THE WORLD. It works death—1. In the effect of mere regret for worldly loss. We come into the world with health, friends, and sometimes property. So long as these are continued we are happy, and therefore fancy ourselves very grateful to God; but this is not religion; it has as little moral character in it, in the happy human being, as in the happy bird. Nay more, it is a suspicious thing; having been warmed by joy, it will become cold when joy is over; and then when these blessings are removed we count ourselves hardly treated, as if we had been defrauded of a right; rebellious hard feelings come; people become bitter, spiteful, discontented. This is the death of heart; the sorrow of the world has worked death. 2. When sin is grieved for in a worldly spirit. There are two views of sin: as wrong, or as producing loss, *e.g.*, of character. In such cases, if character could be preserved before

the world, grief would not come. In the midst of Saul's apparent grief the thing uppermost was that he had forfeited his kingly character; almost the only longing was that Samuel should honour him before his people. And hence it comes to pass that often remorse and anguish only begin with exposure. A corpse has been preserved for centuries in the iceberg, or in antiseptic peat, and when air was introduced it crumbled into dust. Exposure worked dissolution, but it only manifested the death which was already there; so with sorrow. 3. When the hot tears come from pride. No two tones of feeling, apparently similar, are more unlike than that in which Saul exclaimed, "I have played the fool exceedingly," and the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Now this sorrow of Saul's, too, works death; when once a man has found himself out, he cannot be deceived again. What on this earth remains, but endless sorrow, for him who has ceased to respect himself, and has no God to turn to? II. THE DIVINE POWER OF SORROW. 1. It works repentance, change of life, alteration of habits, renewal of heart. The consequences of sin are meant to wean from sin. The penalty annexed to it is, in the first instance, corrective, not penal. Fire burns the child, to teach it one of the truths of this universe—the property of fire to burn. The first time it cuts its hand with a sharp knife it has gained a lesson which it never will forget. Sorrow avails only when the past is converted into experience, and from failure lessons are learned which never are to be forgotten. 2. Permanence of alteration. A steady reformation is a more decisive test of the value of mourning than depth of grief. The characteristic of the Divine sorrow is that it is a repentance "not repented of." And in proportion as the repentance increases the grief diminishes. "I rejoice that I made you sorry, though it were but for a time." Grief for a time, repentance for ever. And few things more signally prove the wisdom of this apostle than his way of dealing with this grief. He tried no artificial means of intensifying it. So soon as grief had done its work the apostle was anxious to dry useless tears—he even feared lest haply such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 3. It is sorrow according to God. God sees sin in itself: a thing infinitely evil, even if the consequence were happiness instead of misery. So sorrow, according to God, is to see sin as God sees it. The grief of Peter was as bitter as that of Judas. But in Peter's grief there was an element of hope, because he saw God in it all. Despair of self did not lead to despair of God. This is the peculiar feature of this sorrow; God is there, accordingly self is less prominent. It is not a microscopic self-examination, nor a mourning in which self is ever uppermost; my character gone; the greatness of my sin; the forfeiture of my salvation. The thought of God absorbs all that. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Sorrow and sorrow*:—Time was when inner experience was considered to be everything, and experimental preaching was the order of the day. Now it is apt to be too much slighted. Introspection was formerly pushed to the extreme of morbid self-searching; yet it ought not now to be utterly abandoned. A correct diagnosis of disease is not everything, but yet it is valuable. A sense of poverty cannot by itself enrich, but it may stimulate. Now it is "only believe." And rightly so: but we must discriminate. There must be sorrow for sin working repentance. Upon this point we must—I. REMOVE CERTAIN ERRONEOUS IDEAS WITH REGARD TO REPENTANCE AND SORROW FOR SIN. Among popular delusions we must mention the suppositions—1. That mere sorrow of mind in reference to sin is repentance. 2. That there can be repentance without sorrow for sin. 3. That we must reach a certain point of wretchedness and horror, or else we are not truly penitent. 4. That repentance happens to us once, and is then over. 5. That repentance is a most unhappy feeling. 6. That repentance must be mixed with unbelief, and embittered by the fear that mercy will be unable to meet our wretched case. II. DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE TWO SORROWS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT. 1. The godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation is sorrow for sin—(1) As committed against God. (2) Arising out of an entire change of mind. (3) Which joyfully accepts salvation by grace. (4) Leading to future obedience. (5) Which leads to perpetual perseverance in the ways of God. The ways of sin are forsaken because abhorred. This kind of repentance is never repented of. 2. The sorrow of the world is—(1) Caused by shame at being found out. (2) Attended by hard thoughts of God. (3) Leads to vexation and sullenness. (4) Incites to hardening of heart. (5) Lands the soul in despair. (6) Works death of the worst kind. This needs to be repented of, for it is in itself sinful and terribly prolific of more sin. III. INDULGE OURSELVES IN GODLY SORROW FOR SIN. Come, let us be filled with a wholesome grief that we have—1. Broken a law, pure and perfect. 2. Disobeyed a gospel, Divine and

gracious. 3. Grieved a God, good and glorious. 4. Slighted Jesus, whose love is tender and boundless. 5. Been ungrateful, though loved, elected, redeemed, forgiven, justified, and soon to be glorified. 6. Been so foolish as to lose the joyous fellowship of the Spirit, the raptures of communion with Jesus. Let us confess all this, lie low at Jesus' feet, wash His feet with tears, and love, yea, love ourselves away. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A twofold soul sorrow* :—1. The honest administration of gospel truth often inflicts sorrow on its subjects. The apostle made the Corinthians "sorry with a letter." The gospel is a sword to cut, an arrow to pierce, a fire to burn. 2. The sorrow is of twofold distinct types. Let us contrast these sorrows. I. THE ONE IS CONCERNED WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF WRONG; THE OTHER WITH THE RESULTS. 1. Some groan under a sense of their sins because of the injuries which they have already inflicted and their ultimate doom. It is a selfish regret, an unvirtuous emotion. 2. But others mourn over the moral wrongness of the act; not because of the curse that has or will come upon them. The sorrow of Judas represents the one, the sorrow of Peter the other. II. THE ONE IS CONCERNED FOR OTHERS, THE OTHER FOR SELF. "Godly sorrow" seems to engulf all personal considerations. The claims of God, the interests of society, the good of the universe, these are the subjects that unseal its fountains. III. THE ONE IMPROVES THE CHARACTER, THE OTHER DETERIORATES IT. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation," from all that is corrupt in thought and feeling, from all evil tendencies and habits. Moral sorrows, like waters, at once cleanse, refresh, and fertilise. But selfish sorrow contracts and hardens the soul. The man who selfishly broods over his own ill doings sinks into a miserable misanthrope. IV. THE ONE ISSUES IN BLESSEDNESS, THE OTHER IN MISERY. "Godly sorrow" need not be "repented of," for it brings a consciousness of forgiveness, a sense of the Divine favour, and a direction of the whole soul to all that is useful and Divine. "But the sorrow of the world worketh death." It leads only to remorse, despair, and utter ruin. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Godly sorrow* :—1. The text carries us into the heart of a story eighteen hundred years old. The actors in it have long fallen on sleep; but forasmuch as the story has a place in the Bible, it can never die. It is "written for our admonition." St. Paul has heard of a terrible scandal at Corinth. He hears that the Church is scarcely shocked by it. All the feeling is left to him. A man who has been caught up into the third heaven knows what a sin looks like in the vestibule of the Great King; and he has to communicate that aspect of it to the Church. The result we have in this chapter. 2. Luther tells how, while he was still ignorant of the gospel of grace, the word "repentance" was repulsive to him; but when once he had apprehended the revelation of a free forgiveness, all the texts about repentance began to charm and attract him. May it be thus with us. Note—*I. THE WORLD'S SORROW.* 1. When St. Paul wrote "the world" stood out plainly enough to the Christian. The idea of the word in the Greek is order. As God sent it forth from His creative hand it was a system of exquisite adaptation and workmanship. But when sin entered and death by sin, there sprang up side by side a new organisation, from which God was left out. When Christ came He found this alien world almost co-extensive with the human universe. Out of it He called such as would listen. But still in the first days of the Church the other was the predominant one; and therefore it spoke for itself as to what was meant when St. John said, "Love not the world," or our Lord, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own." The difficulty began when "the world" itself adopted Christianity for its religion, submitted itself to Christian baptism. But still there is a world, and a very real one, and its characteristic is just what it was—namely, an order and an organism, which leaves God out. It goes in and out amongst the Church, with which it claims to be synonymous. Wherever there is a life lived without God; wherever there is a society organised on the principle of being by itself untrammelled by thought of Him, there is "the world" in this evil sense. 2. The world's sorrow fills a large page of life. (1) For, of course, "the world" is not exempt from misfortune, from wounds in the house of its friends—from death, and death's thousand perils and satellites. But there is something characteristic in the world's way of taking each trouble; there is an astonishment, a resentment, a selfishness, a despair quite peculiar to the sorrow of the "kosmos" which has shut out God. How often has it been seen quite literally that "the world's sorrow" has wrought "death"! How often has suicide itself been the world's way of meeting misfortune! (2) But, considering the context, we may suppose St. Paul to have had specially in his view the world's sorrow for sin. Sin does touch with sorrow even "the world." Sometimes the sin of others

touches it; the loose life of a son may deeply wound a father's love as well as a father's pride and a father's confidence. "The world" has to sorrow oftentimes for its own sin; it is often found out by it. There is a sorrow for the loss of character, for the blighting of a career, for the object of a guilty passion, deprived of all that makes life valuable. These are specimens of "the world's" sorrow, which, however, only at last "works death." The "world" being organised on the principle of shutting out God, and death, in its full and final sense, is the final signing and sealing of that exclusion of God. II. "THE SORROW WHICH HIS ACCORDING TO GOD." 1. This may mean—(1) God-like—sorrowing for sin as God sorrows for it. Witness the Cross. (2) As God would have it to be—a sorrow which is agreeable to the mind and will of the Holy One. (3) As God works it by the powerful efficiency of His grace. 2. But none of these senses is entirely satisfactory. We would rather read it, "the sorrow which has regard to God," in direct opposition to the world's sorrow, that leaves out of it the thought of God. It would be unreal language to require that sorrow for sin should have no reference whatever to its bearing upon the sinner. God has arranged in mercy and wisdom that motives of fear and self-preservation shall powerfully influence us; but not until God has place in the sinner's sorrow can that sorrow be more than ambiguous as to the sinner's state and the sinner's hope. 3. This Godward sorrow will have in it three ingredients. (1) "Against Thee, Thee, only have I sinned." As the godly-refraining from sin has in it the thought, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" so the godly-sorrowing for sin has in it the thought, "Against Thee, O God, yea, in comparison against Thee alone have I sinned." (2) It does not isolate the particular sin; it sees it in its root, and in its connection. "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (3) And thus it recognises a need far graver and more serious than that of forgiveness. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Repentance is not merely sorrow; it is the new mind which views altogether differently from before the two lives of sin and of holiness, and the two objects, self and God. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Godly sorrow*:—I. ITS NATURE—Sorrow according to God. 1. It is sorrow for sin as an offence against God. Not that the penitent is unaffected with the evil of sin as respects his fellow-creatures and his own soul. It is, however, as an offence against God that he chiefly laments it; he views it as rebellion against God, as transgression of His law, a disbelief of His truth, a rejection of His grace, ingratitude for His goodness, and insensibility to His love. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight." A consideration of his sins, as what occasioned the sufferings and death of Christ, is what especially affects his heart. He looks upon Him whom he has pierced, and mourns for Him. 2. It is according to the will of God as revealed in Scripture. Not that God delights to see any of His creatures unhappy. He knows that godly sorrow is essential to our happiness. 3. It is produced in the heart by the Spirit of God. Man, in his natural state, knows nothing of this sorrow. 4. It accords with the design of God respecting man. This is evidently none other than to bring us back to Himself. II. ITS EFFECT. It "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Repentance signifies a change of mind; a change of the understanding from darkness to light, and of the will and affections from sin to holiness. Such a change is attended with the most happy results. We do not wonder, therefore, to hear the apostle declare that it is "not to be repented of." Whether we consult Scripture or experience, whether we search the Church below or above, not a saint can we meet with that regrets his repentance or his salvation. Conclusion: But is this the case with the impenitent? 1. Is not the want of "repentance to salvation" often accompanied with such bitterness of reflection, even in the present world, and especially at the approach of death, as makes those who feel it unutterably wretched? 2. "The sorrow of the world worketh death." Having no connection with the love and fear of God and faith in His mercy it never ends happily, whatever may be the causes which produce it, it terminates at no time in a change of heart and conduct. (*D. Rees.*) *True repentance is a godly sorrow*:—I. In speaking of the NATURE OF GODLY SORROW we are led to remark that it is not only sorrow on account of sin, but sorrow of a peculiar kind. The sorrow of which the apostle speaks is godly sorrow which leads men to mourn with a right spirit, and has an eye towards God, against whom sin has been committed (Psa. li. 4; Luke xv. 18). Godly sorrow not only mourns before God for outward sins, but also for those evil thoughts which can be known only to Him who sees the heart. It will be also an increasing sorrow in proportion

as the subject of this gracious repentance is led into all truth, as he is brought to know more of the depths of iniquity, and the evil of sin; as he is enabled to discern more of the workings of his heart, and more of the spirituality of the Divine law. But it will be a feeling accompanied with peace, because it will be recognised as an evidence of grace. II. SOME OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS GODLY SORROW IS EXCITED, WHICH WILL FARTHER ILLUSTRATE THIS TRUTH. It is difficult sometimes to trace the immediate cause of godly sorrow, because the first workings of this principle are often silent and gentle in their operations. 1. Affliction. When men are at ease in their possessions, and are intoxicated with the bustle of worldly care, they can indulge in sin with little restraint, and neglect the salvation of their souls as a matter of little concern. The mercies of God seem only to supply fresh encouragement to sin. Hence He is sometimes pleased to awaken the sons of prosperity by means of afflictive dispensations. 2. Not unfrequently His goodness leadeth to repentance. 3. Another means which God is pleased to employ in producing godly sorrow is the reading or the preaching of His own Word. In some, as in the case of Josiah, the terrors of the law have prepared the way for spiritual peace. In others the effects have more nearly resembled those which were produced by the sermon of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost. III. THE EFFECT OF THIS GODLY SORROW. It worketh, saith the apostle, a repentance "unto salvation" not to be repented of either in this world or the next. Let it then be distinctly remembered that the blessing is not of a temporal character; but the salvation mentioned in the text has reference to higher blessings, and calls for increasing thankfulness because it respects the deliverance of the soul. (*W. Mayers, A.M.*) *Repentance*:—I. THE REMEMBRANCE OF SIN IS THE CAUSE OF GODLY SORROW IN THE HEART OF A TRUE PENITENT. The sinner is to be considered in two different periods of time. In the first he is under the infatuation of sin; in the last, after-reflections on his sinful conduct fill his mind. 1. The sinner is affected with the number of his sins. When we reflect on our past lives sins arise from all parts and absorb our minds in their multitude. 2. The true penitent adds to a just notion of the number of his sins that of their enormity. Here we must remove the prejudices that we have imbibed concerning the morality of Jesus Christ; for here also we have altered His doctrine, and taken the world for our casuist, the maxims of loose worldlings for our supreme law. We have reduced great crimes to a few principal enormous vices which few people commit. 3. A third idea that afflicts a penitent is that of the fatal influence which his sins have had on the soul of his neighbour. One sin strikes a thousand blows, while it seems to aim at striking only one. It is a contagious poison which diffuseth itself far and wide, and infects not only him who commits it, but the greatest part of those who see it committed. 4. The weakness of motives to sin is the fourth cause of the sorrow of a penitent. Motives to sin are innumerable and various; but what are they all? Sometimes an imaginary interest, an inch of ground, and sometimes a crown, the conquest of the universe, the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them (*Matt. iv. 10*). 5. I make a fifth article of the penitent's uncertainty of his state. For although the mercy of God is infinite yet it is certain the sinner in the first moments of his penitence hath reason to doubt of his state, and till the evidences of his conversion become clear there is almost as much probability of his destruction as of his salvation. 6. Perhaps hell. 7. In fine, the last arrow that woundeth the heart of a penitent is an arrow of Divine love. The more we love God the more misery we endure when we have been so unhappy as to offend Him. The union of all these causes which produce sorrow in a true penitent forms the grand difference between that which St. Paul calls godly sorrow and that which he calls the sorrow of the world, that is to say, between true repentance and that uneasiness which worldly systems sometimes give another kind of penitents. II. St. Paul speaks of THE EFFECTS OF GODLY SORROW only in general terms in our text; he says IT WORKETH REPENTANCE TO SALVATION; but in the following verses he speaks more particularly. 1. The first effect of godly sorrow is what our apostle calls carefulness, or, as I would rather read it, vigilance—yea, what vigilance! I understand by this term the disposition of a man who, feeling a sincere sorrow for his sins, and being actually under the afflicting hand of God, is not content with a little vague knowledge of his own irregularities, but uses all his efforts to examine every circumstance of his life, and to dive into the least obvious parts of his own conscience in order to discover whatever is offensive to that God whose favour and clemency he most earnestly implores. The penitence of worldlings, or, as St. Paul expresseth it, "the sorrow of the world," may indeed produce a vague knowledge of sin. Afflicted people very commonly say, We deserve these punishments, we are

very great sinners; but those penitents are very rare indeed who possess what our apostle calls carefulness or vigilance. 2. "What clearing of yourselves!" adds St. Paul. The Greek word signifies apology, and it will be best understood by joining the following expression with it, "yea, what indignation!" In the sorrow of the world apology and indignation are usually companions; indignation against him who represents the atrocity of a sin, and apology for him who commits it. The reprieved sinner is always fruitful in excuses, always ingenious in finding reasons to exculpate himself, even while he gives himself up to those excesses which admit of the least excuse. Now, change the objects of indignation and apology, and you will have a just notion of the dispositions of the Corinthians, and of the effects which godly sorrow produces in the soul of a true penitent. Let your apology have for its object that ministry which you have treated so unworthily, let your indignation turn against yourselves, and then you will have a right to pretend to the prerogatives of true repentance. 3. The apostle adds, "yea, what fear!" By fear in this place we understand that self-diffidence which an idea of the sins we have committed ought naturally to inspire. In this sense, St. Paul says to the Romans, "Be not high-minded; but fear" (Rom. xi. 20). Fear—that is to say, distrust thyself. Here you suffered through your inattention and dissipation; fear lest you should fall by the same means again, guard against this weakness, strengthen this feeble part, accustom yourself to attention, examine what relation every circumstance of your life has to your duty. There you fell through your vanity; fear lest you should fall again by the same means. Another time you erred through your excessive complaisance; fear lest you should err again by the same means. 4. "What vehement desire!" This is another vague term. Godly sorrow produceth divers kinds of desire. Here I confine it to one meaning: it signifies, I think, a desire of participating the favour of God, of becoming an object of the merciful promises which He hath made to truly contrite souls, and of resting under the shade of that Cross where an expiatory sacrifice was offered to Divine justice for the sins of mankind. 5. Finally, zeal is the sixth effect of godly sorrow, and it may have three sorts of objects—God, our neighbours, and ourselves. III. St. Paul expresses himself in a very concise manner on this article; but his language is full of meaning; REPENTANCE PRODUCED BY GODLY SORROW (SAYS HE) IS NOT TO BE REPENTED OF—that is to say, it is always a full source of consolation and joy. Godly sorrow reconciles us to three enemies who, while we live in sin, attack us with implacable rage. 1. The first enemy who attacks us while we live in sin with implacable rage is the justice of God. 2. As godly sorrow reconciles us to Divine justice, so it reconciles us to our own consciences. It is repentance only, it is only godly sorrow that can disarm conscience. 3. In fine, godly sorrow reconciles us to death. (*Jas. Saurin*.) *Sorrow according to God* :—The apostle's summary of his preaching is "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." These two ought never to be separated. Yet the two are separated, and the reproach that the Christian doctrine of salvation through faith is immoral derives most of its force from forgetting that repentance is as real a condition of salvation as faith. Consider—**I. THE TRUE AND THE FALSE SORROW FOR SIN.** 1. Now we have no more right to ask for an impossible uniformity of religious experience than we have to expect that all voices shall be pitched in one key, or all plants flower in the same month, or after the same fashion. Life produces resemblance with differences; it is machinery that makes facsimiles. Yet, whilst not asking that a man all diseased with the leprosy of sin, and a little child "innocent of the great transgression," shall have the same experience; Scripture and the nature of the case assert that there are certain elements which, in varying proportions, will be found in all true Christian experience, and of these an indispensable one is "godly sorrow." 2. Notice the broad distinction between the right and the wrong kind of sorrow for sin. "Sorrow according to God" is sorrow which has reference to God; the "sorrow of the world" is devoid of that reference. One puts sin by His side, sees its blackness relieved against the "fierce light" of the Great White Throne, and the other does not. There are plenty who, when reaping the bitter fruits of sin, are sorry enough. A man that is lying in the hospital, a wreck, is often enough sorry that he did not live differently. The fraudulent bankrupt that has lost his reputation, as he hangs about the streets, slouching in his rags, is sorry enough that he did not keep the straight road. Again, men are often sorry for their conduct without thinking of it as sin against God. Crime means the transgression of man's law, wrong the transgression of conscience's law, sin the transgression of God's law. Some of us would perhaps have to say—"I have done crime." We are all of us quite ready to say,—"I have done wrong";

but there are some of us that hesitate to say, "I have done sin." But if there be a God, then we have personal relations to Him and His law; and when we break His law it is more than crime, more than wrong—it is sin. It is when you lift the shutter off conscience, and let the light of God rush in that you have the wholesome sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation. I believe that a very large amount of the superficiality and easy-goingness of the Christianity of to-day comes just from this, that so many who call themselves Christians have never once got a glimpse of themselves as they really are. I remember once peering over the edge of the crater of Vesuvius, and looking down into the pit all swirling with sulphurous fumes. Have you ever looked into your hearts in that fashion and seen the wreathing smoke and the flashing fire there? If you have, you will cleave to that Christ who is your sole deliverance from sin. 3. But there is no prescription about depth or amount or length of time during which this sorrow shall be felt. If you have as much sorrow as leads you to penitence and trust you have enough. It is not your sorrow that is going to wash away your sin, it is Christ's blood. The one question is, "Has my sorrow led me to cast myself on Christ?" II. "GODLY SORROW WORKETH REPENTANCE." 1. What is repentance? Many of you would answer "sorrow for sin," but clearly this text draws a distinction between the two. The "repentance" of the Bible is, as the word distinctly expresses, a change of purpose in regard to the sin for which a man mourns. Let me remind you of one or two passages which may show that the right notion of the word, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," *i.e.*, without change of purpose on His part. Again, "The Lord repented of the evil which He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not," *i.e.* clearly He changed His purpose. So repentance is not idle tears nor the twitchings of a vain regret, but the resolute turning away of the sinful heart from its sins. It is "a repentance toward God," the turning from sin to the Father. 2. This change of purpose and breaking off from sin is produced by sorrow for sin; and that the production of this repentance is the main characteristic difference between the godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world. A man may have his paroxysms of regret, but the question is: Does it make any difference in his attitude? Is he standing, after the tempest of sorrow has swept over him, with his face in the same direction as before; or has it whirled him clean round? My brother! when your conscience pricks, is the word of command "Right about face!" or is it, "As you were"? 3. The means of evoking true repentance is the contemplation of the Cross. Dread of punishment may pulverise the heart, but not change it; and each fragment will have the same characteristics as the whole mass. But "the goodness of God leads to repentance," as the prodigal is conquered and sees the true hideousness of the swine's trough when he bethinks himself of the father's love. III. SALVATION IS THE ISSUE OF REPENTANCE. 1. What is the connection between repentance and salvation? (1) You cannot get the salvation of God unless you shake off your sin. "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c. It is a clear contradiction in terms, and an absolute impossibility in fact, that God should deliver a man from sin whilst he is holding to it. (2) But you do not get salvation for your repentance. It is no case of barter, it is no case of salvation by works, that work being repentance. "Could my tears for ever flow," &c. 2. What is the connection between repentance and faith? (1) There can be no true repentance without trust in Christ. Repentance without faith would be but like the pains of those poor Hindoo devotees that will go all the way from Cape Comorin to the shrine of Juggernaut, and measure every foot of the road with the length of their own bodies in the dust. Men will do anything, and willingly make any sacrifice rather than open their eyes to see this—that repentance, clasped hand in hand with faith, leads the guiltiest soul into the forgiving presence of the crucified Christ, from whom peace flows into the darkest heart. (2) On the other hand, faith without repentance in so far as it is possible produces a superficial Christianity which vaguely trusts to Christ without knowing exactly why it needs Him; which practises a religion which is neither a joy nor a security. "These are they which heard the word, and anon with joy received it." Having no deep consciousness of sin, "they have no root in themselves, and in time of temptation they fall away." If there is to be a life-transforming sin and devil-conquering faith, it must be a faith rooted deep in sorrow for sin. Conclusion: If, by God's grace, my poor words have touched your consciences, do not trifle with the budding conviction! Do not let it all pass in idle sorrow. If you do, you will be the worse for it, and come nearer to that condition which the sorrow of the world worketh, the awful death of the soul. Do not wince from the knife before the roots of the cancer are cut out. The pain is merciful. Better the wound than the malig-

nant growth. Yield yourselves to the Spirit that would convince you of sin, and listen to the voice that calls to you to forsake your unrighteous ways and thoughts. But do not trust to any tears, any resolves, any reformation. Trust only to the Lord that died for you, whose death for you, whose life in you, will be deliverance from your sin. Then you will have a salvation which "is not to be repented of." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Godly sorrow and its precious fruit*:—I. **GODLY SORROW.** Its nature. 1. Sorrow, the generic, is known to all; the specific, godly sorrow, needs definition and description. All understand what is meant by a flower; so we never define it. But there are some species which few have ever seen, and which accordingly have to be described. This is usually done by comparing and contrasting it with some common plant. It is thus that we must deal with godly sorrow, which is here contrasted with a commoner kind, "the sorrow of the world." Now this is made up of many different kinds—the pain of a diseased body; the eating canker of a discontented mind; the loss of property or of friends. These and all other kinds of grief which have respect only to the present life are slumped together as "the sorrow of the world." Alone, on the other side, stands that one peculiar species, "sorrow towards God." 2. The expression intimates a changed and peculiar attitude of the soul. Away from the world, with its hopes and fears, the man must turn, and open his inmost being towards God. Now just as vapours rising from the ground and hanging in the atmosphere, change the white brightness of the sun into a jaundiced yellow or a fiery red, so passions, issuing like mists from the soul itself, darken the face of God, hiding His tenderness, and permitting only anger to glance through. And it depends on the work of the Spirit in the man whether the result of that shall be dislike of God's holiness, or sorrow for his own sin. This is the very hinge of the difference between the carnal and the spiritual mind. The one is enmity against God for His righteousness; the other, sorrow for its own sin. The true wish of the one man's heart is that there were less of holiness in God; of the other, that there were more in himself. The two griefs and the two desires lie as far apart from each other as light and darkness—as life and death. 3. How it is produced. The series of cause and effect runs thus: goodness of God (*Rom. ii. 4*); godly sorrow; repentance. Sorrow for sin is not felt until God's goodness aroused it; and that sorrow once aroused, instantly manifests true repentance in an eager effort to put sin away (*ver. 1*). A fear of hell is not sorrow for sin: it may be nothing more than a regret that God is holy. As an instrument wherewith the peace of spiritual death may be disturbed, the Lord employs it, but it lies very low, and is worthless unless it quickly merge in the higher affection—sorrow for sin. When a man, touched by God's goodness, takes God's side with his whole heart as against himself in the matter of his own guilt—this is the turning-point. When Jesus looked on Peter, Peter went out and wept. God's goodness, embodied in Christ crucified, becomes, under the ministry of the Spirit, the cause of godly sorrow in believing men. II. **THE REPENTANCE WHICH GODLY SORROW PRODUCES.** It is a change of mind which imparts a new direction to the whole life, as the turning of the helm changes the course of the ship. This turning is—1. **Unto salvation.** The man's former course led to perdition; it has been reversed, and therefore now leads to life. 2. **Not to be repented of.** The change is decisive and final. Your portion is chosen for life—for ever. When in godly sorrow you have turned your face to Christ, and consequently your back on all that grieves Him, you will never need to make another change; you will never repent of that repentance. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The apostolic doctrine of repentance*:—I. **THE SORROW OF THE WORLD.** 1. It is of the world. There is an anxiety about loss, about the consequences of misdoing, about a ruined reputation, &c. Now sin brings all these things; but to sorrow for them is not to sorrow before God, because it is only about worldly things. Observe therefore—(1) Pain, simply as pain, does no good; sorrow, merely as sorrow, has in it no magical efficacy; shame may harden into effrontery, punishment may rouse into defiance. (2) Pain self-inflicted does no good. The hand burnt in ascetic severity does not give the crown of martyrdom, nor even inspire the martyr's feeling. The loss of those dear to us, when it is borne as coming from God, has the effect of strengthening and purifying the character. But to bring sorrow wilfully upon ourselves can be of no avail towards improvement. When God inflicts the blow, He gives the strength; but when you give it to yourself, God does not promise aid. Be sure this world has enough of the Cross in it; you need not go out of your way to seek it. 2. It "works death." (1) Literally. There is nothing like wearing sorrow to shorten life. When the terror of sorrow came on Nabal, his heart became a stone, and died within him, and in ten days all was over.

When the evil tidings came from the host of Israel, the heart of the wife of Phineas broke beneath her grief, and in a few hours death followed her bereavement. (2) Figuratively. Grief unalloyed kills the soul. Man becomes powerless in a protracted sorrow where hope in God is not. The mind will not work; there is no desire to succeed. "The wine of life is drawn." (3) Spiritually. It is a fearful thing to see how some men are made worse by trial. It is terrible to watch sorrow as it sours the temper, and works out into malevolence and misanthropy. Opposition makes them proud and defiant. Blow after blow falls on them, and they bear all in the hardness of a sullen silence. Such a man was Saul, whose earlier career was so bright with promise. But defeat and misfortune gradually soured his temper, and made him bitter and cruel. Jealousy passed into disobedience, and insanity into suicide. The sorrow of the world had "worked death." II. **GODLY SORROW.** 1. Its marks. (1) Moral earnestness—"carefulness" (ver. 11). (2) "Fear"—not an unworthy terror, but the opposite of that light recklessness which lives only from day to day. (3) "Vehement desire," that is affection; for true sorrow—sorrow to God—softens, not hardens the soul. It opens sympathies, for it teaches what others suffer. It expands affection, for your sorrow makes you accordant with the "still sad music" of humanity. A true sorrow is that "deep grief which humanises the soul"; often out of it comes that late remorse of love which leads us to arise and go to our Father, and say, "I have sinned against Heaven and in Thy sight." (4) "Clearing of themselves," *i.e.*, anxiety about character. (5) "Revenge"—indignation against wrong in others and in ourselves. 2. The results—"Not to be repented of." No man ever regretted things given up or pleasures sacrificed for God's sake. No man on his dying bed ever felt a pang for the suffering sin had brought on him, if it had led him in all humbleness to Christ. But how many a man on his death-bed has felt the recollection of guilty pleasures as the serpent's fang and venom in his soul! (F. W. Robertson, M.A.)

Ver. 11. For . . . ye sorrowed after a godly sort.—*The internal workings of genuine repentance*:—The Bible says a deal about repentance. 1. Its nature (Job xlii. 5; Psa. li.; Ezek. xxxvi. 35; Matt. xxvi. 24; Luke xv. 35; xviii. 13; 2 Cor. vii. 9). 2. Its necessity (Ezek. xiv. 6; Matt. iii. 1, iv. 17; Luke xiii. 13; Acts iii. 19; Rev. ii. 5, &c.). 3. Its internal working as here. I. **SOLICITUDE.** "What carefulness!" Men who have repented are no longer unconcerned about spiritual matters, but are cautious, careful, diligent. The necessity of carefulness may be argued from—1. The corrupting influences of social life. 2. The agency of tempting spirits. 3. The remaining depravity of our own nature. This is tinder for the devil's fire, a fulcrum for the devil's lever. Hence be careful. II. **DEPRECATION.** "What clearing of yourselves"—how anxious to show your disapproval of the evil of which you have been guilty. Thus genuine repentance ever works. III. **ANGER.** "What indignation!" Repentance generates a deadly hatred to evil. We have little faith in the moral excellency of those who cannot go into flames of indignation whenever the wrong appears before them. Strong love for the thing loved necessitates strong hatred for the thing hated. "Dante, who loved well because he hated, hated wickedness because he loved." When a repentant soul muses not only on the sins of others, but on his own, the fires of indignation kindle into a blaze. IV. **DREAD.** "What fear!" Fear, not of suffering but of sin. This fear is the highest courage, and also love dreading to displease the object of its affection. V. **EARNESTNESS.** "What vehement desire!"—what longing for a higher life! "What zeal!"—what intense desire to eschew the wrong and to pursue the right! "What revenge!" What a craving to crush the wrong! All these expressions mean intense earnestness about spiritual matters which is rare and praiseworthy. Genuine repentance is antagonistic to indifferentism. (D. Thomas, D.D.)

Vers. 12-16. Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong.—*Church discipline*:—I. **CHURCH DISCIPLINE SHOULD BE EXERCISED FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE CHURCH** (ver. 12). The particular individual referred to here was the incestuous person (1 Cor. v. 1). The apostle here states that this discipline was not merely for the offender's sake, nor indeed for the sake of the offended. His object in writing was not merely to chastise the one, and to obtain justice for the other. He had a larger aim; it was to prove to them how much he cared for their spiritual purity and reputation. Punishment should not only be for the reformation of the wrongdoer, but as an example to others. The unhealthy branch should be cut off for the sake of the tree's health and growth.

All true chastisement for wrong aims not only at the good of the offender, but at the good of the community at large. II. WHEN THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH IS MANIFESTED IT IS A JUST MATTER FOR REJOICING (ver. 13). The Church was improved by Paul's disciplinary letter. Of this Titus had assured him, for they had "refreshed" his "spirit" during his visit among them. Their improvement, too, justified the high testimony which he had given Titus concerning them (ver. 14). The love of Titus for them was increased by the discovery of it (ver. 15). Thus the godly sorrow which they manifested on account of that which was wrong amongst them was in every way satisfactory to him; it gave him comfort, it greatly refreshed the spirit of Titus, increased his affection for them, and inspired the apostle himself with confidence and with joy. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

VERS. 1-5. *The grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.—The grace of liberality:—*I. TRUE LIBERALITY IS A CHRISTIAN GRACE—as truly a grace as knowledge, diligence, and love. What light this throws upon the whole subject of church finances! 1. Failing to see that liberality is a grace, we have made it a burden. As a grace in the heart, liberality struggles for an outlet in acts of benevolence; as a duty or a burden, it needs to be urged. Hence all this clap-trap machinery for raising church money. 2. This grace, like any other, may be obtained—(1) By consecration. No man is prepared to receive it until he has "first given himself to the Lord." Paul enforces such a consecration (ver. 9). (2) By prayer. What reflections would arise in the mind of one praying for the grace of liberality! What views of responsibility would the Spirit of all grace flash upon his mind! How would the claims of self dwindle into insignificance in the presence of the claims of Christ. II. THIS GRACE LEADS MEN TO GIVE ACCORDING TO THEIR ABILITY; YEA, BEYOND. 1. Neither the scanty income of "deep poverty," nor the increasing demands of accumulating wealth, nor the claims of fashionable life, will prevent such a man from being liberal "according to that which he hath," &c. He will never begin to retrench at the church, because he knows that God can retrench upon him in a thousand ways. 2. The reason "God loves a cheerful giver" is because such giving can only flow from grace, and such giving is always a means of grace. Instead of a collection dissipating all religious feeling, our "joy" ought "to abound unto liberality." If liberality is a Christian grace, and giving is a means of grace, why should not a man feel as religious while giving as he does while singing and praying? 3. Ordinary poverty is generally considered a lawful excuse for not giving. But "the deep poverty of the Macedonians abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (vers. 2-4). The offering is sanctified by its motive and spirit. It is not the intrinsic value of the contribution, but the love of the contributor and his relative ability to give, that makes the contribution acceptable to God. 4. There are three classes who fail to do their duty—(1) Those who give largely, but not "according to their means"; if they did, they would give hundreds instead of tens, and thousands instead of hundreds. (2) Those who give nothing because they are too poor. (3) A class made up of rich and poor, whose religious joy is so seraphic that it always soars above the financial wants of the Church. They are always trembling lest the pastor should drive all religion out of the Church by taking so many collections! Now, what is wanting in all these classes is this grace of liberality. This would lead the rich and the poor to give "according to their means." III. THE GRACE OF LIBERALITY, LIKE ANY OTHER, MAY BE CULTIVATED (ver. 6; 1 Cor. xvi. 1). 1. Here is systematic beneficence. The grace of liberality needs exercise just as much as faith and love. Besides, the Churches need money now—every week. This systematic way of giving by weekly instalments keeps the duty of self-denial before the mind. Such a system of beneficence would soon develop the grace of liberality and increase the funds of the Church to a point where she would have an ample fund "laid by" all the time, ready to meet all the claims at home and abroad! 2. Those who wait to give largely, when they do give, usually let the grace of liberality die for the want of exercise; so that, when the time comes when

they are able to give largely, they have neither the grace nor the desire to do so. And those who give but little or nothing through life, and give largely when they come to die, rarely ever give enough to pay the interest on what they ought to have given under a life course of systematic beneficence. 3. It is only those who enjoy the grace of liberality as a growing principle in the soul that can realise the saying of Christ: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (*J. M. Bolland, A.M.*) *The grace of liberality*:—The Christians of the Jerusalem Church were in sore trouble. A feeble folk at the best, they were now reduced to an extremity of famine. At this juncture the advantage of Christian fellowship was brought into clear light. Paul and Barnabas took it upon themselves, by Divine appointment, to call upon the more favoured brethren for help (Acts ii. 27–30). They received prompt contributions from the Churches in Achaia, also from those in Macedonia (Rom. xv. 26). A strong appeal was made to the churches of Galatia (1 Cor. xvi. 1). The congregation at Rome, made up largely of Gentiles, some of whom were wealthy and influential, was exhorted to do its part (Rom. xv. 27). And in the Scripture before us the matter is presented to the Corinthian Christians in a way to stir their deepest and most substantial sympathy. It was a splendid opportunity for displaying the genuineness of Christian unity. In appealing to the Corinthian Church the apostle makes mention of the liberality of their brethren in Macedonia, hoping thus to provoke them to good works. At the very time when these Macedonians were sending their gifts to Jerusalem, they themselves were groaning under a twofold yoke of poverty and persecution. Nevertheless they furnished forth a pattern of benevolence. First, they gave voluntarily. They gave with spontaneity, with good cheer, with abandon. They gave not as a deep well gives to the toiler at the windlass, but as a fountain gives to the wounded hart that stands panting at its brink. Second, they gave largely—"to their power, yea, and beyond it." Self-denial is the first step in consecration. The virtue of sacrifice lies largely in the cost of it. Third, they gave from principle. The beginning of their generosity and its motive and inspiration lay in this, that "they first of all gave their own selves to the Lord." After that everything was easy. Let us note some of the reasons why God's people, "as they abound in everything, in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in diligence, and in brotherly love, should abound in this grace also." I. BECAUSE GIVING IS A GRACE. It is not a mere adjunct or incident of the Christian life, but one of its cardinal graces. Whether a disciple of Christ shall make a practice of giving or not is no more an open question than whether he shall pray or not. The rule of holy living is never selfishness, but always self-forgetfulness. This was the mind that was in Christ Jesus, and this must be the disposition of those who follow him. II. IT IS IN THE LINE OF COMMON HONESTY. We are stewards of the gifts of God. The silver and the gold are His. III. GIVING IS A FRUITFUL SOURCE OF HAPPINESS. IV. GIVING IS A MEANS OF GETTING. Let us observe the testimony of Scripture on this point. "Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." V. THIS IS THE NOBLEST END OF MONEY-MAKING. Some men get to hoard. Others get to spend. Still others get to give. VI. OUR GIVING IS GOD'S METHOD FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD. It is God's purpose that all nations should be evangelised. Our wealth must furnish the sinews of the holy war. VII. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST TEACHES US TO GIVE. He was the greatest of givers. He gave everything He had for our deliverance from sin and death. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Christian liberality*:—In 1 Cor. xvi. mention was made of a contribution which the Corinthians were systematically to store up for the poor brethren at Jerusalem. Paul here renews the subject and records the largeness of the sum contributed by the churches of Macedonia, and urges the Corinthians to emulate their example. Note—I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERILITY. 1. It was a grace bestowed from God (vers. 1, 6). Now there are many reasons which make liberality desirable. (1) Utility. By liberality hospitals are supported, missions established, social disorders healed. But St. Paul does not take the utilitarian ground; though in its way it is a true one. (2) Nor does he take the ground that it is for the advantage of the persons relieved (ver. 13). He takes the higher ground: it is a grace of God. He contemplates the benefit to the soul of the giver. 2. It was the work of a willing mind (ver. 12). (1) The offering is sanctified or made unholy in God's sight by the spirit in which it is given. (2) A willing mind, however, is not all. "Now therefore perform the doing of it."

Where the means are, willingness is only tested by performance. Test your feelings and fine liberal words by self-denial. Let it be said, "He hath done what he could." 3. It was the outpouring of poverty (ver. 2). As it was in the time of the apostle, so it is now. It was the poor widow who gave all. Generally a man's liberality does not increase in proportion as he grows rich, but the reverse. (1) Let this circumstance be a set-off against poverty. God has made charity easier to you who are not the rich of this world. (2) Let it weaken the thirst for riches. Doubtless riches are a good; but remember that the Bible says, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." 4. It was exhibited to strangers. Gentile and Jew were united to each other by a common love. There is nothing but Christianity which can do this. Think of the old rancours of the heathen world. Philanthropy is a dream without Christ. Why should I love the negro or the foreigner? Because we are one family in Christ. II. ITS MOTIVES. 1. Christian completeness (ver. 7). It is the work of Christ to take the whole man, and present him a living sacrifice to God. 2. Emulation. Compare vers. 1 to 8 and Rom. xi. 11. Ordinary, feeble philanthropy would say, "Emulation is dangerous." Yet there is such a feeling in our nature. So St. Paul here took advantage of it, and exhorts the Corinthians to enter the lists in honourable rivalry. Emulation, meaning a desire to outstrip individuals, is a perverted feeling; emulation, meaning a desire to reach and pass a standard, is the parent of all progress and excellence. Hence, set before you high models. Try to live with the most generous, and to observe their deeds. 3. The example of Christ (ver. 9). (1) Christ is the reference for everything. But (2) it is in spirit, and not in letter, that Christ is our example. The Corinthians were asked to give money for a special object. But Christ did not give money, He gave Himself. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *The grace of liberality*:—I. GIVING IS A CHRISTIAN GRACE. It is a recognition of that great duty of service which is obligatory throughout the kingdom of Christ. II. Naturally enough, then, we find giving treated in this passage as THE DUTY OF ALL. The churches of Macedonia in their deep poverty are commended for their giving. Giving is of as wide obligation as the observance of the Sabbath. Much the same reasons could be urged for excusing the poor from the observance of the Sabbath as from the duty of giving. The Sabbath might be transmuted into money. The poor might use the day to earn additional wages. III. A third lesson of this paragraph is that GIVING SHOULD BE VOLUNTARY AND CHEERFUL. The Macedonian churches are here commended that they gave of their own accord and besought Paul with much entreaty to accept their gift for the needy at Jerusalem. IV. Giving, we are to notice, is also AN ACT OF FELLOWSHIP. The Macedonians in sending their contribution to the Christians at Jerusalem were enjoying "fellowship in the ministering to the saints." Fellowship is an interflow of hearts and a co-operation with others. Now giving is one of the simplest and easiest methods of expressing fellowship. It is at the outset a recognition of the brotherly relation of man to man. It is an effort to share the burdens of others. We are filled with amazement at the discoveries of modern science. To-day power can be sent along a wire through our streets and into the country and utilised wherever we please. It is a blessing of much the same character that our gifts can fly here and there over the whole world as a force to relieve distress and elevate character. We cannot always go ourselves. V. We must recognise Christian giving as THE OUTCOME OF PERSONAL CONSECRATION. The wonderful liberality of the Macedonian Christians was due to the fact that "first they gave their own selves to the Lord." A friend lately received the gift of a house; what did that include? The rent, of course, that certain tenants were paying for the use of the house. The original owner, after he had given this house to another, could no longer collect the rents for himself. If we have truly given ourselves up to God in a complete consecration, that includes anything and everything of ours. If we have property, it is His; time, abilities, influence—all are His. VI. The passage declares that giving is A PROOF OF LOVE. It is no trial to us to advance the cause of Christ by our gifts if we love the Lord Jesus supremely. VII. The passage urges us to GIVE IN IMITATION OF CHRIST. The apostle reminds us that the Lord Jesus Christ, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. VIII. Once more let us notice that GIVING IS MEASURED BY WILLINGNESS, NOT BY AMOUNT. "If the readiness is there," wrote the apostle, "it is acceptable according as a man hath and not according as he hath not." We are often discouraged by the smallness of our gifts, but we need not be. (*Addison P. Foster.*) *Ancient charity the rule and reproof of modern*:—A puny faith begets a sickly charity. In nothing

is the faith of our day set in stronger contrast with the faith of the first Christians than in this its most essential fruit. You are accustomed for the confirmation of your faith, your discipline, your worship, to go back to the first ages and to find your pattern there. Are you as ready to go back to them to learn the rule and practice of true charity? The gospel is the revelation of the perfect will of God, made, once for all, to all mankind. It has but one rule, then, for every place and for all ages. Until self is conquered nothing is accomplished. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price," is the first lesson in the Christian school. How can it be otherwise? When did love ever seek its own? The case of the Macedonian Christians teems with instruction for us all. The first reception of the gospel was visited everywhere with persecution. Saint was synonymous with sufferer. Wherever the storm raged highest, love was the most lavish of its treasures. Distance made no difference. The "one faith" made for all "one heart." At this time the poor Christians at Jerusalem were the objects of especial interest. The apostle's tender heart yearned to his brethren of the flesh, and, writing to the Church at Corinth, he pleads their cause with all his own inimitable eloquence. He writes from Macedonia. Compared with that at Corinth, the churches in this province at Philippi, at Thessalonica, at Berea, were poor in this world's goods. But they were "rich in faith." He holds them up, therefore, as an ensample to their rich brethren, "to provoke them to good works." 1. That a charitable disposition is the gift of God—"the grace of God bestowed on the churches"—who sends His Holy Ghost, and pours into all hearts that will receive it, "that most excellent gift of charity." 2. That it is a source of pure and rich enjoyment to its possessor, "the abundance of their joy," the apostle calls it, "twice blessed," in the phrase of our great poet. 3. That its exercise, where it exists, is not repressed by poverty, not even "deep poverty, in a great trial of affliction." 4. That it waits not to be asked, but is "willing of itself." 5. That its tendency is always to exceed, rather than to fall short, of the true measure of ability, overflowing in the riches of its liberality, not only "according to" its power, but "beyond" its "power." 6. That it counts the opportunity of exercise a favour done to it, "praying us, with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift." 7. That this will only be so when the heart has been surrendered, as "a living sacrifice," and then will always be, first giving "their own selves to the Lord, and" then "to us, by the will of God." (*Sermons by American Clergymen.*)

Pure benevolence :—This is as much a doctrine as any taught in God's Word, although it may not be so popular as some others. I. HOW DID THE MACEDONIANS GIVE? 1. In affliction. 2. In poverty. 3. In self-abnegation. They gave more than they were able to give. 4. In willingness. Not grudgingly—"Praying us with much entreaty." 5. Beyond expectation—"Not as we hoped." II. TO WHOM DID THEY GIVE? 1. To Corinth; that was Home Missions. 2. To Jerusalem; that was Foreign Missions. III. WHAT DID THEY GIVE? 1. Their own selves. 2. Their money. IV. WHY DID THEY GIVE? I. They were moved by what Christ had sacrificed for them. 2. They "gave to God." (*Homilist.*)

Money :—Money is usually a delicate topic to handle in the Church, and we may count ourselves happy in having two chapters from the pen of St. Paul, in which he treats at large of a collection. We see the mind of Christ applied in them to a subject that is always with us, and sometimes embarrassing; and if there are traces here and there that embarrassment was felt even by the apostle, they only show more clearly the wonderful wealth of thought and feeling which he could bring to bear upon an ungrateful theme. Consider only the variety of lights in which he puts it, and all of them ideal. "Money," as such, has no character, and so he never mentions it. But he calls the thing which he wants "a grace," "a service," "a communion in service," "a munificence," "a blessing," "a manifestation of love." The whole resources of Christian imagination are spent in transfiguring, and lifting into a spiritual atmosphere, a subject on which even Christian men are apt to be materialistic. We do not need to be hypocritical when we speak about money in the Church; but both the charity and the business of the Church must be transacted as Christian, and not as secular affairs. (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

Vers. 2-4. How that in a great trial . . . the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty.—*The poverty of the Macedonians* :—The condition of Greece in the time of Augustus was one of desolation and distress. It had suffered severely by being the seat of the successive civil wars between Cæsar and Pompey, between the Triumvirs and Brutus and Cassius, and, lastly, between Augustus and Antonius.

Besides, the country had never recovered from the long series of miseries which had succeeded and accompanied its conquest by the Romans; and between those times and the civil contest between Pompey and Cæsar, it had been again exposed to all the evils of war when Sylla was disputing the possession of it with the general Mithridates. . . . The provinces of Macedonia and Achaia, when they petitioned for a diminution of their burdens, in the reign of Tiberius, were considered so deserving of compassion that they were transferred for a time from the jurisdiction of the Senate to that of the Emperor (as involving less heavy taxation). (*T. Arnold, D.D.*) *The best law of liberality* :—“It has been frequently wished by Christians,” says the late Dr. Payson, of America, “that there were some rule laid down in the Bible, fixing the proportion of their property which they ought to contribute to religious uses. This is as if a child should go to his father, and say, ‘Father, how many times in the day must I come to you with some testimonial of my love? How often will it be necessary to show my affection for you?’ The father would of course reply, ‘Just as often as your feelings prompt you, my child, and no oftener.’ Just so, Christ says to His people, ‘Look at Me, and see what I have done and suffered for you, and then give Me just what you think I deserve. I do not wish anything forced.’” (*Christian Herald.*)

Ver. 5. And . . . first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.—*The best donation* :—Here we see Paul disappointed, though he was never discontented. “This they did, not as we hoped.” Paul’s disappointment was concerning money, although that was a thing the apostle never cared about at all. But his expectations were not realised on this occasion because they were exceeded. He had only hoped that they would give a little, for they were not rich people; but their liberality was up to the utmost limit of their power, “yea, and beyond their power.” Our gifts are not to be measured by their amount, but by the surplus kept in our own hand. Not only did these Macedonian believers give much, but “they were willing of themselves.” The apostle did not have to organise a “Fancy Fair” to wheedle the money out of them, nor even to urge them to their duty. But these Macedonians gave more than money: they gave themselves. This was the best donation; better even than the two mites of the poor widow. She gave her living; but they gave their life.

I. THESE PEOPLE ARE AN EXAMPLE TO US. The great works of the world are not done by the great people of the world; but as the tiny coral insects, patiently working unseen, produce large results, it often happens that the weakest brethren bestow large blessings. They are an example because—1. They followed the right order. They did the first thing first. “They first gave their own selves to the Lord.” It spoils even good things when you reverse the right order, and put the cart before the horse. Did you ever hear of the servant who first dusted the room and then swept it? This is the first thing, because—(1) It is of the first importance. If you are Christ’s, join Christ’s people; but the first thing is, see to it that you are Christ’s. Everything else is a poor second in comparison with this. (2) It makes the second thing valid. If it does not come first, the second is good for nothing. The man who gives himself to the people of God, before giving himself first to God, does wrong to God, to the Church, and to himself, and is thus a threefold offender. (3) It leads to the second. These Macedonians would never have given themselves to the Church if they had not first given themselves to God; for in those days to join the Church meant shame, persecution, and frequently death. 2. They were free in what they did. They “first gave.” The only pressure put upon them was that which made them willing in the day of God’s power. The religion which is pressed by surroundings, friends, or the demands of society is not worth having. They gave themselves, also, wholly and unreservedly. This is proved by the fact that their money followed the gift of their own selves. 3. They acted in obedience to “the will of God.” (1) They felt that it was right to give themselves to the Lord first, because Christ had bought them with His blood. This is the apostle’s argument (chap. 14, 15). (2) They felt the same thing about giving themselves to the apostle, and the Church. It is the will of God that you who love Him should be numbered with His people. It is for your comfort, growth, preservation. You owe something to the Church. By its means the preaching of the gospel has been kept alive in the world. Through its preaching you have been converted. (3) So also in regard to helping the poor. Christ is the poor man’s truest Friend; and those who give themselves to Christ must give of their substance to the poor, and thus lay up “treasure in heaven.” **II. LET**

US FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE. 1. Give yourself to the Lord. Do not wait to make yourself better, or to feel better. Until you have given yourself to Him, He cannot accept any other offering. Unless you are really Christ's, you cannot be truly happy. Nor can we be safe. Only His power can save us from our adversary, the devil. Some of us gave ourselves to Christ forty years ago, some thirty; some twenty; some ten; some only quite lately. Well, do you wish to run back? 2. Give yourself to the Church. (1) Not that you will find it perfect. If I had waited till I had found one that was perfect, I should never have joined one at all; and if I had found one, it would not have been perfect after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us. (2) How else is there to be a Church in the earth? If it is right for any one to refrain from membership in the Church, it is right for every one, and then the testimony of God would be lost to the world. (3) It is due to our fellow-workers. Some of them are fainting for want of helpers. It is a hot autumn day, and a man is reaping; the sweat pours from his face, and he fears that he will never get to the end of the field; and all the time you are pleasantly occupied leaning over a gate, and saying to yourself, "That is an uncommonly good labourer." Or, perhaps, instead of doing that, you are saying, "Why, he does not handle the sickle properly! I could show him a better way of reaping." The work of the Church is generally left to a few earnest folk. Is that right? (4) Think again, what a lack of fellowship there will be if those who have given themselves to the Lord do not also give themselves to His people. Possibly you ask, "What should I gain by joining the Church?" That is a miserable question to put. Do you know how much you will lose by not joining the Church? You will lose—(a) The satisfaction of having done your Lord's will. (b) The joy of fellowship with your brethren. (c) The opportunity of helping by your example the weak ones of the flock. 3. Give yourself both to the Lord and to His Church. Put the two together, and thus begin to place yourself wholly in the line of God's will. Do this—(1) That you may bear witness for Christ. Here are certain people who, with all their faults, are the true followers of Christ. Join them, and say, "I, too, am a follower of Christ." That is what church membership means. (2) To spread the gospel. Everybody is needed in this service to-day; for the clear light of the gospel is sadly obscured in many places. (3) To maintain the Church. Nothing in the world is dearer to God's heart than His Church; therefore, being His, let us also belong to it, that by our prayers, gifts, labours, we may strengthen it. (4) That you may grow in love, and continue to prove your love to your Lord and His Church. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Dedication of ourselves to God :—I. TO CONSIDER WHAT IS NECESSARILY SUPPOSED IN THE EXERCISE HERE MENTIONED. 1. We would observe that this giving of ourselves to the Lord must certainly suppose our having cordially believed on and embraced the Lord Jesus Christ, with our whole heart and soul, in all His saving offices and relations. 2. It supposeth our having, by grace, made a free and hearty choice of God in Christ as our God and portion (Psa. lxxiii. 26; xvi. 1). 3. It supposeth our hearty approbation and embracing of God's well-ordered Covenant (2 Sam. xxiii. 5).

II. WHAT MAY BE IMPLIED IN GIVING OURSELVES UNTO THE LORD. And on this we would notice—1. That there are some things which cannot, strictly speaking, be said to be this giving of ourselves to the Lord. 2. What of ourselves we are to give unto the Lord; and—3. Upon what grounds and principles we should thus give ourselves unto the Lord. 1. It cannot properly be said that we can, by any act or disposition of our own, make ourselves to be God's creatures; for no creature can give existence to itself; He made us, and not we ourselves. 2. Neither can we, by any act of our own wills or exercise of our own power, make ourselves God's redeemed. 3. Neither can we, by any act of our own, make ourselves more to be God's than we were before, nor add anything to the moral obligations we were under, antecedent to any such giving of ourselves; for, by our very nature, we should be wholly for God. 1. It implieth our giving all the powers and faculties of our souls to God. 2. It implieth that we give our hearts to God. 3. It implieth that we give our consciences to God—give them up wholly to His will and authority. Some give their consciences to their friends. 4. All real Christians give their wills to God to be wholly directed and influenced by His authority, and they firmly resolve to have no will but His. 5. Real Christians give all the authority, power, and influence God has given them wholly to His service, whether it be as a head of a family, an elder, a minister, or a magistrate, to be all employed in the service and on the side of religion. 6. We should, and all real Christians do, give their name and reputation to the Lord. 7. Real Christians give their walk and conversation to the Lord,

aiming by grace to conform their external walk to the letter of the law, and their internal walk agreeably to the Spirit of God's holy law. 8. Real Christians give their spirits to the Lord, that is, the temper, frame, and disposition of their souls. Oh, how many are a disgrace to religion by their haughty, stiff, untractable spirits and dispositions. 9. Real Christians will give unto the Lord all they have—the substance the Lord has made them stewards of. 10. As said before, real Christians give their bodies, and all the members thereof, to the Lord. 11. Christians should, and real Christians do, give their time to the Lord; for as all the time they have is from the Lord, it is surely their duty to dedicate it to Him, to be employed in His service. III. Which was to consider UPON WHAT GROUND REAL CHRISTIANS GIVE THEMSELVES UNTO THE LORD. And—1. Real Christians give themselves to the Lord upon the ground of God's giving Himself in Christ unto them, to be their God and portion; "I will be your God." 2. Real Christians give themselves to the Lord, on the ground of God Incarnate giving Himself for them; "He suffered the just for the unjust." 3. They give themselves to the Lord, upon the ground of a three-one God giving Himself to them. 4. They give themselves to the Lord on the ground of the Covenant, fulfilled in all its legal conditions, as ratified in and with the blood of Christ (Ezek. xvi. 6; Isa. lv. 1, 3, 4). 5. They give themselves to the Lord upon the ground of the promise. 6. Real Christians give themselves to the Lord on the ground of the sweet, efficacious, and powerful influences of the Spirit of all grace. 7. Real Christians give themselves unto the Lord on the ground of its being the will and command of the Lord, and in obedience to His authority; and without this all the other grounds would be to no purpose. IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN IS TO GIVE HIMSELF UNTO THE LORD. And—1. The Christian is to give himself unto the Lord in faith. 2. The Christian must do it with knowledge and understanding. 3. The Christian is to do this evangelically, that is, upon gospel principles, in a gospel spirit, and to gospel uses and ends. 4. Real Christians give themselves to the Lord in love. It is not a work of their understandings only, but also of the heart—of the whole soul. 5. They do it publicly, openly, and avowedly. Application: 1. Hence we may learn who they are, who we may expect will give themselves unto the servants of the Lord, and yield a cordial subjection to every ordinance of the Lord. They are just such as have first given themselves unto the Lord. 2. Hence we may learn in what sense, and upon what grounds, and how far Christians are to give themselves unto the servants of the Lord, even to the Apostles of the Lord, in conformity with His will and command. They are to do so in so far, and no farther than as they keep by the will of the Lord revealed in His Word. 3. We may learn that as real Christians ought not, so neither will they be averse to, nor backward in giving themselves unto the Lord. (*Alex. Dick.*) *Self-dedication to God*:—Such is the instructive representation here set before us of the faithful servants of Jesus Christ in Macedonia. The contrast stated in the second verse of this chapter, between their inward feelings and their outward circumstances, is inimitably beautiful, and shows what mighty things the grace of God can accomplish. Here your contemplations are naturally directed to the powerful influence of the gospel at the promulgation of Christianity. You behold the heathen nations lying in darkness and the shadow of death. They awake to newness of life; they rise to active exertions in the cause of God. I. TO SET BEFORE YOU THE EXAMPLE OF THESE MACEDONIAN CHURCHES. 1. This giving of themselves to Him implies unfeigned reliance on His infinite merits, or the unreserved surrender of their heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be by Him redeemed, renewed, and sanctified. These men of Macedonia, before their conversion to Christ, were in a state of distance and estrangement from the Divine favour. 2. Giving themselves to the Lord implies sincere dedication of their time and talents to the honour and service of that blessed Redeemer in whom they have believed. 3. Giving themselves to the Lord implies an unreserved surrender of their lot to His unerring disposal. II. TO RECOMMEND TO YOUR IMITATION THE EXAMPLE OF THE MACEDONIAN CHURCHES. 1. Your giving yourselves to the Lord is your duty. Jesus is worthy to receive all blessing, dominion, and glory; therefore it is acting a wise part to give yourselves to Him who waits to be gracious, and who most justly challenges your supreme veneration. In Himself He possesses every excellence. Angels adore Him. United with His personal excellence, contemplate the wonders of His redeeming love. 2. Your giving yourselves to the Lord is a privilege, and connected with your best interests here and hereafter. He well knows all your circumstances, weaknesses, and wants, and is able to help you in every time of need. Give yourselves then to the Lord, and He will strengthen your heart. Perhaps you may ere long be

called to difficult duties and arduous services. If you have given yourself to the Lord, you are warranted to triumph. 3. Having urged your imitation of the example mentioned in my text, from the motives of wisdom and of safety, I have only to add that solid comfort and exalted hopes are the happy consequences of giving yourselves to the Lord. I conclude by addressing myself in the improvement of this discourse. 1. To the young, vigorous, and healthy. Give yourselves this day to the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. To those who have received Christ Jesus the Lord. Renew this day your dedication of yourselves to Him. 3. To those who have devoted themselves to the God of their salvation. Resign all your interests to His unerring disposal. (*A. Bonar.*) *On dedication to God:—*I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN GIVING OURSELVES TO THE LORD? 1. He has a natural and unalienable right to us as the author of our existence. Besides this, He has redeemed us. Yet He expects that we should confirm His right to us by our own voluntary surrender. 2. We had sold ourselves to sin, and the world had too much reason to claim us for its own. To give ourselves to the Lord implies that we renounce all former dependence and attachments, and that thus disengaged from all rivals, we present our bodies and spirits an unreserved sacrifice to God. II. HOW WE ARE TO GIVE OURSELVES TO THE LORD. 1. With humility and reverence. Remember that you are engaged with the greatest Being in the universe. 2. Deliberately; with the prudence and caution of those who know what they are doing. Rash promises are seldom observed. Zeal without knowledge soon becomes cold. 3. Cheerfully; not by constraint, but willingly. Consider yourselves as going to receive, not confer, a favour; and let gratitude and joy mingle with all that you do. 4. Immediately. How long halt ye between two opinions? III. WHY THIS SHOULD BE OUR FIRST AND PRINCIPAL CONCERN. Because—1. God has the first and indisputable claim to us. 2. It may otherwise never be done. How common is it for men, when their consciences urge them to this self-dedication, to put it off to a more convenient season! 3. All other things will then succeed better. It is the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich. (*S. Lavington.*) *Consecration:—*I. FIRST, WE MUST GIVE OUR OWN SELVES. Does that mean that I am to say my prayers, read my Bible, come to Church, and do what is kind and good? Certainly. Yet you may do all this and your own self not be given. The giving of ourselves to God is, first, the present of a thoughtful mind. But, more, the giving of ourselves is the present of a loving heart. The Macedonians gave money and gave effort, but the essential point is that they “first, gave their own selves to the Lord.” An earnest Christian says: “Nearly four years ago, I was to spend the day in a large city. Before starting I said to my dear invalid sister, now in glory, ‘Can I buy anything for you, dear? I do want so much to bring you something from the city.’ She interrupted the question, saying, with such a sweet, yearning look, ‘Nothing, dear. Do not bring anything. I only want you. Come home as soon as you can.’” She goes on to say: “The tender words rang in my ears all the day, and oh, how often since her bright entrance within the gates have her touching words and loving look returned to my memory.” Let us ask ourselves if this is not what our Saviour desires of us. Christ knows that if He gets any one’s love He gets that one’s self and service. If we give the heart it follows that we have made a present of ourself once for all. Is it not a shabby thing when giving a present to be thinking how much you will need to give and how much you may keep for yourself? Is it not even more shabby when you have once given to be seeking back what you have given? There is nothing of that when the gift really comes from love. The heart given, and once for all, without reserve, then there may follow all the active effort we desire to give. II. THE REASON WHY WE SHOULD GIVE OURSELVES. 1. Because it is right. “We are not our own, we are bought with a price.” 2. It is for our highest happiness. To be sure, there is renunciation in consecration, but there is also rich compensation. 3. For the world’s good and happiness. The Macedonians first gave their own selves, then their liberality and good works abounded towards others. The world needs heart-enlisted Christians. (*The Preacher’s Assistant.*)

Vers. 7, 8. Therefore, as ye abound in everything.—*The grace of liberality:—*I. WHY WE OUGHT TO GIVE A PORTION OF OUR SUBSTANCE TO THE LORD. It is a duty clearly enjoined in Scripture. The practice of giving to the Lord began very early, for we read that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord, and that Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof. And why is this duty enjoined in Scripture? There are three reasons for this. 1. To remind us of our dependence on God as our Creator and bountiful benefactor. 2.

To remind us of our obligation to God as our Redeemer. 3. To promote our spiritual welfare. We are naturally selfish, and wish to retain in our own possession whatever gifts God has conferred upon us. II. WHAT OR HOW MUCH WE SHOULD GIVE. Whatever we may think of the tenth or of the fifth, or of the early Christian examples, one thing is certain, that if our giving is to be acceptable to God it must cost us something. The measure with too many is what they can give without self-denial, or without in any way affecting their comforts or luxuries. This is not giving in the Scriptural sense. Let us take the Divine measure, "as God hath prospered us," and use it faithfully with the hand of love. III. WHEN WE SHOULD GIVE. Is there any Scriptural rule or suggestion on this point? (1 Cor. xvi. 2). Some people profess to despise system in religious matters, and look upon it as savouring of legality. In worldly affairs system is called "the soul of business and the secret of success." If, then, we recognise its value in everything else, why despise it in giving to the Lord? IV. HOW OR IN WHAT SPIRIT WE SHOULD GIVE. (*T. Moir, M.A.*) *Christian liberality*:—Consider the duty of consecrating a portion of our substance to purposes of benevolence. I. THE REASON OF THE DUTY. 1. It is the natural issue of the spirit of benevolence. God is love, and he that is begotten of Him in His own image must have a loving heart. Love delights to give—it is its nature to give; it needs no specific commandment—it is a commandment unto itself. 2. To the same result are we led, I remark further, by a regard for God's glory. 3. This brings us to mention, as another incentive to Christian liberality, the love of God's truth. 4. I add here another motive—it is that of gratitude. 5. It is a further plea for the duty before us that it benefits those who perform it. A bountiful spirit leads to temporal advantage. It favours industry, for he who delights in giving liberally will the more readily toil that he may have something to give. For a like reason it is conducive to economy. Selfishness more or less deranges our powers, and, among other harms, it puts the judgment in peril. Benevolence restores the balance of the mind. Many a man has become a bankrupt who, if the sweet spirit of charity had ruled him, raising him above grovelling aims, presenting things in their true relative importance, and allaying the fever of financial ambition, would have gone in comfortable solvency to his grave. Habits of beneficence secure, besides, the goodwill of men. But of far greater consequence is the influence of Christian liberality on our spiritual well-being. It is a precious means of grace. II. From the reason of the duty before us we pass now to the MANNER of performing it. 1. We should give intelligently. 2. We should give cheerfully. 3. Of great importance is it that we give frequently. 4. We should give systematically. III. We advert, in the last place, to the MEASURE of our benevolence. The language of our text is, "see that ye abound in this grace." What a man can do, and what abounding is, must depend on three conditions, jointly considered—his capital, his income, and his necessary expenses. (*A. D. Smith, D.D.*) *To prove the sincerity of your love*.—*The test of love*:—*Note*—I. THAT LOVE IS THE ESSENCE OF REAL RELIGION. What we see is like the fruit of the vine, but there is a root. The gracious principle, though hidden, lives, grows, and operates. Observe—1. Love Divine enkindles it. 2. The state of the world expands it. 3. The Divine glory inflames it. II. THAT THE GENUINE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN LOVE IS TESTED BY CIRCUMSTANCES. These circumstances are like balances to the coin, a storm to the ship, the fire to metal, or a battle to the soldier. *E.g.*, there is—1. The necessity of self-denial and bearing the cross. Remember Paul's conversion and subsequent life. We cannot serve God and mammon. 2. The rival claims of the world and the worship of God. There are earthly claims. Must not be allowed to stand in opposition, nor to monopolise that which belongs to God. 3. The requirement of means for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. Conclusion—1. Let us fairly prove the state of our hearts. 2. Let us carefully test all our performances. 3. Let us contemplate the decisions of the judgment day. (*Congregational Pulpit.*) *Love to Christ proved*:—I. THE CLAIM OF CHRIST TO OUR LOVE. It is founded—1. On His Divine excellence; and the relation of all that excellence to us in the character of our Saviour. 2. On His deeds of benevolence and mercy, His mediatorial work and office. 3. By the personal benefits we have derived and are daily deriving from Him. 4. It is discerned in the provision He has made for our everlasting happiness and perfection. II. THE NATURE OF THE LOVE HE CLAIMS FROM US. 1. It must be supreme. 2. It must be constant. 3. It must be practical. "Let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth." III. HOW CHRIST TRIES THE LOVE OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. By the doctrines and precepts of His Word. Proud reason finds it hard to bow to some

truths. 2. By the circumstances of His cause in the world. 3. By the condition of some of His people. Many of them are in want and sickness and mental distress. 4. Our love to Christ is tried by the special circumstances of our own lot. IV. THE MARKS WHICH PROVE OUR LOVE FALSE AND INADEQUATE. We can have no true love to Christ—1. If we have not committed our souls to Him. 2. If we are cherishing secret sin. 3. If our attachment to any earthly object causes us to violate His commands. 4. If we are unwilling to deny ourselves for His honour or the service of His cause. 5. If we are unwilling to depart from this life that we may be for ever with Him. (*The Evangelist.*)

Ver. 9. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich.—*What we know through knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*:—I. HOW DO WE KNOW IT. "Ye know." 1. There are records which establish the fact—the gospels, epistles, &c., the burden of all of which is, "He was rich, yet for your sakes," &c. The contents may be classified thus—(1) Earthly facts in the realm of history (Acts x. 38). (2) Antecedent facts in the realm of testimony (John xvi. 28). (3) The meaning of the facts in the realm of inspiration (1 Tim. i. 15). (4) The after issues of the facts in the realm of experience (Eph. ii. 13). 2. There are the fathers who accepted and expounded the fact. 3. Through all the entanglements of controversy in the history of the Church this fact and doctrine remains undisturbed. 4. The continuity of the Church has no other solution but this. "He was rich," &c. II. WHAT IS THE FACT WHICH WE KNOW. 1. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. His pre-existence (John xvii. 5)—rich in the Father's love and in the plenitude of power. 3. His incarnation (John i. 14). "He became poor." He descended into the lowest rank amongst created intelligences, and in that rank was the poorest of the poor. 4. The purpose. "That we might be made rich." He descended from His throne that we might ascend to it. 5. This was all prompted by grace. Infinite love finds its highest joy in giving itself to enrich others. III. WHAT DO WE COME TO KNOW THROUGH KNOWING THIS? There are many truths which are valuable, not merely in themselves, but also on account of the further knowledge we acquire through them—*e.g.*, to know how to secure the best microscope is of value in this sense, so with the telescope. There are four fields of knowledge opened up by our knowledge of the grace of Christ. 1. The infinite love of God (Rom. v. 8). 2. The value of man in the eye of Heaven. 3. The Divine consecration of self-sacrifice. 4. The Divine lever by which God would lift the world. IV. THIS ADDITION TO OUR KNOWLEDGE OUGHT TO BE THE MEANS OF GREATER FULLNESS IN OUR LIFE. Knowing this fact our response should be—1. Loyalty. 2. Joy. 3. Elevation and holiness. 4. Earnestness in commending it to others. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*:—I. THE ORIGINAL GREATNESS OF CHRIST. "He was rich." When? Not during His life upon the earth. It could not be said that He was born rich. Neither did He acquire wealth. It must have been then at some other time. We take, therefore, the term "rich" to designate "the glory which Christ had with the Father before the world was." Not His Godhead, but its manifested splendour. When Peter the Great wrought as a common shipwright he did not cease to be the autocrat of Russia, but his royalty was veiled. So the Lord did not lay aside His deity, but the advantages of it. II. THE LOWLINESS OF HIS AFTER LOT. Marvellous condescension! III. HIS PURPOSE. Three things are implied—1. That men are poor in respect of the spiritual riches. Intellectually the mind of the sinner may be well furnished, but he has no knowledge of God, no peace with God, no portion in God. 2. Christ became poor in order to enrich men, to bring us pardon, purity, peace, and happiness. 3. These riches come to us through the poverty which Christ endured. He could not have enriched us if He had not thus emptied Himself, for our poverty had its root in our sin, and that sin had to be atoned for before we could be blessed (*cf.* chap. v. 21). (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The grace of Christ*:—I. A FACT STATED. That Christ being rich became poor. 1. He was rich in the possession of the ineffable glory which He had with the Father before all worlds (John xvii. 5, i. 1; Heb. ii. 14-16). Though He could not change the attributes of His nature, He suspended their glorious manifestation. This was a voluntary act; He existed in such a mode that He had the power to lay aside His effulgence. 2. He was rich not only in glory but in virtue. He was the object of supreme complacency with the Father for His immaculate perfection. This character could not be put off, yet His relative position to law was altered. Though He could not become poor in the sense of being a sinner, He did in the sense of being treated like one. He was regarded

by the law as a debtor, and His life was the forfeit of such moral poverty. II. THE DESIGN TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. "That we through His poverty might be made rich." 1. We were poor—(1) In having lost the glory and dignity with which we were originally invested. (2) In being sunk in positive and practical sin. (3) In the sense that we had nothing to pay. We were bankrupts as well as debtors. We could not answer the demands of law. 2. Christ became poor, and so made us rich—(1) By laying the foundation for our pardon in His sacrificial and vicarious death. (2) By affording a ground in virtue of which the Holy Spirit is dispensed, by whom we are renewed in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him who created us. (3) By giving us a hope of being richer in the next world than we can be in this. We now know something of "the riches of His grace," but we read also of His "riches in glory." III. THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO POSSESS OF ALL THIS. "Ye know." 1. You know it is true. This is an appeal to judgment and reason, guided by evidence in support of the truth. 2. You know it in yourselves, as enriching you now. You have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 3. You know it as the ground on which all your hopes are built for futurity, the source from which you derive grace upon earth, and to which you feel yourselves to be indebted for all the honour and glory which eternity will disclose. This is an appeal to Christian consistency, for it is only the consistent Christian that can feel the confidence that he is standing upon this rock, who can look forward now in time to what eternity will disclose. In conclusion, learn—1. The importance which it becomes us to attach to all matters which are matters of pure revelation, of which this subject is one. 2. The actual necessity that there is for the doctrines of the Cross to give coherency and consistency to the whole system of revealed truth. 3. How grace is exercised towards us; and then you learn the claims which Christ has upon our affections and our gratitude. 4. The necessity that there is for your examining into the extent, the accuracy, and the influence of your knowledge of religious truth. What a shame it would be if, when the language were addressed to you, "You know this," you were to reply, "No, I do not know it; I have never read nor thought of it." 5. That Christian morality is animated and sustained by purely Christian motives. It is very observable how Paul associates almost every moral virtue, in some way or other, with our obligations to Christ. 6. That the riches of the Church throughout eternity will bear a proportion to the poverty by which they were obtained. The Church shall be lifted so high, and her riches shall be so transcendent, as the poverty of Christ was extreme and aggravated. (*T. Binney.*) *Poverty and riches*:—It can scarcely be needful that I should bid you give your attention to these words. For we prick up our ears the moment we catch the slightest sound that seems to hold out a promise of making us rich. Will any of you tell me that you have no wish to be richer than you are? Happy are you. You must be truly rich; and you must have gained your riches in the only way in which true riches can be gained, through the grace and the poverty of Christ. I. CHRIST WAS RICH. 1. When He was with God, even from the beginning, sharing in the Divine power and wisdom and glory, and showing forth all this in creating the worlds. 2. When He said, "Let there be light." The light which has been streaming ever since in such a rich, inexhaustible flood, was merely a part of His riches. 3. When He bade the earth bring forth its innumerable varieties of herbs and plants and trees, and peopled it with living creatures, equally numerous. 4. When He made man, and gave him the wonderful gifts of feelings, affections, thought, speech, &c., when He gave him the power of knowing Him who was the Author of all things, and of doing His will. This was the crowning work in which Christ showed forth His riches; and yet in this very work before long we find a mark of poverty. For man, though made to be rich, made himself poor. He made himself poor in that he, to whom God had given the dominion over every creature, made himself subject to the creature, and chained his soul to the earth, as a dog is chained to its kennel; in that, instead of opening his soul to receive the heavenly riches wherewith God had purposed to fill it, he closed it against that riches, while he gave himself up to acquiring what he deemed far more valuable; in that, instead of lifting up and spreading out his heart and soul in adoration to God, he dwarfed and cramped them by twisting and curling all his thoughts and feelings around the puny idol, self. II. HE BECAME POOR. How? In the very act of taking our nature upon Him, in subjecting Himself to the laws of mortality, to the bonds of time and space, to the weaknesses of the flesh, to earthly life and death. Even if He had come to reign over the whole earth He would have descended from the summit of power and

riches to that which in comparison would have been miserable poverty. But then He would not have set us an example how we too are to become rich. Therefore He to whom the highest height of earthly riches would have been poverty, vouchsafed to descend to the lowest depths of earthly poverty. And at His death He vouchsafed to descend into the nethermost pit of earthly degradation, to a death whereby He was "numbered among the transgressors." III. HE BECAME POOR THAT WE THROUGH HIS POVERTY MIGHT BE RICH. Note that our poverty was twofold—that which haunted us through life in consequence of our seeking false riches, whereby we are sure to lose true riches; and that to which we become subject in death, an eternal poverty, which awaits all such as have not laid up treasure in heaven. Now—1. The example of Christ's life, if we understand it and receive its blessings into our hearts, will deliver us from that poverty which arises from our seeking after false riches. For that poverty results in no small measure from the mist which is over our eyes which keeps us from discerning the true value of things, and deludes us by outward shows. It results from our supposing that riches consists in our having worldly wealth. Yet what is the real value of this under any grievous trial? Assuredly we may say to the things of this world, "Miserable comforters are ye all." Therefore had it been possible for our Lord to be deluded by the bribe of the tempter, He would only have sunk thereby into far lower poverty than before. For He would thereby have lost that heavenly riches which lay in cleaving to the Divine word, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," &c. He would have lost the riches and the power of that word which was mightier than all the kingdoms of the earth; for it made the devil depart from Him, and angels come and minister to Him, which all the armies of all the kingdoms of the earth could not have done. This, our Lord teaches us, is true riches. Moreover our Lord's example teaches us that true riches, while it does not consist in what we have of the things of this world, does consist in what we give. Nor is this to be measured by the amount given, but by the heart which gives it. The poor widow was rich in some measure after the pattern of our Saviour Himself. She had the riches of love, of freedom from care, of a full trust in Him who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the grass of the field. Here you may see plainly how the poorest of you may become rich through Christ's poverty. 2. By the sacrifice of His death. One of His first declarations was, that the poor are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now they who have an inheritance in this are rich not for a few days or years, but to eternity. But something more is needed in order to attain it beside the mere fact of being poor. For we do not enter into that kingdom through our own poverty, but through Christ's. But when we remember Christ's poverty, when we feel that He died in order that we might live, when we know that through His precious sacrifice we are reconciled to the Father, and that, poor as we are in ourselves, and destitute of every grace, He has obtained the power of the Spirit for us, and through Him will give us grace for grace—then for the first time we find out that in Him we are truly rich. When we consider ourselves apart from Christ we are always poor—in strength, in grace, in hope. But when we have been brought by His Spirit to feel ourselves at one with Him, when we think, and pray, and act, not in our own strength, but in His, then we become partakers of those infinite riches He came to bestow. (*Archdeacon Hare.*)

The riches and poverty of Christ:—I. THE NATIVE RICHES OF CHRIST. They are the riches of God. Whatever God is, and has, "the Only-begotten of the Father" possesses. 1. These riches were first displayed in the things which He made (John i. 2; Col. i. 15-17). He is the hidden spring, the open river, and the ocean fulness of universal life and being. 2. But, whilst He is the presupposition of all things, He is also the prophecy of all things. All things look to, move towards, and only rest in Him. Creatures have latent powers that they cannot exercise, desires that they never satisfy. Man is felt and seen to be the crown of nature. But among the sons of men there is no complete man. When "the Word became flesh," human nature first became complete and crowned. 3. What then must His riches be who is the wealth of God? Riches among men are distributed. To one is given genius; to another force of character; to another social eminence; to another worldly abundance. But the native riches of our Lord is the wealth of all wealth. In Him it pleases the whole fulness of God to dwell. Consider first the earth in all its wealth of land and ocean; its production of life in all its forms; the riches of its hidden wisdom in the prevailing order of its silent forces; and the wealth of goodness displayed in the designed beneficence that constrains all things to subserve the well-being of all creatures. Then call to mind the wealth which flows in the stream of human life. From the earth we must rise to the starry heavens, and thence to

the infinite unseen beyond, before we can begin to estimate the native riches of Him of whose grace our text speaks; the "unsearchable riches" which He had with the Father before all worlds, by the possession of which it became His great work to "cause all to see," &c. (Eph. iii. 9, 10). The riches of our Lord will only be seen in the end. II. THE POVERTY HE CHOSE. To be poor, never having been anything else, can scarcely be regarded as an evil; but to become poor—how great a calamity! Yet He who was rich in all the wealth of God became poor. Consider the poverty of—1. His nature. "The Word became flesh," the frailest and most corruptible of all the forms of life. He who had life in Himself became dependent for life, and breath, and all things. He whom angels worshipped was made so much lower than they as to welcome their ministrations. He who was the bread of God became dependent upon the bread of the world. He, the Eternal Son, having "life in Himself," became partaker of a life subject to all the laws of developed existence. He who was the Wisdom of God grew in knowledge. He who was possessed of "all power" craves the sustaining fellowship of men. And He to whom all pray became Himself a man of prayer, whose prayers were agonies unto blood-sweating. 2. His circumstances. (1) The time of His birth was poor—when the degradation of His nation was complete, when Judæa wore a foreign yoke. (2) The place of His birth was in keeping with the time. (3) As He was born in poverty, so in poverty He was brought up, and in poverty He lived and died. 3. His experience. He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Now there is nothing makes us feel how utterly poor we are like sorrow. We only weep when we are at our wits' end, and our last resource has been exhausted. Jesus was "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted"; "He was numbered with transgressors." III. THE WEALTH OF HIS POVERTY. It is through His poverty that we are made rich. His riches flow to us, and become ours, through His poverty. His riches require poverty as the medium through which alone they can be given to the poor. Note—1. Its voluntariness. He became poor. By His own act "He became poor," the act of His eager love and obedience (Heb. x. 5-7). No one took from off His brow the crown of heaven, He laid it aside; no one stripped Him of His royal robes, He unrobed Himself; no one paralysed the arm of His power, of Himself He chose our weakness; He laid down the life of heaven for the life of earth, as He laid down the life of earth for the life of heaven. 2. Its vicariousness. His riches were not laid aside for the sons of light; or for the angels who kept not their first estate, but for the dust-clothed and sinful children of earth. Had our circumstances and condition, calling for His help, been the result of misfortune or ignorance, His pity were not so strange. But He became poor for sinners, for rebels, hard and unrelenting in their rebellion. "Hereby perceive we the love of God," "in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Through such poverty flow riches enough to quicken the dead in trespasses and sins. 3. The beneficence of its purpose. He does not contemplate our deliverance merely, nor our restoration to man's primitive state. He became poor that we may be rich in all the filial correspondences of the Father's wealth. "My God shall supply all your need," &c. 4. The fittingness of His poverty for the communication of His riches. We must become that which we would bless. The father makes himself a child that he may win the child's heart; the teacher makes himself one with his scholars that he may the better teach them. We must weep with those who weep if we would comfort them, and lie under the sins of sinners if we would save them from their sins. The riches of Christ's grace could only be communicated through the poverty which brought Him under our condition. "He who was rich became poor," "was compassed with our infirmity," "touched with our feeling," "tempted in all points as we are," "that we might find grace to help in every time of need," and that He might become our "eternal salvation." 5. The capacity for wealth contained in poverty. Only a nature capable of great riches can be subject to great poverty. But the depth of poverty measures the experience of the riches which deliver from its destitution. Only a creature made in the image of God, and constituted a partaker of the Divine nature, could suffer the loss of God and be "without hope in the world." And only on those who have suffered from the want of God could there be the display of His innermost riches. The deepest wants in man are met by the innermost "needs be" in God. Sin opens up and explores in the creature solemn and awful depths, but the awful depths of sin become filled with God's mercy towards sinners. (*W. Pulsford, D.D.*) *The great renunciation*:—Here we are reminded of the manifestation of the Divine love in Jesus Christ, and of the grand design of that manifestation. 1. Christ became poor in character. In the past eternity He dwelt in a

holy universe; was circled about with holy hosts; He was Himself the light in which there was no darkness at all. But He "became poor." He condescended to dwell with sinners; to become the substitute and representative of a guilty race. "He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Here is the heart of the text. "He was made sin for us who knew no sin." We all heard a few years ago of the island in the South Seas called Leper Island; all who became infected with the terrible disease in any of the adjoining islands were banished to Leper Island, and there ultimately they miserably perished. And then we were told of a priest who out of pure pity went to live in the plague spot. He was not a leper, but he cut himself off from civilisation, and was willing to share the lot of the sufferers so that he might minister to them, living with them, being buried with them. The conduct of that missionary was a reflection of the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Catholic missionary consenting to live with the leprous community could not communicate his health to them—that was utterly beyond his design and power; the fact is the priest became infected with the leprosy himself and died of it. But Christ came to heal us of our direful malady, to make us share His strong and beautiful life, to touch our lips with cleansing, to banish our corruptions, to send heavenly health through all our veins, to give to our whole being the vitality and bloom of righteousness. What is more clear than the fact that Christ has enriched the race with a new, a higher, a more powerful righteousness? When the incarnation came the world was poor enough in character. The nations had wasted their substance in riotous living, and Jew and Greek were alike hopeless and corrupt. But let us not lose ourselves in generalities. "For your sakes." The apostle individualises. Let us personally claim that grace, and although we are poor and blind and naked and defiled, He shall cleanse us from every spot, and make our raiment to be of gold and fine needlework. 2. Christ became poor in dominion. In the eternity of the past Christ sat on the throne. He was the Creator, Ruler, Heir of all things. But for "our sakes He became poor." The fact of His poverty is seen in that it was possible for Him to be tempted. He took upon Himself the form of a slave and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. "That we might become rich." That, slaves as we were, the lost kingship might be restored to us. Christ restores us to self-government. This crown of self-government has fallen from our head. We are tyrannised over by vile passions—intemperance, anger, pride, avarice—all these vices triumph over us, and make a show of us openly. Christ once more puts the fallen crown upon our head. He restores in us the government of God. Christ gives to us self-mastery—first and grandest of coronations. Christ restores to us the government of nature. In the beginning man was the vicegerent of God. But that dominion has been broken, and instead of man ruling nature, nature has ruled man, affrighted him, crushed him. But as man recovers self-rule he mysteriously acquires power over all things. Do we not see this in the progress of our Christian civilisation? As men master themselves their relation to nature is changed, they lift themselves out of the stream of physical forces, and attain a wider freedom. Science is only possible through character, and as Christ makes us free from the power of evil we lay our hand on the sea, direct the lightning, and inherit the riches of the world. Christ restores us to an abiding government in the kingdom of the future. We read much in the New Testament about the saints reigning as kings. Christ is to be King in the world of the future, and all who are loyal to Him shall share in the undisputed and everlasting sovereignty. 3. Christ became poor in blessedness. Revelation brings the Deity before us as infinitely blissful. In God is the unutterable bliss springing from perfect knowledge, absolute will, ineffable love, everlasting righteousness. Here, once more, for "our sakes He became poor." And how profoundly poor! He became poor "that we might become rich." What an extraordinary gladness throbbed in the apostles—everywhere in the New Testament we feel the pulsations of a mighty joy! And so it is still with all those whose lives are hid with Christ in God. In the midst of a world of sorrow and death He brings to us the blessedness of celestial worlds. A little while ago I read of a gentleman in the heart of a great city listening to a telephone, when he was surprised to hear the rich music of forest birds. It seemed that the wire passed through the country, and so some way caught the music of the far-away woods and transmitted it to the heart of the black toiling city. Christ has restored the missing chords between heaven and earth, and now in a world of care and conflict, of suffering and tears, we are delighted to catch the echoes of far-off music, to taste the joy unspeakable and full of glory which belongs to the perfect universe. Many of us are poor enough in joy.

but it is not our own fault. If we would only claim more of that glorious grace which Christ gives, our peace should flow as a river, our hearts be as a watered garden whose waters fail not. 4. Christ became poor in life. He was rich in life. "He only hath immortality." But for "our sakes He became poor." He shared our mortality. The Rose of Sharon faded as other roses do; the Lily of the Valley withered as lilies nipped by the frost. He did not even attain the poor threescore years and ten. The text assumes the poverty of humanity. Yes, we are poor, paupers indeed. There is a deep destitution under all our displays of knowledge, power, happiness, character. The enrichment of humanity is through the humiliation of Christ. In Him the riches of eternity are poured into the bankrupt life of man. There is no other way to true riches but through Him. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

Poverty and riches with Christ:—I. CHRIST BECAME POOR. 1. This cannot mean that He ceased to be the owner and Lord of all things. That sort of limited ownership which the law gives me over what is mine I can renounce. Not so with the absolute ownership of God. The use of them He may lend; His own proprietorship in them He cannot alienate. Still less is it possible to strip oneself of those moral and personal qualities which make up the wealth of one's very nature. Could a Divine Person cease to carry in Himself the unsearchable riches of Divine power, or wisdom, or goodness? 2. Christ became poor in the sense of forbearing to claim His wealth or to avail Himself of it. The nobleman, *e.g.*, who leaves behind him his estates, conceals his rank, and goes abroad to maintain himself on what he can earn by daily labour, becomes poor, not by loss indeed, but by renunciation. What motive could be purer than this, "For your sakes"? What design nobler than this, "That ye through His poverty might be rich"? So Christ's poverty was not an outward condition so much as an inward act. At the most the outward condition only mirrored the inward act. All things were not less truly His own than before; only He refused to assert His right to them, or to enjoy their benefit. And why? That He might make Himself in all things like unto us, His human and fallen brethren. (1) We are creatures who hang upon God with absolute dependence. Is not that poverty—to be derived from, sustained, and led by another? To this Christ stooped. Though inherently equal to the Father, He consented to occupy the position of a creature's inferiority: "My Father is greater than I." Though Maker of the universe, He consented to receive His ability from God: "The Son can do nothing of Himself." Of the infinite treasures which were His, He would not turn so much as a stone to bread to feed His own hunger. (2) There are restrictions under which we are bound to act—the confining bonds of law. No man is free to do whatever he likes. Against this curbing and prescribing law, whether of morals or of social custom, all men fret; and Jewish men in particular were saddled with a yoke of ancient prescriptions peculiarly vexatious. To all this Christ submitted. He became too poor to have a will of His own or be a law unto Himself, for He was "made under the law." (3) Sin has wrought for us a deeper poverty than God meant for men. There is no shame in having nothing but what our Father gives; no shame in being free only to do His will. But there is shame in wearing a life forfeit to the law through criminal transgression. This is poverty indeed. Yet Jesus walked on earth with a forfeited life because He had devoted it to the law. Here was the acme of self-impoverishment. He held not even Himself to be properly His own. On the contrary, He held Himself to be a ransom for our transgression, a price due, a Person doomed. II. IT IS THIS SPONTANEOUS ABERGATION WHICH GIVES US THE MORAL KEY TO THAT MYSTERIOUS ATONING LIFE AND DEATH OF THE SON OF GOD. In this act there lay the perfection both of that love which gives and of that humility which stoops and veils itself. It forms the most consummate antithesis to the immoral attitude taken up by our fallen world. This world, being indeed helpless and dependent, yet renounces God, asserts itself, dreams of self-sufficiency. For an answer to such sinful folly, the Son of God, being indeed rich, becomes as poor as the world is. He stoops to show us men our true place. We shall reap no profit from this adopted poverty of His unless we learn of Him how to be poor in spirit before God. For me as for Him the pathway is one of renunciation. My would-be independence of God I must frankly abandon. God's claims I must own as Jesus Christ owned them in my name. The sentence which righteously condemns me I must accept as He accepted it for me. The sacrifice of His costly life I must regard as the due equivalent for my own life, forfeit for my guilt. Then I, too, am poor. I, too, owe everything to God. I am so poor that I am not even my own any more, but His who gave Himself for me; so poor that I do not live any more, for I died in His death; or, if I live, it is no more I, but Christ who

liveth in me. III. THIS CHRIST-LIKE PATH CONDUCTS TO TRUE ENRICHMENT. Compare the Jesus whom John describes in chap. xix. with the Jesus whom John describes in Rev. i. On the pavement, in the prætorium, and on the Cross, He let them strip Him. Was ever man stripped so poor as this one, buried at last in a borrowed grave? Look up and see the vision of Patmos. The same Man; but His eyes are a flame of fire, &c. Has not His path through uttermost poverty been a path to boundless wealth? Ponder this comment of St. Paul, and you will know what I mean (Phil. vi. 6-11). Such glory as He had with the Father before the world was, He first laid aside that He might be made like unto us, inglorious in all things. Then when He stood among us as our priestly Head on the night when He was betrayed, He asked the Father to give Him back of His grace that same glory which He would not claim by right, saying, "Now, O Father, do Thou glorify Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was!" Why does He thus stoop to be a petitioner for His own? Because He would receive it on such terms that He may share it with us. Hear Him add (as one who believes that he has what he has asked), "The glory which Thou hast given to Me, I have given to them." (*J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*) *The poverty of Christ the source of heavenly riches*:—I. THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. The term "grace" is of common use in the Scriptures, the meaning of which is determined by its connection. It sometimes implies wisdom, "Let no corrupt communication," &c. (Eph. iv. 29). It also signifies power, "My grace is sufficient for thee," &c. (2 Cor. xii. 9). But generally it imports benevolence, favour, love, or goodwill (Rom. v. 20; 1 Tim. i. 14). This grace is—1. Free and generous in its nature. Grace must be liberal and spontaneous, otherwise it is no more grace. Had the conduct of Christ towards man been the result of any overwhelming necessity, it could not, with any propriety, have been denominated grace. All the movements of the Deity are voluntary and free. God never acts necessarily. 2. Unsolicited and unsought on the part of man. 3. Disinterested in its character. Human beings are selfish in their actions. Self-interest sways the multitude, and it is difficult to divest ourselves of this principle: we have generally some interest in all we do, either present pleasure or the expectation of future reward. But the Lord Jesus is the supreme and eternal God, who is infinitely removed from all those low and sordid views by which man is actuated. His actions are perfectly disinterested. 4. Distinguishing in its operations. Two orders of intelligent beings offended their Maker, angels and men. But the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was displayed to man—fallen, miserable, rebellious man. 5. This grace was made known. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." God hath gloriously displayed it. It was made known to our primitive parents almost as soon as sin entered into the world. It was revealed to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to Isaiah, and all the prophets; for "to Him," namely, to Christ, "give all the prophets witness" (Acts x. 43). II. CONSIDER THE DISPLAY OF THIS GRACE. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." 1. He possessed all the incommunicable perfections of the Deity. 2. He possessed all the moral perfections of the Deity. Now thus think upon Christ. (1) Consider the grandeur of His abode. (2) Consider the extent of His dominion. (3) Consider the dignity of His titles. (4) Consider the number and splendour of His attendants. (5) Consider the profusion of His liberality. See how He scatters His bounty in every direction. There is not a particle of animated matter that He does not feed. The riches of Christ are widely different from the riches which men possess. (a) His riches are His own, exclusively and eternally. Ours are derived from others. The riches of Christ are His, not derived, not procured, but essential to His nature. (b) Christ's riches are undiminishable and inexhaustible. Ours may be squandered and exhausted. (c) The riches of Christ are illimitable and incomprehensible. But He "became poor," that is—1. He assumed our nature in its lowliest and most degraded state. 2. He suffered the penalty due to our sin. III. THE DESIGN FOR WHICH THE GRACE OF CHRIST WAS DISPLAYED. 1. That we might be rich in grace; rich in all the fruits of righteousness. 2. Rich in glory. We shall inherit a glorious place (2 Pet. i. 11). We shall be associated with glorious society, and be invested with glorious privileges. These are the true riches in opposition to those of the world, which are treacherous, false, and deceitful. Satisfactory, in opposition to earthly wealth, which cannot satisfy the infinite desires of the mind (Luke xii. 15). Imperishable, in opposition to those which wax old and perish in the using. They are riches attainable by all. The good things of this world are

possessed by few. The connection between the poverty of Christ and the riches of the Christian may be easily discovered. (1) By the humiliation, sufferings, and death of Christ an atonement was made for sin, and a way of access to God made plain. God is the chief good: man by sin became an alien from Him. (2) By the atonement of Christ all the blessings of grace and glory are procured for us. (a) From the subject before us we infer how deeply we are indebted to Christ. (b) We see with what confidence we may come to Christ. (c) We discover from the text that it is our privilege, no less than our duty, to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*R. Treffry.*)

Genuine philanthropy:—In the context we have three facts in relation to Christian philanthropy. 1. That true love for humanity is essentially associated with piety. Paul is speaking of the kindness which the church at Macedonia had shown to the sufferers of the mother-church at Jerusalem. The affection that binds to God will bind to the race. 2. That true love for humanity is an earnest element of character. These Macedonians seem to have been poor and afflicted, probably the subjects of persecution (ver. 2). Their benevolence was not a mere sentiment. 3. That true love for man has in Christianity the highest example. "Ye know the grace," &c. Note that genuine philanthropy—I. IS IDENTICAL WITH THE LOVE DEVELOPED BY CHRIST. This grace of Christ was—1. All-embracing. There are some who sympathise with the physical woes of man and overlook the spiritual; some feel for a few, and are regardless of others. But Christ regards the bodies and souls of all men. 2. Perfectly disinterested. 3. Self-sacrificing. II. SACRIFICES THE MATERIAL FOR THE SPIRITUAL. "He who was rich," &c. III. AIMS SUPREMELY AT THE PROMOTION OF SPIRITUAL WEALTH. "That ye through His poverty might be rich." Spiritual wealth is—1. Absolutely valuable. Material wealth is not so. In some countries and ages it is not of much value. Of what advantage would a handsome fortune be to a savage? But spiritual wealth is valuable here, everywhere, and for ever. 2. Is essentially connected with happiness. There is often great trial in the getting and the keeping of worldly wealth. 3. Is within the reach of all; earthly wealth is not. Conclusion: Observe—(1) That to promote moral wealth requires the sacrifice of secular wealth. Let us suppose that Jesus had not become poor. What would have been the result? The material must be given up to the spiritual. (2) That no sacrifice is too great to promote spiritual wealth. "Christ gave Himself." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

On the benefits derived from the humiliation of Jesus Christ:—I. LET US CONSIDER THE ORIGINAL CONDITION OF THE PERSON HERE MENTIONED. "He was rich." II. HOW THIS ILLUSTRIOUS PERSON ACCOMPLISHED THE PLAN OF OUR REDEMPTION. "He became poor." III. TO CONSIDER THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THESE SUFFERINGS WERE ENDURED. "For your sakes He became poor." IV. THE BENEFITS WHICH FLOW THROUGH THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST. 1. The view which has been taken of Divine grace should awaken your gratitude. 2. The view taken of Divine grace is calculated to beget your confidence. 3. The view taken of Divine grace should constrain you to the diligent use of all the appointed means of grace and salvation. (*W. Thornton.*)

Christ's motive and ours (text and Phil. i. 29):—1. The true test of any action lies in its motive. Many a deed, which seems to be glorious, is really ignoble because it is done with a base intention; while other actions, which appear to be poor, are full of the glory of a noble purpose. The mainspring of a watch is the most important part of it; the spring of an action is everything. 2. The less of self in any effort, the nobler it is. A great work, undertaken from selfish motives, is much less praiseworthy than the feeble endeavour put forth to help other people. 3. We are often told that we should live for the good of others, and we ought to heed the call; but there is so little in our fellow-men to call forth the spirit of self-sacrifice, that if we have no higher motive, we should soon become tired of our efforts on their behalf. Consider—

I. THE MOTIVE OF CHRIST'S WORK. "For your sakes." 1. The august person who died "for your sakes." He was God. "Without Him was not anything made that was made." All the powers of nature were under His control. He might truly say, "If I were hungry I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof." Hymned day without night by all the sacred choristers, He did not lack for praise. Nor did He lack for servants; legions of angels were ever ready to do His commandments. It was God who came from heaven "for your sakes." It was no inferior being, no one like yourselves. If I were told that all the sons of men cared for me, that would be but a drop in a bucket compared with Jehovah Himself regarding me. If it were said that all the princes of the earth had fallen at some poor man's feet, and laid aside their dignities that they might

relieve his necessities, such an act would not be worthy to be spoken of in comparison with that infinite condescension and unparalleled love which brought the Saviour from the skies. 2. The insignificant clients on whom all this wealth of affection was poured. If our whole race had been blotted out, He had but to speak the word, and myriads of creatures prompt to obey His will would have filled up the space. But we are not only insignificant, we are also iniquitous. As sinners, we deserve nothing but God's thunderbolts. Many of us, also, were peculiarly sinful. Some of us feel inclined to dispute with Saul of Tarsus for the title, "chief of sinners." It will ever remain a wonder to me that the Son of God should have condescended to die for me. 3. The wondrous work which this master-motive inspired. "For your sakes" the Son of God took into union with Himself our nature, without which He could not have suffered and died. "He became poor." The poverty of a man is reckoned in proportion to the position of affluence from which he has come down. When the Christ of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, was forsaken by His Father, deserted by His friends, and left alone to suffer "for your sakes," that was the direst poverty that was ever known. See your Lord beneath the olives of Gethsemane. Then see Him before Herod, Pilate, and Caiaphas. Behold Him, as they lift Him up to suffer the death of the Cross! All this Christ suffered "for your sakes." What love and gratitude ought to fill your heart as you think of all that Jesus bore on your behalf! There is a story of an American gentleman who was accustomed to go frequently to a tomb and plant fresh flowers. When some one asked why he did so, he said that, when the time came for him to go to the war, he was detained by some business, and the man who lay beneath the sod became his substitute and died in the battle. Over that carefully-kept grave he had the words inscribed, "He died for me!" There is something melting in the thought of another dying for you; how much more melting is it when that One is the Christ of Calvary! 4. The comprehensive motive for which He wrought the wondrous work. Everything He was and did was "for your sakes." II. THE MOTIVE WHICH SHOULD INSPIRE ALL OUR SERVICE FOR HIM. "For His sake." What are we that we should be allowed the high honour of suffering "for His sake"? It is a great privilege to do, or to be, or to bear anything for Him. The thought expressed in these words may be enlarged, and assume six or seven phases. 1. "For righteousness' sake" (Matt. v. 10). If a man suffers as a Christian for doing that which is right, he is suffering for Christ's sake. 2. "For the gospel's sake" (1 Cor. ix. 23). Now, if you are put to any shame for the sake of the gospel, you suffer "for His sake"; and if you labour to spread the gospel you are doing something "for His sake." 3. "For His body's sake, which is the Church" (Col. i. 24). We ought to do much more than we do for God's people. 4. "For the elect's sakes" (2 Tim. ix. 10), *i.e.*, not only those who are in the Church as yet, but those who are to be. Happy is that man who spends his time in seeking out poor wanderers, that he may bring in God's elect. 5. "The kingdom of God's sake" (Luke xviii. 29). No one who has left aught for it shall fail of present and eternal reward. 6. "For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us" (2 John 2). It is not merely the gospel we are to defend, but that living seed which the Holy Ghost has put into us, that truth which we have tasted, and handled, and felt; that theology which is not that of the Book only, but that which is written on the fleshy tablets of our hearts. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) Now, therefore, perform the doing of it.—*Performances*.:—There is an eloquence of promise in many men. In the commercial world they excel in promissory notes. In the social world they are the generous distributors of vague invitations guiltless of date. Men stop as pilgrims at the inn of Good Intent, and their position is that of "almost Christians." Notice promises—I. IN RELATION TO THE KINGDOM OF EVIL. Men do not like to lose sight of the City of God. There is a purpose to be true to Christ some day. They mean well. Mean well! What slave of vice does not do that? But let the soul be brought face to face with the necessity of endeavour, and then De Quincey, when an opium eater, is not more powerless. There is no hope in, "I'll think about it," in a convenient season, in the promise, "when I change my neighbourhood." Now, perform the resolution like a man, for "Now is the accepted time." II. IN RELATION TO RESPONSIBILITIES. 1. Of gift. "I would give if I were rich." No; if you do not yield God a fair measure of your income now you would not then. It is as easy to be miserly with a hundred a-year as it is with a thousand. God performs. He promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and we see the triumph over evil in the Cross. Christ has promised a prepared place, and our

departed ones are now confessing that it was all true. 2. Of service. Service is of many kinds, but there is always a "now" about it. Moreover, performance once honestly commenced tempts out more and more of loyal effort. It is compensative, too, and brings surely its own blest reward. Never mind the initial difficulties. All great men have found them and have mastered them. Begin.

III. IN RELATION TO THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST (ver. 9). In His incarnation He "performed the promise made to our forefathers." His life was one long performance. He performs still. Be ye imitators of Him. IV. IN RELATION TO THE BOUNTIFULNESS OF GOD. Meditating on our redemption we sing, "Love so amazing," &c. Perform, then, the doing of it. V. IN RELATION TO INFLUENCES. Actions speak louder than words. (*W. M. Statham.*) *The laws of Christian liberality*:—I. READINESS, or a willing mind. What is given must be given freely; it must be a gracious offering, not a tax. This is fundamental. The O. T. law is re-enacted. "Of every man whose heart maketh him willing shall ye take the Lord's offering." What we spend in piety and charity is not tribute paid to a tyrant, but the response of gratitude to our Redeemer, and if it has not this character He does not want it. If there be first a willing mind, the rest is easy; if not, there is no need to go on. II. ACCORDING AS A MAN HAS. Readiness is the acceptable thing, not this or that proof of it. If we cannot give much, then a ready mind makes even a little acceptable. Only let us remember this, that readiness always gives all that is in its power. The readiness of the Macedonians was in the depths of poverty, but they gave "themselves" to the Lord; yet this moving appeal of the apostle has been profaned times innumerable to cloak the meanest selfishness. III. RECIPROCTY. Paul does not write that the Jews may be released and the Corinthians burdened, but on the principle of equality. At this crisis the superfluity of the Corinthians is to make up what is wanting to the Jews, and at some other the situation will be exactly reversed. Brotherhood cannot be one-sided; it must be mutual, and in the interchange of services equality is the result. This answers to God's design in regard to worldly goods, as that design is indicated in the story of the manna. To be selfish is not the way to get more than your share; you may cheat your neighbour by that policy, but you will not get the better of God. In all probability men are far more nearly on an equality in respect of what their worldly possessions yield, than the rich in their pride, or the poor in their envious discontent would readily believe; but when the inequality is patent and painful—a glaring violation of the Divine intention here suggested—there is a call for charity to redress the balance. Those who give to the poor are co-operating with God, and the more a community is Christianised, the more will that state be realised in which each has what he needs. (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

Ver. 12. **If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath.**—*The Christian accepted according to his advantages*:—We are led to judge of our own merits by considering what we would do if we were in situations different from that in which we have been placed. Had we unbounded wealth, we say, how would we use it for the benefit and happiness of mankind! Had we our place among the mighty of this world, what a field should we have for doing good! Thus we lose ourselves in vain imaginations, in mere dreams of fancied usefulness. And why is this but because we forget the words of the apostle, God accepts a man "according to that which he hath, not according to that which he hath not." Thus, then, it seems that it is a mistake for a man to dwell upon what he "hath not"; let him rather apply himself seriously to consider what he "hath." And here every one will most surely find that he has enough. And some things there must be which every man hath; some of the duties of life must be in the power of every one; he is a son, or a parent, and then how much opportunity he has for forbearance, and succour, and self-denial: or he has friends, or he has enemies, and this enables him to exercise the Christian graces of forgiveness. But while he sees in it abundant matter of serious self-examination, it suggests also equally strong motives of consolation. God accepts according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not. If it be asked, why we are thus accepted in the sight of God, we may be assured that it is not for the works' sake. When we have done all, be it more or less, we can only say we are unprofitable servants. And yet there is One, for whose sake they are accepted, as the tests and fruits of faith. "A willing mind," this is the sacrifice required on our part; and what does this expression imply? In the meaning of Scripture, more perhaps than we should at first suppose; it implies a sincere disposition to submit to God in all things, to be led by Him, without any

reference to the degree in which such conduct may interfere with our own selfish inclinations and objects. The absence of a willing mind is seen in the case of those who say that they intend at some future time to repent. We have all our opportunities and means of serving God. We have seen that those opportunities may be greater or less. If they are greater, our responsibilities will also be greater. (*H. W. Sullivan, M.A.*) *God's acceptance of His people's will for the deed*:—I. WANT OF POWER TO DO MORE SHALL NOT MAR THE ACCEPTANCE OF WHAT IS DONE FROM A WILLING MIND ACCORDING TO POWER. In that case God will accept of His people's will for the deed. 1. In what particular cases God accepts His people's will for the deed. (1) Where there is a sincere will to serve Him in a piece of work requiring some external abilities which are wanting (Acts iii. 6). (2) When doing the best we can through grace, our work after all is attended with many blemishes. (3) Going as far as we have access in a work, but meeting with a providential stop (Heb. xi. 17). There is a great difference betwixt the stops men make and those which God makes; the former argues an unwilling mind, but the latter not so. (4) Services that one really desires, and fain would perform for God, but have not opportunity (2 Chron. vi. 8; Phil. iv. 10). (5) Services performed with a real desire of success for God's honour and men's good; the Lord accepts the good will to the success denied, as if it had succeeded according to their wish (Isa. xlix. 4; 2 Cor. ii. 15). 2. Why does God accept such will for the deed? (1) The sincere will to a work is present, which God mainly regards. (2) We have a merciful High Priest to present that will for acceptance, notwithstanding all the weaknesses, blemishes, providential hindrances, want of opportunity, and failure of success, that it may be attended with (Heb. iv. 15, 16). 3. We have a merciful Father to deal with (Psa. ciii. 13, 14). (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

Vers. 13-15. For I mean not that other men should be eased and ye burdened.—*Christian liberality*:—I. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH PAUL URGED IT. The apostle spoke strongly: not in the way of coercion, but of counsel and persuasion (vers. 8, 10). Note the difference between the dictatorial authority of the priest and the gentle helpfulness of the minister (chap. i. 24). There is not a minister or priest who is not exposed to the temptation which allures men to try to be a confessor and director to his people, to guide their conscience, to rule their wills, and to direct their charities. But observe how entirely alien this was from St. Paul's spirit. According to the apostle, a Christian was one who, perceiving principles, in the free spirit of Jesus Christ, applied these principles for himself. As examples of this, remember the spirit in which he excommunicated (1 Cor. v. 12, 13) and absolved (chap. ii. 10), and remark, in both these cases—where the priestly power would have been put forward, if anywhere—the entire absence of all aim at personal influence or authority. St. Paul would not even command Philemon to receive his slave (Philem. 8, 9, 13, 14). And in the case before us he would not order the Corinthians to give even to a charity which he reckoned an important one. He wanted them to be men, and not dumb, driven cattle. II. THE MOTIVES HE BROUGHT TO BEAR. 1. The example of Christ (ver. 9). To a Christian mind Christ is all; the measure of all things: the standard and the reference. 2. The desire of reciprocity (vers. 13-15). This is the watchword of Socialists, who cry out for equality in circumstances. But think, Paul's principle is that the abundance of the rich is intended for the supply of the poor; and the illustration of the principle is drawn from the manna (ver. 15). If any one through greediness gathered more than enough, it bred worms, and became offensive; and if through weakness, or deep sorrow, or pain, any were prevented from collecting enough, still what they had collected was sufficient. In this miracle St. Paul perceives a great universal principle of human life. God has given to every man a certain capacity and a certain power of enjoyment. Beyond that he cannot find delight. Whatsoever he heaps or hoards beyond that is not enjoyment but disquiet. *E.g.*, if a man monopolises to himself rest which should be shared by others, the result is unrest—the weariness of one on whom time hangs heavily. Again, if a man piles up wealth, all beyond a certain point becomes disquiet. How well life teaches us that whatever is beyond enough breeds worms, and becomes offensive! We can now understand why the apostle desired equality, and what that equality was which he desired. Equality with him meant reciprocity—the feeling of a true and loving brotherhood; which makes each man feel, "My superabundance is not mine: it is another's: not to be taken by force, or wrung from me by law, but to be given freely by the law of love." Observe, then, how Christianity would soon solve the problems of the rights of the poor and the

duties of the rich. After how much does possession become superabundance? When has a man gathered too much? You cannot answer these questions by any science. Socialism cannot do it. Revolutions will try to do it, but they will only take from the rich and give to the poor; so that the poor become rich, and the rich poor, and we have inequality back again. But give us the spirit of Christ. Let us love as Christ loved. Give us the spirit of sacrifice which the early Church had, when no man said that aught of the things he possessed was his own; then each man's own heart will decide what is meant by gathering too much, and what is meant by Christian equality. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) **But by an equality.**—*New Testament equality*:—The word *ισότης* means here neither reciprocity nor equity, but equality, as the illustration in ver. 15 shows. The *ἰκ*, as in ver. 11, expresses the rule or standard in giving. The rule is equality; we must give so as to produce, or that there may be, equality. This is not agrarianism, nor community of goods. The New Testament teaches on this subject—**I. THAT ALL GIVING IS VOLUNTARY.** A man's property is his own. It is in his own power to retain or to give away; and if he gives, it is his prerogative to decide whether it shall be much or little (*Acts v. 4*). Giving is the fruit of love. It is of course obligatory as a moral duty, and the indisposition to give is proof of the absence of the love of God (*1 John iii. 17*). Still it is one of those duties the performance of which others cannot enforce as a right belonging to them. It must remain at our own discretion. **II. THAT THE END TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY GIVING IS RELIEVING THE NECESSITIES OF THE POOR.** The equality therefore aimed at is not an equality as to the amount of property, but equal relief from the burden of want. **III. THAT WHILST ALL MEN ARE BRETHREN, and the poor as poor, whether Christians or not, are the proper objects of charity, yet THERE IS A SPECIAL OBLIGATION RESTING ON THE MEMBERS OF CHRIST TO RELIEVE THE WANTS OF THEIR FELLOW-BELIEVERS** (*Gal. vi. 10*). All the directions in this and the following chapter have reference to the duty of Christians to their fellow-believers. There are two reasons for this. 1. The common relation of believers to Christ as members of His body, so that what is done to them is done to Him, and their consequent intimate relation to each other as being one body in Christ Jesus. 2. The assurance that the good done to them is pure good. There is no apprehension that the alms bestowed will encourage idleness or vice. **IV. THE POOR HAVE NO RIGHT TO DEPEND ON THE BENEFICATIONS OF THE RICH BECAUSE THEY ARE BRETHREN** (*2 Thess. iii. 10*). Thus do the Scriptures avoid, on the one hand, the injustice and destructive evils of agrarian communism, by recognising the right of property and making all almsgiving optional; and on the other, the heartless disregard of the poor by inculcating the universal brotherhood of believers, and the consequent duty of each to contribute of his abundance to relieve the necessities of the poor. At the same time they inculcate on the poor the duty of self-support to the extent of their ability. They are commanded “with quietness to work, and to eat their own bread.” Could these principles be carried out, there would be among Christians neither idleness nor want. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*)

Vers. 16–24. **But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus.**—*Thanksgiving to God for ministerial care*:—1. We may look up, and give thanks to God for what they are. 2. We may look back, and give thanks to God for what they were. Now these two will very much consist together—the praising of Titus, and the praising of God for Titus. **I. IT IS MENTIONED TO THE PRAISE OF TITUS THAT HE HAD IN HIS HEART AN EARNEST CARE FOR THE CORINTHIANS.** Observe, what service he did was from a principle within, from something in his heart; there is the fountain. Nor is any work of piety or charity properly a good work unless it be a heart work. It was a principle of care that actuated him in this service. The word *σπουδή* signifies a close application and intention of mind to the business he was employed in, a concern to have it done well, fear lest there should be any mistake or miscarriage in it, diligence, industry, and expedition in the prosecution of it. What Titus found to do for the glory of God, and the good of the souls of men, he did it with all his might, and made a business of it. We translate it an earnest care, his heart was upon, and he left no stone unturned to bring it to a good issue. Now in the earnest care that Titus had for the churches, we are to consider him both in general, as a minister of the gospel, and in particular, as an agent in the work of charity. 1. Let us consider him as an evangelist, for so Timothy and he and many others were. He was an assistant to the apostles, both in planting churches and in watering those that were planted. That which Titus is here commended for, is the earnest care he had for those of

the Church of Corinth, and for their spiritual welfare. And concerning this we may observe—(1) Though Titus was not under any particular obligation to the Corinthians, as their settled pastor, yet he had an earnest care for them, and they were very much influenced by his care, and were very observant of what he said to them. He did not ask, “What are they to me?” nor was he asked what he had to do to concern himself about them. God is no respecter of persons in His bounty, nor must we be so in ours. Titus had an earnest care in his heart to make himself a blessing wherever he comes, and such should we have; we must study to serve some good purpose in every place where Providence casts our lot. The more extensive our usefulness is, the more it resembles His goodness whose tender mercies are over all His works. (2) Though Titus had many to take care of, many churches that he visited and interested himself in the affairs of, yet his care for each of them was an earnest care. The stream of his pious concern ran broad, and yet it ran deep. The extensiveness of his care abated nothing of the earnestness of it. Some are made careless by the greatness of their undertaking, they grasp at too much, and then think that will excuse them in their neglects. Though a wise man would not thrust himself into a hurry of business, nor have more irons in the fire than he can look after, yet a good man would covet a fulness of business, according as his capacity is, that whenever his Master comes he may be found doing. (3) Though there were others who had the care of the Corinthians, and whose business it was to direct, exhort, and quicken them, yet Titus showed the same care for them that they did; not that he would intrude into other men’s office, or take their work out of their hands, but he would strengthen their hands, and carry on their work, would second what they said, and add thereto many like words. He saw there was need of all the help that might be for the furtherance of the gospel there. Let us now see what improvement we may make of this part of Titus’s care as a minister, thus in some measure copied out. 1. It sets a good example before ministers whose hearts should in like manner be full of earnest care about the work they have to do, and the great trust committed to them; and happy were it for the Church if they were all thus. 2. It lays an engagement upon people, who have been or are under the care, the earnest care, of faithful ministers. (1) Examine yourselves how you have improved under his earnest care for you, and whether your profiting has appeared in any proportion to the opportunities you have enjoyed; whether your growth in knowledge and grace has been answerable to the care that has been taken of you, and the pains that have been taken with you. (2) If ministers have and should have such an earnest care for your souls, should not you much more have an earnest, a more earnest, care for your own souls? (3) If ministers must have this earnest care for the souls of those under their charge, surely parents and masters of families ought to have some care, to have an earnest care, for the spiritual welfare of those under their charge, their children, their servants, to restrain them from that which would be to the prejudice and ruin of their souls, and to provide that for them which is necessary to their well-being. 2. We now come to consider Titus as an active instrument at this time in a work of charity that was on foot. (1) It is easy to apprehend that herein he showed an earnest care for the poor saints at Jerusalem, for whose use this collection was made, and a great concern for them, that they should be speedily and plentifully relieved in their present distress; and they would have reason to say, “Thanks be to God, that put into the heart of Titus this care” for us and our families, for otherwise we might have perished. Titus heard what straits they were reduced to, and as one who put his soul into their souls’ stead, laid out himself to get supply for them. Though Titus was a Greek, and was never circumcised, as Timothy was, and upon that account the saints at Jerusalem (many of whom retained too great an affection for the ceremonial law) were perhaps cool towards him, yet he was active to do them service, as Paul also was, though he was the apostle of the Gentiles, so our liberality must not be confined to those who are just of our own sentiment and way. This was the good work that Titus had this earnest care to help forward. (2) It is as true, though not so easily apprehended, that Titus showed as earnest a care for the Corinthians, whom he persuaded to do good, as for the saints at Jerusalem, whom he desired that this good might be done to. Now Titus had an earnest care for the Corinthians, that they who came not behind in any gift, might not come behind in this gift; he was in care that they should not be slow in their contributions, because Paul had boasted of them, that Achaia was ready a year ago (2 Cor. ix. 2); and in care that they should not be illiberal in them, but that what was gathered should be considerable: he was in care that they

should give like themselves. The Corinthians were generally a rich people, and lived great; whence it became a proverb, "Every man cannot pretend to live at Corinth." Now Titus was jealous of them, lest they should pinch their charity to feed their luxury. The particular kindness he had for this Church of Corinth did not put him upon contriving how he might excuse them from this good work, or make it easy to them, that it might be the more kind to him; but on the contrary, because he loved them, he was very earnest with them to do more than otherwise they would have done. I would endeavour, therefore, for the amending of this matter, to make it out that those are to be accounted your friends who, with prudence and discretion, propose to you proper objects of charity, and press you to give liberally to them. (1) They would have you to do that which is your duty, a plain, necessary, and great duty, which God requires of all those whom He has entrusted with this world's goods. (2) They would have you do that which will be your honour, and which will put a reputation upon you, and therefore it must be looked upon as an instance of their earnest care for your preferment. (3) They would have you do that which you will have comfort in, and advantage by, in this world, and therefore you are to reckon them your friends who have a care for you. (4) They would have you do that which will be fruit abounding to your account in the day of recompence. II. IT IS MENTIONED TO THE PRAISE OF GOD, THAT HE PUT THIS EARNEST CARE INTO THE HEART OF TITUS FOR THEM; AND THANKS ARE GIVEN TO HIM FOR IT. Now thanks be to God, who by His providence brought Titus to Corinth, and by His grace excited and enabled him to do this good office there. See how solicitous blessed Paul is upon all occasions to ascribe the glory of all the good that was done, whether by others or by himself, to the grace of God, and to own in it the influences and operations of that grace. 1. That God can put things into men's hearts beyond what was expected. He is the Sovereign of the heart, not only to enjoin it what He pleases by His law, but to influence it, and to infuse into it by His providence and grace as He pleases. He has access to men's hearts. The way of man is not in himself, he cannot think what he will, but the wise God can overrule him. Let no man boast of his free thought, when whatever devices are in men's hearts, it is not their counsel, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. See in this how God governs the world, by the hold He has of the consciences of men. 2. That whatever good is in the heart of any, it is God that puts it there. If Titus have in his heart an earnest care for the spiritual welfare of the Corinthians, though he is a very good man, and one whom much good may be expected from, yet even this is not of himself, it is not to be called a natural affection, it is a gracious one. If we have an earnest care for our own souls, and for their spiritual and eternal welfare, it is God that puts it into our hearts, that gives it to us, so the word here used signifies, it is He that plants it in us. 3. That Christ's ministers are in a particular manner all that, and that only, to His churches that He makes them to be. They are stars that shine with a borrowed light, and shed no other benign influences but what are derived from the Sun of Righteousness. If they have a care, an earnest care, a natural care, for the souls committed to their charge, it is God who has put it into their hearts, it is His grace in them that makes them blessings to the places where they are. We must therefore look up to God, by prayer, for that grace which is necessary to make the stewards of the mysteries of God both skilful and faithful. 4. That the grace of God is particularly to be seen and owned in the progress and success of any work of charity, as this here, which Titus was active in among the Corinthians. In this we may be tempted to think there needs no more but that common concurrence of the Divine Providence which is necessary to the negotiating of every other affair; but it seems by this we have as much need of the working of the Spirit and grace of God to enable us to give alms well, as to enable us to pray and preach well. Let us now close all with some inferences to these observations. 1. If this be so, then those who do good have nothing to glory in; for whatever good they do it was God that put it into their hearts to do it, and therefore He must have all the glory. Boasting is hereby for ever excluded. This forbids us to trust to our own good works, as if by them we could merit anything at the hand of God. 2. If this be so, then those who have any good done them, either for soul or body, must give thanks to God for it, who raised up those who were the instruments of it, and put it into their hearts to do it, and perhaps to do it with an earnest care. We ought indeed to acknowledge their kindness and to be grateful to them, but that must be in token of our gratitude to God, who, in making them His agents, made them His receivers. But we must look above and beyond them. 3. If this be so, let us hereby be engaged and

quicken to do all the good we can in our places; to do the good the Corinthians did, that is, to contribute largely and freely for the support and encouragement of poor saints according to the ability God has given us; to do the good Titus did, that is, to solicit the cause both of the necessitous and of the deserving, and to procure assistance for them. Hereby we shall evidence that God, by His grace, has put some good into our hearts, which the good we do is the fruit and product of, and by which the tree is known. Hereby likewise we shall give occasion to many to praise God for us, and for the good which by His grace we are inclined and enabled to do. 4. This may be matter of comfort and support to us when useful instruments are removed from us. (*Matthew Henry.*) *The collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem* (text and chap. ix.):—I. THE MODE OF COLLECTING THE CONTRIBUTION. 1. St. Paul entrusted this task to three messengers: to Titus, who was himself eager to go; to a Christian brother whom the churches had selected as their almoner; and to another whose zeal had been tested frequently by St. Paul himself. 2. The reasons for sending these messengers. (1) To give the Corinthians time (chap. ix. 3). Observe the tender wisdom of this proceeding. Every one knows how different is the feeling with which we give when charity is beforehand, from that with which we give when it comes side by side with debts and taxes. The charity which finds us unprepared is a call as hateful as that of any creditor whom it is hard to pay. (2) To preserve their reputation for charity. For if the Corinthians were not ready, their inability to pay would be exhibited before the messengers. Observe—(a) The just value which the apostle set on Christian reputation. For the inability of the Corinthians would be like insolvency, and would damage their character. We all know how insolvency damages the man, how he feels humbled by it, and “ashamed” before men. (b) The delicacy of the mode in which the hint is given: “We (that we say not, ye) may not be ashamed.” St. Paul makes it a matter of personal anxiety. Thereby he appealed not to their selfish feelings, but to everything which was noble or high within them. The Corinthians would feel, We cannot bear that Paul should be disgraced. This is a great principle. Appeal to the highest motives, whether they be there or no, for you make them where you do not find them. Arnold trusted his boys, and all attempt at deceiving him ceased forthwith. When Christ appealed to the love in the heart of the sinful woman, that love broke forth pure again. (3) To preserve his own reputation. If so large a sum had been entrusted to him alone he might have been suspected of appropriating a portion to himself (vers. 20, 21). In this is to be observed St. Paul’s wisdom. He knew that the world would scan his every act and word, and attribute all conceivable and even inconceivable evil to what he did in all honour. Now, because the bare conception of malversation was impossible to him, we might have expected him to forget that the world would not think it equally impossible. For to the pure all things are pure. It is to such—men guileless of heart—that Christ says, “Be ye wise as serpents.” Consider how defenceless St. Paul would have been had the accusation been made! Moreover, though he were to be acquitted, a charge refuted is not as if a charge had never been made. Years after, the oblivious world, remembering only the accusation, and forgetting the fulness of the refutation, asks, “But were there not some suspicious circumstances?” No innocence will shield, no honour, nor integrity bright as the sun itself, will keep off altogether the biting breath of calumny. Therefore it is that he says, “Let not your good be evil spoken of.” Therefore it is that he, avoiding the possibility of this, sent messengers to collect the money, “providing for things honest in the sight of all men.” II. THE MEASURE OF THE AMOUNT. The apostle did not name a sum to the Corinthians, but counselled them to be—1. Liberal: “As a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.” He did not speak as we often preach—in an impassioned manner in order to get a large collection. Yet he plainly told them that a large contribution was what God asked. In the multitudinous charities for which you are solicited, give liberally somewhere, in God’s name, and to God’s cause. But the cases must depend on yourselves, and should be conscientiously adopted. 2. Deliberate: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart.” Distinguish this deliberate charity from giving through mere impulse. Christian charity is a calm, wise thing; it has, too, courage to refuse. A Christian man will not give to everything; he will not give because it is the fashion; because an appeal is very impassioned, or because it touches his sensibilities. He gives as he “purposeth in his heart.” Here I remark that often the truest charity is not giving but employing. 3. Cheerful: “The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.” III. THE MEASURE OF THE REWARD. As in all spiritual rewards it

is exactly proportioned to the acts done. The law of the spiritual harvest is two-fold. 1. In reference to quantity: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly." Hence may be inferred the principle of degrees of glory hereafter (*cf.* the Parable of the Talents). The right hand and left of Christ in His kingdom are given only to those who drink of His cup and are baptized with His baptism. 2. In reference to kind. The reward of an act of charity is kindred with the act itself. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." A harvest of wheat comes not from sown barley, &c. Thus also is it in the spiritual world. Now here often a strange fallacy arises. Men sow their carnal things—give their money, for example, to God, and expect to reap the same. In pagan times fishermen or farmers sacrificed their respective properties, and expected a double fishery or harvest in return. The same pagan principle has come down to us. Some persons "lend to the Lord," in order that He may repay them with success in business, or an advance in trade. The fallacy lies in this: the thing sown was not money, but spirit, *e.g.*, the poor widow gave two mites, but God took account of sacrifice. The sinful woman gave an alabaster box of ointment, valued by a miserable economist at three hundred pence. God valued it as so much love. Now God is not going to pay these things in coin of this earth. He will repay them with spiritual coin in kind. In the particular instance now before us, what are the rewards of liberality which St. Paul promises to the Corinthians? They are—(1) The love of God (*ver.* 7). (2) A spirit abounding to every good work (*ver.* 8). (3) Thanksgiving on their behalf (*vers.* 11, 12, 13). A noble harvest! but all spiritual. Give, and do not expect your money to be returned, like that of Joseph's brethren in their sacks' mouths. When you give to God, sacrifice, and know that what you give is sacrificed, and is not to be got again, even in this world; for if you give, expecting it back again, there is no sacrifice; charity is no speculation in the spiritual funds, no wise investment, to be repaid with interest either in time or eternity! (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*)

Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.—Twelve causes of dishonesty:—10 extraordinary circumstances can give the appearance of dishonesty to an honest man. Usually, not to seem honest, is not to be so. The quality must not be doubtful like twilight, lingering between night and day and taking hues from both; it must be daylight, clear and effulgent. No one has honesty without dross, until he has honesty without suspicion. 1. Some men find in their bosom from the first a vehement inclination to dishonest ways. Knavish ways are inherited from dishonest parents. 2. A child naturally fair-minded may become dishonest by parental example. He may be taught to be sharp in bargains, and vigilant for every advantage. Little is said about honesty, and much about shrewd traffic. Whatever profit breaks no legal statute—though gained by falsehood—is considered fair. 3. Dishonesty is learned from one's employers. 4. Extravagance is a prolific source of dishonesty. The desire to be thought affluent; to outrival others in display. 5. Debt is an inexhaustible fountain of dishonesty. The debtor learns cunning tricks, concealments, excuses. 6. Bankruptcy, although a branch of debt, deserves separate mention. 7. There is a circle of moral dishonesties practised because the law allows them. Gentlemen who can break the whole of God's law so adroitly as to leave man's law unbroken. 8. Political dishonesty breeds dishonesty of every kind. The idea that all is fair in politics has to be smitten. 9. A corrupt public sentiment produces dishonesty. 10. Financial agents are especially liable to the temptations of dishonesty. Their whole attention falls directly upon naked money. The hourly sight of it whets the appetite. 11. Executive clemency, by its frequency, has been a temptation to dishonesty. Who will fear to be a culprit when a legal sentence is the prelude of pardon? 12. Criminal speculations are prolific of dishonesty. Speculation is the risking of capital in enterprises greater than we can control, or in enterprises whose elements are not all calculable. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

*The double standard of duty:—*The language is peculiar; as though the human standard were a step higher than the Divine; as though a Christian were in more danger of coming short of honesty before men than before God. St. Paul really means, however, that we are to keep both standards in view. I. THE HUMAN STANDARD OF DUTY. 1. It partly serves to interpret the Divine law, not fully, but in important measure. 2. It restrains us from reading the law according to our own interests, which is a constant danger. "Private interpretation" has danger in it. 3. It is a law over us that we are more or less stringently held to obey. Its penalty is visible; and so it educates us to obedience. II. THE

DIVINE LAW. 1. It is stricter than man's law. We may well say to ourselves if men demand this, God demands more. 2. The Divine law considers our motives in all their extent, and holds us to account according to our intent, our power, and opportunity. 3. The Divine law demands our best; men will take less; God asks honesty and fidelity as we know them, not as men define them. (*Homiletic Monthly.*)

Wherefore shew ye to them . . . the proof of your love.—*Expected proof of professed love*:—1. In every believer's heart there is—(1) Love to God. He cannot else be a child of God. (2) Love to Christ. How could he be a Christian otherwise? As a consequence of this. (3) Love to the brotherhood. 2. Where there is true love in the heart it becomes a working principle. It is a vital principle, and out of its growth there comes fruit. I. **WHAT IS THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS LOVE THAT WE SHOULD BE SO ANXIOUS TO PROVE IT?** It is—1. Divine in its origin. We should never have loved if God had not first loved us. It is, therefore, a precious thing, and we ought to take heed that we assuredly possess it, and so to live that others may be convinced that it rules our spirits. 2. Surpassing in its energy, for true love to God exceeds all other love. This affection, like Aaron's rod, must swallow up all others, and must therefore produce its own proof. If it were some minor passion we might not be so particular about it. 3. Vital in its necessity. If a man does not love God, Christ, and His people, then the life of God does not dwell in him. Hence the importance that the proofs of our love should be unmistakable. 4. Warranted by the facts of the case. Love to God—I will not spend a word in justifying it. Love to Christ—how can it be needful to commend it to you? "Love so amazing, so Divine," &c. 5. Eminent in its achievements. It makes Christians strong. Faith laughs at impossibilities, and cries, "It must be done"; but love performs the deed, for "faith worketh by love." What have not men done out of love to Christ?

II. **WHAT IS THIS PROOF?** As regards—1. God and Christ. If you love Him you will keep His commandments, seek to honour Him, be anxious to extend His rule, long for communion with Him, grieve when you grieve Him, long to be like Him. 2. God's ministers. If they speak well of you, do not let them have cause to retract their holy boasting, and to say with tears, "I was deceived in these people." If any have brought you to Christ, be an honour to them and to the gospel that they preach. 3. God's people. (1) Go and join them. Do as she did who said, "Whither thou goest, I will go; . . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (2) When you have joined the church, show a proof of your love by hearty fellowship. (3) Unite with them in service. 4. The ungodly. Try to snatch the firebrands from the flame. If you can preach Christ. Speak of Him to your companions.

III. **WHY IS THIS PROOF CALLED FOR?** 1. True love always longs to prove itself. It does not need a command to do it. It is waiting for an opportunity. It is so with your domestic life. In a far higher degree, what a delight it is to a Christian to do something for Jesus! 2. That it may become a blessing to other people. It would be of no use for the Corinthians to sing a hymn about charity while the poor saints at Jerusalem had not a loaf to eat. 3. It is reasonable that you should do so. God did not love you and keep it to Himself; He gave His Son. IV. **WHO IT IS THAT CALLS FOR THIS PROOF OF OUR LOVE.** I will leave out everybody else and say, it is your Lord, your own dying, living Saviour who says, "Show Me the proof of your love." I will tell you how He is saying it. 1. Affliction has come into your house. There is a dear one dead; and Jesus says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these dear ones? If so, thou wilt part with them and not complain." 2. Perhaps you have had a difference lately with one to whom you ought to be united in friendship. Now your Lord and Master says to you, "Show Me the proof of your love. Forgive him for My sake even to seventy times seven; and if you have wronged him confess the wrong, and humble yourself for My sake." 3. But possibly there are some here who have had in their minds the project of doing something unusual for Jesus, or the church, or the poor, or for missions to the heathen. Jesus says, "I have prospered you: when others have failed in business I have taken care of you. Show Me the proof of your love." Will you not hear His call? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER IX.

VERS. 1-5. As touching the ministering to the saints.—*Liberal giving*:—I. **WHY DOES GOD CALL US TO GIVE?** 1. He cannot need our gifts. We can give Him

nothing that we did not first get from Him. 2. It must be somehow for our sakes. Giving is God's way of getting for ourselves the highest good. The root of sin is selfishness. God would have us grow bigger, have a larger world to live in, find a higher joy; and the secret of all this change is giving. It is a curious fact that we call a man who gets but does not give a "miser," that is, a miserable man. The true worth of money is never learned until we begin to make others happy with it. It is just so of learning. There is joy in getting knowledge; but a higher joy it is to teach those who do not know. II. NATURE TEACHES US MANY LESSONS ON GIVING. The sun exists to give light, heat, and life. The sea is always giving. III. GOD MEASURES OUR GIVING BY OUR PURPOSE. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart." What did you mean to give, and what was your motive? IV. LIBERAL GIVING IS PERHAPS THE CHOICEST, RIPEST FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. The Arab proverb says, "The water you pour on the roots of the cocoanut-tree comes back to you from the top, in the sweet milk of the cocoanut." You may hang up a bar of slightly tempered steel, strike it with a mallet, and make it a magnet. Then with that magnet you may, by rubbing other bars with it, make them magnets too; and it is wonderful that instead of making the magnetic power of that first bar less, you increase it. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) *Liberal giving*:—I. THE TACT AND WISDOM AND TENDERNESS OF PAUL IN PRESENTING AND PRESSING THE SUBJECT ARE WORTHY OF UNQUALIFIED ADMIRATION. The apostle does not say how much a child of God should give, simply because he regards giving as a spiritual attainment, and not as an outward function. It is to be governed by spiritual laws and to move by spiritual impulses. He cites the case of the Macedonian Christians, not as a standard of comparison, but as a heart-incentive. The true giver in blessing others will always be a large receiver of blessings. The word which in the Received Text is translated "bounty" has in the margin its more literal meaning, "blessing." The giver is a sower of seed. His gifts are the seed of a future harvest for which he may confidently look. There is here no appeal to selfishness, but the simple statement of a Divine law, and one of widest scope. The man who puts forth little physical strength reaps little vigour of body. The man who feebly uses mental faculty gains little mental power. The man who loves little is little loved and destroys his capacity to love. As giving is a spiritual grace, it can grow and reward its possessor only by use. We are at cross-purposes with our own faculties and with God's plans respecting us if the power of giving lies unused within us. Our selfishness dwarfs and impoverishes us. Niggardliness is a most miserable investment. Put any Divine gift under the leadership of greed or of sloth, and it is sure to err and come to no good. In the great sum of things giving has a royal place. Do we not comprehend how the giver is a receiver? It is sufficient in answer to appeal to two things: first, to the homely evidence of experience; second, to the promises of God. But this testimony of experience reaches deeper than all rewards in kind. True giving is the act of the soul; it touches character; it is a grand power of moral discipline. It cleanses conscience and purifies the heart to give rightly and generously. It awakens a higher manhood in the soul. It crucifies the low, base lust of selfishness. It strangles closeness and stinginess and all the meaner and craven lusts of our nature to get beyond and above the greed of getting and keeping into the high and Divine realm of giving. Giving enlarges a man. It develops all that is good in him. It stirs him with higher impulses. It makes him a holier and happier man. But it must be giving in Christ's sense and after His example. But this certainty of a Divine return to the giver rests also on the direct promise of God. Here is the giver's security. What is given is not lost. It is a deposit in the exchequer of Heaven. God loveth the cheerful giver. He is able to bless him, and He will bless him. II. The final thought of the apostle is THE CONNECTION OF GIVING AND THANKSGIVING. Every gift is a "bounty," a "blessing," a "thanksgiving." It is a free thank-offering out of the blessings God has given. True giving rises out of the catalogue of hard duties into the rank of happy privileges. The root of all giving is love, and love is full of thankfulness. And then, as the mind and heart of the apostle are filled with a sense of what a great blessing is this spirit of free and generous giving both to the giver and to the receiver, he ends abruptly the discussion with the well-known sentence, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" He rises from all human giving to the Divine, the gift of the Saviour. He contrasts our feeble gifts with the unspeakable one. He inspires our giving with that. He links our giving to that. To give is to be like God. (*T. H. Robinson, D.D.*) *Liberal giving*:—It is plain that God means that His people shall all be givers. Opportunities to give everywhere.

surround us. The Christians at Jerusalem were at just this time in great want. In part this may have been due to their experiment of a community of goods, and in part to their repeated and long-continued persecutions. Christian giving should be—I. PRIMARILY, THOUGH BY NO MEANS EXCLUSIVELY, TO NEEDY SAINTS (chap. v. 1). II. PROMPT AND ENERGETIC, THAT SO IT MAY BE ADEQUATE AND SURE (vers. 2-5). The good name of a church is no small part of its power. It is this which makes its teachings respected, and its example a stimulus to others. It is in all things a good rule to be deliberate in planning, and then swift in execution. For thus it is that good intentions become worthy deeds. III. NOT SPARING BUT BOUNTIFUL (ver. 6). IV. DELIBERATE AND CHEERFUL (ver. 7). V. TRUSTFUL. This is enforced by the apostle by a twofold consideration (vers. 8-10). VI. MINDFUL OF THE GREAT BLESSINGS SURE TO COME OF IT (vers. 11-14). (*Monday Club Sermons.*)

Ver. 6. **He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.**—*The way and worth of genuine beneficence*:—I. THE WAY. 1. Bountifully (ver. 6). 2. Deliberately (ver. 7). A spurious charity gives from impulse or pressure. 3. Cheerfully (ver. 7). II. THE WORTH. It is the most valuable thing in the universe. 1. In its issues. (1) It confers happiness on the man who practises it. He will be "blessed in his deed." (2) It ensures the blessing of the Almighty. (a) He sees that the man of charity shall lose nothing by his contributions (ver. 8). (b) He sees that his beneficent deeds shall be blessed for ever (ver. 9). A good deed is a seed that will go on multiplying for ever. (3) It alleviates the distress of mankind (ver. 12). (4) It is promotive of universal worship (vers. 12, 13). 2. In itself (ver. 15). What is the "gift" here? Has Paul a special reference to Christ? Be it so. The value of that gift was the love which it incarnated. (*D. Thomas.*) *Liberal charity stated and recommended on the principles of the gospel*:—The Scriptures abound in a great variety of the most beautiful images and figurative allusions. I. LET US BEGIN WITH CALLING YOUR ATTENTION TO THE CHARACTER HERE REPRESENTED—"He that soweth bountifully," in other words, the man of liberal charity. 1. This is a character formed and perfected under the influence of supreme regard to God and the Redeemer. Beneficent love to men is at once a natural consequence and proof of knowing the love of God, and loving Him. 2. The man of liberal charity is one who gives cheerfully according to his ability. 3. True liberal charity is wisely divided amongst many, and proportioned to the objects upon which it acts. It is not, it cannot be confined to near relations, intimate friends, or particular favourites. The principle which gave it birth extends its influence in every possible direction. 4. That may well be called liberal charity which is designed to promote the greatest possible good. II. Let us now attend to THE RICHNESS OF HIS REWARD, EXPRESSED IN THE PROMISE ADDED, THAT HE SHALL REAP ALSO BOUNTIFULLY. Need I here caution you against considering what shall be said on this part of the subject as holding out any deserved recompense to personal merit? 1. The truth of this great and gracious promise will be felt in inward enjoyment and spiritual improvement. 2. Add to this the blessing and prayers of those who receive your help. 3. The promise in the text holds up, as a farther inducement to liberal charity, a richly varied and extensive prospect of good to the world. 4. That he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully in a future and eternal state. Let me now entreat your attention to the practical improvement of the subject. 1. In the first place, then, it may direct us in forming a just judgment of our own characters. 2. Must not the consideration of this approved character lead us to study and admire that religion from which it receives all its excellence? (*R. Balfour.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; . . . for God loveth a cheerful giver.**—*A cheerful giver beloved of God*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY A CHEERFUL GIVER? To be this one must—1. Give proportionately, for liberal givers reckon how much as good stewards is expected from them. If giving the tenth of one's income to the Lord were a duty under the Jewish, much more is it so now under the Christian dispensation. But the Jew, with his free-will offerings, &c., perhaps gave as much as a third altogether. And at this present day the Hindoos give very nearly that proportion, and thus shame the illiberality of many Christians. I do not, however, like to lay down rules. Give as the Lord hath prospered you, and do not make your estimate what will appear respectable, or what is expected by others, but as in the sight of God. 2. Give willingly, and do not be "bled" or squeezed like the young grape to get the wine out because it is not ripe. We ought to be like the honeycomb, dropping spontaneously. 3. Get

beyond the serf-like, slavish spirit. The slave brings his pittance, which he is obliged to pay, and goes his way in misery. But the child, pleased to give its Father what it can, beholds the Father smile, and goes its way rejoicing. 4. Give very earnestly. Some give God their time, but they are half asleep. Some give Him their efforts, but their heart never seems in them. 5. Wish that we could give ten times as much. Oh that we could learn the secret of entire consecration! II. WHY DOES GOD LOVE A CHEERFUL GIVER? Because—1. He made the world on the plan of cheerful giving, and the great Artist loves all that is consistent with His plan. Why is the sun bright? Because it is giving away its light. Why is it glorious? Because it is scattering its beams on all sides. The moon—wherefore do we rejoice in her? Because what light she receives from the sun she gives again to us. Even yon twinkling stars—their brightness and radiance consist in their giving. Take the earth; what is its excellence but what it gives? Thousands of years ago there were vast forests waving in the sunbeams, and giving themselves to die to form vast stores of coal for future use. There is not a tree but is giving perpetually. There is not a flower but its very sweetness lies in its shedding its fragrance. All the rivers run into the sea, the sea feeds the clouds, the clouds empty out their treasures, the earth gives back the rain in fertility, and so it is an endless chain of giving generosity. There is nothing in this world but lives by giving, except a covetous man, and such a man is a piece of grit in the machinery. He is out of date; out of God's order altogether. But the cheerful giver is marching to the music of the spheres. 2. Grace has placed such a man in order with the laws of redemption as well as the laws of nature. Salvation is not a thing to be earned and won, but is the result of the free grace of God. Now the professed Christian, who is no giver, or being a giver is not a cheerful giver, is out of order with the system which revolves around the Cross of Christ. 3. He loves anything that makes His people happy; and the spirit of love to others is the surest source of happiness. He who lives for himself must be wretched. 4. In such He sees the work of His Spirit. It takes a great deal of grace to make some men cheerful givers. With some the last part of their nature that ever gets sanctified is their pockets. III. WHY WE WHO LOVE THE LORD SHOULD SEEK TO BE CHEERFUL GIVERS WHOM GOD LOVES. Because—1. All we have we owe to Him. 2. Recollect that the time for giving will soon be over. 3. We have need of a giving God. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Cheerful giving*:—When St. Paul tells us that God loveth a cheerful giver he must surely mean that in cheerful giving there is something which God approves. Had any one suggested to him that Christian men, at any rate in this world, must always need God's pity and forbearance, and can never in anything they are or do deserve His approbation, he would have answered that they are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and that He is able out of very poor materials to create what He Himself can regard with delight. I am thankful to believe that in those who do not bear Christ's name there are many virtues which God honours, and that in Christian people He recognises a goodness which is hidden not only from themselves, but from other men. It was not by an accident that the apostle spoke of a "cheerful" giving, and not merely of conscientious giving, or liberal giving, or unostentatious giving. There are only two passages in which the word, which is very properly translated cheerful in this place, and the cognate word cheerfulness, occur in the New Testament; both are in the writings of St. Paul, and both texts refer to the duty of giving. The writer tells the Corinthians that God loveth the cheerful giver, and in writing to the Romans he says that he who showeth mercy is to do it with cheerfulness. There are many duties which have to be discharged with solemnity, and some which it is not a sin to discharge reluctantly; there are some duties the discharge of which makes us very sad, but the duties of giving and of showing mercy are to be discharged cheerfully. There are some people who give, but who are certainly not cheerful givers. It is impossible, I suppose, that the man who gives ostentatiously should be a cheerful giver. He has no delight in parting with his money. The satisfaction is not in the giving, but in the honour which comes to him as the result of it, and he is vexed with manifold anxieties as to whether his wishes will be fulfilled or not. The man who gives because it is the custom of people about him to give is not a cheerful giver. He would not be sorry if there were no such thing as a hospital, just as he would not be sorry if there were no such thing as an income tax. No doubt most duties become pleasanter the more faithfully they are discharged, and if any one is conscious that he has no inclination to give, and no delight in doing it, he ought still to give because his conscience commends him. It would be well for such a

man to remember that there is a very intimate relation between the conscience and the heart. If the heart does not long to give, the conscience is very likely to be satisfied with gifts which would seem quite inadequate if he had the spirit of generosity. I am inclined to think that by following this course, and by praying to God very earnestly for the grace of generosity, the general spirit of charity will gradually be developed. But, I believe, there are many of you whom St. Paul himself would describe as cheerful givers. I think I know people who feel grateful to every one who makes known to them some new channel for their benevolence, who tells them of want which they can relieve, and sorrow which they can comfort. 1. For cheerful giving it is necessary, first of all, that the heart should be free from the spirit of covetousness. There is no harm that I can see in a man liking the things which only money can purchase; and there is no harm in desiring to make money in order to be able to purchase them. I cannot think that God is displeased if we like the pleasant things which He has made, for He meant us to like them, or He never would have made them. And if it is no sin to like them it is no sin to desire to have them; but we cannot have them without money. But it is possible to like these pleasant things too well, to have the heart absorbed by them; it is possible to care too much for them, and to be indifferent to the great end of life, and to those supreme duties which should have our first thought and our most earnest care. Perhaps it is not so much the love of the pleasant things which money brings which is the worst enemy of large-hearted liberality, as the desire to live in style, and the wish to accumulate money for its own sake. God loves a cheerful giver, because cheerful giving proves that the spirit of covetousness is blotted out. 2. For cheerful giving there must be a hearty sympathy with the particular objects for which we are asked to give. No doubt many accidental circumstances determine the direction in which our sympathies are directed. Many of us have a deep interest in missions to the heathen, whilst some of us care most about missions to the heathen at home. Some men are specially impressed with the importance of the duty of chapel building, and some—though not many—are particularly interested in our colleges. Many of us have known people who have gone to the hospital during the year, and have come out in health and strength, and it is hardly possible for any man with a human heart beating in his breast not to be touched by the appeal which comes to you to-day. God loves a man who gives cheerfully for an object of this sort because the gift is induced by the very spirit of compassion by which the hand of Christ was moved to confer miraculous relief. When we ask to be filled with the mind that was in Christ Jesus, we desire to be filled with the compassion for human misery that possessed Him. 3. In cheerful giving our gifts must bear a fair proportion to our resources. I believe that any man who gave a shilling at the collection last year, and was unconscious of any thrill of pleasure, would find that by giving ten shillings the pleasure would come. God Himself doubtless rejoices in all the joy with which His bountiful hand enriches His creatures. He loves a cheerful giver, because when a man gives cheerfully he gives not only at the impulse of a generous love, but he gives largely enough to make his gift a real sacrifice, and by every sacrifice for others we are brought into closer sympathy with God Himself. 4. Giving becomes most cheerful when it is exalted into an act of thanksgiving and an expression of love for God as well as for man. The collection is a part of the service; and it is something for us to have one portion of the service in which we may all take a part with cheerfulness. In very much of the service, I fear, there is very little joy for many of you. When we are showing forth God's praise some of your hearts are filled with self-reproach, because there is not more fervour and gladness in thanksgiving. But those of you who are most depressed may rejoice that to one appeal which God makes you can respond with cheerfulness. To-day He asks us what we will do to lessen their suffering and restore them to health. He will rejoice if with any thoughts of them our hearts are moved with compassion, and if we give cheerfully out of love to them. But if we remember how dear they are to Him, and give the more largely because of that, He will rejoice the more. And we too shall give the more cheerfully if we remember that by our giving we not only alleviate human suffering, but made glad the heart of God. Here is something we can do for God Himself. You serve Me if you serve My children. "God loveth a cheerful giver," for he who gives most cheerfully, gives out of love for God, as well as out of love for man. (*R. W. Dale, D.D.*) God is able to make all grace abound towards you.—*The all-ability of God*:—These words stand in the heart of a chapter which is almost entirely occupied with instructions about giving. It is a habit of our apostle, in the discussion of a particular subject, to lift himself.

up suddenly to a higher level, where he can grasp some more general principle and command a wider outlook. The language of the verse is like that of Eph. iii. 20. I. "GOD IS ABLE"—a very simple proposition. A self-evident one to those who really believe in God. Is not the opinion of many something like this?—"God is not able to do much specifically. Granting His personal existence, He can only act along the line of the laws, and in conformity with the great forces of the universe." "God is able" is our answer to this. Whatever He has done, He can do again. Is He not the Creator still, every day? Every morning He says, "Let there be light." Every year He says, "Let the earth bring forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind." II. THEN SURELY HE IS ABLE TO RULE THE WORLD HE HAS CREATED, AND STILL CREATES. He is the Lord of Creation, and not its servant. The "laws" of the world are but the methods of God. Nature is God's way of acting to-day. If He acts differently to-morrow, that will be nature too. It will be another nature, another method of God made known. He can act behind all the points that are visible to us, and without altering the "order of nature" He can produce what change He desires. III. WE MAY THEREFORE ASK HIM TO GIVE US WHAT WE THINK WOULD BE GOOD FOR US. There are limits to prayer as to everything else. Every one is bound to say with the Master Himself—"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Still there is room for prayer. 1. Take, *e.g.*, "Give us this day our daily bread." That scarcely any would object to. Even sceptical people wish to be fed. Even the richest of men need bread. But that simple prayer is an appeal to the all-ability of God; and if answered, as it is continually, involves supernatural considerations. 2. We pray to God also about the weather. But there are some who are almost afraid to pray about it. The feeling is: "We had better to leave it; God knows best what to do. We are under physical laws. If we pray at all, let it be for the spirit of submission to them." This shadowy phantom that men call law, which is nothing but the present amount of their own knowledge of God's methods of action, disappears for a while when the great Presence is realised, and then it comes stalking in again and makes for the throne, and its worshippers stand around with formula and definition, with records of discoveries, with catalogues of sciences and arts, and say, "Law is king." 3. Thus we reach the solema dread issue—"God or no God!" For if I may not ask my daily bread from God, if I may not tell Him what I wish about the weather, then what may I speak to Him about? "About spiritual blessings"; but are they not also given according to law? If God is bound to act invariably in the material sphere, He is equally bound to act invariably in the spiritual sphere; and if we may not pray to Him in the one, we may not pray to Him in the other. It is God or no God. IV. PRAYER SPRINGS FROM THIS FAITH THAT "GOD IS ABLE." For what is prayer? "Our Father which art in heaven" is the answer. Prayer is the child speaking to the Father—asking anything that seems good and needful. 1. Prayer is asking. It is not dictation. If it were, it would be liable to the objections urged against it. 2. Answers come in many ways. They sometimes come by denial of the particular request, in order that a greater blessing may be given. 3. Do you say, "I am not so much concerned about the outward things of this life, but I am borne down by a sense of guilt: I see no way of escape, for it is written, "As a man soweth, so shall he also reap"?" I answer, "God is able to forgive." 4. Do you say, "My nature seems strengthless. I can wish, but I can do nothing"?" I answer, "God is able" to make you all that He designs man to be. 5. Or do you say, "I hope I am forgiven, and yet I am in fear. The heart is deceitful, temptation is strong. What if after all I should make shipwreck of faith"?" My answer is, "God is able" to guide you safely through. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Abounding grace*:—I. THE EXHAUSTLESS TREASURE—"All grace." You know if a man has got a little money, and he lives upon the principal, he may get rid of it all and be reduced to want; but here is a treasure that you may live upon—the interest and principal too—as long as life lasts. 1. This is treasured up by God the Father in His infinite, paternal love; and it can no more be plundered than it can fail or be exhausted. 2. It is held officially and responsibly by our covenant Head. He is the Treasure, and He is the Treasurer. 3. It is imparted by the Holy Ghost. It is His province first to implant all His own graces, and then to impart supplies to those graces to call them into lively exercise. II. THE ABOUNDINGS OF THE SUPPLY. "God is able to make all grace abound towards you." It is of no use for a man to tell me that he has abundance of gold locked up in an iron chest, and he has lost the key; but let it be brought out, and it may be of some importance. So also with the statement of my text. God does not deal as parsimoniously with us as we with Him. It is abounding grace that He bestows. 1. He does

not always meet the caprice, the carnal desire of His people, but He always makes His grace abound in everything they really need. 2. God makes all grace to abound for the replenishing of the exhausted child of God. Those of you who have been at all accustomed to sharp exercises will be prepared at once to recognise the seasons in which you have felt exhausted, just like the man that is running a race, and bids fair to win the prize, but his strength is exhausted, just like the man that has been hungering and thirsting a long while, and is almost wishing to die. Now, in such cases as these, what is the abounding of grace for but to replenish? "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." (*J. Irons.*) **Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness.**—*Reasons for penuriousness self-refuting*.—There are some words used by people in utter ignorance of their true meaning. When appealed to on behalf of some charity the stock excuses are "I must be economical—frugal—thrifty"; by which they mean that they must be narrow-hearted, niggardly, although they do not intend you to take that as their meaning. But never were words more misused. Let us see what they really mean. I. **ECONOMICAL** comes from the Greek root which means "home feeding." Now, fathers and mothers, what does home-feeding mean? Just to measure out so many ounces to your little child, and a little more to your eldest one? Is that the way we feed our children? No! We set them down at the table and let them eat as much as they like, until they have had enough—that is economy. The Mosaic economy is the dispensation of God's abundant graces through the teaching, &c., of Moses to the family of Israel. The economy of Christ is taken, I suppose, from the miracle of the loaves, where Christ stands as the Father, breaks the bread, blesses it, and gives it out, and there is enough and to spare. The economy of grace is God giving enough for each and all—bestowing His Holy Spirit, enough for each and for all. Economy is one of the noblest and most bountiful words in the language. II. **THRIFTY**. You say, "I must be thrifty," and I hope you will; for it is an adjective derived from the words "to thrive." And thrive as fast as you can, and God's blessing be with you. But do not attach a meaning that is "mean" to it. A thrifty table is a thriving table, and a bountiful one too. III. **FRUGAL**. This comes from the Latin *Frugis*, fruitful. A frugal table is a fruitful table, groaning beneath the weight of God's temporal gifts. (*R. Maguire, D.D.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **By the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ.**—*Professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ*.—We have here—I. A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES—"The gospel of Christ." And what is the gospel? It is, in short, a proclamation. 1. A full salvation. 2. A finished salvation. 3. A free salvation. 4. An infallible and eternal salvation. II. AN EPITOME OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. "Your subjection." 1. This carries with it a supposition that man likes not the gospel of Christ naturally. And never will depravity give way until it is brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ. 2. The proof of this subjection is the being made willing to submit to the humiliating plan of salvation, and this is illustrated in the case of St. Paul. III. AN EXHIBITION OF CHRISTIAN PRACTICE—"your professed subjection." There is then to be a profession of religion. If retirement, if solitary communion with God had been all that was necessary, He would have appointed us to live in solitude rather than in communities. (*R. C. Dillon, D.D.*) *What is essential to Church membership?*—I wish to direct attention to the declaration of those who profess obedience to Christ by joining the Church. Such a one professes to have—I. A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. One cannot make a profession truly unless he makes it intelligently. There is a difference between knowledge and faith, yet when there is faith there must be some knowledge. Ignorance marks credulity, but not faith. True, there is a difference between apprehension and comprehension. We often apprehend what we cannot explain. To be a Christian it is not necessary to be a theologian; yet there must be a clear conception that Jesus Christ is the Lord, that He has suffered and died to make salvation possible. In the present reaction against creeds we must see that we do not let go our hold on the essential truths. II. A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE GOSPEL'S POWER. Men should first come to Christ, then into the Church. I do not claim that the Church member should be able to tell the moment when he was born into the kingdom of the Saviour, or the details of his conversion. The watchman may not be able to tell when the first faint gleam of the day was on the eastern sky, &c. What I ought to know is that the day has dawned in my heart. It is not claimed that the Christian is to be perfect. The

little one in the primer class is just as much a student as the youth with his calculus. So no one is to be excluded from Christ's school because he is but learning the alphabet of His doctrine. III. A WILLINGNESS TO SACRIFICE EVERYTHING THAT IS INCONSISTENT WITH A CHRISTIAN LIFE. The Christian has one Lord, Christ Jesus. If he enters where there is another ruler, call it pride, fashion, or what you will, he becomes a traitor to his Lord. Remember, the Christian can have but one king. And think of Paul's warning, that he that doubteth is condemned already. IV. A WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH THE CHURCH IN BEHALF OF CHRISTIANITY. The Church has a work to do in the world. 1. To those who have professed this subjection, Have you kept this profession? 2. To those who have not made profession, Why have you not professed Christ? (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

The Christian's surrender to Christ :—The apostle expresses his thought in military language. He speaks of the confession of Christ which the Corinthian Christians had made as a surrender, in which they grounded the arms of their opposition and enlisted under His banner. He speaks of their subjection as a subordination to military authority. This is Paul's idea of Church membership. I. THE GOSPEL IS A GREAT BODY OF TRUTH RECEIVED FROM HEAVEN BY IMMEDIATE REVELATION, AND FOR THIS REASON OF A HIGHER ORDER AND A MORE BINDING AUTHORITY THAN ANY TRUTH WHICH COMES TO US IN A NATURAL WAY. To this system of revealed truth we are to subject our understandings. We are to receive it as the Word of God. II. THE GOSPEL IS THE REVELATION OF A METHOD OF SALVATION—A NEW METHOD, one of which man never could have conceived—an exclusive method, so that a man must discard all others if he accepts this. Church membership implies, in this second sense, subjection of the heart to the method of redemption revealed in the gospel—the renunciation of all self-righteousness. III. THE GOSPEL PRESCRIBES A RULE OF PRACTICAL LIVING. So, then, he is to subject his life to the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. IV. THE GOSPEL IS GOD'S GREAT AGENCY FOR THE REGENERATION, THE PURIFICATION, THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE WORLD. Church membership involves the subjection of one's resources to the service of Christ. A man's time, his influence, his money, all are to be laid upon the altar to be used as the Lord has need. This is the kind of Church membership we need to-day. (*T. D. Witherspoon, D.D.*)

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.—*God's unspeakable gift* :—Consider Christ as—I. THE GIFT OF GOD. 1. What is not implied—(1) That there is any posteriority on the part of the Son to the Father. The Son's goings forth are "from of old—even from everlasting." "Before Abraham was, I am." (2) That there is any inferiority in nature, perfections, or blessedness on the part of the Son; for what the Father is that the Son is. (3) Still less that there was any involuntariness on the part of the Son to come to us. The Son was as willing to be given as the Father was to give Him. 2. What is implied—(1) The Saviour's appointment by the Father to the work of substitution for sinners. (2) The Saviour's subjection, as the sinner's Substitute, to all the consequences which His situation entailed, having undertaken to make satisfaction for us. (3) The application of the Son to the sinner's soul as his portion, with all the blessings that are consequent upon His mission. II. THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT OF GOD. Now this word "unspeakable" occurs only twice elsewhere (chap. xii. 4; 1 Pet. i. 8). 1. It is unspeakably great. Its greatness surpasses all human expression. It is a Divine gift. Divinity is the sun that lightens and gilds every passage of inspiration. 2. It is unspeakably free. And, after all, it is the freeness of this gift that makes it so worthy of God to bestow, and so fit for us to accept. 3. It is unspeakably necessary. We were lost, and none but Christ could find us; dead, and none but Christ could raise us; sunk, and none but Christ could recover us; afar off, and none but Christ could bring us in; guilty, and none but Christ could procure for us a pardon. 4. It is unspeakably efficacious. A gift may be exceedingly valuable in itself—it may have been bestowed by great kindness, but, somehow or other, it may fail of answering the end intended. But here is a gift that is efficacious. III. A GIFT FOR WHICH THANKS ARE TO BE RETURNED TO GOD. These thanks must be—1. Personal. 2. Fervent and lively. 3. Practical. As Philip Henry says, "thanksgiving is good, but thanks-living is better." (*J. Beaumont, M.D.*)

God's unspeakable gift :—I. THE GIFT OF GOD. 1. Its nature. It is the gift of His beloved Son. The prophets foretold Him as the gift of God—"Unto us a Son is given." Jesus describes Himself as the gift of God—"God so loved the world that He gave," &c. The apostles announce Jesus as the gift of God (1 Rom. vi. 23; 1 John v. ii.) 2. Its excellence. It is unspeakable in—(1) Its source. The love of God. Who can tell why God hath loved us? who can calculate how God

hath loved us? or who can comprehend the beginning or the end of the love of God in Christ Jesus? Who can tell its duration or its perfections, its tenderness, or its strength? Angels stooping from their throne in glory to contemplate and to adore the manifestation of redeeming love in Christ. (2) Its value. To form some faint idea of the value of this gift, consider—(a) the divinity of the Redeemer's person. (b) The depth of the Redeemer's sufferings. (3) Its character. All wisdom, mysteries, and blessings unite in Christ crucified. (4) Its application is—(a) Free. Jesus invites all, and casts out none. (b) Spiritual. Though offered to all freely, the Holy Spirit alone can effectually apply it. (5) Its effects. Pardon, peace, holiness, heaven. II. THE DUTY OF MAN. To thank God for the gift of His Son. 1. With the gratitude of our hearts. 2. With the praises of our lips. 3. By the obedience of our lives. (*J. Cawood, M.A.*) *God's unspeakable gift*:—All the gifts of God are good; but there is one which, in its intrinsic value and the importance of its blessings, infinitely transcends them all, so that, without exaggeration, it is "unspeakable." That gift is Jesus Christ. It is unspeakable—

I. IN THE FREEDOM OF ITS BESTOWMENT. 1. It was unmerited; it was a gift to those who never had the shadow of a claim. It was a gift to man, not in a state of allegiance and innocence, but of rebellion and apostasy. 2. Never was gift so entirely unsolicited. The grace which was given us in Christ Jesus God gave us before the world began. II. IN ITS VALUE. 1. In itself it is unspeakable. The wondrous union of the Divine with the human nature in the person of Immanuel is infinitely more than our feeble powers can comprehend. Yet it is a truth most clearly revealed. From this union arises His ability to save; hence the incalculable value of His sacrifice. On the one hand, being human, He can obey and suffer; on the other hand, being Divine, there is an infinite merit impressed upon His obedience and sufferings. 2. Its relative value. Think of the relation in which the Redeemer stood—(1) To the Father. Think of the glory which He had with Him before the world was. (2) To the universe, as the Creator, the Proprietor, and the Sovereign Lord. III. IN THE RESULTS OF ITS BESTOWMENT. 1. The salvation of men. This was the great object of the Redeemer's mission. It is a salvation from—(1) The pollution of sin. Purity is an essential part of it. (2) The power of sin. Sin shall not have dominion over them who, being justified by faith, are no longer under the law, but under grace. (3) The wrath of God. God is angry with the wicked every day. (4) The sting of death. (5) The resurrection of damnation, the terrors of judgment, and the pains of hell. 2. The honour of God. (*T. Raffles, D.D.*) *The unspeakable gift*:—Let me—I. ILLUSTRATE THIS INTERESTING DOCTRINE. By the gift of Christ we receive—1. The gift of religious truth. 2. The gift of conscience. Where there is no truth there is no conscience; men seem asleep; in their trespasses and sins they are dead. Such was the state of the pagan world. 3. The gift of righteousness by faith. It is only by Christ that we come to know the fact that the God whom we have offended is placable, and that it is in His gracious purpose to forgive. 4. A new order of affections. 5. The privilege of public worship. II. IMPROVE IT. 1. This unspeakable gift, with all its resulting blessings, may have been offered to us in vain. 2. In it see the love of God; His readiness to save. 3. If the gift be unspeakable, from the very fulness and variety of its blessings, then have we presented to us the noblest view of the true life of a Christian. In every other form of religion, or in those framed out of a corrupted form of the true religion, we soon see all that they can give; the spring is soon dry, or, rather, it never flows but in the imagination of the deluded votary. But here the fulness is inexhaustible, and spreads innumerable blessings before us in time and eternity. (*R. Watson.*) *The unspeakable gift*:—It is unspeakable because—I. IT IS MOST PRECIOUS (1 Pet. ii. 7). Suppose I put into your hand a large jewel worth ten thousand pounds; then I show you another, and say there are only four to be seen on the face of the earth. The one is costly, the other rare, and both are precious. Christ is precious because—1. He is most valuable. His humanity is adorned with every grace; His Divinity is enriched with every perfection. 2. He is most rare. There is only one Bible, and that is enough. We have only one sun. So we have only one Saviour, and we need no other. II. IT IS MOST COMPREHENSIVE (Rom. viii. 32). It comprehends all we need for time and for eternity. They who receive this gift receive—1. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. 2. All spiritual privileges. 3. Heaven (John xiv. 1). III. IT IS MOST SUITABLE. They who receive this Gift receive raiment for their naked souls (Rev. vii. 13). Those who are spiritually hungry receive "the Bread of Life" (John vi. 48). Water is to satisfy the thirsty; they who receive this Gift receive the "water of life" (John iv). They who receive

this Gift receive freedom from the captivity of Satan and of the world (Isa. lxi. 1). IV. IT IS MOST SATISFYING. The world never satisfies. That large bag of gold contains twenty thousand sovereigns. What is that written on the outside? "Satisfieth not." But what is Christ? A Gift so precious that they who receive it are satisfied for ever. V. IT IS ETERNAL (Rom. vi. 20). You see inscribed upon all earthly things the words, "Only for a time." (*A. Fletcher, D.D.*)

The unspeakable gift:—I. BEFORE WE CONSIDER WHAT THIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT IS, LET US CONSIDER THOSE WHICH CAN BE EASILY SPOKEN OF. 1. What a wonderful world is this! What beauty, variety, majestic presence of law, vast order, infinite adaptations to the purposes of life! Go out on a summer morning. Man goes forth to his work and his labour, creating another world of art and use, a microcosm in the macrocosm. He also is allowed to be a creator in his little sphere. 2. Life is a little day, but how it is filled with opportunity for knowledge, for work, for love! 3. And what a wonderful gift is the human soul! What mysterious powers are hidden therein, slowly evolved into grand activities! For all this we may well thank God every day and every hour. But why? He does not need words of praise. He cannot love praise as men desire it. To this many would answer, "He wishes our praise, not for His own sake, but only for ours. It does us good to be grateful." This is true as far as it goes, but only half the truth. There is a sense in which God may enjoy the thanks of His creatures. If those thanksgivings of ours come from love, then even the Infinite Majesty of Heaven may find joy in the grateful heart of creation, for love unites the high and the low. Who can ever despise or be indifferent to sincere love? II. LOVE, THEN, IS "THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT." 1. The gift which makes the value of all other gifts. We do not value a gift from man unless we see in it some love. Ingratitude is inability or unwillingness to recognise love in a giver. 2. Love is "unspeakable," for who can describe even human love, much less infinite love? But what we cannot describe we can see and know. Who can describe the perfume of a violet? Yet we know it. Who can describe the melody in the song of a nightingale or the music of a gentle voice? But we know these, and can recall them after long years. So we may know, though we cannot describe, this unspeakable gift of Divine love. Men may receive all God's other gifts, and if no love is seen in them they will awaken no gratitude. A man of taste may be gratified, but hardly grateful, in the sight of outward beauty. The sight of vast laws may gratify our desire for knowledge; a man may do right simply because it is right, and will find satisfaction in so doing. But the "unspeakable gift" may not be in any of these blessings. It is not till we see love in God's gifts that we are grateful; and when we see love we cannot help being grateful. 3. But is not this the wonder of wonders, that the Infinite Being should not be above the reach of love? We see power, wisdom, benevolent adaptations everywhere; but before the personal being, the great heart of the universe, there hangs an impenetrable veil. To the intellect this mystery is unfathomable. But one has drawn aside that veil—one who from the first spoke of God as Father. We can come to the Infinite Being by the broad highway of reason. But who except Jesus has revealed the deeper mystery of Divine love? There have, indeed, been mystics in all religions who have sought by ascetic practices to purify themselves so as to meet God in their souls. But Jesus brings God's love to all, not to the thinker or the monk, but to the humblest child of the Infinite Friend. The sailor on the high and giddy mast can feel beneath him the everlasting arms. The young soldier, dying in pain on the battle-field, can say, "My Father!" and be at peace. The sinner in the midst of temptation can utter in his heart a cry for help, and be pardoned and saved. The little child can talk with this dear Father, and its childish prattle will reach the Infinite ear. 4. And this unspeakable gift is given to you and to me. To us the word of this salvation is sent. Salvation! for what can be more safe than to feel ourselves in the embrace of an infinite love? Sacrifice and offering He does not require. He says only this, "My son, give Me thine heart." And to enable us to do this He shows how He so loved the world as to give His only Son to bring the same sense of a Father's love to the rest of His children. (*J. Freeman Clarke, D.D.*)

The gift unspeakable:—Nothing can so excite God's people to give to Him as the remembrance of what God has given to them. "Freely ye have received, freely give." Gospel graces are best stimulated by gospel motives. The gospel is founded upon giving, and its spirit is giving. God gives us Jesus—everything in fact; and then, moved by love to Him, we give ourselves back to Him and to His people. I. CHRIST IS THE GIFT UNSPEAKABLE. 1. No man can doctrinally lay down the whole meaning of the gift of Christ to men.

The devout and studious have themselves cried out, "Oh, the depths," but they have not pretended to fathom this abyss of mystery. It is idle to attempt a definition of infinity. Theology can speak on many themes, and she hath much to say on this, but her voice fails to speak the whole. 2. No man can ever set forth the manner of this gift. (1) The manner of the Father's giving the Only-Begotten to us. We swim in mysteries when we speak of the Father and the Son. How, then, shall any explain how God could give the Son to die, He being one with Himself? Or, if he could explain, can he tell us what it cost? (2) Our Lord's sufferings when He was made sin for us. None can declare the greatness of His sufferings. Incarnation is but the first step, but of that first descent of love who shall declare the mystery? "Thine unknown sufferings," says the Greek Liturgy, and unknown they must for ever be. 3. None can describe the boons which have come to us through the gift of Christ. There is, first of all, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. Then comes adoption, and all that that means. "All things are yours," &c. Other gifts may amaze us, but this overwhelms us. If the stream be fathomless who shall find a plummet wherewith to measure the fountain? 4. When it is best realised speech about it fails. Utterance belongs not to the deepest emotion. Some feelings are too big for expression. A dear lover of Christ wished to join a certain church, but her testimony was too little to satisfy the brethren, and they told her so; when, bursting through all bonds, she cried out, "I cannot speak for Him, but I could die for Him." 5. Even when the Spirit of God helps men to speak upon it, they yet feel it to be unspeakable. You shall not be able to soar amongst the mysteries and then come back and say, "I can declare it all to you." No, Paul "heard things which it were not lawful for a man to utter."

II. CHRIST IS A GIFT TO BE VERY MUCH SPOKEN OF. 1. By thanks to God. 2. By deeds of praise. If our words have failed let us try actions, which speak more loudly than words. (1) Give yourself away to your Lord. If God has given you Christ, give Him yourself. Ye are not your own. (2) Then, having given yourself, give of your substance to God, and give freely. Nothing can be too good or great for Him. (3) Deeds of patience are among the thanks which best speak out our gratitude to God. If you have lost everything but Christ, yet if you have Christ left you what have you lost? Why fret for pins when God gives pearls? 3. By always holding a thankful creed. Believe nothing which would rob God of thanks or Christ of glory. Hold a theology which magnifies Christ, which teaches that Christ is God's unspeakable gift. 4. By bringing others to accept God's unspeakable gift. Seek out those who do not know Christ, and tell them "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The gift of gifts*:—It is unutterably precious because—

I. OF THE GIVER. II. IT INCLUDES OTHER GIFTS. III. IT IMPROVES OTHER GIFTS. Through it man values—1. Nature. 2. Human nature. 3. The Bible more. IV. IT MAKES US GIVERS. V. IT IS A GIFT TO ALL.

1. Not a loan. 2. Not a purchase. 3. A gift, and a gift to all. (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *Praise for the gift of gifts*:—

I. SALVATION IS ALTOGETHER THE GIFT OF GOD. 1. It comes to us by Jesus, and what else could Jesus be? 2. Over and over again we are told that salvation is not of works, and these are themselves a gift, the work of the grace of God. 3. If salvation were not a free gift how else could a sinner get it? I know that there would have been no hope of heaven for me if salvation had not been the free gift of God to those who deserved it not. 4. Look at the privileges which come to us through salvation! They are so many and so glorious as to be altogether beyond the limit of our furthest search and the height of our utmost reach. (1) Pardon. (2) Sonship. (3) Heirship. (4) Oneness with Christ. (5) The Divine indwelling. (6) Peace which passeth understanding. (7) Victory over death. (8) Heaven. II. THIS GIFT IS UNSPEAKABLE. Not that we cannot speak about it. How many times have I, for one, spoken upon it. It is like an artesian well that springeth up for ever and ever. We can speak about it, yet it is unspeakable. Christ is unspeakable—

1. In His person. He is perfect man and glorious God. 2. In His condescension. Can any one measure or describe how far Christ stooped? 3. In His death. 4. In His glory. When we think of His resurrection, of His ascending to the right hand of God, words languish on our lips. 5. In His chosen. All the Father gave Him, all for whom He died, He will glorify with Himself, and they shall be with Him where He is. 6. In the heart here. Throughout a long life and even in heaven Christ will be a gift unspeakable. "Eternity's too short to utter half Thy praise."

III. FOR THIS GIFT THANKS SHOULD BE RENDERED. 1. Some cannot say "Thanks be to God," &c., because—(1) They never think of it. There must be "think" at the bottom of "thank." (2) Some are always

delaying. (3) Some do not know whether they have it or not. 2. Join me in this exercise. (1) Thank God for this gift. Put out of your mind the idea that you ought to thank Christ, but not the Father. It was the Father that gave Christ. He gave His Son because He already loved us. (2) Thank God only. Do not be thinking by whose means you were converted. (3) Thank God spontaneously. Imitate Paul. When he sounded this peal of praise his mind was occupied about the collection, but, collection or no collection, he will thank God for His unspeakable gift. (4) Thank God practically. Do something to prove your thanks. (a) Look for His lost children. (b) Succour His poor saints. (c) Bear with the evil ones. (d) Watch for His Son from heaven. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Gratitude to God for the mediation of Christ:—I. We are, then, to show that God is entitled to the greatest gratitude because of the unspeakable gift of His Son Christ Jesus. Gratitude is that affection of the soul which is excited by acts of kindness done to us. It should always bear proportion to the kindness shown. But how can we estimate the degrees of kindness? In the case of a gift we may do this in the following manner: In proportion as that which is given is valued by the person who gives, in proportion as it is of advantage to the persons to whom it is given, and in proportion to its being undeserved or more or less strictly gratuitous, in the same proportion is the degree of kindness shown, and in the same proportion, consequently, is the degree of gratitude due. 1. Let us first consider the great value which God must have set on the gift. It was not one of the most exalted of our own order whom God gave to men as their Saviour, neither was it one of the angelic spirits who are far more exalted beings than the most exalted of the children of men. Now, if God has such a love to good and holy men as He is represented in Scripture to have, His love to so glorious a person as Christ above must be unspeakably greater. But this is not all. The particular name by which this glorious person is distinguished in Scripture plainly intimates the nature and strength of that love which the God of love must ever feel towards Him. He is called His Son, His own Son, His only begotten and well-beloved Son. If God has such an extraordinary love to those who are His adopted sons, as we find in Scripture He has, how inconceivably greater love must He always bear to the Son of His nature, who was ever with Him, and ever did the things which pleased Him! What unspeakable kindness towards men, then, did God discover in giving His own Son, a person of such worth, and so dear to Himself, to be their Saviour! How grateful a sense of His kindness ought such a gift to produce in us! 2. Let us, in the next place, consider the vast value of this gift to men. Many and valuable are the gifts which we have received from God, but of them all there is none so valuable as the gift of His Son, and of eternal life through Him. Its great superiority appears in this circumstance, that the bestowal of it was necessary in order to convert all other gifts into blessings. For what would the gift of life in this world, with all prosperity, have proved if the Son of God had not also been given that He might become the author of eternal salvation to as many as obeyed Him? 3. But let us, in the last place, on this part of the subject, consider our entire want of claim on God for this gift. II. To INQUIRE WHAT SOME OF THE CAUSES ARE OF THAT BASE INGRATITUDE WITH WHICH THE GREAT BODY OF THE HEARERS OF THE GOSPEL ARE CHARGEABLE, NOTWITHSTANDING THIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT. 1. The first cause of this base ingratitude which we shall mention is ignorance of the nature and excellence of the gift. Knowledge is the light of the soul, and by it are the various powers and faculties of the mind directed in their operation. It is the perception of what is grand that excites our admiration; it is the perception of loveliness that excites our esteem; and it is the perception or knowledge of kindness shown to ourselves that excites our gratitude. Where there is no such perception or knowledge of kindness there can be no gratitude. Whether you neglect the Bible, or contemn and deny it, in order, as you may think, to show your superior wisdom and understanding, your ignorance of the nature and excellence of the gift of God made known to you in it must be highly criminal, and consequently the ingratitude which flows from your ignorance cannot be excused. 2. The next cause of this base ingratitude which we shall mention is error, or such opinions respecting this gift as derogate from its greatness and excellence. The gift is depreciated by making Christ a mere man, which lessen also the value of it to men by denying that they are so miserable as the Scriptures represent them to be, and which depreciate it further by magnifying the merit of human conduct, as if it deserved much favour. 3. Another great cause of ingratitude is insensibility of heart. This is the principal cause. It is the parent of the indolence and inattention which produce ignorance of Divine things

in general, and of this gift in particular. It is also a prime reason of that perversion of understanding which embraces error for truth. 4. The only other cause of this ingratitude which we shall mention is pride. Pride, being a high sense of our own worth, is most unfriendly to the exercise of gratitude, because it always disposes us to look upon ourselves as entitled to those favours which we receive. We come now to conclude the subject with a few reflections on what has been said. 1. In the first place, then, from this subject we may learn that God is entitled to our warmest gratitude for such an unspeakable gift as the gift of His only begotten and well-beloved Son. 2. In the next place, from this subject we must be convinced of the propriety of the feeling and language of Paul, and of those who, like him, are ready to say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" 3. In the last place, from this subject we are led to contemplate the baseness and depravity of our nature. (*W. Auld.*) *Christ, God's best gift to man*:—I. CHRIST IS THE GIFT OF GOD TO MEN. He fulfils all the conditions of a gift. 1. He is something valuable. 2. He is offered to us freely; for God was under no kind of obligation to make us such an offer. 3. He is offered to persons who have no claim to such a favour. We cannot claim the offer of Christ as a recompense for injuries received from God, for He has never injured us; nor can we claim it in return for services performed, or favours bestowed, for we have never done anything for God. 4. Nor does God offer His Son with the expectation of receiving anything in return, for we and all that we possess are already His. 5. Nor does God offer us His Son with any intention of resuming the gift; for the gifts of God are without repentance. II. THIS GIFT MAY BE JUSTLY STYLED UNSPEAKABLE. Observe—1. That the love which led God to bestow such a gift upon us, must have been unspeakably great. Though Christ spoke as never man spake, yet even He could not describe it except by its effects. "God," says He, "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," &c., thus intimating that His love could not be described, and leaving us to judge of its greatness by its effects. And, judging by this rule, how great must His love have been! 2. Christ's worth and excellence are unspeakably great. He is the pearl of great price. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and grace; His riches are unsearchable. In Him dwells all fulness, even all the fulness of the Godhead. In giving us Christ, therefore, God has given us Himself and all He has; and hence those who receive this gift are said to be filled with the fulness of God. 3. Unspeakable as is the intrinsic value of Christ, He is, if possible, still more unspeakably valuable to us. The value of a gift depends much on circumstances. Money may be a valuable present to any one; but to a man on the point of being dragged to prison for debt it is much more so. Medicine or food may be valuable in itself, but when given to a man ready to perish, its value is very greatly increased. So Christ is unspeakably precious in Himself. But how unspeakably more valuable is such a gift to us, who were on the point of perishing for ever. III. THIS IS A GIFT FOR WHICH WE OUGHT TO THANK GOD WITH THE MOST LIVELY GRATITUDE. Is it necessary to prove this? Is it not evident from the preceding consideration? (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Unspeakable gifts of God*:—It may surprise some that concerning this passage there has been considerable difference of opinion among expositors. The point in dispute is this, to what particular gift of God did the apostle refer? Most readers instantly conclude that Christ is the gift. To what other gift of God can you give this title "unspeakable." I refer to this reasoning only to remind you how fallacious it is. It has its roots not in an exaggerated idea of the greatness of the gift of Christ, for that is impossible, but it has its roots in unworthy notions of God's other bounties. We should not say it must be the gift of Christ, because it is called unspeakable, for that is assuming God's other gifts are such as our finite minds can clearly comprehend. It is true that Christ is an unspeakable gift of God. In the gift of Christ God's love did transcend all His other manifestations; but it is also true that before Christ came from the heart of God to seek and to save the lost, gifts had been lavished upon the children of men of which we would have said their greatness surpasses our description. If we take the bounties of God and set them before our minds, and try to realise what we should feel, and what our earthly life would have been if those bounties had been denied, instead of saying one of His gifts is unspeakable, we should be more likely to say they are all unspeakable. Now look at some common bounties, as we call them; common, not because we can do without them, but because in the fulness of the Divine love they come constantly and they come to nearly all. In the beginning darkness was upon the earth. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." That command is still heard, and by Divine power

every night is turned to day. Can you gaze upon the glories of each new returning morning without feeling that this one gift of light repeated every twenty-four hours through the untold ages is an unspeakable gift? Sometimes you meet a man blind from his birth; you see him groping his way in the midst of the thousand fair things whose varied beauties are a perfect blank to him. When you put that man's darkness by the side of your light, when you put that man's poverty by the side of your wealth, do you not feel that you can with the utmost reason exclaim, "Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift." Sometimes you see a poor stricken sufferer who has borne the burden of pain and weakness well nigh through his life. When you think of his pain and feebleness, and of your own soundness and bodily health, vigour, and animal spirits, would it be exaggeration if you exclaimed, "Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift"? Sometimes you meet a poor creature to whom the light of reason is denied, human as to his bodily form, but wanting in the mind, which is man's crown of glory. He has no reason whatever to control his instincts and to subdue the strong passions of his body. He cannot look through nature up to nature's God. When you look at him, what name do you give to your own faculties? There is but one name for your faculties; they are an "unspeakable gift." Those who know me best will least need to be told that it is not mine to induce you to think less of Christ, the gift of gifts. Not less of Christ, but more of God's other benefits. Now it is more than time to seek an answer to this question. Seeing that there are so many unspeakable gifts, and the apostle refers to only one, to which did he refer? Many able expositors contend that the gift the apostle refers to was the generous, liberal disposition of the Corinthian Christians to the poor saints at Jerusalem. "God has given to you, Corinthians, the heart to feel for others, He has given to you the readiness to help others. God be thanked for this unspeakable gift." Then comes the question: Was the apostle thinking of this when he exclaimed, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift." Those to whom I have referred believe that in effect the apostle said, "You, Corinthians, have never seen the poor suffering people at Jerusalem, but your hearts have bled with pity for them, and your hands have been held out bountifully. Your bountifulness makes many people believe in the gospel with greater faith and love." I am afraid that such an exposition of the passage is what some selfish people have never dreamt of. They have looked at the words, and they have thought the apostle is speaking of some rich treasure which God has put into the hands of the people for their own use and enjoyment. It never occurred to them that he might mean something which God put into the hearts of the Corinthians to make them think and care for others, to make them deny themselves for the sake of others. A quick, sympathetic nature is an unspeakable gift; they make no effort at all to get that gift. But a great many people seem as if they do wish they could be delivered from the burden of all troublesome thought and affection towards others. If they could be their own creators, they would give themselves thoughts of tenderness towards themselves, and hearts of granite towards other people. He who wrote these words about this gift himself had it in rich abundance. At first he had a proud heart, a cruel nature, and the grace of Christ came and changed that nature, and made him responsive to the touch of everybody's trouble. Yes, we must look at this gift not only in relation to this life, but in relation to the life which is to come. Those to whom God gives a gracious heart like His own, He does not intend to leave them for ever in this world of blended light and darkness, sorrow and joy. He intends very soon to take them where all is peace, and all is perfection, and all is blessedness. I have already given you two classes of exposition of this passage. Suffer me now to say a word about a third. The late Dean Alford took this text for a Whit Sunday sermon, and he said, "I hesitate not to say at once that the unspeakable gift is the gift of the Holy Spirit." He contended that the blessing of Pentecost—the gift of the Holy Spirit—was the one even toward which all the other events of Revelation contributed. "The other gifts," he said, "are means to an end, the indwelling of the Spirit in me is the end itself." Was not Christ exalted that the Spirit might be given to men? No one will question that the gift of the Spirit is an "unspeakable gift." This world, with all its light and comforts, we owe to the gift of the Spirit. If the unspeakable gift of the Spirit had not been given to Moses, David, Isaiah, and all the inspired writers, they would never have given us a book which above all others is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Not only was the Spirit needed for those who wrote; it is needed also for those who read. We know that he "that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved," but how do we lack the

patience, perseverance, and power necessary to continue to the end. But when the human knowledge and energy fails, the Divine force may secure the victory, and bring the man off more than conqueror. I daresay some of you, while I have been talking, have been like the dove out on the wild waste of waters, you are glad to get back with a weary wing to the old familiar ark, and you say, "After all you have said, it was Christ the apostle meant." Be it so, you cannot go wrong in saying that *that* gift is unspeakable—unspeakable in the love it reveals—unspeakable in the glorious issue it will ultimately have. Does some one say that I have touched upon so many unspeakable gifts that I have left him in confusion and perplexity? I am glad if it is so. I wanted to make you feel that God's gifts are not one, nor two, nor three gifts only; they are not like two or three pyramids rising out on a flat and dreary desert plain. The region of God's bounty is a mountainous region. "Peak after peak, alps upon alps arise." The higher we climb the broader the vision becomes. There is one higher than the rest, and I see a cross on its summit. To that summit we should look most frequently. It is there we are nearest to God; it is there we grow most into His likeness; it is there we drink most into His Spirit; it is there where sinful men get their guilt cancelled, and receive their passport to a crown and kingdom of glory that fadeth not away. Thanks be to God for every unspeakable gift. (*C. Vince.*) *The priceless-ness of Christ*:—It is a peculiarity of St. Paul that the less reminds him of the greater. The most ordinary of facts suggest to him the sublimest of truths. The apostle is here enforcing the duty of liberality by a variety of arguments which reach their climax in the text. This gift of God is unspeakable because—

I. IT POSSESSES UNSPEAKABLE WORTH. 1. Christ is the embodiment of a perfect humanity, and is precious as perfect purity must be amidst pollution, as perfect obedience must be amidst rebellion, as perfect love must be where each man seeks his own. 2. He is God manifest in the flesh. The hands that men touched fashioned the worlds. The eyes they looked into were those from which there is nothing hid. The voice they listened to commanded the hosts of heaven, and called the dead from their graves. Not till our arithmetic can reckon the wealth of omnipotence can we estimate the preciousness of Christ. He is unspeakably precious as the Picture and Transcript of God. II. IT PROVIDES FOR UNSPEAKABLE NEEDS. 1. Unspeakable guilt. When the soul sees how in Christ God can be just and the Justifier of the unjust, then it echoes the words, "Unto them that believe He is precious. Thanks be unto God," &c. 2. Unspeakable weakness. And he who accepts it discovers that while the chains of justice fall off from his limbs, a new tide of vigour flows all through his being. That is a treasure indeed which contains both the key that unlocks the prison doors and the medicine that restores the released man's health, sending him forth on existence not only free but whole. 3. Unspeakable loneliness. Man is without friendship, or at least such a friendship as he really needs. Circumstances happen when man, however plentiful or loving his friends may be, must feel alone. There are the isolations of individual perplexity, sin, sorrow, and death. Give me the presence of One who is wise enough to say, "This is the way, walk ye in it," in my hours of doubt—gracious enough to say, "I have seen thy ways and will heal thee," in my hours of remorse—loving enough to say, "Cast thy burden upon Me," in my hours of trial—near enough and strong enough to say, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee," at the time when my feet feel the chill waters of death. Give me the presence of a Comforter like this; then will the heart be satisfied. This need is supplied by God's unspeakable gift. III. IT CONVEYS UNSPEAKABLE BLESSINGS. Large as the wants are, the provisions are larger; great as man's poverty is, greater still is God's grace. It is one thing to take a vessel and to fill it; it is another to place it in a boundless sea, where it may ever float, and ever be brimming. 1. God not only gives pardon for guilt. Not as the offence is, so is the free gift; but where sin hath abounded, there grace hath abounded much more; and they whom God pardons He raises to infinite dignity. What other king ever translated rebels from the prison-house straight to the palace, and gave them a share in the children's heritage? 2. God not only discloses for weakness a sufficiency of strength; in Christ there is the pledge of unspeakable victory. It were much to stand in the evil day; but those who have Christ shall be more than conquerors. 3. God not only proffers companionship for loneliness, but affords unspeakable sympathy. In Christ there is a fellow-feeling so wide that it sweeps the range of every emotion, and so true and so delicate that it can touch the tenderest and not jar. IV. IT IS THE EVIDENCE AND EMBODIMENT OF UNSPEAKABLE LOVE. Here we reach the spring and the origin of all. (*W. A. Gray.*) *God's*

unspeakable gift:—1. Christ brought us truth on the highest questions of all, and taught us that truth most fully. We prize, and justly prize, the great masters who gave us the knowledge of nature—Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Darwin; but more momentous still are the instructions of Moses, Isaiah, and the great moral masters of the ages. Here Christ is supreme. He vindicated and disclosed the spiritual world and the spirituality of man with surpassing authority and power. He made it impossible henceforth that the race should lose itself in materialism and sensuality. In Christ we have in its fulness the precious doctrine of grace, forgiveness, peace. 2. Christ brought righteousness. He secured to us the power of purity. He inspires the strength by which the highest goodness is attainable. 3. Christ brought us hope. He came into the world in an age of weariness and despair, and He made everything to live by putting into the heart of the race a sure and splendid hope. The advent of Jesus mightily enriched the race in inconvertible treasure—in knowledge, kindness, purity, and hope. How much it enriched us none may tell. The gift is “unspeakable.” Have we received the unspeakable gift? Men do not readily believe in and accept the highest gifts. They are often strangely blind. Did they welcome Gutenberg? Did they strew flowers for Columbus? The world did not believe in these great donors; the gifts they brought were too grand. So, when the “unspeakable gift” was given, men stood aloof in insensibility or scorn. Christ came to His own, but they received Him not. The message of God’s redeeming mercy is disregarded by multitudes of nominal Christians. Every now and then we hear of a superb masterpiece being discovered in a house where for years it has been neglected and unknown. The picture has been the butt of wit, it has had penknives through it, it has been relegated to the attic. But in how many houses is the gospel, the masterpiece of God, ignored and despised! The savage living in a land of rich landscapes, of gorgeous birds, of priceless orchids, of reefs of gold, of mines of diamonds, of stores of ivory, and yet unconscious of it all, possessing nothing but a hut and a canoe, is a faint image of thousands in this Christian land who are living utterly unmindful of the boundless spiritual treasure close to their feet. Some of us have received the crowning gift of God; but we have not fully received it. That is a striking passage in Obadiah: “The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” What a great deal belongs to us that we do not possess! It lies beyond us untouched, unseen, unrealised. Our poor experiences are not the measure of the gift of Christ. We have the dust of gold rather than the gold itself, a few rose leaves rather than the garden, grape gleanings rather than the vintage. And let us not miss the great practical lesson of the text. The theme of the chapter is that of ministering to the saints. If God has been so magnificent in His generosity to us, what ought we to deny our brother? Our thanks for Heaven’s infinite gift must be expressed in our practical sympathy with the sons and daughters of misfortune and suffering. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

CHAPTER X.

VER. 1. Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.—*The meekness and gentleness of Christ*:—These words recognise Christ’s character as an accepted standard of appeal among the Corinthians. To ourselves such an appeal would not be strange. But does it not strike you as remarkable here? For remember that only a few years before this the oldest of the converts were gross idolaters. The standard of appeal has not altered. The preacher refers back to Christ as the source of all authority and influence. As Christians, if we are in perplexity, we ask the question, What did Christ do? and when we discover that, our course is clear. There is to us no higher joy than to please Him. But notice what it is in Christ to which Paul refers. **I. THE MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.** 1. Men had been striving to overturn Paul’s authority and destroy his influence. This was enough to excite the indignation of any true-hearted man, and no wonder if he had vindicated his character in stinging words. But he will not do this. He will conquer them by the gentleness which Christ ever manifested to those who had gone astray. Most thoroughly had he entered into Christ’s spirit. He can never forget how tenderly and patiently the Saviour had treated him. Years after, when writing to one who had never tried the patience of Christ as he had done, he

said: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord" (1 Tim. i. 12-16). Paul had experienced the power of Christ's meekness and gentleness, and he was anxious that others should know it too. 2. Let us turn to the life of Christ, and see how full it is of this Divine virtue. John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" and, though there is an idea of sacrifice, what is more meek and gentle than a lamb? He Himself declared, "I am meek and lowly of heart." Think of all He suffered, and the manner in which He suffered it. He came into the world eager to bless and save it, but "He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." And yet in no instance was He ruffled by the injuries wrought on Himself. When the helpless and the poor were oppressed, He stood ready to defend them. How He scathed the Pharisees! Yet even in their case tenderness and love were in His heart, for immediately after His tremendous exposure He breaks out in a wail like a mother for the child of her love, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets," &c. And to the very close of life He remains the same. Isaiah (liii. 7) and Peter (1 Pet. ii. 23)—the one in prophecy, the other in history—unite in bearing testimony to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. II. THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST WAS NOT AN AMIABLE WEAKNESS. There are many who obtain credit for this virtue who have no manner of right to it. They are patient if any one wrongs them, and seem the incarnation of good humour. Often this disposition is simply a consciousness of helplessness or indifference. But Christ was gentle because He was strong. It was an awful power that Christ carried with Him; and were it not that we know how gentleness clothed that power, we should be ready to wonder that men did not shrink in fear before His presence. He had power enough to drive devils into the deep, yet gentleness to gather children in His arms. III. JESUS WAS GENTLE, BUT IT WAS NOT BECAUSE HE WAS IGNORANT OF MEN'S CHARACTERS. We may often act towards others in kindness and forbearance because we do not know them. But Christ knew what was in men; He was never deceived; and this was one of the reasons of His gentleness. He saw good as well as bad. He understood all the difficulties that beset men. Allowances were to be made, and He made them; circumstances were to be considered, and He considered them. We are hasty in judgment, because we are so ignorant of what passes within the hearts of those we condemn. Christ was full of forbearance, because He knew the whole. IV. JESUS WAS GENTLE, BUT NOT BECAUSE HE WAS INDIFFERENT TO JUSTICE AND PURITY. We often overlook sin, because we do not much care whether things are right or wrong. A child does wrong; a friend in amiable pity says, "Oh, let him go this time." The friend cares very little about justice itself or the law of the household. When a criminal is taken, there are plenty of weak people who will urge you to let him go. They get credit for gentleness. But then, indeed, some people are always ready to forgive any wrong that has been done against some one else. People are careless because they have no hatred of what is evil in their own natures. They have sinned so much themselves that they readily condone sin in others. But all this is not true gentleness; it is indifference to righteousness. Now Christ's gentleness was not of this nature. He did care what men did. He was perfectly pure, and every sin wounded His heart like a poisoned arrow. He loved righteousness, and hated iniquity. He was as just as He was loving; and it was to vindicate Divine justice that He came to Calvary. He died the just for the unjust. V. THIS MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS IS THE WEAPON BY WHICH CHRIST CONQUERS US. It is the power of His love that subdues human hearts. He will bear with men until His very patience and gentleness shall make them ashamed of their sin. What argument can be more powerful than this? (*W. Braden.*) *The meekness and gentleness of Christ recommended to the imitation of the young.*—When this pathetic address is considered in connection with the circumstances that led to it, the character of Paul appears in a very interesting light. In writing to a church where party spirit was raging, the apostle expresses himself in a manner prudent and mild, yet firm and dignified. The meekness of Christ is a phrase expressive of the calmness and patience, the forbearance and humility by which He was distinguished. I. IN WHAT WAY MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS SHOULD OPERATE IN THE YOUNG IS THE FIRST TOPIC THAT CLAIMS OUR ATTENTION. 1. Meekness and gentleness appear in modest and unassuming manners. Meekness and gentleness are directly opposed to the love of display, and this desire to have the pre-eminence. They delight in the shade of retirement, and shrink from the glare of public observation. 2. Meekness and gentleness appear in calmness and forbearance under provocations and injuries. The power of meekness and gentleness is sometimes affectingly manifested under domestic evils. 3. Meekness

and gentleness appear in courtesy and kindness in the intercourse of life. 4. Meekness and gentleness, prompt to lenity and indulgence to others, and to abstinence from all measures of rigour and severity. The spirit of meekness and gentleness will preserve us from rigour and severity in judging of the actions of others. 5. Meekness and gentleness appear in patient acquiescence under the afflictions of life. II. I proceed now to show THAT THE MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS OF CHRIST PRESENT THE MOST PERSUASIVE MOTIVES TO THE CULTIVATION OF THESE EXCELLENCES. 1. Meekness and gentleness appear in the character of our Lord in the most winning form. If your hearts are at all open to the influence of good example, they must be gained now. 2. It is the meekness and gentleness of One whom you are under the strongest obligations to imitate. Reflect on what He endured for you. 3. Consider how much His honour and that of His religion are concerned in the regard which you pay to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. You wish the world to think well of the spirit of your Master, but you must know that they will judge of it from you. 4. Consider how much Christ is related to you. To beseech a child, by the virtues of his parents, will probably guard him against the opposite vices, and lead him to act as they did. 5. Consider the glory of His person and character. It is not the meekness and gentleness of one whose station is low, or whose influence is insignificant; nor are these solitary graces in His character. 6. It is the meekness and the gentleness of one who has connected the most important consequences with our imitation or neglect of his example: "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). I conclude by recommending the imitation of this meekness and gentleness to other classes of persons. Ye who are old, I beseech you by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ, not to aggravate the sorrows of your evil days by peevishness and discontent. Ye parents, I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, to beware of "provoking your children to wrath," and to endeavour to persuade before you attempt to compel. Masters, do your duty to your servants, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master is in heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with Him. Ye who are at variance, I beseech you by these virtues of Christ to leave off contention. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. v. 9). Ye members of churches, follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another. Let political parties cease to distract the nation by their broils and their scurrilities; and let them in the spirit of the gospel direct their efforts to promote peace on earth and good-will among men. (*H. Belfrage.*) *The gentleness of God* :—I. GENTLENESS IS THE METHOD BY WHICH STRENGTH MANIFESTS ITSELF. 1. The greater the power of the being, the greater will be the marvel and the delicacy of gentleness. In a woman we expect gentleness. But in a warrior it creates an admiration that it does not in woman. 2. It is wonderful, too, in proportion to the provocation to contrary feelings. That all rude and hateful things should find themselves the subjects of gentleness, this is surprising. 3. It is likewise wonderful in proportion to the moral sensibility and discriminating purity of the mind which exercises it. Gentleness, springing from easy good-nature, which will not take the trouble to vindicate justice and right, will not command even respect. II. CONSIDER, THEN, WITH THESE INTERPRETING REMARKS, WHAT MUST BE THE NATURE OF GENTLENESS IN GOD. 1. He dwells alone from eternity to eternity, because there is none other that can be of His grandeur of being. The whole earth is said to be but a drop of the bucket before Him. And that such a One, living in such a wise, should deal with His erring children with gentleness is wonderful and sublime! 2. Consider also His moral purity and His love of purity, and His abhorrence of evil. That such a Being should carry Himself with gentleness toward those who have forfeited all claim to mercy and gentleness—this is wonderful! The life of every individual is a long period of moral delinquency. No one who has not had the experience of a parent can have any adequate conception of the patience and gentleness exercised by a mother in rearing her child. True mothers are only God's miniatures in this world. How great will be the disclosure which shall be made when, in the great day, Christ shall enrol from the archives of eternity the history of each individual soul. It will be seen then how much patience must have been exercised by the Divine Being in rearing a single one of His creatures. Now consider national life. Judge from your own feelings how God, with His infinite sensibility, must feel when He sees men rising up against their fellow-men, waging wars and devastating society by every infernal mischief that their ingenuity can invent. The Bible says that God is past finding out; not merely

His physical power, but His disposition — His moral nature. If God cared for the misconduct of men no more than we do for the fiery strifes of an ant-hill, there would be no foundation for such a conception of Divine gentleness and Divine goodness. Evil is eternal in the sight of God, unless it be checked and cured. Sin, like a poisonous weed, re-sows itself, and becomes eternal by reproduction. Now God looks upon the human race in the light of these truths. And tell me what other attribute of God, what other influence of His character, is so sublime as this—His gentleness? III. NOW, WHILE THESE STATEMENTS ARE FRESH IN YOUR MIND, I DESIRE TO PRESENT TO YOU A CLEAR CONCEPTION OF GOD AS YOUR PERSONAL GOD. He is not a Being that dwells in the inner recesses of the eternal world, inaccessible, incomprehensible. Men never find Christ, but are always found of Him. He goes forth to seek and to save the lost. It is the abounding love of His heart that draws us up toward Him. "We love Him because He first loved us." It is this willing, winning, pleading Christ, who wields all the grandeur of justice and all the authority of universal empire with such sweet gentleness that in all the earth there is none like unto Him, that I set before you as your personal friend. He does not set His holiness and His hatred of sin like mountains over which you may not climb. He does not hedge Himself about by the dignities and superiorities of Divinity. All the way from His throne to your heart is sloped; and hope, and love, and patience, and meekness, and long-suffering, and kindness, and wonderful mercies, and gentleness, as so many banded helping angels wait to take you by the hand and lead you up to God. And I beseech you by His gentleness, too, that you fear Him no longer; that you be no longer indifferent to Him; that you wound Him by your unbelief no more, but that now and henceforth you follow Him—"for there is none other name under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." Conclusion: I hold up before you that God who loves the sinner and abhors sin; who loves goodness with infinite fervour, and breathes it upon those who put their trust in Him. And remember that it is this God who yet declares that He will at last by no means clear the guilty! Make your peace with Him now, or abandon all hopes of peace. Be not discouraged because you are sinful. It is the very office of His love to heal your sins. Who would need a physician if he might not come to his bedside until after the sickness was healed? What use of school-master if one may not go to school till his education be complete? (*H. W. Beecher.*)

The tenderness of Christ:—I. IN CONNECTION WITH WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED TO US CONCERNING HIS MISSION AND LIFE. 1. It harmonises with the prophetic intimations. (1) See this in the very "titles" bestowed upon Him. Lest the spirit should fail at the thought of "the Ancient of Days," the "Everlasting Father," "the Mighty God," we are encouraged to look at Him as "the seed of the woman," the "consolation of Israel," "the Prince of peace." Though He is the "plant of Renown," He grows up a "tender plant." Though He is the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," He is led as a "lamb to the slaughter." And though speaking to us out of the "bush burning with fire," it is a fire which only awes by its brightness, but consumes not a leaf with its flame. (2) Still more does this come out in prophecies bearing more directly on His work and office (*Isa. xxxii. 2, xlii. 1; cf. Matt. xii. 18*). 2. And such as prophecy declared Christ should be, such, in all the actings of His earthly life, do we find He was. With His own disciples He had to bear much. Yet rarely does His language rise to harsh reproof—scarcely even to upbraiding. It is rather that of a subdued, softened, melancholy tenderness. And was there less of tenderness in His dealings with those who were not disciples? with the penitent woman in Simon's house? with the woman of Samaria? &c. 3. This tenderness of the Saviour's character has accompanied Him into heaven, arching as with the mild splendours of a rainbow the throne of His mediation, and giving a softened light and lustre to the moral administration of God (*Rev. i.-iii.*).

II. IN ITS BEARING ON SOME OF THE EXPERIENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. How should we be comforted by it under early convictions of sin, and doubts of the Divine forgiveness? None should despair whilst in the midst of the throne there stands the gentle Lamb of God whose blood cleanseth from all sin. 2. It should be very comforting when cast down by the weakness of our faith. The same weakness has been exhibited by our brethren in the world, but a gracious Saviour allowed for, pardoned them. Look at that agonised father as he brings his demoniac son to the Saviour. Weak faith, mixed faith, little faith—better this than none at all: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Or see again how tenderly the Master deals with His fearful disciples in the storm. And therefore to all who are suffering from this infirmity, we say, "Be not afraid, only believe."

3. Consider it as it bears upon our slow progress in the Divine life—our coldness in sacred exercises, our fluctuations and decays of religious feeling. Go to Gethsemane, and look on the disciples sleeping when they ought to have been praying; but the compassionate Saviour can excuse all. “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 4. See the Christian under the pressure of outward adversity. More than thirty years did our Divine Master spend in that school. And we love to think of Jesus as “touched with a feeling of our infirmities” now that He reigns in heaven. 5. See the Christian again under the prevalence of temptation, and what a strong refuge has he in the Saviour’s tenderness: “For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” Yes, “tempted in all points like as we are.” And now, in heaven, He brings to bear on His work for us all the sacred memories and experiences of His earthly state. 6. Behold the Christian in that hour of nature’s greatest weakness, when he sees opening before him the doors of the unseen world. Then does he feel the power of the Saviour’s tenderness most; for it is His special office “to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (*D. Moore, M.A.*)

The gentleness of Christ:—Gentleness is not so much the essence of goodness as it is its exquisite setting; it is a kind way of being good. It is not the tree itself, but the blossom upon its boughs; but the tree of which it is the blossom is the tree of life. There is none so gentle as “the Lord God omnipotent.” We see and feel His gentleness in the way in which He is daily conferring His bounties.

I. THE WAY IN WHICH HE EXERCISED HIS POWER. We are almost afraid of power in the possession of man. When we think of the Pharaohs, the Herods, the Cæsars, the Napoleons, we shrink from the committal of power to any human arm. He laid a gentle hand upon the sick; He spoke gentle words to those who appealed for His succour, quietly and graciously.

II. THE WAY IN WHICH HE TAUGHT DIVINE TRUTH. Men of brilliant powers often like to flash them upon society; genius often dazzles and bewilders. But the Great Teacher, not neglecting the opportunity that offered, went quietly and meekly to His work of utterance. He chose the humble wayside, the upper room, the shaded garden, where He could teach His disciples.

III. THE WAY IN WHICH HE TREATED ERROR AND FAILURE AND SIN.

1. Gently He excused the extravagant zeal of one of His disciples, discovering for her a justification she would never have found for herself. “She has done it for My burial” (Matt. xxvi. 12).
2. Gently He bore with infirm discipleship; correcting their misunderstanding, enlightening them in their darkness, and on one occasion most graciously accepting their intended but halting service (Matt. xxvi. 41).
3. Gently He rebuked and restored failure and fall (Luke xxii. 61; John xxi. 15–19).
4. Gently He dealt with those who rejected Him.
5. Gently He dealt with those whom all others spurned; admitting the publican into His kingdom.
6. Gently He bore Himself at the last sad scenes. We may beseech men by the gentleness of Christ—(1) To have their own character and conduct clothed with this grace; that themselves and their life may be beautiful and attractive like their Lord’s. (2) To yield their hearts to Him who is the rightful object not only of high regard, but of a true affection; this gentle Lord of truth and grace is one whom we can love and therefore serve. (3) To shrink from the condemnation of Christ. We can afford to disregard the threatenings of the violent, but we may not despise the earnest warnings of the calm and true. (*W. Clarkson, B.A.*)

The apostle’s vindication:—The Epistle has until now been addressed to those who at least acknowledged the apostle’s authority. But now we have St. Paul’s reply to his enemies. Note—

THE IMPUGNERS OF HIS AUTHORITY.

 1. We must distinguish these into two classes—the deceivers and the deceived; else we cannot understand the difference of tone, sometimes meek, and sometimes stern, which pervades the vindication; e.g., comp. ver. 2 with ver. 1. His enemies charged him with insincerity (2 Cor. i. 12, 13, 18, 19); with being only powerful in writing (2 Cor. x. 10); of mercenary motives; of a lack of apostolic gifts; and of not preaching the gospel. They charged him with artifice. His Christian prudence and charity were regarded as devices whereby he deceived his followers.
 2. We must also bear in mind that the apostle had to deal with a strong party spirit (1 Cor. i. 12), and of all these parties his chief difficulty lay with that which called itself Christ’s. (1) Though these persons called themselves Christ’s they are nevertheless blamed in the same list with others. And yet what could seem to be more right than for men to say, “We will bear no name but Christ’s; we throw ourselves on Christ’s own words; we throw aside all intellectual philosophy; we will have no servitude to ritualism”? Nevertheless, these persons were just as bigoted and as blameable as the others. They did not mean

to say only, "We are Christ's," but also, "You are *not* Christ's." This is a feeling which is as much to be avoided now as then. Sectarianism falsifies the very principle of our religion, and therefore falsifies its forms. It falsifies the Lord's Prayer. It substitutes for "our Father," the Father of *me*, of *my* Church or party. It falsifies the creed: "I believe in Jesus Christ *our* Lord." It falsifies both the sacraments. (2) However Christian this expression may sound, the spirit which prompts it is wrong. This Christ-party separated themselves from God's order when they rejected the teaching of St. Paul and the apostles. For the phase of truth presented by St. Paul was just as necessary as that taught by Christ. Not that Christ did not teach all truth, but that the hidden meaning of His teaching was developed still further by the inspired apostles. We cannot, at this time, cut ourselves off from the teaching of eighteen centuries. We cannot do without the different phases of knowledge which God's various instruments have delivered to us. For God's system is mediatorial—that is, truth communicated to men through men.

II. HIS VINDICATION. 1. St. Paul based his authority on the power of meekness, and it was a spiritual power in respect of that meekness. The weapons of his warfare were not carnal. (1) This was one of the root principles of St. Paul's ministry. If he reproved, it was done in the spirit of meekness (Gal. v. 1); or if he defended his own authority, it was still with the same spirit (chap. x. 1). He closes his summary of the character of ministerial work by showing the need of a gentle spirit (2 Tim. ii. 24–26). (2) Here, again, according to his custom, the apostle refers to the example of Christ. He vindicated his authority, because he had been meek, as Christ was meek. So it ever is: humility, after all, is the best defence. Do not let insult harden you, nor cruelty rob you of tenderness. You will conquer as Christ conquered, and bless as He blessed. But remember, fine words about gentleness, self-sacrifice, meekness, are worth very little. Would you believe in the Cross and its victory? then live in its spirit—act upon it. 2. St. Paul rested his authority not on carnal weapons, but on the spiritual power of truth. The strongholds which the apostle had to pull down were the old habits which still clung to the Christianised heathen. There was the pride of intellect in the arrogant Greek philosophers, the pride of the flesh in the Jewish love of signs, and most difficult of all—the pride of ignorance. For this work St. Paul's weapon was Truth, not authority, craft, or personal influence. He felt that truth must prevail. A grand, silent lesson for us now! when the noises of a hundred controversies stun the Church. Let us teach as Christ and His apostles taught. Force no one to God, but convince all by the might of truth. Should any of you have to bear attacks on your character, or life, or doctrine, defend yourself with meekness, or if defence should make matters worse, then commit yourself fully to the truth. Outpray, outpreach, outlive the calumny. (F. W. Robertson, M.A.)

Vers. 3–6. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.—*The distinctions between the good and the bad*.—I. WHAT IS CONCEDED BY THE APOSTLE in the text as to the general state of the servants of Christ; or, in other words, what is meant by the expression, we "walk in the flesh"? 1. It is evident that this expression does not mean the same thing as "walking after the flesh"; for, in the Epistle to the Romans, it is expressly said that the servant of God "does not walk after the flesh," but "after the Spirit." The expression plainly refers, not to the corruptions of the bad, but to the infirmities of the good. Consider in what respects a real Christian may sometimes be found to "walk in the flesh." 1. He "walks in the flesh" in that he is subject to all the infirmities of the body. It is said, for instance, of Hezekiah, that he was "sick even unto death." The same fact is stated with regard to Onesiphorus. And Timothy is commanded to "take a little wine, on account of his often infirmities." 2. In the next place, the servant of God is liable to error in judgment and opinion. 3. In like manner the real Christian, as long as the connection of "the flesh," or of the body and soul, continues, is subject to the assaults of temptation. Abraham was tempted; Job was tempted; Peter was tried by his natural impetuosity; Paul, by a thorn in the flesh. 4. In like manner the real servant of God is subject to infirmities of temper and conduct. Look, for example, into the history of the Old Testament saints, and see their deviations from holiness. 5. The real Christian is subject to infirmities even as to those great principles and affections which are nevertheless the governing powers of his soul. What infirmity, for instance, is there in his faith! Look again at the love of the real servant of Christ. At times how ardent and active are his

feelings, and at other times how cold and sluggish! Thus, also, the hope of the real Christian is often characterised by much infirmity. To-day every promise is bright in his eyes; the next day, perhaps, the consciousness of his guilt seizes upon his mind; his sky is clouded. But does it follow, as some would pretend, that there is no distinction between the servants of God and the servants of the world, between religion and irreligion? By no means. "Though we walk in the flesh," yet "we do not war after the flesh." II. Consider in WHAT THE DISTINCTION between the good and the bad consists; or, in other words, what is the meaning of the expression "we do not war after the flesh"? 1. The Christian, says St. Paul, does not "war after the flesh"; in other words, he does not contend with his opposers in the spirit or in the manner in which they contend with him. Look, for instance, at the great Head of the Christian Church, when suffering under the cruelty of His countrymen: He returns silence for insults; deeds of mercy for deeds of blood. Look again at the first martyr to the religion of the Cross: "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." And such will be the distinction of temper and conduct in every case of conflict between the servant of Christ and of the world. 2. But it is my wish to extend this inquiry to the more general points of distinction between the real Christian and the followers of the world. And it is not too much to affirm, that as to no one point will the real servant of God habitually walk, think, live "after the flesh." 1. In the first place, holiness in a servant of God is habitual; sin is occasional and rare. Hezekiah was betrayed into an act of vanity; Herod, we may conceive, was habitually vain. 2. The real Christian alone mourns over his sins as so many acts of ingratitude and disobedience to God. It is almost a folly to speak of the man of the world as mourning for sin at all. 3. The Christian, and the Christian alone, carries his sins to the Cross of Christ for pardon. 4. The Christian, and the Christian alone, is carrying his corruptions to the Spirit of God for correction and sanctification. 5. The Christian is obtaining a daily and visible conquest over his corruptions. The corruptions of the men of the world, because left to themselves, or nursed up in the cradle of self-indulgence, are daily gaining strength. 1. Conclusion: If such are the infirmities even of the acknowledged servants of God, how necessary is it that men, in every stage of their religious progress, should acknowledge their weakness and worthlessness, and cast themselves on the compassion of God for pardon and grace! 2. If the points of distinction between a servant of God and a servant of the world are as many and great as we have seen, let no man who has not the marks of a Christian lay any claim to his name and to his privileges. (*J. W. Cunningham, A.M.*) *Our warfare*:—I. THE ENEMY AGAINST WHOM THIS WARFARE IS DIRECTED. 1. That enemy is Satan. 2. The position of these hosts of darkness. 3. The kingdom of Satan is represented as fortified by numerous strongholds. (1) Of these some are intellectual. There is the stronghold of—(a) Wilful ignorance (chap. iv. 4). (b) Infidelity, in which revealed truth is scornfully rejected and bitterly reviled. (c) Prejudice, under which multitudes refuse the doctrines of Evangelical religion. (d) Superstition and idolatry. (2) There is the stronghold of moral depravity in every heart. When every other fortress is broken down, man finds a refuge here. II. THE WEAPONS WITH WHICH THIS WARFARE IS PROSECUTED. 1. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal—neither force nor intrigue. False religions have been thus propagated; but Christianity repudiates all such aid. 2. What those weapons are, Paul has stated in Eph. vi. Now these weapons, though not carnal, are nevertheless mighty. (1) For defence. (2) For conquest. For the overthrow of Satan's kingdom, and the disenthralment of the human race from his iron yoke, we need no other weapons. (3) In their source—"God"; not any skill, or strength, or courage in us. (a) It is God who summons us to this glorious conflict. (b) He equips us for the contest. (c) He is graciously present with us by His good Spirit, inspiring us with Divine energy, and giving us the victory. III. THE TRIUMPHS WE ANTICIPATE. 1. The total downfall of the strongholds of Satan. (1) The stronghold of ignorance. The darkness which for so many centuries has covered the earth shall be dispelled. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (2) The strongholds of superstition and idolatry. The truth as it is in Jesus shall be universally triumphant. (3) Those earthly governments which obstinately withstand Christianity. The kingdoms of the earth will become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. 2. The casting down of imaginations, and of every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God—bold speculations, sophistical reasonings, false philosophies, which either deny His existence or distort His character and misinterpret His will. Now such things are made high things by learning, genius, rank,

wealth, and popular applause. But the things which promote the knowledge of God have for the most part been low, humble, obscure. But these matters will be reversed. The knowledge of God will make its way. 3. The subjugation of human hearts to the sceptre of Jesus. (*W. Horton.*) *Christianity a warfare*:—I. A WARFARE ILLUSTRATING THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. Christianity cannot get into any man's heart but it makes a warrior of him. The grace of God is completely at variance with the spirit and practice of the world. What does Paul call his life as he looks back on it? An extended scene of unbroken serenity and enjoyment? No—"a good fight." 2. But observe, is it not of a defensive warfare that the text speaks? "Pulling down," "casting down," "bringing into captivity" are the operations of an aggressive army. A religion of benevolence is an amiable and useful thing, but if it is unaccompanied with a hatred of sin and a striving against it, we must not call it Christianity. II. THE OBJECT OF THIS WARFARE. 1. The demolition of evil. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." And that must be ours too. Think of a country so strong in its natural defences as to be impregnable—there is a picture of Satan's dominion. No created power can wrest it out of his hand. But there is One before whom natural obstacles are all as nothing, and so Satan strengthens them with fortifications and citadels. These in one age or country are of one kind, in another of another kind. Satan accommodates himself to the nature of the ground. There is—(1) Superstition, one of Satan's oldest fortresses. In the apostle's days it appeared as paganism. When Christianity began to triumph, it assumed a new character, paganism Christianity in the form of error. (2) Infidelity, no longer, however, coarse and scoffing, but cultured and professedly reverent. 2. The entire subjugation of the human mind to Christ. When soldiers besiege a fortress, and, battering down its walls, take possession of it, the men within it become their prisoners. And Christ aims His gospel at the strongholds of Satan, and calls upon His followers to beat them down in order to rescue men from Satan's bondage and to make them captives to Himself. "Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." How low are our ideas of Christianity when compared with St. Paul's. Such texts as these make us feel sometimes as though we had never yet learnt anything of it. III. THE WEAPONS. 1. What are the "carnal weapons"? 2. What then will do the work? This the apostle does not say. We are, however, at no loss. "We preach Christ crucified," says this apostle; and what does he immediately call that? a carnal weapon? No, "the power of God and the wisdom of God." I do not say, lay all other means aside. Form societies, build schools, erect churches, circulate books—but remember still, all these will not damage materially one bulwark of Satan among us unless our one main object in them is to make known the gospel. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The spiritual conflict, weapons, and victory*:—I. THE CONFLICT IN WHICH CHRISTIANITY AND ITS ADVOCATES ARE ENGAGED. 1. The world must be regarded as the scene of universal strife and rebellion against God. Before the creation of our race some of the powers of heaven revolted from their allegiance. By the chief of these fallen spirits, man was successfully tempted to the perpetration of evil; and the whole history of the world since has only presented the annals of unbroken rebellion against God. 2. The conduct of the warfare on behalf of God was confided to a temporary dispensation; but in the fulness of time it was finally committed to the dispensation of the gospel. When the gospel went forth there was a vast amount of individual opposition. But, besides this, there were opposing systems. There was, for example, Judaism, which, now that its shadows were fulfilled, had no right to the exercise of authority over men. There were also various modifications of the grand apostasy of heathenism. 3. This gospel is still to be the instrument of the spiritual conflict. II. THE WEAPONS WITH WHICH THIS CONFLICT IS CONDUCTED. Note—1. The denial expressed. "We do not war after the flesh." "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal"—not penalties, prison-houses, or swords. Christianity is absolutely incompatible with those means of propagation. Never did the penalties of law or the horrors of armies urge forward the cause of redemption one single step. 2. The affirmative implied. (1) The instrumentality that the advocates of Christianity are to employ. Evangelical truth, along with the evidence by which that truth is attested and confirmed. The preaching of the Cross of Christ involves in it all those high and delightful topics which are so well adapted to produce a powerful impression on the intellect and the affections of mankind; and we therefore rely upon it to secure the progress of Christianity. (2) The agency upon which they are to depend. God has been pleased to provide the agency of His own Spirit to work in connection with the

gospel. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. Man draws the bow at a venture, God wings the arrow, and makes it sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies. "Not by might, nor by power." III. THE VICTORY IN WHICH THIS CONFLICT WILL TERMINATE. 1. The nature of this victory will be accordant with infinite benevolence. Our contemplations of victory in human war are always connected with many causes of sorrow; but who can contemplate the victories of the gospel without rapture? 2. The extent of this victory will be commensurate with the boundaries of the world. (*J. Parsons.*)

Ver. 4. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.—*The moral power of Christianity*:—In the writings of St. Paul you meet with frequent military allusions, but you must not consider them as introduced by the apostle's preference of the figurative style. We doubt whether it be altogether just to speak of these allusions as metaphorical. The Christian is not so much metaphorically as really a soldier, if by a soldier we understand one who is surrounded by enemies. You will at once perceive, by reference to the context, or, indeed, by observing the verse itself, that the apostle is here describing Christianity, not in its operations within the breast of an individual, but rather as the engine with which God was opposing, and would finally overthrow, the idolatry and the wickedness of the world. We admit, indeed, that it is perhaps unnecessary to separate altogether Christianity, as ruling in the individual, from Christianity as advancing to sovereignty. The weapons with which the preacher conquers himself must, in a measure, be those with which he conquers others. But still the points of view are manifestly different. St. Paul is describing himself as the champion of righteousness and truth, against the vices and errors of a profligate and ignorant world; and the point which he maintains is that the engine with which he prosecutes his championship, though not "carnal," is "mighty through God" to the accomplishing the object proposed. I. WE BEGIN WITH CHRISTIANITY AS ADAPTED TO THE CONVERTING INDIVIDUALS. And we fasten upon the expression of the apostle that his weapons were not carnal; they were not such weapons as a carnal policy would have suggested, or a carnal philosophy have approved. The doctrines advanced did not recommend themselves by their close appeal to reason; neither did they rely for their cogency on the eloquence with which they were urged. It seems implied that the virtue of the weapons lay in the fact of their not being carnal, for the apostle is put on his defence, and the not using carnal weapons is his self-vindication. And, beyond question, in this lies the secret of the power of Christianity, and of the thorough insufficiency of every other system. If Christianity demanded nothing more than confession of its truth, Christianity would be carnal, seeing that we satisfied ourselves of its evidences by a process of reasoning, and such process is quite at one with the carnal nature, flattering it by appealing to the native powers of man. If, again, Christianity depended for its reception on the eloquence of its teachers, so that it rested with them to persuade men into belief, then again Christianity would be carnal, its whole effectiveness being drawn from the energy of the tongue and the susceptibility of the passions. And if Christianity were thus carnal—as every system must be which depends not on a higher than human agency—it could not be mighty in turning sinners unto God. But Christianity, as not being carnal, brings itself straightway into collision with every passion, principle, and prejudice of a carnal nature, and must therefore either subdue, or be subdued by that nature. I do not think it possible to insist too strongly on the fact that the great work of Christianity, considered as an engine for altering character, is derived from its basing itself on the supposition of human insufficiency. If it did not set out with declaring man helpless, it would necessarily, we believe, leave man hopeless. It goes at once to the root of the disease by proclaiming man lost if left to himself. It will not allow man to take credit to himself for a single step in the course of improvement, and that it is which makes it mighty, inasmuch as being proud of the advance would ensure the falling back. Hence the stronghold of pride gives way, for there must be humility where there is a thorough feeling of helplessness, and with the stronghold of pride is overturned also the stronghold of fear, seeing that the lesson which teaches us our ruin, teaches us, with equal emphasis, our restoration. And the stronghold of indifference—this, too, is cast down; the message is a stirring one; it will not let the man rest till he flee impending wrath. Neither can the stronghold of evil passions remain unattacked; for the gospel scheme in proffering happiness exacts the mortification of lusts. II. BUT WE

SHALL GREATLY CORROBORATE THIS ARGUMENT IF WE EXAMINE THE POWER OF CHRISTIANITY IN CIVILISING NATIONS. It admits of little question that paganism and barbarism go generally together, so that the worshippers of idols are ordinarily deficient in the humanities of life. We may not indeed affirm that heathenism and civilisation cannot co-exist; for undoubtedly some of the nations of antiquity, as they could be surpassed by no modern in superstition, so they could by few, if by any, in literature and arts. We shall not pretend to say that a vast revolution might not be wrought among a heathen population if you domesticated in their land the husbandman and the artificer, and thus awakened in them a taste for the comforts of civilised life, even though you left them undisturbed in their idolatry, and sent them no missionary to publish Christianity. So that we are not about to affirm that Christianity is the only engine of civilisation; but we venture to affirm that none can be compared with it as to effectiveness. You may introduce laws, but laws can only touch the workings, not the principles of evil; whereas every step made by Christianity is a step against the principles, and therefore an advance to the placing government on its alone secure basis. To civilise must be to raise man to his true place in the scale of creation, and who will affirm this done whilst he bows down to the inferior creatures as God? We have a confidence in the missionary which we should not have in any lecturer on political economy, or any instructor in husbandry and handicraft. You may think it a strange method of teaching the savage the use of the plough to teach him the doctrine of the atonement. But the connection lies in this—and we hold it to be strong and well defined—by instructing the savage in the truths of Christianity I set before him motives, such as cannot elsewhere be found, to the living soberly, industriously, and honestly; I furnish him at once with inducements whose strength it is impossible to resist, to the practising the duties and evading the vices which respectively uphold and obstruct the well-being of society. And, if this has been done, has not more been done towards elevating him to his right place in the human family than if I had merely taught him an improved method of agriculture? Shall not the mental process be deemed far superior to the mechanical? And shall it be denied that the savage who has learned industry in learning morality has gone onward with an ampler stride in the march of civilisation than another who has consented to handle the plough because perceiving that he shall thereby increase his animal comforts? This we conceive is the true order; not to attempt to civilise first, as though men in their savage state were not ready for Christianity, but to begin at once with the attempt to Christianise, computing that the very essence of the barbarism is the heathenism, and that in the train of the religion of Jesus move the arts which adorn and the charities which sweeten human life. And in this is Christianity “mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” The missionary, with no carnal weapon at his disposal, with no engine but that gospel, has a far higher likelihood of improving the institutions of a barbarous tribe, introducing amongst them the refinements of polished society, increasing the comforts of domestic life, and establishing civil government on more legitimate principles, than if he were the delegate of philosophers who have made civilisation their study, or of kings who would bestow all their power on its promotion. We will ask the missionary who is moving, as the patriarch of the village, from cottage to cottage, encouraging and instructing the several families who receive him with smiles, and hear him with reverence. We will ask him by what engines he humanised the savages, by what influence he withdrew them from lawlessness, and formed them into a happy and well-disciplined community. Did he begin with essays on the constitution of society; on the undeveloped powers of the country; on the advantages derivable from the division of labour; or on those methods of civilisation which might be thought worthy the patronage of some philosophical board? Oh, the missionary will not tell you of such methods of assaulting the degradation of centuries; he will tell you that he departed from his distant home charged with the gospel of Christ, and that with this gospel he attacked the strongholds of barbarism; he will tell you that he preached Jesus to the savages, and that he found, as the heart melted at the tidings of redemption, the manners softened and the customs were reformed; he will tell you that he did nothing but plant the Cross in the waste, and that he had proved that beneath its shadow all that is ferocious will wither, and all that is gentle spring up and ripen. Such is Christianity, mighty in the converting individuals, mighty in the civilising nations. This is the engine through which we ourselves have risen to greatness, and from which each of us draws the means of

grace and the hope of glory. This is the religion, thus effective in fertilising the waste places of the earth, and elevating the most degraded of our species. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Spiritual warfare :—I. THE WARFARE. It is—1. A moral warfare. It is the cause of truth against error; of knowledge against ignorance and superstition; of liberty against vassalage; of holiness against sin. Its object is that the kingdom of darkness may be overthrown and the kingdom of Christ established. 2. A necessary contest. It is not optional. We must conquer or be conquered. 3. An arduous conflict. It cannot be maintained by an idle show on the parade, but only by actual and persevering service. Our enemies are—(1) Numerous. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. (2) Ever on the alert. We cannot with safety reckon on any cessation of hostilities. 4. A most momentous struggle. In it are involved interests the most solemn and interminable. II. THE WEAPONS. 1. Every Christian is a soldier, and he puts on the whole armour of God (Eph. vi. 11, &c.). Those engaged in this warfare fight according to prescribed laws. Wherever they go they erect the standard of the King of kings. They fight and conquer by their faithful preaching, holy living, works of faith, and labours of love. 2. These weapons are not carnal. Men are not to be dragooned into Christianity. Errors are not to be cut to pieces by the sword. 3. But though they are not carnal, they are real and powerful. How mighty—(1) Compared with those used by the warriors of this world! What can they do?—they can wound the body; but the soul defies their power. But here are weapons which can take hearts prisoners, and carry them away in delightful captivity. (2) Compared with the weapons of those who oppose themselves to Christ—the jests of impiety—the subtleties of sophistry, the feathered arrows of sarcasm. When by the means of these has ever error been wrung from the heart? 4. Whence arises this might? Let us take care not to attribute too much to our weapons. They are mighty through God. He furnishes and accompanies the right use of them with His presence and His power. III. THE ISSUE. 1. The pulling down of strongholds. The enemy, after having been worsted in open conflict, flee to the strongholds; but we are to lay siege to and destroy the foe in their very fortresses. And what is any unregenerate heart but a stronghold? Men are under the influence of the spirit that worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Is he not fortified there by ignorance, by pride, by corrupt passions, by unbelief? 2. “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing,” &c. The allusion here is to those engines which are employed to destroy walls and towers of defence. The terms apply to “philosophy, falsely so called.” How many high things are there still in the world which must be cast down! 3. The captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. (1) The enemy has been pursued, his fortresses have been thrown down, his citadel has been taken, and every individual within has been carried away in triumph. The whole man with all his powers is overcome. A victory thus such as the warriors of this world never achieved. Bodies may be taken captive, still the thoughts are free. But here is a conquest over the thoughts. (2) And this captivity is as honourable and delightful as it is complete. What can be more degrading than to be a captive of sin and Satan?—but to be taken captive by Christ, and to be obedient to Him, what an honour, a joy! Conclusion: We may learn that our common Christianity—1. Is not a system of seclusion and quietism. It is a warfare. Neutrality is out of the question here. “Curse ye Meroz,” &c. 2. Is not only defensive, but aggressive. The principal reason why the gospel has not made more progress in the world is this: we have contented ourselves with a defensive rather than an aggressive warfare. What are we doing—defending the outworks, showing our dexterity in distinguishing nice points, and sometimes wounding a fellow-soldier, perhaps, because his habiliments differed from our own? This we have done, instead of uniting in one broad phalanx against the common foe! 3. Is destined ultimately to triumph. (*R. Newton, D.D.*)

True soldiery :—I. ITS WEAPONS. 1. They are not carnal. They are not—(1) Miraculous. Miracles were employed in the cause of truth; but they were never intended to be permanent. (2) Coercive. The civil magistrate has sought by penalties to force Christianity upon the consciences of men. Such means misrepresent it, and were proscribed by its Founder. (3) Crafty. In nothing perhaps has the craftiness of men appeared more than in connection with the profession of extending Christianity. 2. Though not carnal, they are mighty—through God because—(1) They are His productions. Gospel truths are the ideas of God—remedial ideas embodied in His Son; and they are the “power of God.” The gospel has proved itself the greatest power in the social world. (2) They are the

instruments of God. When we put our ideas in a book we cannot personally accompany them. We know not their effects, and then we die, and must leave them behind. But God goes with His ideas, and works by them. II. ITS VICTORIES.

1. They are mental. There is not much glory in destroying the bodily life of man. Wild beasts, a poisonous gust of air, will excel man in this. And then you do not conquer the man unless you conquer his mind. 2. They are corrective. They do not destroy the mind nor any of its native faculties, but certain evils that pertain to it. (1) The evil fortifications of the mind. The depraved mind has its strongholds against truth and God—prejudices, worldly maxims, associations, passions, habits. (2) The corrupt thinking of the mind: "Casting down imaginations" (marg. "reasoning"). It is against evil thinkings, whether of a poetic, a philosophic, or any other character. (3) The antitheistic impulses of the mind: "and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." Every feeling and passion that rise against God. 3. They are Christian. They are victories won for Christ. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Weapons of warfare*:—The last idea that occurs to some professing Christians is that Christianity or that Christian life is a warfare. It has been noticed by discerning persons that almost as soon as a man joins the Church he settles down into indifference or selfish enjoyment—as if a man should enlist into the army, and then go home and sit down all the rest of his days on the sunny side of his house and in the favourite spot of his garden. What kind of enlistment is that? In addition to this the next mistake that is made is that persons who enter the Christian service imagine that all the fighting is to be done outside. You cannot fight outside until you have fought inside. The first man you have to kill is yourself. It is possible to be a magnificently grand philanthropist in public, and to let your own family starve for want of sympathy. On the other hand, it is possible for men to be so generous at home as to have no larger charity, not to care about those who are far off and at present unknown; possible for a man to be so pottering about his own little affairs in a little four-cornered house, as to forget that God has made constellations, universes, infinite spaces, and countless myriads multiplied by countless myriads of mankind. Are we at war? If the Church is not at war, it is unfaithful to Christ. Was Christ the Prince of Peace? Truly He was, yet the Prince of Peace, for the very reason that He was the Prince of Peace, never ceased from war. No such soldier ever lived as Christ. Christ is against every bad thing; against foul air; against false weights and measures and balances; against all trickery in trade, all insincerity in social life; against all show, fashion, glitter, that has not behind it the bullion of eternal truth and everlasting grace. Christ never met evil without smiting it in the face. Supposing the Church to be at war; has the Church the right instruments or weapons in hand? I think not. The metal is bad, the forging is faulty, the whole conception of the panoply is vicious. There are many wrong weapons in the Church. There is disputativeness. That is a miserable weapon, and never brings home any prey. Some people want to legislate men into goodness. Why does not the State take up this matter? Because the State has no right to the use of such weapons. The State is not necessarily a soldier of Christ. The State cannot make people sober, it can only punish them for having been drunk. All this, therefore, points to the necessity of something other. What is that something other? It is the spiritual element. You can only get at men by getting at their souls. How will Paul, chief of the soldiers of the Cross, deport himself in this war? Hear him: "Now I Paul myself beseech you." Is that the fighting tone? Yes, in the Church it is the only fighting tone. But here are men who want to conquer hearts, souls; and they lie down, beseech, and make their meekness part of their panoply; and their gentleness is the very strength of their sword. Then there is the beautiful life. What a sturdy old weapon is that! The mother converts the children without saying much to them. Her patience is an argument; her night-and-day love wins in the issue. Then there must be spiritual conviction and spiritual persuasion, and you must get a hold upon the heart. The pastor who has hold of his people's hearts can never be dethroned. Let our war, therefore, be according to our capacity and our opportunity. Let us go steadily forward with quiet work, steady giving, constant sympathy, perpetual readiness to do the very next thing that is to be done, though it be of the very simplest character. Only get up something romantic, and you may command any amount of attention, and any amount of response for the time being. But romance has no deepness of earth, and therefore it soon withers away. When will men be steady workers? (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. Casting down imaginations.—*Forts demolished and prisoners taken*:—

I. FORTRESSES DEMOLISHED. Many things are opposed to the knowledge of God. Some are garrisoned against it by the feeling—1. That they do not want to know God. The masses of our fellow-countrymen are not so much opposed to the gospel as indifferent to it. "What shall we eat?" &c., are far more important questions than "What must we do to be saved?" This entrenchment has to be carried, and the gospel arouses apprehension, and so storms the stronghold of indifference.

2. That they know already. Trained from their childhood in false doctrine, they hold fast to it, and defy the gospel to reach them. How the Holy Spirit casts down this imagination when He makes men feel that they are blind by nature.

3. That if they do not know God they can find Him out without His help.

4. That they know of something better already; that the gospel is outworn.

5. That they never can know. In this despair the rebel entrenches himself as in a very Malakoff, and becomes desperate in his resistance to the gospel. Yet even this rampart is cast down by mighty grace.

II. PRISONERS ARE MADE. "Bringing into captivity every thought." The mind is like a city, and when it is captured the inhabitants which swarm its streets are the thoughts, and these are taken prisoners.

1. The gospel comes with power to the heart of a man, and he begins to fear the wrath of God and the judgment. Christ has captured his thoughts of self-security.

2. He cries, "I am guilty; I have broken God's law, and I am condemned!" The Lord has captured his thoughts of self-righteousness.

3. Now he begins to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and his ideas that he could do without his God are made prisoners.

4. His thoughts of pleasure in alienation from the Great Father are now slain, for he desires to draw near to the Most High.

5. A little hope begins to dawn, he hopes that there may be salvation for him. His thoughts of rebellious despair are led captive.

6. The Spirit of God encourages him, and he comes to believe in Jesus; his self-trust is a prisoner.

7. Hear him as he sings, "I am forgiven, because I have believed in Jesus! Oh, how I love His precious name!" His inmost heart is captured.

III. THESE PRISONERS ARE TO BE LED AWAY INTO CAPTIVITY. Monarchs of old, when they subdued a country, removed the people to a distance. Now, when the Lord captivates the thoughts of our mind, He leads them to another region altogether. The offspring of the mind He guides into the spiritual realm, wherein they delight in the Lord, and bow themselves before Him.

1. He who, being made conscious of his sin, believes in Jesus Christ, submits all the thoughts of his judgment and understanding to the obedience of Christ, and this is a great point gained. His prayer is, "Lord, teach me, for else I shall never learn."

2. The same power leads captive the will. It remains a will still, but the will of God is supreme over it.

3. Human hopes also are spellbound by grace. These winged things were wont to flutter no higher than the tainted atmosphere of this poor world, but now they find stronger pinions and soar aloft to things not seen as yet, eternal in the heavens.

4. The man's fears too, now ennobled by grace, cover their faces with their wings before the throne of God, while the man fears to offend against the Father's love.

5. His joys and sorrows are now found where they never went before; he rejoices in the Lord, and he sorrows after a godly sort.

6. His memory also now retains the precious things of Divine truth, which once it rejected for the trifles of time, and his powers of meditation and consideration keep within the circle of truth and holiness, finding green pastures there.

7. This done, you shall see the same enthrallment cast over the Christian man's desires and aspirations. He has flung away his old ambitions, and aspires to nobler things.

8. The same blessed servitude binds the man's plots and designings. He plans still, but it is not for his own aggrandisement; his grandest design is to bring jewels to the crown of Christ. Does this sound rather like sarcasm to you? If it does, stand convicted, for every thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

9. The renewed man's love and hate are both held captive by the power of grace. He loves Jesus truly and intensely; he hates sin with his whole soul.

10. It is a fair sight to see Christ's sacred bands worn by our tastes, which are so volatile and hard to constrain. The fancy, too, that impalpable cloud, painted as by the setting sun, that will-o'-th'-wisp of the spirit, even this is impressed into royal service, and made to wear the livery of Christ, so that men even dream eternal life. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

*The present struggle of error, and complete future victory of the gospel:—*I. WHAT IS MEANT BY IMAGINATIONS? Imaginations in respect to—1. The being and character of God. Some have imagined that there is no God (Psa. cxli.). Others have degraded His character by false representations of Him (Rom. i. 23, 25). There is the Pantheist—his god is identical with the universe; the Deist—his God

is in the heights of heaven, wholly uninterested in the concerns of men; the narrow-minded religionist—his God is implacable and arbitrary. 2. Our own merit and excellence. The Corinthian Church was full of this, and many modern professors have no other standard than themselves, and condemn all who differ from them, however excellent they may be. 3. The performance of the duties of religion. (1) Prayer. It is to God alone we are to pray. (2) The sacraments. (3) The preaching of the gospel. A poetic style is all very well, but many "darken counsel by words without knowledge." II. THESE IMAGINATIONS ARE PERFECTLY INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. "That exalteth," &c. They are incompatible—1. With the whole tenor of the Scriptures; as regards—(1) The character of God. "God is a Spirit." "God is light." "God is love." (2) The character of man (Job xv. 14; Psa. viii. 4; Rom. iii. 10–13). (3) The various duties of religion. (a) Prayer must be offered to God from the heart, and in the name of Christ (Psa. lxxv. 2; Heb. xi. 6; John xv. 14). (b) The ordinances. Compare the commandments of Christ with the false teachings of men (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 24–26). (c) Preaching (chap. iv. 5; 1 Cor. ix. 27). 2. With true philosophy. All sciences point to God. 3. With the experiences of the wise and good in all ages of the world. III. THE TENDENCY OF THE GOSPEL IN REGARD TO THESE IMAGINATIONS. The weapons by which they are to be demolished are—1. The circulation of the Scriptures. 2. The preaching of the gospel in its purity. 3. The influences of the Spirit. Conclusion: We see—(1) The certain destiny of error. It must perish. (2) The future felicity of the world. Free from all error. (3) Our duty in the present. Oppose error, and serve truth. (*Congregational Pulpit.*) *Strongholds*:—1. Ignorance is one of these strongholds. Nothing but their ignorance of Christianity makes two-thirds of the world heathen to-day. 2. Indolence may also be mentioned as a stronghold of Satan. Souls may be lazy as well as bodies. 3. Appetite is a formidable stronghold. Some persons, from natural propensity or habits of life, are much more under this tyranny than others. With some it has been a point which absolutely commanded the soul, and when Satan succeeds in intrenching himself there, he can usually shell out most of a man's religion from his heart. Fort Drunkenness, Fort Licentiousness, and Castle Gluttony are masters of one-half the world. Many a soul has played the role of Esau, and sold its eternal birthright for a mess of toothsome pottage. 4. Pride is a lofty height which commands many a soul, and which Satan is very sure to get possession of. It is hard for pride to own itself an abject criminal at the bar of God, and to beg for mercy. 5. I need not say that Satan has no more powerful stronghold than the love of money. He prefers gold-plated defences to iron, and if he can succeed in sheathing a soul with sovereigns, he will pretty surely hold it against all assaults. This is *par excellence* his stronghold in the heart. 6. The power of habit. It is not merely that an old sinner is more depraved than a younger one, which makes us less hopeful of his conversion, but because he has formed a habit of sinning, which, like all other habits, becomes more and more difficult to break. Every time a godless act is repeated is like casting a new spadeful upon the breastworks and fortifications by which we are shutting ourselves off from God, till, finally, the stronghold of Satan rises about us frowning and impregnable as the very ramparts of hell. (*The Church.*) **And bringing into captivity every thought.**—*The moral discipline of the intellect*:—Men live more lives than one. There is the life of thought as well as the life of action, and the one must be moralised as well as the other. We must practise mental morality. Let us then consider in detail this moral culture of the mind—

I. AS IT RELATES TO SELF. 1. Avoid a wrong self-estimate. Neither overestimate nor underestimate. Beware of pride, vanity, conceit, and kindred vices. 2. Cultivate humility—mental modesty. Live in the presence of God, of His holiness and greatness, and keep a fresh and high ideal—pride cannot then exist. II. AS IT RELATES TO NATURE AND MAN. 1. In relation to nature. Let us in our interpretation of it preserve a deep love of truth. 2. In relation to man. Cultivate sobriety in judgment and reflection. (1) In matters personal. Do justice to distasteful individuals. Be charitable. (2) In matters political. Beware of blind and bitter partisanship. Argue for truth, not victory. (3) In matters social. On such questions as capital and labour, allow for the "personal equation"—for class prejudice and self-interest. Beware of rash theorising. III. AS IT RELATES TO GOD AND RELIGION. 1. Practically. (1) Beware of an unscrupulous conscience. (2) Beware of an over-scrupulous conscience—weak, narrow, morbid, unenlightened. (3) Let conduct increase in efficiency, with knowledge. 2. Speculatively. Beware of wanton doubt-dabbling. (*E. S. Keeble.*) *The conflict of faith with undue exaltation*

of intellect :—The recent history of Cilicia may have well suggested this language, it having been the scene of some very fierce struggles in the wars against Mithridates. The dismantled ruins of 120 strongholds may have impressed the boyish imagination of Saul with the destructive energy of Rome; but the apostle only remembers these earlier impressions to give them a spiritual application. I. It is "THE UNDUE EXALTATION OF" INTELLECT WITH WHICH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS IN CONFLICT. 1. With intellect itself religion can have no quarrel. It were a libel on the All-wise Creator to suppose that between thought and faith there could be any original relations other than those of perfect harmony. 2. Here, as elsewhere in human nature, we are met with unmistakable traces of the Fall. A range of granite mountains, which towers proudly above the plain, speaks to the geologist of a subterranean fire that has upheaved the primal crust. And the arrogant pretensions of human thought speak no less truly of an ancient convulsion. The Fall so disturbed the original structure of our nature as to make reason generally the slave of desire instead of its master. And therefore the intellect which exalts itself against revelation is often in reality not free intellect, but intellect working at the secret bidding of an irritated passion. Yet intellect never vaunts its freedom so much as when it is in conflict with revelation. We do not pose as champions of free thought in mathematics. We solve an equation as dispassionately as if we were ourselves pure reason. But revelation challenges the activity of will and conscience; and the passions sound an alarm at the first signs of the coming of the Son of Man. Then natural intellect feels it necessary to be upon its guard, and to maintain an attitude of suspicion. 3. Take note of the varieties of intellect which enter into this conflict. There is—(1) Mercenary intellect. Necessity, it is said, knows no law; and that poverty cannot afford to have a conscience. And sometimes this hired intellect passionately asserts its monopoly of freedom. It even tells the ministers of Christ, who have freely entered His service, that we are not free. Under the circumstances, conflict with religion is natural. (2) Self-advertising intellect, which is bent on achieving a reputation, no matter how. It will write something startling, "original." When it asserts that Scripture is a collection of foolish legends, it takes pleasure in thinking of the trouble which its irritating productions will occasion. But its object is notoriety. (3) Sensualised intellect, whose purpose is to rouse in the imagination and veins of man those fiery passions which are his worst enemy. (4) Self-reliant or cynical intellect, that slave of a sublime egotism; but its cold, clear, incisive energy passes for perfect intellectual freedom. 4. We must not forget that among earnest opponents are souls which glow with a love of truth. They have not yet found the road to Damascus; but we may safely leave them to the love and providence of God. II. It is implied in the language of the apostle, that INTELLECTUAL OPPOSITION TO REVELATION, except on great occasions, and under the leadership of distinguished captains, DOES NOT USUALLY SEEK US IN THE OPEN FIELD. Its customary instinct is to take refuge on some heights, or behind some earthworks. It screens its advance under the cover of some disputed principle, or of some unproved assumption. 1. A primary characteristic of sceptical intellect is its unwillingness to make room for faith; it assumes to command the whole field of truth. It feels itself humiliated if debarred from the the sight of any spiritual fact. (1) But we find no such sensitiveness respecting the power and range of the organ of sight. Ask the astronomer whether the stars and suns that reveal themselves to his telescopes are the only ones which exist. Ask the entomologist whether his microscope has discovered the most minute embodiment of the principle of life. It is no discredit to the organs of sense that they are thus limited. Nor should reason complain if, as we ascend the mountain of thought, she reaches a region at which she must leave us. (2) Reason, indeed, can do much, even beyond the province in which she confessedly reigns. She can prove to man that he possesses a soul and a conscience, and that his will is really free. She can even attain to a certain shadowy knowledge of the First Cause of all. But she can do no more. Her highest conquests but suggest problems she cannot solve, afford glimpses of a world on which she may not presume to enter. What knows she of the inner life of God? What can she tell us concerning sin, or its removal? &c. Reason must accept her providential place as faith's handmaid, not as faith's substitute; or her pride will surely prepare for her a terrible chastisement. 2. But when the possibility, need, and even the fact of a revelation has been admitted, the rebellious intellect stipulates that revelation must not include mysteries. Whatever may be revealed, it must be submitted to the verifying faculty. (1) But surely it is unreasonable to determine beforehand

what a revelation ought or ought not to contain ; we are in no position to speculate on such a subject. But let me ask, what is a mystery? Not a confused statement, a contradiction, an impossibility, an unintelligible process, a reverie of the heated religious imagination. A mystery is simply a truth hidden, in whatever degree. We see some truths directly, just as in the open air we gaze upon the sun. We know other truths indirectly, just as we know the sun is shining, from the ray of sunlight which streams in at the window. Now a mystery is a truth of the latter kind. It can only be known from the evidence or symptoms of its presence. Yet the evidence proves to us that the truth is there ; and the truth is not the less a truth because it is itself shrouded from our direct gaze. Thus St. Paul speaks of the mystery of the Incarnation, and of the calling of the Gentiles, and even of marriage. (2) Now the world we live in is a very temple of mysteries. In spring everywhere around you are evidences of the existence of a mysterious power which you can neither see, nor touch, nor define, nor measure, nor understand. What do you really know about the forces you term attraction and gravitation? And you yourselves, what are you but living embodiments, alike in your lower and your higher natures, and in the law of their union, of this all-pervading principle of mystery? (3) To object to mystery as a feature of a Divine Revelation is therefore irrational. Surely, as we mount in the scale of being, we must expect an increase both in the number and magnitude of these hidden truths. 3. Granting this, the wayward reason falls back upon the demand that revelation shall not be dogmatic. Christianity must abandon the pretension to offer a defined body of truth, and is bidden to accommodate herself to the changed circumstances and imperious necessities of the time. (1) But this is only a disguised form of opposition to the truth which dogmatic statements embody. A theist, *e.g.*, has no objection to saying explicitly that there is one God. It does not occur to him, that in making that statement he is guilty of an intellectual narrowness or of bad taste. Nor does he hold it necessary presently to balance his profession by some other statement which shall reduce it to the level of an uncertainty. Yet to say that there is one God is to make an essentially dogmatic statement. If, then, he presently hesitates to say that Jesus Christ is truly God, or that His death was a propitiatory offering for human sin—this, we must suppose, is because he does not believe the truths which are thus stated in human language. If he urges that a dogmatic statement is more or less unsatisfactory in that, owing to the imperfection of human speech, it leaves unanswered, or rather it suggests, many concomitant questions ; it may be rejoined that this is no less true when you assert the unity of God, than when you assert the Godhead or the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. If he dislikes dogma because, forsooth, dogma is the “stagnation,” or the “imprisonment,” or the “paralysis” of thought, his objection applies to his statement that there is one God, just as much as to any other proposition in the creeds. (2) The fact is, faith discerns in dogma the regulation of its thought, just as the mathematician finds in the axioms which are the base of his science, the fixed principles which guide his onward progress, not the tyrannical obstacle which enthrals and checks him. (3) This prejudice against dogma is the last stronghold of the enemy ; it is a position from which he must be dislodged at any cost, or all previous victories may soon be forfeited. Surely it is of little avail to grant that a revelation has been given, and even that it is replete with mystery, if no one revealed truth may be stated in terms as absolutely certain. If religion is to be a practical thing, it must depend, not upon beautiful thoughts, but upon clearly-defined certainties. When tempted we need something solid to fall back upon ; not a picture, not a mist, not a view, not an hypothesis, but a fact. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Christian subjection of thought* :—A sceptic once said to me, “Why, Christianity actually wants the control of your very thoughts. Who could really conform to a system like that?” My rejoinder was, that a man’s thoughts were his very life, and that a religion which is going to do anything for a man must work upon his thoughts and endeavour to lift them, by giving him both a law and an ideal of thinking. This is one of the glories of Christianity. In paganism you have religious observances divorced from morality—a cult which panders to a man’s lowest passions. And even in Christendom, amongst communions which have more or less lost touch of the Bible and Christ, the problem is how to satisfy the religious instincts of men without troubling them to move out of their present level of thought and practice. The purpose of New Testament religion is the subjection of every thought to the obedience of Christ. Is that too great a programme? It is a difficult one, certainly. Study the development of character in a man who, from practical paganism, has

been brought under the power of gospel like Bunyan. First, there was the outward act of submitting himself to Christ. Next follows a reformation of outward conduct. But the greatest conquest comes later. For a long time the trouble was that the thoughts, the grooves of which had been cut in the old dissolute days, could break loose and revel like devils in the chambers of his brain. And it required many a period of wrestling and much powerful work of the Divine Spirit before that great realm of life was fully in the Master's hands. I. "EVERY THOUGHT" IS A PHRASE WHICH COVERS PRETTY NEARLY THE WHOLE INNER LIFE OF MAN. Philosophical analyses of man's mind usually divide it into thought, feeling, volition; but, as a matter of fact, these are all mixed up and act together. You love a person; but the feeling is full of thought. On the other hand, thought is full of feeling. The feeling of gladness or hope produces thoughts of one sort, the feeling of gloom those of an opposite. And when you come to volition or will, you find thought and feeling combined in its every act. And Christ will aim at nothing less than that the whole inner life be subjected to Him. Now what is meant here is simply that all our thinkings be after the pattern of God's own mind. The ultimate triumph of the gospel is that we shall love to find out what His thoughts are, to interpret them, to enjoy them, to obey them. II. ONLY AS THE WORLD'S THOUGHT IS BROUGHT THOROUGHLY INTO THIS SUBJECTION CAN IT HOPE TO GET THE BEST OR SOAR TO THE HIGHEST. 1. What is a true musician, *e.g.*? Surely one who in that department is obedient to the thought of God. He is simply an interpreter of God's laws of harmony. True, some of the great musicians have not been noted as religious men; but inasmuch as they were great in music, it was so by the strictness of their obedience to God's mind in that one department of it. 2. What of the interests of truth, of scientific investigation? Will the world be shut up to narrow ideas? Why, do we not see that everything that can be found out by investigation, in the heavens above or on the earth beneath, is already true in the mind of God? Every new advance here is simply getting at another of God's thoughts. Obedience stopping inquiry? Why, it is a call to inquiry. For we need to know more that we may more perfectly obey. III. THIS NEEDS PUSHING HOME TO EACH ONE OF US. We can never get the best out of life till we have all our thoughts brought into obedience to the Christ of God. Imagine a man regulated by this principle. All his thinkings are, as it were, coloured by the consciousness of God's presence. Each thought floats in this as in an atmosphere. 1. It is only so that a man comes to understand what faith is and what it can do for him. The secret of the business is in realising that you have not to strain to get yourself into a state of higher exaltation of spirit to find Him, but to feel that He is just here where you are, working in and through your life each moment. When you lift anything and then let it fall, there is gravitation, you say. Yes; it is God at work. When you look at a tree coming into bud, the charm of it is in seeing God, your Great Companion, at work in it. No one else could do this. Yes. He is here as much as anywhere in the universe—here in all His wisdom, power, and love. 2. I have spoken of our thoughts as floating in an atmosphere, and as coloured by that. Just as in a landscape the rocks, woods, water, which yesterday looked black, frowning, almost repulsive, to-day, by their sunny brightness woo and fascinate you, and that simply by a change in the atmospheric conditions; so with persons and your thoughts about them. Now, when the mind is won to the obedience of Christ, the atmosphere in which our thoughts float is the atmosphere of His love. Ah, how differently do our fellow-men present themselves to us when seen through that light! Here, *e.g.*, is one person looked at by three different pairs of eyes. It is that poor fallen woman who crouches at the feet of Christ. Yonder is a man, brutal and sensual, and his thoughts are only of the animal, of sensuous gratification. There is another looking on, a hard, flinty Pharisee, who sniffs here nothing but human carrion, and who goes away thinking how virtuous he is, and how wicked some people are. But there is Christ. We know something of what His thoughts were. Now if I come into obedience to the mind of Christ, I shall have just such thoughts as His about such an one. I should see her and pray to God for her salvation. (*J. Brierley, B.A.*) *Government of the thoughts*:—I suppose there are few prerogatives which men would be less inclined to part with than the absolute secrecy and independence of their thoughts. Each one should take care to keep himself inwardly as well as outwardly pure, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Here, however, an objection is sometimes raised. Our thoughts, it is said, succeed each other according to fixed and unalterable laws, one thought bringing up another in a constant current, over which

the will has no more power than over the current of blood in our veins. Unquestionably it is not for our will directly to determine what we shall think of at the moment; neither can we, merely by willing it, stop thinking altogether. Thus much is true; but it does not follow that we have no control whatever over our trains of thought. Suppose, for example, that I am thinking of a sinful indulgence; I am free to think of that side of it which invites, or of that side of it which repels; I can think of it as an indulgence merely, or as a sinful indulgence; and the train of thought to which the whole will give rise will vary accordingly. We are competent at any moment freely and deliberately to select out of a train of thoughts that one to which we will attend. But we will suppose this selection made, not freely and deliberately, but spontaneously, or from the impulse of the moment, as is probably the fact in most cases; still what we do from the impulse of the moment, depends on the state of our minds, and this again depends, for the most part, on what we have chosen to make it, or allow it to become. Accordingly it will not do to disown all responsibility respecting the government of our thoughts, on the plea that they are not subject to our control. Thus far, the aim of my reasoning has been to prove that no object is likely to suggest bad thoughts, except through the concurrence of a weakened or depraved mind. But, in a practical view of the subject, this is taking higher ground than is necessary, or perhaps judicious. Let us admit, then, that, in the present condition of humanity, there are some things so adapted of themselves to excite bad thoughts that they will have this effect on the best minds. Still this does not hinder us from being able to govern our thoughts, for it by no means follows that we are obliged to put ourselves in the way of such things. Let me add, that the control which every man has, or might have, over his thoughts does not consist in prevention alone. Bad single thoughts may flit, from time to time, through the minds of good men; but it is bad men only who encourage their stay. If we would expel bad thoughts, it must be by the preference we give to good thoughts, that is, by introducing good thoughts into their place. Away, then, with that subtle but most inconsistent form of fatalism, which teaches that we can help our actions, but not our thoughts. What is to choose but to think; and without freedom of choice what freedom of actions could there be? All freedom, therefore, begins and ends with freedom of thought. Within certain limits, therefore, and as far as morality goes, we have as real a control over our thoughts as over our actions or our limbs. This being conceded, nothing remains but to consider some of the reasons and motives which should induce us to exert this power wisely and effectually, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." I. Consider HOW MUCH THE THOUGHTS HAVE TO DO IN FORMING AND DETERMINING THE WHOLE CHARACTER. "Thought," says an eloquent writer, "is the rudder of human action. As the thought is wise or foolish, good or bad, vicious or moral, the cause of action is noxious or salutary. When, therefore, I am told it is but a thought, I am told that it is the most important of all things." Tell me what are a man's thoughts, and you do not tell me what he will actually do, but you tell me what he would like to do. Tell me what are a man's thoughts, and you do not tell me what he is in the judgment of the world, for the world judges by the outward appearance. Thoughts have been called "the seeds of conduct"; but they are more than this. They are seeds which have already begun to germinate under ground; they have begun to develop their natural and essential properties. In this way the whole character may be covertly undermined. Melancholy instances of this description occur, from time to time, in what is regarded as the sudden fall of men who have hitherto enjoyed the entire confidence of the community. These men have been falling for years in the slow decay of all upright purpose and thought. II. It will help us to understand how this can be, and at the same time strengthen our general conviction as to the necessity of controlling our thoughts, if we consider THAT EVERY SIN BEGINS IN A SIN OF THOUGHT; that is to say, in some vicious purpose or intention, and often in meditating, over and over again, when at length we are emboldened to do. As a general rule, it is only after frequently revolving crime in their minds that men find the resolution, or rather the hardihood, to commit it. Take, for example, the crimes of envy, jealousy, and malice; who does not know how often a man will wish evil to another, and imagine ways in which he would like to do him evil, before he arrives at the point of putting any one of his fancied schemes in practice? The same is also true of acts of fraud and dishonesty. Actual transgression, when first proposed, is never in itself agreeable to our nature, but always more or less revolting. A strong instinctive aversion must be overcome before we can go on.

Our sense of repugnance to the crime has been blunted by familiarity. And here it is that the demoralising influence of ill-regulated thought appears. III. Hence a third consideration which should impress us with the necessity of governing our thoughts is, THAT UNLESS THE RESTRAINT IS LAID THERE IT IS NOT LIKELY TO BE EFFECTUAL. Because we maintain the sinfulness of bad thoughts, it does not follow that we must push this doctrine to the extent of asserting that the thought of sin is as bad as the deed. Unquestionably it is not. The actual perpetrator of a crime is guilty of a double offence, that of desiring to do it, and that of not restraining the desire. Nay, more; if the evil thought is suggested from without, and immediately disowned and rejected from within, it will depart and leave no stain. The guilt of evil thoughts does not consist in our having them, but in our indulging them. Let the check be put upon the thought, and we not only prevent the sin from coming to maturity, but we take the character of sin from its first beginnings; that is to say, we turn what would otherwise have been a temptation yielded to, which is sin, into a temptation overcome, which is virtue. Those, on the contrary, who indulge the thought, and yet rely on their power and resolution to prevent it from passing into act, do miserably miscalculate their strength. As has been said, "There can be no doubt with any reflecting mind but that the propensities of our nature must be subject to regulation; but the question is, where the check ought to be placed—upon the thought, or only upon the action?" After all, the weightiest consideration which should lead us to govern our thoughts is that which religion suggests; they are known unto God, who will call them into judgment at the last day. Something, doubtless, would be gained, as regards the duty in question, if we would merely give heed to that apothegm of Pagan wisdom, "Reverence thyself." For he who knowingly tolerates in himself what he would be ashamed to have others know, shows that he has less respect for his own good opinion than for that of the world. The mind, the soul, will go on thinking still, even in its disembodied state, and thinking as it did here, and takes its place according to the spirit and tendency of its thoughts. Is not this what the Scriptures mean when they say, "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God"? (*J. Walker, D.D.*)

The captivity of thought.—I. THE POWER OF THOUGHT. The greatest on earth is man, the greatest in man is mind, the great function of mind is to think. 1. The ability to think is man's great distinction. By this, man seems to be distanced from every other creature by an impassable gulf; for, if other creatures have built the way which leads up to man, it is one they have not been able to follow. 2. Thought is the instrument of all man's work. Within creaturely limits it is a power of creation. Consider what it has already accomplished, what is still being done by it, and what prophecies of work continue ceaselessly to proceed from man's busy brain. 3. Thought is also the great material with which we work. All work is the working out and working up of thought. We sometimes hear men talk of being used-up. He only can be used-up who has not learned to use himself. 4. Thought gives value to everything. (1) Works of skill are costly. Skilled labour commands the highest market price. And as the world completes its history thought will be more and more in demand. In all great crises the man of thought will come to the front. (2) The value of thought, too, is seen in its power—when wisely directed—of control over the inferior powers. A man of rightly-directed thought cannot well be a low, bad man. Earnest and well-chosen engagement of mind disengages the body from every excess, and disqualifies it for low pursuits. II. FOR OUR THOUGHTS TO HAVE THIS VALUE, WE MUST LEARN TO LEAD THEM. 1. Thought unled, like an unbroken animal, will be drawn hither and thither by the allurements of the senses; or left, passively subject to external influences and circumstances, to vegetate but not to bear fruit; for there is no order in the thought of an undisciplined mind, consequently no harvest—no accumulation of thought and its results. 2. If a man does not lead his thoughts, some other power will, the world, the flesh, or the devil, or all these powers combined. Now, the central character of the power of our thoughts makes it a first necessity that we should lead them, if we are to remain in possession of ourselves. Thought determines the man. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It arrests the attention, awakens feeling, inflames the passions, subdues the will, and commands action. Thoughts, therefore, unled will be to a man what winds and waves are to a ship under canvas but without a rudder, or what steam is to an engine without the guiding rail—a driving and destructive power. 3. What is so important, then, as that we should have

power over our thoughts, that we should be able to choose them, to select those we wish to retain, and to dismiss those we would banish; that we should be able to hold and fix arrested thoughts, infuse them with our will, and work in and by them our good pleasure. III. IF WE WOULD LEAD OUR THOUGHTS, WE MUST KNOW HOW TO MAKE THEM INTERESTING. The mind readily places itself at the service of the heart. To master the details of any subject in which we are not truly interested is an irksome task. But when we take to a subject, with what eagerness we pursue it! The mind readily labours for what interests the heart. The heart lives with its treasure, and surrounds it with habitual thought. These thoughts repeat themselves so frequently that they soon become established. We should mark those thoughts which come unbidden, and ascertain their right to the place they seek to occupy. And we cannot do this too soon, for thoughts which occupy the heart become impassioned, and are difficult to dismiss, though they may be such as it ill becomes us to cherish; and, if not at once dismissed, become habitual. IV. HOW MAY WE LEAD OUR THOUGHTS INTO CAPTIVITY? Thought cannot be forced. To lead it we must observe the nature of the mind, which is susceptible of influence, but not of force. Our leading, therefore, must not be arbitrary, but in accordance with law and order—truth and justice. There is nothing more repugnant to the mind than the tyranny of wilfulness; but the appeal of law and order accords with its nature, and awakens their own deep-laid echoes in answering assent. To lead our thoughts, then, we must simply ask for obedience to an authority which, though it speaks without, appeals to its own "Amen" within us. But to what authority? 1. To that of conscience. Paul only sought to enforce that which "commended itself to the conscience in the sight of God." Man's conscience is endowed with that power of judgment which makes him responsible for an obedience according to the light. Our thoughts must be led by our consciences. 2. The Divine Word. This has its correspondence in the conscience, as the light has its corresponding faculty in the eye which witnesses of the designed agreement between them. The Word of God, by awakening the conscience, awakens a power to whose judgment it submits the claims of its authority. But it is a higher authority than conscience. Conscience is corruptible, and has been corrupted. The Word is "incorruptible," and "liveth and abideth for ever." It faithfully represents the judgment of God, and enables the spirit, which is given to every man, when once awakened, to see things in His light—even the deep things of God. The spirit in the child has an ear which knows the Father's voice, and an eye which discerns His light, and is the child's capacity for being taught of God. Under the inherited corruption that is in the flesh, and the influence of the vain pageantry of "the course of this world," the conscience is dead, and needs to be quickened and enlightened by "the Word, which is quick and powerful," &c. 3. He who speaks in the Word. He is the last authority because, without the Word which addresses the conscience through the ear, we should be ignorant of Him. With light everywhere, men know not God. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" whose minds "the god of this world hath blinded" lest "the light of God should shine unto them." It is through "the foolishness of preaching" that He is revealed to us as a God of attractive goodness and mercy. In Jesus Christ "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory," &c. In Him we have, though last, our highest authority for the obedience of our thoughts. And when He is once seen, like the risen sun, He accounts for and claims as His all the light that preceded Him. He is the centre and source of every attraction. With His reign set up in the heart, submission becomes a devotion, obedience a worship, and the whole life moves in charmed circles of rectitude and peace. The powers of His life, His light, His love are, therefore, "the weapons of a warfare" which are "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds," &c. How blessed it is to know that there is a way for our thoughts, a way having all the authority of law, the satisfaction of truth, the charm of goodness, the promise of stability, and the certainty of perpetual progress! A right, royal, central way, which conducts to the centre of all blessedness! How blessed it is to know that this way is His, whose "counsel standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations," who can cleanse the thought of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and who has undertaken to do so as "the Captain of our salvation." Admit Him to our hearts, and He will lead our thoughts captive, not by force, but by the love He inspires. But, in order thus to lead our thoughts, He draws us not merely "with cords of love" but also by "the bands of a man"—by influences in harmony with the laws of our nature. He knows we are amenable to reason, that we carry an

echo truth can awaken, that we respond to goodness and yield to mercy. By appealing, therefore, to our several powers in accordance with their own freedom of action, we are made willing in the day of His power, and yield ourselves up to His sway. (*W. Pulsford, D.D.*) *The government of the thoughts necessary to holiness:—*Christianity is sometimes spoken of as the revelation of a plan by which the guilty may be pardoned, and sinners be saved. Thank God this is gloriously true. A truer designation of Christianity is, that it is the divinely offered means for exalting the debased character of fallen man to a fitness for the enjoyment of God and the blessedness of His presence in eternity. Again, Christianity is sometimes treated of as a scheme for improving the character and elevating the morals of mankind. It is certainly not a difficult matter for persons well brought up to be moral in their conduct and honest in their dealings. The light of conscience is abundantly sufficient for withholding us from the commission of numberless vices, and impelling us to the cultivation of some of the most exalted virtues. It is obvious, therefore, that if Christianity aimed at nothing higher than to excite our belief in certain truths, and to elevate our conduct to a certain standard, a very unnecessary expenditure of suffering has been endured for a purpose that might have been attained had Jesus Christ never suffered and His apostles never preached. But God never does employ any means but for an end fully worthy of them. That end is the one expressed in the text. "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Yes, the gospel goes as no other teaching does, or can, to the hidden man of the heart. It came from God, and it has to do with that in us which constitutes our resemblance to God—the soul. What a work is this! Who that knows anything of his own heart, knows not the difficulty of restraining, controlling, governing, fixing, directing his thoughts and feelings? and our thoughts and feelings are ourselves—the actions, the movements of our souls. We are not so much what our actions are (for ten thousand motives may prompt our actions), but what our thoughts are, what our intentions, purposes, feelings, wishes, aims are. This, then, is true religion, to have every thought brought into captivity "to the obedience of Christ." All below it may be amiable, but is not Christianity. "Our thoughts are heard in heaven." Our thoughts are God's rule, God's standard for judging of our character, and fixing of our destiny; our words are but the expression of our thoughts, and our actions but embodied thoughts. Then only do we know what true Christianity is when we acknowledge its supremacy over the movements of our inmost souls. I exhort you to give to the gospel its righteous demands. Religion must have its proper place within us—or none. To give it a subordinate authority is even to pour contempt upon its author, assuredly to deprive ourselves of its promised bliss. **I. THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION IS WELL EXPRESSED.** To bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Not that it is meant that every thought of our minds is to be about religion, or that the will of Christ is always to be had directly in view, or the presence of Christ always perceptibly felt. Nothing so impracticable. This is a blessedness reserved for the faithful above. Yet an approach to it is implied and may be made. I speak of the really godly; Christ is enthroned in their affections. Just as gain holds in captivity every thought of the covetous man, or ambition of the worldly man, or pleasure of the man of fashion, or lust of the sensualist; just as music, or painting, or literature of the man of taste, even though ten thousand thoughts, independent of his predominating passion, pass through his mind, and direct his walk—so is it with the man of God. Christ holds in captivity every thought of the Christian. "To him to live is Christ." His ruling passion, his prevailing taste, his one great work, is religion. He may have many worldly duties to discharge, but he has not in any a thought or a feeling at variance with the will of Christ. For him to be reconciled to sin, nay not to abhor it in all its phases and disguises, would be as contrary to his new nature as for a musician to be insensible to the charms of harmony or the jarring of discords. Religion with him is not only an appointed work, but a ruling passion, a Divine, a heaven-born taste. Like every other passion or taste (call it which you will), it may require many a strong effort of the mind, demand many a sacrifice, impose much self-denial. Seasons indeed there are in a true believer's experience when the influence of grace is as powerfully felt as among the redeemed above. Then is the triumph of religion, and then too is the believer's enjoyment complete. But not only then is it that every thought of his breast is in "captivity to the obedience of Christ," even his most worldly occupations are under the blessed influence of His loving spirit. Pride, selfishness, anger, jealousy, malice, lust, are prohibited from entering the

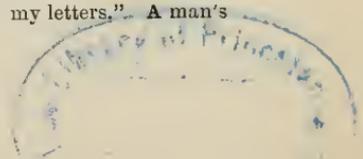
holy habitation of his heart. Such is true religion, and these are its fruits. II. THE MEANS FOR MAKING THIS ATTAINMENT. Mighty as the change from our natural condition is to that implied by the word of the text, one thing, and but one thing can effect it, can reduce our souls to obedience, can reconcile us to God, and bring "every thought into captivity"—the Cross, the Cross of Christ, seen, approached, embraced. The life that flows from that death alone can quicken us to submit to His authority who endured it on our behalf. But the difficulty is to bring our souls within the influence of the Cross, within the range of its transforming energy. This can only be done by—1. Devout meditation on your own soul's worth, its powers, capabilities, and eternal duration; the present degradation of living without God in the world, and the unutterable misery of being separated from His presence in eternity. Meditate on the holiness of God, the heinousness of sin, and the fearfulness of that curse which its commission provokes. Then look up to the Cross and meditate on the love of Christ as exhibited in the atoning death. 2. Be much in prayer for grace to give you so lively an impression, to set and keep before you so vivid a perception of the love and power of Christ crucified, as may subdue your soul into obedience and love, and unite all its powers into one great and lasting effort to glorify His name. 3. Be diligent in good works. These, as we abound in them liberally, affectionately, self-denyingly, have a wonderful power in clarifying our spiritual vision; yes, and in perfecting our whole moral nature. 4. Be constant in the means of grace. These are instruments of even almighty power for saving and perfecting our souls in righteousness. III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF "BRINGING INTO CAPTIVITY EVERY THOUGHT TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST." Verily, their "peace" shall be "as a river," and "their righteousness "as the waves of the sea." They shall be safe from evil and from the fear of evil. "His faithfulness and truth," whose captives they are, shall be their "shield and buckler." Unmoved by trying providences, untormented by earthly passions, unharassed by worldly cares, unsubdued by Satan's temptations, they shall pass on their way heavenward in peaceful hope. The pleasures of sense and the promises of sin shall lose their power even to tempt and allure, by reason of the increasing fascinations which those of holiness are felt to impart. (*T. Nunns, M.A.*) *The subjection of the heart to Christ*:—The kingdom of heaven is in your hearts. But your hearts, too, are not like a single citadel, but rather a wide, diversified country. Does the kingdom occupy only a narrow space of hardly won ground, or does the royal standard float over every stronghold, and do the King's writs run through all the wide region peopled by your purposes? Not until then, not till the sway of Christ commands every motion of our wills, not till He has imprisoned every rebellious desire and exiled every turbulent intention, not till He has conquered every ambition that threatens His throne with rivalry, not till our whole nature is a loyal realm, obedient to His sceptre, dare we cease with all earnestness of supplication to uplift the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." (*C. A. Vince, M.A.*) *Unreserved surrender to Christ*:—I remember reading—I think it was in the Indian Mutiny—of a siege which the British army conducted, how they captured, after long fighting, the walls of the city they had besieged; but the native garrison within only slowly retreated, fighting their way step by step, until at last they entrenched themselves in the citadel, and there defied the British troops. So it is with us. Self may be beaten by Christ in the outworks of life; it may retreat from Christ, until all the soul is open to Christ save one little room. Hold one thing back, you hold all; yield one thing you yield all. Yes, a man's cross is just that which he finds it most difficult to yield. (*G. S. Barrett, B.A.*) *Christ must be our absolute Monarch*:—When we are in the right condition Christ and not self occupies the centre of our being. Then it is that He reigns with unhindered sway as King within. The writer not long since heard one who had been a Christian many years describe the nature of the blessing he had recently received in the following words: "I had heard of Christ being King. Well, He had reigned in me, but it was only as a constitutional sovereign. I was Prime Minister, and I did a good deal of the work myself. Then I found that He must be absolute Monarch. And so now He is." (*E. Hopkins, M.A.*) *The victory of Christ over thought*:—I. THIS GOSPEL IS TO BRING THE THOUGHTS OF MEN INTO SUBJECTION TO CHRIST. Christianity recognises man as a thinking being, "bringing into captivity every thought." The thought of man may be regarded—1. As the distinguishing attribute of his nature. It distinguishes man from the brute creation and assimilates him to God and fits him to enjoy Him for ever. Now—2. As the great parent of his character. Man is what his thoughts are. If his thoughts be false, his character is false; if his

thoughts be in harmony with the everlasting laws of God, his character will be so too. If a man thinks feebly, his character will be feeble; if he thinks vigorously, independently and progressively, his character will be the same. 3. As the chief instrument of his influence. Every other influence is utterly insignificant when compared with this. The corrupting influences of the world are only to be removed by the action of free and loving thought upon them. The death of mind is its departure from God. You cannot point to a country where some of the ideas of Jesus are not. Sometimes we take discouraging views of the progress of Christianity, but we should remember that the thoughts of Christ are mixed with the literature, the philosophy, the legislation, the commerce of the world. Is it not a glorious office of Christianity to bring these thoughts into captivity? II. HOW DOES CHRIST CAPTIVATE MINDS? 1. By arousing them into life and action. A man's religion is valuable just in proportion as it engages his intense, solemn, and prayerful thought. The first action of Christ on the mind is to make us think. 2. By removing obstacles. "Strongholds" must be pulled down; "imagination" or false reasonings must be cast down. What is the great hindrance to the subjection of mind to Christ? Human depravity—sin. But in what form does it manifest itself? (1) Sensuousness—materialism. Sensuousness took Adam away from his allegiance, deluged the old population, broke up the Jewish nation, first degraded and then destroyed virtue in Greece, and overthrew Rome. Sensuousness is the dominion of the flesh over the spirit; the despotism of matter over mind. This is the most gross form of opposition to Christianity, the most common, and probably the most fatal. There is hope of men while they think, but there is no hope for men if they have sunk into sensuousness. (2) False philosophy—the spirit of all wrong systems, which generally develops itself in scepticism. (3) Religious superstition which substitutes mechanical action for mental activity. (4) Secular authority. Conclusion: 1. Have you given your thoughts to Christ? 2. What are we to do to bring other minds to Christ? (*Caleb Morris.*)

Vers. 8-10. **For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority.**—*God's gift of special power to man*:—The "authority" of which the apostle here speaks was, in all probability, a supernatural endowment (Acts xiii. 8-11, xiv. 8-10, xv. 9-12). Having this power, he was superior even to the ablest of his censors, and he felt that should he "boast somewhat" of this there was no reason for him to be ashamed. Note that such special gift—I. IS UNDER MAN'S CONTROL. Paul's language seems to imply that he might or might not use his "authority"; it did not infringe in any way his freedom of action. God has given exceptional power to some men, to Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Peter, &c.; but in all cases it seemed to leave them free to use it or not, to use it in this direction or in that. The Maker and Manager of the universe respects evermore the free agency of His rational and moral offspring. We may enslave ourselves, but He will not, and will always treat us as responsible for all we do. II. ITS DESIGN IS USEFULNESS. "The Lord has given us for edification," &c.—not to pull down, but to build up. Usefulness is the grand end of our existence! We are formed not to injure, but to bless. Alas, how extensively men pervert these high gifts of heaven! II. IT IS NO PROTECTION FROM MALICE. Though Paul was so distinguished by signal endowments, he was nevertheless the subject of envy and slander (ver. 10). So with Moses and the prophets. The more distinguished a man is for gifts and graces, the more he is exposed to the detraction and hatred of others. It was so with Christ Himself. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak.**—*The Corinthian criticism of St. Paul* is really of moral import, although it has been read in a physical sense. It does not say anything at all about the apostle's physique, or about his eloquence or want of eloquence; it tells us that (according to these critics), when he was actually present at Corinth, he was somehow or other ineffective, and when he spoke there people simply disregarded him. An uncertain tradition no doubt represents Paul as an infirm and meagre person, and it is easy to believe that to Greeks he must sometimes have seemed embarrassed and incoherent in speech to the last degree (what, e.g., could have seemed more formless to a Greek than vers. 12-18?). Nevertheless, it is nothing like this which is in view here. It is simply this—as a man bodily present he could get nothing done; he talked, and nobody listened. It is implied that this criticism is false, and Paul bids any one who makes it consider that what he is in word by letters when he is absent, that he will also be in deed when he is present. The double rôle of potent pamphleteer and ineffective pastor is not for him. To this kind of criticism every

preacher is obnoxious. An epistle is, so to speak, the man's words without the man, and such is human weakness that they are often stronger than the man speaking in bodily presence. The character of the speaker, as it were, discounts all he says, and when he is there and delivers his message in person, the message itself suffers an immense depreciation. This ought not to be, and with a man who cultivates sincerity will not be. He will be as good as his words; his effectiveness will be the same whether he writes or speaks. Nothing ultimately counts in the work of a Christian minister but what he can say and do and get done when in direct contact with living men. In many cases the modern sermon really answers to the epistle as it is referred to in this sarcastic comment; in the pulpit, people say, the minister is impressive and memorable; but in the ordinary intercourse of life, and even in the pastoral relation, where he has to meet people on an equal footing, his power quite disappears. He is an ineffective person, and his words have no weight. When this is true, there is something very far wrong; and though it was not true in the case of Paul, there are cases in which it is. To bring the pastoral up to the level of pulpit work—the care of individual souls and characters to the intensity and earnestness of study and preaching—would be the saving of many a minister and many a congregation. (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

Vers. 11-18. **Such as we are in word . . . will we be also in deed.**—*The vital in character, foolish in judgment, dishonourable in conduct, and supreme in obligation* :—Here is—I. A TRAIT OF CHARACTER THAT IS VITAL (ver. 11). The apostle claims for himself thorough and inflexible honesty. His enemies implied that he would not say in their presence what he wrote in his epistles. He denies this. A good man is incarnate honesty, always, everywhere, and with all. A splendid attribute of character this, albeit rare. Truculency and time-serving are, alas! rampant; they are a cancer that is eating up the life of the social body. II. A JUDGMENT OF SELF THAT IS FOOLISH (ver. 12). 1. They had represented Paul as cowardly. With oblique irony he says, "We dare not make ourselves of the number," as if he had said, "Of course we cannot compare ourselves with men of your transcendent courage." Satire is often a serviceable element in conveying truth; it cuts its way into the heart, and makes the nerves of self-conceit quiver. 2. But the point to be noticed is contained in the last clause of the verse, that is their foolish test of self-judgment, viz., the character of others. Nothing can be more unwise than for a man to make the character of another the standard by which to try his own, because—(1) It would lead to a wrong estimate of self. The best of men are imperfect, and conformity to them would leave us far from what we ought to be. (2) It will exert a pernicious influence. It will nurse vanity in the soul. Those who are conspicuously vain have their settled society among those who are inferior to themselves. On the other hand, the presence of the great humbles us. III. A CONDUCT OF MINISTERS THAT IS DISHONOURABLE (vers. 13-16). 1. The teachers at Corinth who were calumniating Paul had gone into his "measure" or province of labour; they had gone to the Church at Antioch, which he had founded, and to the Church at Galatia, now they were stirring up strife at Corinth. They did not break up fresh ground. Paul did so everywhere; his commission was to the whole Gentile world; therefore he did not "stretch" himself beyond his province; therefore he did not "boast of things" without his "measure," or of other men's labours. 2. The conduct which the apostle here deprecates is pursued in these times—(1) In interfering in other men's spheres of labour. (2) In appropriating other ministers' sermons. IV. MORAL OBLIGATIONS THAT ARE SUPREME. 1. Glorifying in the Lord (ver. 17). This implies—(1) Supreme appreciation. We can only glory in that which we value. (2) Soul-appropriation. As a rule we can only "glory" in that which belongs to us. He who can say, "The Lord is my portion" may well glory. 2. Seeking the approval of the Lord (ver. 18). To please Him is our highest duty and sublimest happiness (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The false and true method of estimating men* :—I. THE FALSE AND TRUE METHOD OF ESTIMATING THE CHARACTER OF OTHERS (ver. 13). 1. To judge by public report is a wrong method. There was an impression in Corinth that not only was Paul's "bodily presence" contemptible, but that his letters displayed a heroism of which the writer was destitute, and hence he was judged to be a boaster and charlatan. How common it is for people to judge by general report! But a miserably false standard of judgment is this. I have often received impressions concerning a person I have never seen, which a subsequent personal acquaintance has completely dispelled. 2. To judge by personal knowledge is the true method. "Wait until I come, and you will find that I am true to the character of my letters." A man's



letters, even when rightly interpreted, will not give a complete idea of the author. The author is greater than his book, and one hour with him will give a better idea of him than all the productions of his pen. II. THE FALSE AND TRUE METHOD OF ESTIMATING OUR OWN CHARACTERS. 1. The false method is comparing our own character with the character of others (ver. 12). (1) This is the general tendency of mankind. When we are accused we are prone to say we are not worse than so-and-so. A false standard this, because—(a) The mass of mankind are corrupt. (b) The best of men are more or less imperfect. (c) There is only one perfect character—Jesus Christ. (2) In these words Paul indicates—(a) That it is a terrible thing thus to judge ourselves. “We dare not (are not bold enough) make ourselves of the number.” It is a terrible thing, for it leads to fearful issues. (b) An unwise thing. 2. The true method is judging ourselves by the will of God (ver. 13). Though the apostle by the expression “rule which God hath distributed” primarily refers to the Divine limits of his apostolic work, as will appear again, the “rule” applies also to his personal character. God’s will is the standard or canon by which all characters are to be determined. Conclusion: “Search me, O God, and know my heart,” &c. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 12. For we dare not . . . compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves by themselves . . . are not wise.—*Two false standards of judgment* :—At the first reading we might scarcely see any distinction between the two faults spoken of. “Measuring themselves by themselves,” and “comparing themselves with themselves,” where is the difference? This habit of measuring self by self may arise from various causes. 1. It may arise from conceit. The man thinks himself perfect. Or, if not perfect—which no one says, or perhaps thinks—still sufficiently so for practical purposes. He needs no thorough remodelling; he may still be his own measure, though the measure itself may bear a little repairing to bring it up to statute and regulation. But the measuring of himself by himself may have another explanation. 2. Isolation will account for it. A man lives alone, does his own work, does not read, does not mix with others, never sees either self-denial or courage or patience or nobleness exemplified in life or action—how can he measure himself by any one or anything but himself? 3. A third account of it might be that sort of sluggishness and stupidity of the moral sense which acquiesces in the thing that is, thinks it will do, hopes all will come right. St. Paul does not “presume” or “deign” to make himself of the number. How palpably the opposite of that heroic soul which “counted not itself to have apprehended”! Self-measuring is one of the two faults, let us turn now to the other. “Comparing themselves with themselves, they are not wise.” Here the singular has become plural. The standard of the individual has become the standard of a multitude. The men spoken of compare themselves with themselves after all, only the self which they make their measure is a plural self, a composite self, a self of surroundings and circumstances, an “environment” of beings just like themselves, reflections of their own thought, their own principle, and their own judgment. This is, or may be, a less unlovely person than the former. He is no solitary, and he is no pendant, and he is no misanthrope. He does not profess himself the one wise man, or the one important man, or the one perfect. He is willing to let in some light upon the self-life. But it is a limited light. It is the light of his own little world. It may be a very little world. Some people—especially among the poor—pride themselves upon their littleness. They make it a merit not to go about houses. Men bound themselves by the workshop, the office, or the counting-house—women literally by the home. Yet within this fraction of the race multitudes of individual men and women are absolutely cribbed and caged. They think within it, they judge within it, they act within it—worse still, they aspire within it. Not one idea comes to them but from it. St. Paul says that they who are described by either of these titles, self-measurers by self, or self-comparers with each other, “are not wise.” He might have put it more strongly. A man might be unwise, though applying a right standard to himself, because he was condemned by it, because he did not live up to it. But the man whose measure is self, or whose self-comparison is with other selves, as fallible and as prejudiced and as half-informed and as lazy-minded as himself, has no chance and no peradventure and no possibility of wisdom. He is on the wrong tack. “Measuring themselves by themselves, they are not wise.” What is to be done? Evidently self is the inordinate, the exaggerated, the overgrown thing. Self is here the thing which must be counteracted, combated, taught its place. “Measuring themselves by themselves,”

they must be taught to measure themselves by something else. Almost anything will be a better standard. And now we must take the two men of the text, each by the hand, and bid them rise to a life higher for them both. We shall bid them to rest in no earthly heroism, and to acquiesce in no human example of virtue. We shall carry them on, without pause or dallying, to the contemplation of One in the presence of whose beauty and glory all such minor excellences pale and fade away. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *A wrong standard of measure* :—I. First, then, let us bring this question of comparison to the TESTING OF CHARACTER. We compare ourselves with others and say, "I am as good as ordinary Christians." What is wanted is not just "ordinary Christians." We ought each to pray with Wesley, "Lord, make me an extraordinary Christian." Average Christians comparing themselves with average Christians may think they are about right. II. Again, how practical this is FOR TESTING THE MEASURE OF OUR SELF-SACRIFICE. Many people want to get to heaven as cheaply as they can. A man sees his neighbour do certain things on the Sabbath, therefore he claims a right to do them. III. Once more, let this serve FOR TESTING THE MEASURE OF OUR ZEAL AND CONSECRATION IN GOD'S SERVICE. As to work. Do you compare yourself with others? Are you ever tempted to say, "I do as much as my neighbour; I do not like to push myself forward; I never like to seem to take the lead!" Such feelings are born purely of a tendency to compare ourselves among ourselves. Let us try to be of the utmost use in the world. *Wrong estimates* :—I. THE FOLLY OF ADOPTING A FALSE, WORLDLY STANDARD OF CHARACTER AND CONDUCT. The folly, viz., of—1. Self-righteous reliance on ourselves, or our supposed excellences. See this in the parable of the Pharisee. "There is a generation pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filth." Paul was once one of these Pharisees. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." The death of legal hope became the life of evangelical obedience. The true Christian rests in Christ only and wholly. 2. Dependence on the opinion of mankind. A fatal indolence is apt to creep upon the soul when once it has attained the good opinion of religious men. Pursuit is at an end when the object is in possession. If at the judgment we were to be tried by a jury of fellow mortals, it would be but common prudence to secure their favour at any price. 3. Dependence on morality without religion. Society is a gainer from the absence of vice and the presence of virtue. We are, however, careful to mark the distinction between the morality which has for its only source the motives which begin and end in time, and that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, which has its root and origin in Christian motives and principles. 4. Dependence on religion without morality. Christianity must be received as a whole. Christianity is something more than a mere set of rules, it is a living principle of action. Faith works by love and purifies the heart. In acknowledging Christ as Redeemer we must not forget that He is Lawgiver. II. THE WISDOM OF ADOPTING THAT STANDARD OF CHARACTER WHICH THE GOSPEL REVEALS. 1. As it regards the rule of our faith. 2. As it regards the test of practice. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *Cliques in Church* :—"They measure themselves by themselves," &c., they constitute a religious coterie, a sort of ring or clique in the Church, ignoring all but themselves, making themselves the only standard of what is Christian, and betraying by that very proceeding their want of sense. There is a fine liberality about this sharp saying, and it is as necessary now as in the first century. Men coalesce within the limits of the Christian community from affinities of various kinds—sympathy for a type or aspect of a doctrine, or liking for a form of polity; and as it is easy, so it is common, for those who have drifted like to like, to set up their own associations and preferences as the only law and model for all. They take the air of superior persons, and the penalty of the superior person is to be without understanding. The standard of the coterie—be it "evangelical," "high church," "broad church," or what you please—is not the standard of God; and to measure all things by it is not only sinful, but stupid. In contrast to this Judaistic clique, who saw no Christianity except under their own colours, Paul's standard is to be found in the actual working of God through the gospel. He would have said with Ignatius, only with a deeper insight into every word, "where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." (*J. Denney, B.D.*)

Vers. 13-16. We will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us.—*The mission field admeasured* :—I. THE FIELD MEASURED OUT FOR THE LABOURS OF THE PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL. 1. The world. It was impossible for the apostle, with all his

impulsive zeal, to go beyond his measure. Not that the world had been left without moral assistance from revelation. In the care of the Father of the spirits of all flesh, all nations have had an interest. The antediluvians enjoyed the benefits of all the revelations which were made in that first age. The long life of the patriarchs secured this. In the truths which were introduced by Noah into the new world, and the additional revelations, his sons were sharers; and that the whole might have been preserved is evident from the fact that many of them still exist. The vocation of Abraham was intended for the instruction of the world (Heb. xi. 10). The Jewish institute was designed for the benefit of the world (1 Kings viii. 41-43). To all the world Christ sent His disciples; and to a great part they actually went. The continuance of the zeal of the first ages would have left no "regions beyond." 2. Why, then, do we wonder at the mysteries of Providence, in leaving so many of our race to live without the gospel? God has not left them, but they have been left by their more highly favoured fellow-men. It is a mystery, not of Divine reprobation, but of human unfeelingness. The Jewish and Christian Churches, in succession, have incurred the guilt of unfaithfulness. If any person say this only shifts the difficulty, we may allow it. But why should we single this out as a peculiar mystery? Has not God made man dependent upon man in everything? Christians are the light of the world; and if we refuse to hold forth the word of life, then are we verily guilty concerning our brother.

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THOSE LABOURS WERE DIRECTED. 1. The "measure of the rule" refers to the line which marked out the racecourses, or that which was used in measuring land. The apostles were appointed to places by Him who knew where they might be best employed. (1) Sometimes the direction was supernatural, as when Peter was taught by a vision and Paul by a man of Macedonia. Sometimes the Spirit of God spoke in an audible voice (Acts viii. 29). (2) In other cases—(a) A strong impression was made upon the mind, as when Paul was "pressed in the spirit" to preach Christ in Corinth. (b) They were directed by what appeared the most effectual means of promoting their great work. Thus Paul, in one of his journeys, purposed to return through Macedonia, and oftentimes to visit Rome. (c) The peculiar moral wretchedness and want of some particular people affected them (Acts xvii. 16). (d) They were led by the spirit of enterprise and experiment, and concluded from their success that the line had been stretched out. 2. These views are of importance from their connection with modern efforts. Too long have Christians dozed upon the pillow of lukewarmness, waiting to be roused to action by a miraculous summons. (1) Our duty is as extensive as theirs. The command, "Go ye into all the world," &c., has never been repealed. (2) Have we no men "pressed in spirit" as the apostles were? What about those Moravians who went into the West Indies, to sell themselves as slaves, that they might preach to the negroes? Did not God then stretch out their line? What about Carey and Dr. Coke? (3) Did the first preachers meet with men like Gaius, zealous to encourage their labours? The revival of this disposition in the present day is another proof that our line is extending. Tens of thousands are ready to assist the mission work by their prayers and contributions. (4) Did the apostle consider the sight of the superstitions of Athens a call to preach Jesus? The circumstance that the state of the heathen world is brought before us is our call to the same work. (5) Did the apostles see in opportunities of access the hand of God stretching out their line? By what authority do we put a different construction upon the openings which are everywhere presented to us? Where have we no access? Does commerce see her lines extending in so many directions, and shall we be so blind as not to see that she marks the track which Christian zeal is to follow? (6) Did the apostles contemplate their successes as the proof that God had directed their progress and assigned them their work? Where have modern missionaries laboured without substantial proofs of this kind?

III. THE COMPASSIONATE REGARD OF THE APOSTLE FOR THOSE NATIONS WHICH WERE NOT VISITED BY THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIANITY. His line had stretched as far as Corinth; and he now looks with anticipation into larger fields. And why? Because he knew their moral condition and subsequent danger, and that the gospel would save thousands who would not be saved without it. This is the case in regard to heathen nations now. What they were in the apostolic age they are now, and they ought to excite equal regards. They are regions of—I. Darkness. That is so dense that the plainest morals are confounded, and the only way of reconciliation hidden. 2. Vain, inefficient superstitions. Many are ridiculous, but they have been laughed at too long, and we ought now to weep over them. They offer sacrifices which leave sin unatoned;

they call on Baal, but he hears them not; they purify the body, but the polluted spirit retains all its foulness (Isa. xlv. 20). Do we laugh at the ravings of lunacy? Do we scoff at the stumbles of the blind? Who, then, would not give light to them that sit in moral darkness, and wisdom to those who have no spiritual understanding? 3. Diabolical dominion (Rom. i. 29-31). 4. Misery. "Happy is the people that have the Lord for their God." Change the God and you reverse the effect.

IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE APOSTLE CONNECTS HIS MISSIONARY ENTERPRISES WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES (ver. 15). 1. The apostle supposes that the Corinthians were equally bound with him to the duty of enlarging the sphere of evangelical labour. We collect from this that as soon as a church is established in the faith, it is to become co-operative in exertions to spread the kingdom of Christ. As soon as its own lamp is trimmed, it is to be held forth to direct the steps of others. 2. But by what means can this enlargement be granted by you? (1) By your friendly and affectionate feelings towards Christian missionaries. The word "enlarged" also signifies to extol, to praise. The missionary spirit ought to be held in high esteem. Can we more effectually damp the holy ardour by which it is characterised than by treating it with lightness and coldness? 2. By considering the cause your own. You should identify yourselves with it. 3. By your prayers. 4. By your counsels and contributions. In these respects the first Christians were "fellow-helpers to the truth"; and they have left us an example. (R. Watson.) For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure.—*The true sphere of human usefulness and the source of human glory*:—I. THE TRUE SPHERE OF HUMAN USEFULNESS. 1. It is a sphere in which we are placed by Divine appointment. Paul teaches that his sphere of labour at Corinth was according to God's will (ver. 14). "I am not come to Corinth merely by my own inclinations, or as a matter of impulse or caprice, or as an intruder. I am licensed by God to this sphere." 2. The consciousness that we are in this sphere is a just reason for exultation. "Not boasting of things without our measure." Paul's opponents boasted of their influence in the Church which he had founded, whereas his rejoicing was that he was doing the work of God in the sphere to which he had been sent. 3. It is a sphere which widens with our usefulness. The increase of their faith would lead to an enlargement of his sphere of labour. The true method of extending the sphere of labour to which we have been sent is by the multiplication of our converts. II. THE TRUE SOURCE OF HUMAN EXULTATION. Paul boasted—1. Not in crediting himself with the labours of other men. He did not "boast in another man's line (province) of things made ready to our hand." How common it is for men to credit themselves with the labours of others! In literature there are plagiarists, in scientific discoveries and artistic inventions there are unjust claimants, and even in religion one minister is often found to claim the good that others have accomplished. Paul was above this. The genius of Christianity condemns this mean and miserable dishonesty. 2. Not in self-commendation. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved." That conscience approves of our conduct, though at all times a source of pleasure is not a true source of exultation; for conscience is not infallible. 3. But "in the Lord" (ver. 17). "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross." (D. Thomas, D.D.)

CHAPTER XI.

VERS. 1-6. Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly.—*Self-vindication*:—The next two chapters are entirely occupied with the boastings of an inspired apostle; in the previous chapters we find him refuting separately each charge, till at last, as if stung and worn out at their ingratitude, he pours out, unreservedly, his own praises in self-vindication. All self-vindication, against even false accusations, is painful; not after Christian modesty, yet it may sometimes be a duty. I. THE EXCUSES ST. PAUL OFFERED FOR THIS MODE OF VINDICATION. 1. It was not merely for his own sake, but for the sake of others (vers. 2, 3). Clearly this was a valid excuse. To refuse to vindicate himself under the circumstances would have been false modesty. Notice two words here—(1) "Jealousy." This was not envy that other teachers were followed, but anxiety lest they might lead the disciples astray. He was jealous for Christ's sake, not his own. (2) "Sim-

plidity." Now people suppose this means that a child or a ploughman can understand: but in this sense Paul was not simple. St. Peter says there are things hard to be understood in his epistles. We often hear it alleged against a book or a sermon that it is not simple. But if it is supposed that the mysteries of God can be made as easy of comprehension as a newspaper article or a novel, we say that such simplicity can only be attained by shallowness. "Simple" means unmixed, or unadulterated. We have an example in those Judaizers who said, "Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved": they did not deny the power of the Cross: they said something was to be mixed with it. 2. It was necessary. Character is an exceedingly delicate thing, that of a Christian man especially so. It is true no doubt, to a certain extent, that the character which cannot defend itself is not worth defending, and that it is better to live down evil reports. But if a character is never defended, it comes to be considered as incapable of defence. Besides, an uncontradicted slander may injure our influence. And therefore St. Paul says boldly, "I am not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles." Some cannot understand this. But Christian modesty is not the being or affecting to be ignorant of what we are. If a man has genius, he knows he has it. If a man is falsely charged with theft, there is no vanity in his indignantly asserting that he has been honest all his life long. Christian modesty consists rather in this—in having before us a sublime standard, so that we feel how far we are from attaining to that. Thus we can understand Paul saying that he is "not behind the chiefest of the apostles," and yet that he is "the chief of sinners." II. THE POINTS OF WHICH ST. PAUL BOASTED. 1. That he had preached the essentials of the gospel (ver. 4). His matter had been true, whatever fault they might have found with his manner. St. Paul told them that, better far than grace of language, &c., was the fact that the truth he had preached was the essential truth of the gospel. 2. His disinterestedness (ver. 7). St. Paul had a right to be maintained by the Church, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." And he had taken sustenance from other churches, but he would not take anything from the Corinthians, simply because he desired not to leave a single point on which his enemies might hang an accusation. There is something exquisitely touching in the delicacy of the railery with which he asked if he had committed an offence in so doing. He asked them whether they were ashamed of a man of toil. Here is great encouragement for those who labour; they have no need to be ashamed of their labour, for Christ Himself and His apostle toiled for their own support. The time is coming when mere idleness and leisure will be a ground for boasting no more, when that truth will come out in its entireness, that it is the law of our humanity that all should work, whether with the brain or with the hands, and when it will be seen that he who does not or will not work, the sooner he is out of this work-a-day world of God's, the better. 3. His sufferings (vers. 23–28). It is remarkable that St. Paul does not glory in what he had done, but in what he had borne; he does not speak of his successes, but his manifold trials for Christ. 4. His sympathy (ver. 29). This power of entering into the feelings of every heart as fully as if he himself had lived the life of that heart, was a peculiar characteristic of St. Paul. To the Jew he became as a Jew, &c. Conclusion: All these St. Paul uses as evidences of his apostolic ministry, and they afford high moral evidence of the truth of Christianity. It gives quite a thrill of delight to find that this earth has ever produced such a man as St. Paul. He was no fanatic, but was calm, sound, and wise. And if he believed, with an intellect so piercing, so clear, and so brilliant, he must indeed be a vain man who will venture any longer to doubt. (F. W. Robertson, M.A.) For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy.—*Godly jealousy*:—I. ITS GROUNDS AND REASONS. 1. It was lest their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (ver. 3). Many, like the Galatians, begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh. Professors of religion are evermore in danger of being tossed to and fro, &c. (Eph. iv. 14). 2. It was lest an increasing lukewarmness should prepare the way for greater departures from truth and purity. Persons may retain the doctrines of the gospel, and yet lose the spirit of it. 3. It respected the outward deportment, as well as the dispositions of the mind. Men may turn grace into wantonness, and use their liberty as an occasion to the flesh. Corruption is not so mortified in the best of men as to preclude the necessity of watchfulness and godly jealousy. 4. It was founded in his knowledge of the depravity of human nature. He himself found it necessary to keep his body under, &c.; and the same principle excites his jealousy and fear with respect to others (1 Cor. ix. 27). The best of men are but men at the best. 5. It was derived from his acquaintance with the stratagems and the

strength of the great enemy. He himself had a messenger of Satan to buffet him; and what he had felt himself, made him fear for others (ver. 3). None but Jesus could say, The prince of this world cometh, and findeth nothing in Me. 6. It was justified by various instances of defection in the apostle's time (1 Cor. x. 6). 7. It was augmented by the apostle's peculiar relations with the Church. He had espoused them as a chaste virgin to Christ, and should he at last be disappointed in them, it would be to him a matter of inexpressible grief, and to them of shame and dishonour (1 Thess. ii. 19, iii. 8).

II. ITS PECULIAR PROPERTIES. 1. It proceeded from the purest motives, from a sanctified heart, and was marked with sincerity and truth. He who was jealous over others, was not negligent of himself. Many indulge in what they condemn in others, and by making a virtue of their fidelity, intend it as a substitute for all other virtues. 2. It was expressed not with rancour and malice, but the greatest good-will. The apostle had learned of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and did not indulge his own prejudices under a pretended zeal for religion. 3. It had for its object the promotion of true godliness. He was not only zealously affected, but it was in a good thing, and to answer the best of purposes. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Godly jealousy.—Jealousy is sensitive aliveness to any abatement or transference of affection. There is a sense in which God Himself is said to be jealous over His people. For God will endure no rival. And the faithful ambassador may be allowed to indulge his Master's feeling. It was such a sentiment that filled the heart of Paul here. Note—I. THE WORK OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER. There is a delicacy in the figure employed, viz., that souls who are brought into covenant with God in Christ are betrothed to Him. And the ministers of Christ are represented as the friend of the Bridegroom, who transacts between the Bridegroom and His future bride, and bespeaks her and betroths her to the Bridegroom against the nuptial day. We have a beautiful illustration in the mission of the faithful servant of Abraham. This is the minister's highest and holiest function. II. HIS HOPE AND PURPOSE—"that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." At the coming of Christ to have a goodly company of saved souls. What an expectation past all that our poor hearts can conceive! That those whom he has sealed with the seal of Christ in baptism; that those whom he has warned, rebuked, exhorted with all longsuffering, may be preserved, undefiled, uncorrupted, from the simplicity that is in Christ; that is the goal to which he must ever look. All short of this cannot content an earnest minister's mind. That they should respect and love Him; that they should be regular in frequenting the house of the Lord, &c. All this is in its place important; but all comes short of his desire and prayer. III. HIS CONSEQUENT DUTY. To watch over his people with a godly jealousy. Not with an unhalloved or unfriendly jealousy; not with a censorious and a suspicious spirit. It is not the prerogative of ministers to judge. On the contrary, it is for them to have all longsuffering and charity—they need it themselves, and they should exercise it in the Church. But they are jealous for their Master. And if they see any who profess Christ's name falling into error in doctrine or viciousness in life, then the minister ought to be jealous for the honour of Christ and for the souls of his people. It is a godly jealousy; it comes from God, it is unto God. The man who is jealous for his own party and sect, alas, for him! Surely we may fear lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ! How many have corrupted it by observances that the gospel requires not, and that its spirit is at variance with! And how many are departing from the simplicity of their trust in God's holy Word as their only foundation of faith, and Jesus as their only resting-place! How many there are, too, who are drawn aside into worldly conformity! (*H. Stowell, M.A.*)

I have espoused you to one husband, that I may betroth you as a chaste virgin to Christ.—*The soul's espousal to Christ*.—I. MINISTERS ARE ENTRUSTED WITH THIS GREAT WORK. 1. Consider this match betwixt Christ and His people. (1) The first degree of it was the purpose of it, in the heart of God, from all eternity. (2) Impediments are next removed. Justice says, there can be no match betwixt God and guilty man till I be satisfied. The law says, they are mine, and I will not part with them, till death part us. Truth says, God Himself made this marriage betwixt them and the law, and therefore they cannot be married to another, unless first death dissolve the marriage. But the designed Bridegroom removes these impediments by His obedience to the law, and by His death in our nature and in our stead (Gal. ii. 20). The sinner dies to the law in Christ, and the law dies to the sinner (Rom. vii. 4). And so the parties being thus dead, the truth of God has nothing to object against the purpose of this new marriage. (3) The contract is written and ready for the subscribing. There are

two things in the contract—(a) Christ's consent to match with poor sinners (Rev. xxii. 17). (b) The dowry promised to the bride (Rom. viii. 32). A large maintenance and a good house (John xiv. 3). Yea, the contract is subscribed by the Bridegroom and His Father (Jer. xxxi. 33). The contract is also sealed. "This cup," saith the Bridegroom, "is the new testament in My blood." All this before famous witnesses (1 John v. 7, 8). The whole is registered in this Bible. (4) The courting of the bride in order to gain her consent. And this is managed in two places. (a) Christ comes into her mother's house, to the public ordinances, and there He, by His ambassadors, courteth her consent. (b) Christ comes into the chambers of the heart, and then there is a heart conference betwixt Christ and the soul, without which the former cannot prevail. (5) The espousals. The soul being overcome, gives its consent to take Christ for a husband, renouncing all others. The soul makes choice of Christ. With the whole soul, the soul makes choice of a whole Christ. Makes choice of Him all, for all, and instead of all. (6) The espousals are in this life, at our believing the marriage is consummated in glory (Rev. xix. 7). Now there is a time betwixt the espousals and marriage. (a) This time is for the trial of the bride. The old lovers will come back again, and endeavour to recover her affections which they have lost, and often do they succeed. (b) This interval is that the bride may make herself ready by making progress in sanctification. 2. What hand ministers have in this match. (1) They are proxies for the Bridegroom, sent as Abraham's servant, to seek a wife for their Master's Son (chap. v. 18–20). (2) They are witnesses, though not to the formal consent, yet to that which imports a consent. They see how their message is entertained. (3) They are the attendants of the bride, to adorn her for her husband. It is by the word that the espoused soul is made clean and fitted for Christ, as the Greek word in our text signifies. (4) They present her to the Bridegroom at the last day (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20). 3. Why the Lord employs men in this great and honourable work. (1) It is in condescension to our infirmities. If God had employed angels, how could we have looked upon them? (2) It is very agreeable in that the Divine nature is united with the human in Christ, that men should deal with men. (3) That God may have all the glory. II. THE GREAT DESIGN OF ESPOUSING SINNERS TO CHRIST IS THAT THEY CONTINUING CHASTE AND FAITHFUL MAY AT LAST BE MARRIED TO HIM. 1. What it is for the espoused to keep chaste. (1) They must never be called by another name than their espoused husband (Heb. x. 23). (2) They must never go back to their former husband, for the soul that is really espoused to Christ, is divorced from idols, and lusts, and the law (Rom. vii. 2). (3) Christ must always have their hearts. (4) They must cleave to Christ over all the world's smiles and frowns. They must neither be bribed nor driven from Him (Song viii. 6, 7). (5) They must be separated from the world: not only in their hearts, but in their practices (Rev. xiv. 4; Rom. xii. 2). (6) They must be sincere and upright. Hypocrisy would spoil all. Our espoused Husband is a searcher of hearts. 2. The presenting to Christ of those that keep chaste. (1) The time of it—it will be at the great day (Matt. xxv. 1–12). (2) They, and they only, shall be presented. They that depart from Christ here shall be made to depart from Him there. (3) The bride's attendants. Angels that were witnesses to her espousals, shall also be witnesses to her marriage. Christ's ministers shall say, "here are we, and the children Thou hast given us." (4) The place where the marriage shall be solemnised, that is the Bridegroom's Father's house, even in heaven. (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. **But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.** — *Dangerous deceits*:—I. THE SOURCES OF MAN'S LIABILITY TO YIELD TO SATAN'S INFLUENCES. 1. The heart. Many of our strongest moral propensities remain undiscovered until the force of outward circumstances brings them into action. Sinners knew nothing of his impatience; Hazael of his cruelty; Hezekiah of his pride; yet from their youth each one of these had been nourishing the seeds of these evil propensities in their hearts. "Search me, O God! and know my ways," &c. "The heart is deceitful above all things," &c. 2. The moral darkness which has come over our mental and moral faculties. True, God has left us still the positive light of conscience, but even on this pure light the shadow of the Fall has fallen; and, there is a danger, that even the very light which is within us may be obscured by the darkness. There is nothing which more helps a man to mistaken views of his own condition before God, than a corrupted conscience. And then the effect for evil is the greater, because it enables a man to sin upon a plan, to ruin his own

soul upon a system. "We have got conscience and reason on our side, what can God have given these lights to us for, if it were not to direct us the way He would have us go?" The answer, God has given us two lights—a greater light to rule the conscience, and a lesser light to rule the will. There is one greater light to which conscience must do homage, the light of the Word, of the Spirit, of Christ's blessed example; and this lesser light of conscience, if it borrow not its flame from this sun of truth, will soon become corrupt and obscure. Paul's conscience taught him to do many things contrary to the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS CORRUPTING PROCESS IS EFFECTED. Satan beguiles us—1. By concealing the nature and effects of sin. His way is to bid us look at the fair side of temptation; he says nothing of the wormwood, and the gall. 2. By leaving us in ignorance of the magnetic and attractive power of sin, the way in which one sin drags another after it. No, the man is made to think that he can stop at any point he likes. 3. By teaching us to invent excuses for our own conduct. Such, e.g., as the habit of charging our fault upon others. He taught our first parents this lesson. And most of our excuses are as hollow as that of Aaron when he said, "The people gave me this gold, and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." Again, are we conscious that as Christians we are living a low, worldly life? We begin to excuse ourselves by saying we were not blessed with godly parents as some were, our earliest influences were unfavourable, and we find it very hard to turn our usurped affections into a new channel now. And so with regard to our religious duties and exercises. "I would be more frequent in prayer," a man will say, "more self-denying, more active in good works, but the cares of a family, and the demands of business interfere." Do not doubt that this is the voice of the arch-impostor. 4. By the speciousness of a religious profession. Christianity has now a firm footing in the world, and a man endangers his character who does not pay to it the homage of outward respect. Yet this homage has caused men to mistake profession for practice, the name for the deed, the poor skeleton of a form of godliness for the living reality of its power. Conclusion: The great lesson must be the duty of diligent trying of our own spirits, a frequent proving of our own work, a prayerful and habitual inquiry into the state of our own souls before God. The simplicity that is in Christ—the simplicity of His doctrine, of His rule of life, is the test whereby we are to try ourselves whether we belong to Christ or not. (*D. Moore, M.A.*)

From the simplicity that is in Christ.—*The simplicity that is in Christ*:—The simplicity that is in Christ stands here contrasted with the subtily of the serpent: and the instance given of the serpent's subtily illustrates what is meant by the simplicity which is opposed to it. In that first temptation, all on the part of God was abundantly simple; the command with the warning was simplicity itself. On the other hand, the subtily of the tempter is apparent in the complex pleading which he holds with Eve. God has but one argument against eating; Satan has many for it; and there is no surer sign of subtily than the giving of many reasons for what a single good one would better justify and explain. The simplicity that is in Christ may be discerned in every stage and department of His great salvation. I. IN HIS OWN FINISHED WORK OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ATONEMENT. There is simplicity in Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, as the servant of the Father, and the substitute, surety, and saviour of the guilty. It was in this character that He came into the world: and with entire simplicity did He sustain it. 1. That there is nothing here that transcends man's finite understanding, and baffles his restless curiosity—we are far from saying. But is there not a simplicity in it that comes home to the heart of a poor despairing sinner? 2. But it is the policy of Satan to mar it, and by his subtily to corrupt your minds from the simplicity that is in Christ, and Him crucified. Hence the endless questions he has contrived to raise in connection with it. II. IN THE FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL AS CONNECTED WITH IT. 1. How simple in its freeness (Isa. lv. 1; Rev. xxii. 17). How near does it bring Christ! (Rom. x. 6–9). How very plain as well as pathetic is the Lord's pleading with sinners! (chap. v. 20; Isa. i. 18). How explicit, how unequivocal, are His assurances! (Ezek. xviii. 32, xxxiii. 11; John vi. 37). How clear as it might seem beyond any sophistry is the declaration of the Lord's will that all men should be saved. 2. Yet, it is here especially that Satan puts forth all his subtily to beguile. How many reasons for doubt and unbelief does he contrive to set up against God's one reason for believing. Here am I—a lost sinner. There is Christ, a living Saviour. It may be, Satan tells us, that you are not elected; that you may have committed the unpardonable sin. Or perhaps you are not convinced enough of your sin, or sorry

enough for it; or perhaps you are not repenting, believing, praying aright. But it is upon no may-be that the blessed Lord invites you to commit your soul to Him. He has but one word to you. Let no subtilty of Satan corrupt your minds from the simplicity that is in the gospel offer of a free, a full, a present salvation. III. IN THE COMPLETENESS OF BELIEVERS AS ONE WITH JESUS.

1. The apostle speaks to you as espoused to Christ; and we would be jealous over you, for duplicity now on your part towards Him is nothing short of spiritual adultery, and is sadly inconsistent with His simplicity towards you. And what, the apostle adds (ver. 4), would you have? Would you have one to come to you with another Jesus, another Spirit, another gospel? Are ye so soon weary of the homely fare of the Lord's kingdom that ye would look out for new and foreign dainties? 2. The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, causing her to be discontented with the simple profusion of Eden's blessings and the simple tenure on which she held them. And the like spirit of discontent he would fain cherish in you in regard to the simplicity that is in Christ—the simplicity of a rich and royal liberality, alike in His gifts and in His manner of giving. How simple is His treatment of you, that are His. "Ye are complete in Him." "All things are yours." All that He has is yours upon the simple footing of your abiding in Him. IV. IN HIS GUIDANCE OF YOU, AS YOUR CAPTAIN AND EXAMPLE. 1. It is a guidance—(1) According to the free spirit, and not the mere servile letter of the law. (2) Through the motive, not of a servile dread of still impending wrath, but of love to Him who has first loved us. (3) By the power of that Spirit abiding in us, who worketh in us, both to will and to do of God's good pleasure. (4) In the very steps of Him who hath left us an example. Surely there is great simplicity in such guidance as this. 2. But the subtilty of Satan, how manifold is it in this department. (1) For the rule—oh it cannot always be the strict unbending morality of the Ten Commandments. All men except recluses know that allowances must be made in social life, and regard must be had to circumstances. (2) Then the motive of all you do ought doubtless to be not servile fear, but filial love, and it is plain that this motive might prompt many a service and sacrifice. Still, practically, as things now are, it is a great matter if a Christian keep clear of what is positively forbidden, and if nothing palpably wrong can be established against him. (3) So also as to the power, it is admitted vaguely and generally, that you have a promise of Divine aid. But this, alas! does not hinder a large measure of apologetic pleading of human frailty. (4) And when we look to the pattern, how aptly does Satan teach us to evade the obligation of a full following of Christ, by suggesting that there are many things in which Christ, being Divine, must be admitted to be inimitable. V. IN CONNECTION WITH HIS SECOND COMING AND GLORIOUS APPEARING. 1. As to all that is essential and influential, it would seem to be simple enough. The Lord cometh as our Judge. He cometh as our exceeding great reward. Thus regarded, it is practically a most influential hope; influential for its very simplicity. It sets you upon working, watching, waiting for the Lord. How simple and how blessed an attitude! 2. Yet here Satan has been expending not a little of his subtilty throughout all the ages of the Church's history, sometimes hiding the doctrine, at other times complicating and embarrassing it with a variety of questions, scarcely, if at all, bearing on its real, vital and practical import. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *The simplicity that is in Christ:—I. THE SIMPLICITY.* The word signifies "one-foldness." It has manifold applications. It is opposed to what is difficult, double, compound, cunning, deceitful; it is simple, easy, elementary, guileless, open. Now, in Christ we have—1. Intellectual simplicity. The gospel is intended and adapted for the poor, and for the children. 2. Moral simplicity. The principles and duties which it enjoins are simple; and, if they appear complex, they may be reduced to simple elements. All the details of gospel morality grow from "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," &c. 3. Spiritual simplicity. The motives and the means of holiness are simple; and, whether the individual or the community concerned be learned or ignorant, the same truths and facts supply spiritual nourishment. This simplicity appears in—(1) The Saviour's teaching. The parables and discourses of Jesus are clear and intelligible. (2) The way of salvation is plain. (3) The gospel call is clear, distinct, unwavering. (4) The life of faith to which the believer is called is composed of many stems and branches, but they all draw their nourishment from one common root. "Looking unto Jesus." II. CORRUPTION OF THIS SIMPLICITY. 1. Scientific, philosophical, metaphysical speculations imported into the gospel tend to corrupt the mind from its simplicity. 2. The moral simplicity that is in

Christ may be corrupted by casuistical questionings and scrupulosities of conscience. The single eye may become distorted; the spirit of inquiry may be hypocritical. 3. The plan of salvation may be lost sight of. Another gospel, another Jesus, may be substituted. III. THE COMPARISON. As the serpent beguiled Eve. 1. The position of our first parents was simple, and easy to understand. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat," &c. What could be plainer? Yet they were beguiled. (1) Their minds were diverted from the one simple command. (2) Doubts were started as to its meaning and purport. (3) The Divine goodness was called in question if the command was rightly understood. (4) Fair promises were made of something better. (5) All this was done by gradual steps, cunningly and skilfully. 2. The same elements of temptation which beguiled them are at work to beguile us. As the law was misinterpreted, so the gospel is mystified, and souls are ruined thereby. 3. It is Satan's subtilty—cunning—that we have most to fear. His mode of attack. He works ruin in such a way as to appear to be doing the reverse. He undermines our position while professedly raising us higher, "He deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. xii. 9). 4. This cunning on his part is not to be met by counter cunning on ours. We are no match for him with such weapons. We must fall back upon the simplicity that is in Christ. Gospel truths are true still. We have not followed cunningly devised fables. (*James Smith, M.A.*) *Simplicity towards Christ*:—This is one of the many cases in which a slight alteration makes a great difference. The Authorised Version by its reading suggests erroneously that the "simplicity" is something belonging to Christ; and we have all heard the use of the phrase as expressive of what is supposed to be a plain, simple gospel, as contrasted with man's refinements. But if we read as we ought to do, "the simplicity that is towards Christ," we see that what the apostle is thinking about is not a quality belonging to the gospel or to its Lord, but to the believer, and that it expresses no characteristic of the Redeemer or of His revelation, but something about the way in which we ought to receive and to cleave to Him. I. THEN NOTE THE ATTITUDE REQUIRED. The English words simple and simplicity, like their Greek equivalents, embody a striking figure. Simple literally means without a fold, and the noun here formed from it means consequently, if we may coin a word after the analogy of manifoldness, singlefoldness. Hence it is used to express the two kindred ideas of perfect genuineness or, as we say, straightforwardness, and of thoroughness and out-and-outness. So that the two ideas that are conveyed here are those of genuine and out-and-out simple-minded devotion. He would have them to be, as a bride ought to be, wholly filled with the love and confidence of Him to whom he presents them. The phrase, then, as interpreted by the emblem that stands by the side of it, suggests these three things. 1. We must have simple-hearted love. A bride's love that is halved is destroyed. And the Christian man's heart that is divided is empty of all genuine love to the Master. He requires that we shall love Him all in all, or not at all; and interprets that as treason which is not out-and-out surrender and consecration to Him. The heart need not be emptied of other affections. The central diamond may have round about it a cluster of brilliants, but they must be kept in subordination, small and encompassing. And so our lives are then pure and blessed, not when the love of Christ chills our hearts to other dear ones, but warms and purifies our loves to them into some effluence and likeness of itself. 2. A single-minded submission to Him as fountain of truth, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, is another part of the simplicity that is towards Christ. Just as, in regard to single-hearted love, there is no impoverishing of the affections because He claims the first-fruits of them all, so, in regard to this single-minded discipleship, there is no limiting of the faculties, excluding of Christians from any field of thought, because He claims to be "first and last and midst and without end," the only teacher whose word is absolute truth. All our other thinking ought to be held in subordination to the truths that He reveals. 3. Single-eyed consecration of the practical life to Him is another part of this "simplicity that is towards Christ." Where the heart is single, and the mind filled with His thoughts and commandments and promises and revelations, the life will, of course, yield itself to be directed by Him. II. THIS SINGLENESS AND THOROUGHNESS IS THE ONLY ATTITUDE THAT AT ALL CORRESPONDS TO WHAT CHRIST IS TO US, AND WHAT WE SAY WE ARE TO HIM. We are to cleave to Christ only because Christ is enough. God, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, had the right to demand all the devotion of heart, soul, mind, strength, because He had the power to satisfy and to bless all the faculties that were consecrated to Him. Jesus Christ has no right to

ask me to give my whole self to Him unless He has given His whole self to me; and unless, in that gift, I can find nourishment and strength, and the supply of every craving and every need. If our mind is bowed before the incarnate truth of God we shall know neither the unrest of resultless search nor the gloom of continual doubt, but shall have the light of life to shine upon our road. III. NOTE THE BLESSEDNESS THAT WILL ATTEND SUCH OUT-AND-OUT AND GENUINE CHRISTIAN LIFE. The true misery of men comes because they do not know their own minds nor consistently and persistently keep to one course. Distraction is misery. Unity is peace, and peace is strength, and unity and peace and strength, in the utter devotion of myself to the worthy Christ, are the blessedness of earth, the predictions and foretastes of the transports of eternity. "The simplicity that is towards Christ" is the beginning of the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The danger and evil of being turned away from the simplicity that is in Christ:—* The gospel is supposed by many to be something very easily understood. No doubt its leading truths are comparatively few and simple, but the evil heart of unbelief, our natural blindness, and the efforts of the adversary, often bring it about that men misunderstand it, pervert it, add to it, or detract from it. Hence Paul expresses himself in the language of anxiety, "I fear." And if so the evil he deprecates must be a great evil. Note—**I. SATAN'S TEMPTATION OF EVE, AS A PROOF OF HIS SUBTILTY AND OUR DANGER** (*cf. Gen. iii. 1-6*). 1. His subtily is manifest in his availing himself of the circumstances in which Eve was placed. (1) She was alone. Had Adam been near she would surely have consulted him. Satan's success manifestly depended on his giving no opportunity for consulting one perhaps possessed of more vigour of mind and judgment than herself. Here learn that in times of temptation we should avail ourselves of the benefit of Christian counsel. (2) She was in the situation where temptation was most likely to be successful—near the forbidden fruit. She apparently had but to lift the eye, and the object of temptation was before her. Had she been obliged to travel to a distance, there might have been time for deliberation; but being upon the spot, the very sight of the forbidden fruit would bring new feelings and desires into action, and add fuel to the fire. Let us learn from this to be especially upon our guard when near the object of temptation. 2. Satan's subtily is manifest in the way in which he assailed her, viz., by the serpent. The very fact of the serpent's speaking must have awakened no ordinary surprise and curiosity. Her mind could not be in a calm state. And the remarkable occurrence might only the better prepare her for giving credit to his subsequent statement. And does not this teach us that Satan is ever more to be dreaded when he speaks to us through the instrumentality of others. Peter, no doubt, thought he was but giving utterance to his own feelings when he said, "Far be it from Thee, Lord." But Christ's words are, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," &c. 3. The subtily of Satan is more especially manifest in the nature of the temptation, and the manner in which it is conducted. (1) The first step of the temptation is laid in the remark, "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (a) Here Satan's effort seems to be to awaken doubts of God's goodness and truth. "Is it so? Can it be that God hath made this restriction? Can He have created the fruit; given you appetites and desires, and forbidden you to indulge them? He must either be a hard master, or you must be labouring under some strange delusion." This is the way in which he still works. Sometimes he will work through the burden of sin pressing upon the conscience; sometimes through present suffering, or our natural craving after things forbidden; and if he can but awaken doubt or suspicion, a separation is made between the creature and the Creator. The creature stands helpless and alone, and the after steps are comparatively easy. (b) Look now to the results. These are brought before us in the answer of Eve. From the extensive nature of the grant, so illustrative of His goodness, her attention is turned away. A separation is made between Eve and God. (2) Satan has her now at a great advantage. "And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die." Emboldened by success, Satan daringly sets up his word in opposition to the word of the God of truth. But a few moments before he would not have ventured thus to accost his victim. **II. THE EVIL WHICH THE APOSTLE FEARS AND DEPRECATES.** "Lest your minds should be corrupted." 1. From the simple, poor gospel, that is in Christ. Free in Christ are held forth all spiritual blessings. The gospel—simple, intelligible, and plainly revealed. And yet, how few understand it, believe it! The apostle had preached it at Corinth, and yet he speaks of Christ crucified being to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Well aware of the importance of clear

and realising views of the gospel, Satan is ever active in his efforts to mislead, to blind, or to obscure (chap. iv. 3, 4). Ah! be then upon your guard. Bear in mind that you have such an adversary, not the less to be dreaded because unseen.

2. From the simple, direct, confiding reliance upon Christ. This is our duty, and it is our interest. But obligatory and blessed as it is our minds, through the subtlety of Satan, are very apt to be corrupted or turned away from it. He will suggest that your sins have been too many and that the sacrifices that you will have to make are too many or too great.

3. From the simple, ruling aim, of glorifying God in Christ. (*J. Thomson.*) *Simplicity towards Christ* (r.v.):—1. Simplicity, here, has been supposed to describe a quality belonging to Christ or the gospel. Hence "Give us the simple gospel" has been the cry, and preachers have been expected to reiterate commonplaces, which have made both them and their hearers listless. The gospel is simple, but it is also deep, and they will best appreciate its simplicity who have most honestly endeavoured to fathom its depth. When we let our little sounding lines out, and find that they do not reach the bottom, we begin to wonder even more at the transparency of the clear abyss.

2. It is not simplicity "in" but "towards" Christ of which the apostle is speaking. Note—I. THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHRIST WHICH BEFITS THE CHRISTIAN RELATION TO HIM. 1. The word has had a touch of contempt associated with it. It is a somewhat doubtful compliment to say of a man that he is "simple minded." All noble words, as indeed all good things tend to deteriorate by time and use. It means to be "without a fold," which is, in one aspect, to be transparently honest and true, and in another to be out and out of a piece. There is no underside of the cloth, doubled up beneath, running in the opposite direction; but all tends in one way. A man with no under-currents, no by-ends, who is down to the very roots that he looks, and all whose being is knit together and hurled in one direction, that is the "simple" man whom the apostle means.

2. The attitude which corresponds to our relation to Christ as bride and Bridegroom (ver. 2), is that of—(1) A faith which looks to Him exclusively as—(a) The source of salvation. Paul feared that the Judaizing teachers would find their way into this church and teach them that obedience to the Jewish law was a condition of salvation, along with trust in Christ. And because they thus shared out the work of salvation between Jesus and something else, Paul regarded them as preaching another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel (ver. 4). That particular error is long dead and buried. But has this old foe not got a new face, and does not it live amongst us as really as it lived then? I think it does; in the grosser kind of ecclesiasticism which sticks sacraments and a church in front of the Cross, and in the definite denial that Christ's death is the one means of salvation, and in the coarse, common wish to have a finger in the pie and a share in the work of saving myself, as a drowning man will sometimes half drown his rescuer by trying to use his own limbs. These tendencies that Paul fought are perennial in human nature. And we have to be on our guard for ever against them. It is not Christ and anything else. Men are not saved by a syndicate. "Beside Him there is no Saviour." You go into a Turkish mosque and the roof is held up by a forest of slim pillars. You go into a cathedral chapter-house, and there is one strong support in the centre. The one is an emblem of the Christless multiplicity of vain supports, the other of the eternal sufficiency of the one pillar on which the whole weight of a world's salvation rests. (b) The sole light and teacher of men as to God, themselves, their duty, their destinies and prospects. In this day of confusions let us listen for the voice of Christ and accept all which comes from Him. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou only hast the words of eternal life." (2) An exclusive love which He demands or rather permits or privileges. It is the joy of the betrothed that her duty is to keep her heart clear from all competing affections. But it is none the less her duty because it is her joy. Not that we are to love nothing but Him, but we are to love all things else in Him. Love to one who has done what He has done for us is in its very nature exclusive. The centre diamond makes the little stones set round it all the more lustrous. Divided love incurs the condemnation that falls heavily upon the head of the faithless bride. (3) Absolute obedience. In all matters His command is my law, and, as surely as I make His command my law, will He make my desire His motive. "If ye love Me keep My commandments." "If ye ask anything in My name I will do it." II. THE SOLICITUDE FOR ITS MAINTENANCE. 1. Think of what threatens it. I say nothing about the ferment of opinion in this day, for one man that is swept away from a whole-hearted faith by intellectual considerations, there are a dozen from whom it is filched without their knowing it. (1) By the world. Who can hear the low voice that speaks peace and wisdom

when Niagara is roaring past his ears? But it is possible that we may so carry into all the whirl the central peace, as that we shall not be disturbed by it; and possible that "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all to His glory," so that we can, even in the midst of our daily pressing avocations and cares be keeping our hearts in the Heavens, and our souls in touch with our Lord. (2) By our own weaknesses, waywardnesses, senses, passions, desires. All these have a counter-acting force, which needs continual watchfulness in order to be neutralised. No man can grasp a stay, which alone keeps him from being immersed in the waves with uniform tenacity, unless every now and then he tightens his muscles. And no man can keep himself firmly grasping Christ unless by conscious effort directed to bettering his hold. 2. If there be dangers around and within us, the discipline which we have to pursue to secure this uniform single-hearted devotion is plain enough. Let us be vividly conscious of the peril; let us take stock of ourselves lest creeping evil may be encroaching upon us, while we are all unaware; let us clearly contemplate the possibility of an indefinite increase in the closeness and thoroughness of our surrender to Him; let us find time or make time for the patient, habitual contemplation of the great facts which kindle our devotion; let us, too, wait with prayerful patience for that Divine Spirit who will knit more closely to our Lord. Alas, how remiss we are in all this. 3. Half and half religion will bring no praise to Christ or profit to ourselves. A half-and-half Christian has religion enough to prick and sting him, and not enough to impel him to forsake the evil which yet he cannot comfortably do. If we are to be Christian men at all, let us be it out and out. Half-and-half religion is no religion. "One foot on land, and one on sea. To one thing constant never!" That is the type of thousands of professing Christians. "I fear lest by any means your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is towards Christ." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.**—*Satan himself transformed into an angel of light*:—I. THE WAY OF HIS OPERATION UPON THE SOUL, IN CONVEYING HIS FALLACIES IN THE MINDS OF MEN. 1. By moving, stirring, and sometimes altering the humours and disposition of the body. He knows that there is no grace but has its counterfeit in some passion; and no passion of the mind, but moves upon the wheel of some humour of the body. So that it is easy for him to refine the fire of a choleric humour into zeal, and raise the operations of melancholy to the semblance of humiliation. 2. By suggesting the ideas and spiritual pictures of things to the imagination. From whence it is, that poor deluded women talk much of sudden joys and raptures, &c. Again, some perhaps have had a text cast into their fancy, *e.g.*, Jer. xlvi. 10, whereupon they presently thought themselves commissioned, by an extraordinary call from heaven, to cut and slay. 3. By an actual ingress into the man like a vicarious soul. And now how easy must it be for this spirit to cast any person possessed by him into an ecstasy. And the person possessed (*Acts xix. 16*) could never have prevailed over so many men, had he not had something in him stronger than man. But what needs there any further arguing when we read how often our Saviour cast him out of men? II. THE GRAND INSTANCES IN WHICH THE DEVIL, UNDER THIS MASK OF LIGHT, HAS IMPOSED UPON THE CHRISTIAN WORLD. It has been his constant method to accommodate his impostures to the prevailing notions of each particular age. 1. The ruling principle of the first ages of the church was zealous devotion, and concern for the worship of one only God, having been so newly converted from the worship of many. Accordingly, the devil sets up Arianism, and with a bold stroke strikes at the Godhead of the Son of God. 2. As the Arian ages had chiefly set themselves to take away our Saviour's divinity, so the following ages, by a kind of contrary stretch, were no less intent upon paying an exorbitant devotion to every thing belonging to His humanity. For from hence men came to give that inordinate veneration to the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. After which, with great industry, they got together and kept all relics, which any way represented His memory, till at length they even adored them. This superstition extended itself to Christ's martyrs; the memory of whom they celebrated with solemn invocations at their sepulchres. And thus by degrees paganism came to be christened into a new form and name. Then mortification was (in show at least) advanced, and Satan began to play the white devil, by prohibiting, upon pretence of higher sacerdotal purity, the marriage of the clergy, forbidding also certain sorts of meat, and enjoining others: as likewise imposing many corporal severities, for the recommending of all which to men's use, they taught them that these practices were satisfactory for sin, and meritorious of heaven. 3. When the mist of ignorance began to clear up, men began to smell out the cheat. But then again, lest so sudden and mighty a light might baffle all his

projects, he began wisely to light up his candle, too, in the new sect of Ignatius Loyola, a sect composed of the best wits and ablest heads. And by this course he quickly fought the protestants at their own weapons. For he saw well enough that it was learning which must do his business, when ignorance was grown out of fashion. So having long imposed upon Christendom by popery, and at length finding a new light sprung in upon a great part of it, he thought it his interest to trump up a new scene of things, and so correspondently to the two main parts of religion, speculative and practical, he fell upon two contrary but equally destructive extremes, Socinianism and enthusiasm. III. SOME PRINCIPLES BY WHICH HE IS LIKELY TO REPEAT THE SAME CHEATS. And these are eminently three. 1. The stating of the doctrine of faith and free grace so as to make them undermine the necessity of a good life. 2. The opposing the power of godliness irreconcilably to all forms. And what is this but in another instance to confront subordinates, and to destroy the body because the soul can subsist without it? 3. The ascribing such a kingdom to Christ, as shall oppose and interfere with the kingdoms and governments of the world. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Satan transformed into an angel of light*:—Satan was once, in deed and in truth, an angel of light. He became an angel of darkness, and he is now transformed into an angel of light again; not into the reality, but into the form and semblance. I. SATAN APPEARS IN THE GUISE OF AN ANGEL OF LIGHT. In such a guise it was that he presented himself to our first mother, Eve, in Paradise (*Gen. iii. 4, 5*). In such a guise it was that he assaulted the Son of Man in the wilderness. To this encounter he brought with him the Word of God. Fancy not that every one who has a Bible in his hand, and a text in his mouth, is therefore taught of God. The devil will quote scripture with any one of you. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light and becomes a great preacher of—1. Philosophy. And so contrives to mysticise the Word of God. He can so confound principle with speculation, and argument with assumption, as to leave you in doubt between the simplest elements of fact or truth, and the wildest theories of imagination. 2. Morality. And so he labours to degrade the Scriptures: to take away the spirit, and leave nothing but the letter; a formal code of decency, without life. 3. Expediency. This is his grand bulwark of defiance against the efficacy of the Word of God. Here the world can find a reply to any appeal, however urgent; an evasion of any duty, however solemn. There is always something to be urged, in answer to the commands of God; some plea of necessity, convenience, &c. 4. Rites and ceremonies. The world is always pleased to rest in outward observances, and to substitute the form of godliness for the spirit. The devil knows that and gives them, in his gospel, a full supply. 5. Austerities. This, however, is one of those refinements in the gospel of Satan which he promulgates not to the world at large, but reserves, as a special boon, for those of a more morbid temperament. 6. Superstitions. To make the services of religion irksome is one of his devices; to make them ludicrous is another. II. THE MARKS WHICH DENOTE THE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. 1. He hesitates not to declare the whole counsel of God. There may be much he cannot understand, much he cannot reconcile; still he believes all, proclaims all. 2. Beyond all things and above all things, he manifests a concern for souls (*2 Tim. iv. 2*). 3. In the midst of all his labours he casts off the confidence of the flesh. He knows that Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God must give the increase. Conclusion: 1. It is when false apostles are transformed into angels of light that they most effectually promote the kingdom of darkness. 2. There is a transformation, and that, too, from darkness to light, which leaves a man but a devil at the last. This is the transformation of the head and not of the heart, and gives men a devil's faith, without works; a devil's zeal, without knowledge. How careful should we be, not only to attain a transformation, but the right and true conversion, which none but God can impart. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *The transformation of evil*:—If evil were as frightful in its aspect as in its essence we should be in little danger from it. We shrink from a tiger, rattlesnake, vulture, &c. But just as the Oriental invests destructive beasts with a certain glamour, so vice attains a certain glamour in our eyes. Note—I. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF EVIL. It is transfigured—1. By imagination. A naturalist writes concerning "The beautiful methods of killing the delicate inhabitants of the sea." What beautiful methods there are for killing the delicate inhabitants of the land. The bard robes corruption in cloth of gold. In fiction immoral characters are often made heroic and charming. How artfully has intemperance been metamorphosed into delightful shapes. Bacchus marches accompanied by choicest songs. It is the same with war. In a certain village we saw a slaughter-house cleverly concealed by evergreens: and the slaughter-house of nations has been similarly hidden by

flowers of rhetoric. Libertinism is often made to glow with delusive lustre. In nature we see sometimes the dirtiest puddles tinged with bits of rainbow; oftener still in literature. On the banks of the Amazon there is a brilliant spider that spreads itself out as a flower, and the insects lighting upon it find death. So in human life. 2. By philosophy which may mislead us. (1) In matters of faith and worship. There is a philosophy which explains the gospel—(a) In the sense of worldliness. It regards Christianity as favourable to health, temperance, economy, &c., and ignores all its heavenliness. (b) In the sense of anti-nomianism. Under the pretence of honouring Christ it transgresses the law of righteousness which He came to maintain. (c) In the sense of unbelief. False apostles urge their theories as doctrines of Christ whilst the essentials of faith are lacking in those theories. In the name of reason, independence, progress, we are exhorted to conclusions which make the Cross of Christ of none effect. Many have philosophised about the gospel until they have embraced despair. Eastern travellers are mocked by splendid mirages until they will not believe in the real oases when they see them. And we may philosophise about the church until we find ourselves embracing superstition. The church itself may become a siren alluring us away from Him who is the sinners' peace and hope. (2) In matters of conduct. What unsophisticated men regard with simple abhorrence clever reasoners can show has a good side to it. Take *e.g.*—(a) Improvidence. Mr. Nisbet says, "Indirectly the poor man who brings forth children he cannot feed is a public benefactor; he renders the struggle for life more acute, and by that means stimulates the energies of his race." The simple-minded feel that he is a shameless wretch. (b) Intemperance. Mr. Matthieu Williams says "That all human beings who are fit to survive as members of a civilised community will avoid intemperance, whilst those who are incapable of self-restraint are provided with a happy despatch by natural alcoholic selection, provided nobody interferes with their desire for a short life and a merry one." So the sot is an unconscious philosopher! (c) Impurity. Mr. Sinclair says, "Prostitutes are not the worst, but generally the best of the lower classes; people of fine physique, who cannot get their true match in the sphere where born, but must, by the holiest of all instincts, that of truth, seek upward by any means." (d) War. Powerful writers assure us that war is a sacrifice to the cause of progress, as wholesome as a lightning storm, a school of virtue. (e) And not content with affirming that certain evils are necessary evils, philosophy declares boldly that there is no evil at all. Good and evil are only different degrees of the same thing. 3. By society. The practical world is a great transformation scene where the imp often appears a fairy, and the beast, beauty. Acts of revenge are vindicated when they are called "affairs of honour"; debt is innocency itself when known as "pecuniary obligation"; libertinism is purged of all taint when characterised as "gay life"; the most brutal gladiatorship has suffered a change into something rich when it becomes "the noble art of self-defence." But by whatever alias evil may be known its action is equally ruinous. The arrow is not the less fatal because shot from ambush or winged with an eagle's feather. II. THE PATH OF SAFETY AMID THESE DANGEROUS ILLUSIONS. 1. Let us not forget that the chief danger of life lies in this moral illusion. It is often hard to persuade us that there is any such danger of deception. But the scientist while he believes his eyes takes great pains so that he may be sure he sees truly. The connoisseur is equally careful, and the business man, knowing the trickery in his province, acts warily. And caution is particularly needed in the moral world. Satan conceals his fell purposes as the Greek assassins did their swords in myrtle branches. 2. Let us be sincere in soul. Much depends on integrity of purpose in life. Under all deception is self-deception—a secret willingness to be deceived because we have pleasure in unrighteousness and purpose to follow it. An adventurer persuades you that a few shares at a trifling cost will make you a millionaire; but you find ere long that you have been cruelly deceived. Will the public pity you? No. You were easily blinded because of your inordinate desires. 3. Let us respect the written law. The Bible is a wonderful book for destroying the glamour of sin. It makes palpable—(1) Its sophistry. It exposes the deceitfulness of the heart, and pierces the maxims by which society excuses its folly and vices. (2) Its horror. It compels the transformed devil to return to his true shape. (3) Its fruits. Once our Master encountered Satan in his uttermost transfiguration. With the words "It is written," our Lord pricked one gorgeous bubble after another, and we must follow His example. 4. Let us constantly see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and bring to Him whatever theory or thing may solicit us. In His light we shall know exactly what is true. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

Vers. 16-20. I say again, **Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me.**—*St. Paul's character*:—This is a very curious and somewhat perplexing passage. It is not quite what we should expect to find in Scripture; yet it is a most suggestive passage. I. LET US TRY TO UNDERSTAND BOTH ITS LANGUAGE AND ITS TONE. St. Paul is evidently very much hurt by the treatment which he had received. The Church there was his own creation; and, accordingly, he was deeply attached to it. Now he finds himself the object of unsparring criticism. The taunts of his opponents, however, go a very little way towards producing the tone of wounded feeling which pervades this chapter. What grieved St. Paul was that the Corinthians were being seduced from their allegiance to himself, and the simplicity that is in Christ. It also made him indignant. Who are these men that his Corinthians should transfer their loyalty so readily from him to them? What are their claims, compared with his? Are they "Hebrews," "Israelites," "the seed of Abraham," "ministers of Christ"? He is more. There was something too of scorn and wrong in Paul's feeling. "Ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise." Of course you will cheerfully put up with me and my folly, being so very wise yourselves. It is little or nothing that I ask you to put up with, compared with what you put up with from these new teachers. You let them tyrannise over you to any extent. They may rob you, domineer over you; you put up with it all: so wise are you (ver. 20). This, of course, is irony—half playful, half serious. But the playfulness of the passage bears a very small proportion to the intense seriousness of it. The prevailing tone of the whole is an almost passionate self-assertion, wrung from him almost in spite of himself, and with a kind of scorn of himself in the doing of it ("I speak foolishly")—wrung from him, I say, by grief, and indignation, and anxiety. II. Is this, or is this not, the tone of the passage? If it is, WHAT ARE WE TO THINK OF IT AND THE WRITER? Is he to be less to us than he has been? I think not. Should we not all feel that its removal would be a real loss? 1. There is the strong human interest of the passage. It is a revelation of character. The writer lays himself bare to us. You hear, as you read, the very pulsations of his heart—pulsations wild and feverish, perhaps, but genuine, honest, manly, true. There are no conventionalities and etiquettes. We have the man himself, and find him one of like feelings with ourselves. He can be wounded, and hurt, and sensitive, as we can be. Without it he would be much less of a real character and person to us. Now this is an immense gain. For one thing, it makes all his letters much more real and forceful to us. They are not mere pages in a book, however sacred. They are the words of a man, a friend. It is through such a passage as this that the Epistles of St. Paul become not merely theological treatises, but an autobiography of the writer. They present us with a photograph of himself. He opens more than his mind; he opens his heart to us. 2. Cold critics, analysing St. Paul's character as it unveils itself to us here, will find plenty of fault with it. They will say that he is too sensitive; that his assertion of himself is undignified and unworthy. It would not be difficult to dispute the ground with such critics, inch by inch, were it worth our while to do so. Instead of doing so, let us freely concede that there is a touch of human infirmity here. Now I say that this very weakness, being of the kind it is, not only increases the attractiveness of Paul's character, but also makes it more powerful for good. The noble metals, gold and silver, require, as we all know, some alloy of baser metal, in order to fit them for the service of men. And it seems as if the noblest characters required some alloy if they are to take hold of other minds, and exercise upon them their full force for good. But then all depends upon the nature of this alloy. In Cranmer's case, what gave such weight to his martyrdom was the natural sinking from such a horrible death. There could hardly be two men more unlike than Cranmer and St. Paul. But in St. Paul, too, there is what I call this dash of human weakness. What is it? We feel it as we read our text, without being able to define it. But whatever it be, there is nothing base in it,—nothing mean, coarse, or vulgar. It just makes us feel that there is a point of contact between us and him. It is a deep descent from the sinless weakness of Christ to the dash of human infirmity which we find in St. Paul. And what a descent again is it from St. Paul to ourselves! With him it is but a dash of alloy, making the noble metal all the more serviceable. With us it seems as if we were all alloy. (*D. J. Vaughan, M.A.*) **For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage.**—*A picture of religious imposters*:—These words suggest that they are—I. TYRANNIC. "If a man bring you into bondage." The reference is doubtless to the false teachers of ver. 13. False

teaching always makes men spiritual serfs. II. RAPACIOUS. "If a man devour you." Greed is their inspiration. III. CRAFTY. "If a man take of you." The expression "of you" is not in the original. The idea is, if a man takes you in and entraps you. This is just what religious impostors do, they cajole men, and make them their dupes. IV. ARROGANT. "If a man exalt himself." It is characteristic of false teachers that they assume great superiority. They arrogate a lordship over human souls. V. INSOLENT. "If a man smite you on the face." The religious impostor has no respect for the rights and dignities of man as man. With his absurd dogmas and arrogancies he is everlastingly smiting men on "their face," on their reason, their consciences, and their self-respect. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 21-33. **I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit . . . I am bold also.**—*Paul's avowal of his advantages and his history of his trials*:—I. HIS MANLY AVOWAL OF HIS DISTINGUISHED ADVANTAGES. 1. His superior character (ver. 21). 2. His superior ancestry (ver. 22). 3. His superior apostleship (ver. 23). II. HIS HISTORIC SKETCH OF HIS EXTRAORDINARY TRIALS. The trials here sketched indicate several things. 1. The mysteriousness of God's procedure with His servants. One might have thought that the man inspired with supreme love to Him, and receiving a commission from Him, involving the salvation of souls, would have made his way clear, safe, and even pleasant. The more important the Divine work intrusted to a man, and the more faithful he is in its discharge, the more trials will embarrass and distract him. For an explanation of this we must await the great explaining day. 2. The unconquerableness of Christly love in the soul. What stimulated Paul to embark in, and what bore him up under such an enterprise as this? The answer is, "The love of Christ constraineth me." 3. The indelibility of the impressions which trials produce. They had long since transpired, but they were fresh in Paul's memory. It is a law in our nature that our trials make a deeper impression on us than our mercies. Why? Because they are the exceptions, not the rule. 4. The blessedness which the memory of trials rightly endured produces. In Paul's case—(1) It generated sympathy with the woes of others (ver. 29). No man can sympathise with the trials of others, unless he has passed through trials himself. (2) It inspired the soul with true rejoicing (ver. 30). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **In labours more abundant.**—*Service in sorrow*:—Look at you miller on the village hill. How does he grind his grist? Does he bargain that he will only grind in the west wind, because its gales are so full of health? No, but the east wind, which searches joints and marrow, makes the millstones revolve, and together with the north and the south it is yoked to his service. Even so should it be with you who are true workers for God; all your ups and your downs, your successes and your defeats, should be turned to the glory of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The trials of busy life*:—Now, from many causes, "from the temper of the day, and from the temper of our nation, the being busy is most natural to us"; around us on every hand men and women are largely occupied, toiling for the necessaries, for the comforts, or for the luxuries of life. The more men have, the more they seem to need, and so that desire. Still, to be busy is natural, and to be busy is good; slothfulness, in the case of the majority, would mean poverty and misery. Honest industry stands upon the footing of being a service agreeable to God. Herein lies one of the trials of this life. 1. In proportion as a person's work is great, as the activity of busy life increases, especially if that activity be attended with temporal success, then increases the danger of this God-ward aspect being lost sight of—the work comes to be more and more regarded, as from the first it may have been taken up, only on its earthly side. So much of success seems to be dependent on the individual himself, his knowledge, his energies, his foresight, that at last he comes to say, "My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this," forgetting "Who it is that gives power to get it." Then mark what flows from this forgetfulness of God, or this failing to recognise life's work as given us of Him. 2. Restlessness and disquietude, when success is denied: pride and presumption when it flows in full tide. The present are days of great restlessness; disquietude and much anxiety are too common. Oh! it is sad to see, "a sight which makes a thinking man weep at any time, to look around him anywhere, and see how Satan and the world are befocusing souls for which Christ died, and which might find rest in Him." 3. The third trial to which busy life is exposed, is the trial of procrastination, the putting off until the "convenient season" life's higher duties. "Business" in these days seems to occupy all people's time, and nearly all their thoughts. It thins our churches, breeds a painful

irregularity in the actions of the truer life of the soul. 4. Another trial which attends busy life is the trial of steadfastness. "Business" is often another name for the world; and what a world is this with which we have to do! What a mixture of good and bad, of vice and virtue, of honesty and corruption! And when the Christian has to face all this, to mix daily with all this, to act under or against all this, how terrible must be the strain on his steadfastness, that is, his walking uprightly before God. 5. The last trial is the trial of integrity: that trial, I mean, which, in some form or other, comes to every one—the conflict between principle and our interest. Oh! in the busy life, does not this conflict rage? Such are a few, a very few, of the many trials of busy life. The one leading thought of them all, is this, their danger—unless we be watchful—to divert the soul from its God. Their snare is to leave no time, or to leave no inclination, or to leave no power for high and holy things. But this, remember, through the abuse of them, not through the right and prayerful use. If God has given us our work, however great, we must do it, and we may do it unto Him. (*C. C. Chamberlain, M.A.*)

Ver. 26. **In journeyings often.**—*The Christian away from home*:—Paul was a traveller. His journeyings by sea and land formed an important part of the educating influences that formed his Christian life. Notice—I. THE MENTAL STIMULUS GAINED. Monotonous toil wears us out. It is good to get out of ruts, to look on new objects, to talk about new subjects, to freshen up our spirits. It is good to get out of one's home, store, city, out of one's country even, and see new heavens and a new earth, though for a little while. The rust and the dust of routine life are removed. This mental stimulus of travel is threefold. It is awakened by anticipation, it is intensified by actual enjoyment, and it continues in the joy of reminiscence. II. THE ACTUAL PRESENCE AND GUIDANCE OF GOD IS MORE IMPRESSIVELY FELT "IN JOURNEYINGS OFT." It has been truly said that the spectre of uncertainty haunts the cabin of every departing ship. So of all vehicles and modes of travel. Their history has its tragedies, and the beginning of any journey should elicit the prayer, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." Sweetly to the believer comes the answer, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee." Is thy journey by the sea? The sea is His. Passing through the waters, He will be with thee. So in malarious districts or in heated climes the same shelter is guaranteed. Not only in peril, but in perplexity, do we prove the truth of these pledges. "He leadeth me" when in doubt as to what is best to do, saying, "This is the way, walk in it." We enter a foreign city alone, and unacquainted with the language. Such exigencies of travel are educating. An uplift is gained by the trustful soul that is never lost (*Job xxxi. 32*). III. THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINTS IS REALISED ABROAD AS IT CAN NEVER BE IN THE FAMILIAR INTERCOURSE OF HOME. How Paul's heart did leap within him at Appii Forum! Ten miles farther on, another group, at Three Taverns, welcome him. IV. ABSENCE ENDEARS THE LOCALITIES, FRIENDSHIPS, PRIVILEGES, AND EMPLOYMENTS OF HOME. V. OUR JOURNEYINGS REMIND US THAT LIFE ITSELF IS A JOURNEY, to be pursued with thoughtfulness, with reference to life's great ends and our eternal home. (*E. P. Thwing, D.D.*) **In perils.**—*In perils of water*:—It required courage to be a voyager in olden times, the ships were small and clumsy, the rocks and shores so poorly defined; no weather "probabilities," signals or lighthouses. Yet there are as great perils now, notwithstanding our sea-charts, lighthouses, ironclads, storm-signals, &c. The danger arises now from the multiplicity of crafts. Note—I. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE WHO HOLD THE LIVES, OR THE PROPERTY, OR THE SOULS OF MEN IN KEEPING. 1. Captains, guards, engineers, architects, have very great responsibility, and God will hold them to account. 2. Pastors of churches, private Christians who hold in their hands the souls of people, had better obey the injunction: Watch! II. WHEN WE PART FROM OUR FRIENDS, REUNION IS UNCERTAIN. III. ELEGANT SURROUNDINGS ARE NO SECURITY. Iceberg, and storm, and darkness, and collision can see no difference between magnificent mail steamship and whaler with rusty bolts and greasy deck. Do not think that brilliant surroundings will keep off the last foe. IV. SOME CHRISTIANS ARE NEARER TO GLORY THAN THEY THINK. Some of you are spending your last Sabbath, singing your last song, giving your last salutations. V. THE WORLD HAS NOT YET BEEN PERSUADED OF THE NONSENSE OF PRAYER. VI. THE IMPORTANCE OF ALWAYS BEING READY FOR TRANSITION. (*T. de Witt Talmage, D.D.*) **In perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness.**—*Environment*:—Let us talk a little about

what is known as environment. Men are apt to think they would be better if their circumstances, their surroundings were of another kind and quality. They do not go in upon themselves and say, We are to blame. We must get rid of that delusion before we can make any real progress in life. All history shows us that whatever a man's environment may be he can conquer it; or he can respond to it in the degree in which it is Divine, beautiful, and fascinating. Where did man first fall, according to the Biblical history? Was it in some narrow, ill-lighted street? Was it in some swamp or wilderness? It was possible to fall in Eden. Therefore do not say that if you were in Eden you would be safe. Men say that, if they were only in the city, at the very centre of civilisation, if they had the security of social life as it is to be found in the metropolis of any country, all would go well. The Apostle Paul answers that in our text, "In perils in the city." You thought you would be safe in the city. Here is Paul in all kinds of cities, classical, advanced, thoughtful, immoral; and he says he was "in perils in the city." Men think that if they could be only in the city, in the metropolis, where there is an abundance of literature, where all kinds of galleries are open to the people—picture-galleries, museums, art-repositories, music of every hue and range—then they would have something to think about, and to engage their attention, and to divide at least the intensity of the temptations by which souls are besieged. Paul says, let us repeat again and again, "In perils in the city." The city grows its own weeds; the city opens its own fountains of poison-water. The city is eating out the best life of the nation. "In perils in the city." Yet how many of these perils do we make ourselves, and how eagerly do we avail ourselves of many an open door that invites us to enter and go down to hell! I have seen this in the city—namely, young men, certainly not five-and-twenty years of age, before ten o'clock in the morning going into public-houses. Not vagabonds, but men who were evidently going to some kind of business afterwards, well-dressed young men. What would you say about an instance of that kind, except that it means ruin? You cannot trifle with that state of affairs. You cannot begin a little reform now and a little then. You must throw your enemy now! "In perils in the city." What a temptation there is there to bet and gamble and trifle with other people's money! You do not suppose that a young man makes up his mind to be a thief. In many instances he knows that he is honest in purpose, and he says that, if he can only succeed, no man shall lose a penny by him; he will only back his own judgment against some other man's judgment. He says, "What harm can there be in my setting up my sagacity against the sagacity of some other man?" You cannot be fortunate in betting and gambling. Do not say that you know instances in which men have made tens of thousands of pounds, and are in great prosperity. There are no such instances. They may have all the pounds, but they have not the prosperity. There is no prosperity in wickedness. Do not think you can trifle with the spirit of evil and succeed. Resist the devil, and he will flee from thee. Then what do men say? They continue in this fashion—namely, If I could only get away from the city, if I could get into the country somewhere, if I could get into some quiet place, then all would be well. "In perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness"—in the solitude, in the great emptiness; as much peril in the wilderness as there is in Cheapside; as much peril in the desert as there is in the Stock Exchange. How often in passing through beautiful places have we said, Surely there must be peace in that habitation and in yonder dwelling. Go where you will, you will find the devil has been there before you. There are great perils even in solitude: in fact, it is possible that solitude may be the greatest peril of all. It is the voice of history that the devil comes to men individually, and not to them in crowds only. All the great tragedies are connected with individual instances. Solitude gives us a false standard of self-judgment. It is only by man meeting man, comparing himself with his fellow-men, seeking the judgment of higher minds than his own, that he becomes chastened and thus ennobled; rebuked, and thus elevated. Observe, then, that circumstances cannot give us security. You thought that, when you made ten thousand pounds, you would be perfectly secure. No man ever rested content with ten thousand pounds; there was always another sovereign which some other man had which he wanted; there was always another field which, if he obtained, would beautifully sphere out his estate; and going after fields is like going after the horizon, there is always "another." Do not imagine that if you were rich you would be good. Let no man be discouraged because of his environment. You say, What can a young man do in my circumstances? He can do everything through Christ strengthening him. If men begin to sit down and say, What can I do with only five shillings a week?

what can I do with only a workhouse education? what can I do with people such as these round about me? they will never come to anything. A man must not look at his surroundings, but he must look at his universe and at God enthroned above its riches and forces; and he must say, It is my business by the blessing of God to take hold of circumstances and twist them and bind them and round them into a garland or a diadem. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 27-29. **In weariness.**—*The weariness of life*:—Weariness means to wear away the nervous sensibilities. Paul felt this. It is not lassitude which comes from indifference, but the exhaustion felt by the earnest and faithful soul. Let us thank God for restorative power. In nature how blessed this is! So with grace! I. WEARINESS COMES WITH TEMPORARY DISAPPOINTMENT AND DEFEAT. God has promised to perfect that which concerneth us, but the way of perfection is just the way which wearies us. We are disappointed at the slow progress. And we are human. Think of Rebekah!—"I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth." The motherly anxiety was at work. As we get older we feel "limitations" of power. Disappointment is a cloud, and we wait till the heavens are clear and the all-revealing light comes again! But we are defeated too! But first defeat has made many a true general, has quickened many an inventor, like Watt, Stephenson, and Brunel. Weariness comes to student, explorer, missionary, and philanthropist saddened with ingratitude. But this is not the weariness of sin, that not only exhausts, but destroys. II. WEARINESS COMES WITH SELF-DISCOVERY. The volcano tells what is in the earth. The lightning reveals the latent electricity in the air. Passions and lusts reveal terrible possibilities in good men. David said, "I am weary with my groaning," and again, "I am weary of my crying." Conflict with sin in all its forms is weary work. 1. The roots are so hidden. Like some garden weeds have roots that never seem uprooted, long white threads that interlace the earth and strangle other plants. 2. The battle is so varied. Like Stanley's passage of the Falls, enemies on both banks and on the island, mid-stream. 3. The avengements are so real. There is no escaping the voice! Thou art the man. And the soul cannot pretend not to hear. But think of this same Paul. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The answer is—Christ. More than conquerors! III. WEARINESS COMES WITH UNBELIEF. The Greeks had an underlying sadness in their outwardly beautiful life. It is faith which gives life and zest. Thomas Carlyle says, "All epochs, wherein unbelief, under whatever form soever, maintains its sorry victory, should they ever for a moment glitter with a sham splendour, vanish from the eyes of posterity; because no one chooses to burden himself with study of the unfruitful." Men must be weary who have lost faith. 1. Round of same duties without a goal. 2. Growth a mockery merging into weakness. 3. Health into pain. Vision into dimness. Thought into blank! IV. WEARINESS COMES FROM SOLITUDE. The regiment is thinning in which you started. You have seen many arms of the soldiers "dip below the downs" into the valley. You are beginning in a human sense to feel solitary. The Master was weary in solitude: "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" So was Paul: "At Athens alone." But the Christian is never alone. "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." (*W. M. Statham.*) Beside . . . the care of all the Churches.—*Anxiety of the Churches*:—The word "care" is "anxiety"—the same word by which Christ (Luke viii. 4-15) designates one of the three influences by which the good seed is "stified." St. Paul speaks here of it in the list of sufferings for Christ's sake. That anxiety which our Lord reproveth (Matt. vi. 25, &c.; Luke x. 41) has a namesake among the graces. St. Paul, who says (Philip. iv. 6), "Be anxious about nothing," mentions this without apology as his daily experience. Just in proportion to the meanness of the one is the dignity of the other. The anxieties which choke the Word are commonly as selfish as they are earthly; those of which Paul was here capable are elevating, and, so far from choking the Word, grow out of it. Notice, respecting this care of all the Churches—I. ITS UNSELFISHNESS. These people were nothing to him. They were neither kinsfolk, neighbours, nor countrymen. They were converts, but his idea of his responsibility towards them was not to do his duty and then leave it. He was solicitous, even to pain, about their continuous welfare. II. ITS STRICTNESS. 1. As regards his government of the Churches, with what eagerness both of authority and argument does he throw himself into questions even of dress! (1 Cor. xi. 3-16; cf. 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14). In our ritual controversies we are certain that he would have laid down, as it is now thought tyranny to do, the law of obedience (1 Cor. xiv. 36). 2. His anxiety, as his Epistles show, was a doctrinal

anxiety. He was fighting for Christ, and therefore was peremptory in his enforcement of doctrine. III. INDIVIDUAL (ver. 29). True he made the world his province, but he took a personal interest in his converts. See how he deals with the incestuous person. He never suffered the supposed interests of Churches to eclipse the value of souls. I knew an archbishop who failed not, whatever his distance or occupation, to write at certain intervals to a common northern townsman whom he had reclaimed from intemperance for his establishment in grace. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?—*Sympathy and indignation* :—I. THERE ARE TWO FAULTS WHICH ALTERNATE IN HUMAN CHARACTER

—weakness and harshness. 1. We sometimes find a person who is extremely amiable, one invaluable in hours of distress, to whom we fly in sorrow. And yet in this character, so attractive at first sight, there may be a fatal defect. There may be a want of strength—a sympathy not only with the erring, which is right, but with the error, which is wrong. 2. On the other hand, we sometimes see a person of the greatest elevation and purity of character; we hear his judgment upon right and wrong; we fancy our own moral tone to be braced by his principles and example. And yet here too there may be something fatally wanting. He may be harsh, and have the effect of driving in upon itself, but not of correcting, that which is sinful in another. We feel, perhaps, that it would be impossible for us to confess a fault to such a person; therefore in his company we are tempted to deceive him if not ourselves, and that which is evil sinks the deeper in for being thus driven from the surface. II. TURN NOW, AND SEE A CHARACTER WHICH, BY GOD'S GRACE, COMBINED BOTH THESE VIRTUES AND AVOIDED BOTH THESE FAULTS. 1. By nature it was a strong character. Those whom he regarded as in error St. Paul once persecuted to the death. But, as soon as the love of Christ touched his heart, without losing one particle of strength, he learned to add to it tenderness. Knowing how much he had been forgiven, he knew how to forgive. 2. Now therefore his language is, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" Who is inexperienced or unstable in the life of God, living powerless in a perilous world, and I do not share his fears and sympathise with him to the full from the depth of my own experience? On the other hand, "Who is offended, and I burn not?" I am weak with the weak, but I am not weak towards their tempter. Read the passage in the first Epistle, in which he consigns to a terrible punishment the guilty person, and then read the passage in the second Epistle, in which, after a due interval of exclusion, he bids them to receive back and comfort the penitent offender. III. THE LESSON FOR OURSELVES.

1. Amongst you some are weak, vigorous in body, it may be, quick in mind, and yet weak. Some of you feel it, and accuse yourselves of it: "I am so weak, so unstable, so irresolute, so soon shaken from my purpose." Now, then, St. Paul tells us here how we ought to deal with such weakness. He became weak along with it. This was the right way, he meant, to deal with weakness, to descend, as it were, to its level, and, in the very act of doing so, to help to raise it to his own. Do I recommend laxity of treatment? Far from it. Sympathy is not indulgence, for sympathy can rebuke severely, and severely punish. But there are two ways of doing everything; it is one thing to rebuke with sorrow, and another to rebuke or punish in coldness or in apathy. 2. "Who is offended, and I burn not?" It is the tendency of long carelessness, whether in an individual or in a community, to blunt the edge of the sense of sin. It is said of advancing age that its tendency is to make men more indulgent and less sanguine. Certainly we do find a great want in ourselves too often of righteous indignation. A strange companion, some of you may be saying, to that spirit of sympathy which has just been spoken of! St. Paul, however, did not think so. Now indignation is a dangerous quality to foster towards one of ourselves. But nevertheless it has its uses in the Christian scheme, and the loss of it causes a terrible injury to the health of a community, if not of an individual man. No tongue ever uttered words of such consuming indignation as those which Christ addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees. Would to God there were more who could be angry and sin not in the sight and hearing of some kinds of evil! It is the loss of this feeling which fills the courts of justice with records of unmanly aggressions upon the confiding and the feeble. (*Ibid.*) *Sympathy*:—Many-sidedness, which is an invariable characteristic of all really great men, was indisputably a feature in St. Paul. No doubt it has risks and disadvantages. There is the chance of shallowness. It is often, and with supreme unfairness, identified with insincerity. Capriciousness, too, is imputed to these large and sensitive natures, because we cannot always find them in the same mood. Perhaps that one feature of nature which has done more than any other to conciliate the affection of

the Church is sympathy. Sympathy is feeling with others, and it is quite a distinct thing from feeling for them. The latter is more of a quick and evanescent sentiment, good as far as it goes, but not often going far. Sympathy is a habit, or temper of mind, which means prayer and effort and sacrifice. Let us first select certain types of circumstance which sympathy springs to meet. 1. First, let us not forget our apostle's precept, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice," and not be so ignorant as to suppose that men do not value sympathy with happiness, though they may need it more in sorrow. All conditions of life, as well as all classes of men, claim and appreciate sympathy. Our Lord's presence at the marriage feast at Cana, as well as at the feast at Bethany after the raising of His friend Lazarus, is an instance in point. Disappointment and wounded self-love may occasionally have something to do with our lack of sympathy in a friend's happiness, but thoughtlessness and a certain lazy selfishness have more. 2. There are difficulties in religion, where honest and even reverent souls demand sympathy and do not always get it. Nothing so tends to discourage, or harden, or anger men into actual unbelief as a cold, harsh, dogmatic treatment of their difficulties. Sympathy here, indeed, must be prudent and frank. 3. It is hardly necessary to add how needful and blessed in hours of personal sorrow is the felt sympathy of a friend. People who don't know are apt, by way of excusing themselves for negligence, to allege that sympathy at such times has no real value. Little they know about it. Here, again, we must premise that true sympathy has nothing morbid or softening about it. It braces, while it sighs; it points to Christ, instead of leaning on man. If it means tact and skill, it also means courage and power. In conclusion, let us say other things about sympathy. No doubt there are some people in whom it is a born instinct; so to speak, it is neither hard for them nor easy. It is a matter of course, for it is a part of themselves. Yet, even in them, it needs educating and disciplining by experience. Then let us be careful how, with the best meaning possible, we express sympathy with troubles and losses of which we have no sort of personal knowledge, thereby, it may be, making our kindly intended consolations clumsy, ludicrous, or even painful. Let us leave it to those who do know what they are doing, and so avoid the danger of making a second wound in our attempt to heal the first. Once more, no quality of the soul, when it is genuine and ripe and wise, is so gratefully accepted, so tenderly cherished, so lavishly repaid, as this grace of sympathy, and it does not need money, talent, cleverness—only the presence of love. The love of God and the love of man react upon each other. (*Bp. Thorold.*)

Vers. 30-33. **IF I MUST NEEDS GLORY, I WILL GLORY OF MINE . . . INFIRMITIES.**—*Glorying in infirmities* :—St. Paul, with all his gifts and all his triumphs as an apostle of Christ, led a life of constant trial. There was one very peculiar trial to which he was subjected, that of constant disparagement. Scarcely had he planted the Church at Corinth than another came after him to mar his work. One or two obvious remarks suggest themselves. I. AND ONE IS AS TO THE CHARACTER OF THE SCRIPTURES GENERALLY, IN REFERENCE TO THEIR DETAILS OF FACTS. All the books of Scriptures are of what is called an incidental character. The Gospels were not written to give a complete life of Jesus. And in like manner the history in the Acts was not written to give a complete life of each of the apostles, not even of the two apostles principally spoken of, St. Paul and St. Peter. In each case specimens of the life are given, enough to exemplify the character and the history of the first disciples, by illustrating the principles on which a Christian should act, and the sort of help and support from above which he may look for in so acting. II. Another remark, not wholly unconnected with this, is AS TO THE STYLE AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF THIS PARTICULAR PASSAGE AND ITS CONTEXT. "Ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise." It is what we call ironical language. And there is very much of this tone in these chapters. I would beg you to notice what a very natural person St. Paul was; how he expressed strongly what he strongly felt; how he did not allow a misplaced or morbid charity to keep him from exposing, as any human writer would seek to do, the fraudulent designs and underhand practices of those whose influence over a congregation he saw to be full of danger. III. BUT I MUST DRAW MY THIRD REMARK FROM THE TEXT ITSELF, AND THUS PREPARE THE WAY FOR ITS BRIEF CONCLUDING ENFORCEMENT. St. Paul says, "If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things which concern my infirmities." I fear these words have been sometimes much misapplied. People have spoken of glorying in their infirmities. They have applied the words, all but avowedly, to infirmities of temper and of character, as though it gave them some claim to the

estimation of Christians to be aware of their own liability to sudden outbreaks or habitual unsoundness of prevailing evil within. But now observe the three things to which St. Paul applies the term of infirmity or weakness. 1. The first of these is suffering—suffering for Christ's sake, suffering of a most painful kind and a most frequent repetition—bodily discomfort, bodily privation, bodily pain. Such was one part of his "infirmity." Suffering reminded him of his human nature, of his material frame not yet redeemed by resurrection. 2. The second kind of infirmity is denoted in these words, "that which crowds upon me daily, the anxiety of all the congregations." A keen sense of responsibility is his second weakness. He knew so much in himself, he had seen so much in others, of the malice and skill of the tempter, that when he was absent from a congregation, and more especially from a young congregation busy in the formation or in the charge of distant Churches, he was distracted with painful care, and even faith itself was not enough sometimes to soothe and reassure him. He called this anxiety an infirmity. Perhaps, in the very highest view of all, it was so. Perhaps he ought to have been able to trust his congregation in God's hands in his absence. 3. There was a third weakness, growing out of the last named, and that was the weakness of a most acute sympathy. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" That is, whenever I notice or hear of a weakness in the faith of any one, such a weakness as exposes him to the risk of failing in his Christian course, I have a sense of interest and concern in that case such as makes me a very partaker in its anxieties. I cannot get rid of it by putting it from me. I feel that weakness of character as my weakness; I feel that weakness of faith as my weakness. That is one half of my sympathy. But there is, along with this, another feeling, "who is offended?" who is caused to stumble? who is tempted to sin? and I am not on fire with righteous indignation against the wickedness which is doing this work upon him? Sympathy with the tempted is also indignation against the tempter. Sympathy has two offices. Towards the offended it is fellow weakness; towards the offender it is indignant strength. I have dwelt upon these things for the sake of putting very seriously before you the contrast between St. Paul's weaknesses and our own. Our own infirmities are of a kind which a severer judge than we are of ourselves would certainly designate by the plainer names of defects, faults, and sins—indolence, carelessness, vanity, a desire for applause, a sensitiveness to other men's opinions of us. Compared with such things, how withering to our self-love must be St. Paul's (so-called) weaknesses! The very least of them is a virtue beyond our highest attainments. Which of us ever suffered anything in Christ's behalf? Where is our sense of responsibility?—our anxiety about those committed to us? 4. Finally, I would give a wider scope to the language of the text, and urge upon each one the duty and the happiness of saying to himself in the words of St. Paul, "If I must needs glory, I will glory in those things which concern," not my strength, but "my weakness." The things on which we commonly pride ourselves are our advantages, our talents, our estimation with others, our position in society, the pleasures we can command, or the wealth we have accumulated. But these things, by their very nature, are the possession of the few. St. Paul tells us how we may glory safely, how we may glory to the very end. Glory, he says, not in your strength, but in your weakness. Has God denied to you His gift of health? Has He seen fit by His providence to impair any one of your bodily organs—your sight, your hearing, your enjoyment of taste, or your power of motion? Or have you been treated with neglect by some one to whom you had shown only kindness? Has the poison of disappointment entered your heart? It is just in these very things, or in any one of them, that St. Paul would have you glory. For God's gifts to us we may be thankful, but it is in His deprivations alone that we may glory. And St. Paul tells us why we may thus glory in our disadvantages, in our postponements, in our losses, in our bereavements. He says in another passage of this same Epistle, "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest (tabernacle) upon me." And he speaks yet again in the same spirit "of bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," being made like Him, that is, in His humiliation and in His death for us, "that the life also of Jesus," His living power as it is now put forth in His servants, "might be made manifest in our body." It is the dark side of life which brings us most closely, most consciously into connection with the supporting and comforting help of Christ within. (*Dean Vaughan.*) **Knoweth that I lie not.**—*The happiness of entire truthfulness of heart:*—What a glorious appeal is this of St. Paul; the very spirit of holy truth breathes in it. It was an appeal which

none but an entirely honest and faithful man would make to the One knowing all things, to judge the single truthfulness of his whole speech. We think, at first sight, what a convincing, triumphant appeal these words must have been to all that heard them. But as we dwell upon them a second thought rises up in our minds, "what a comfort and stay the consciousness of this must have been to him who could honestly say so much to himself." What ease and peace and comfort, yes, and what power and vigour as well, must there have been there. Look only at the other side of the case, at the miserable condition of the untruthful, self-deceiving, double-faced heart. Think of the many discomforts, miseries of a heart that does not mean to seek the truth; think how such a heart would stand to other hearts; think, for instance, of all the wretched, uneasy fear of being found out. I do not mean only found out in telling lies, but in all the deceitfulness, the double dealing of a hollow, insincere heart. How can there be any groundwork of real and abiding affection where one is hiding his real thoughts from the other, or not even acknowledging to himself what he really feels? You know well how we draw towards the open, frank man who seems to speak from the heart. Here, then, is the first discomfort of an untruthful heart, that it is estranged from those to whom it ought to be most warmly attached, that it fears those it ought to love. Is this all? No, nor the greater part. There is one other with whom a man may be untruthful, himself. It may be our chief life occupation to carry on a long deceit of ourselves, sometimes knowing the better part and choosing the worse, sometimes blindfolding ourselves, so as to hinder ourselves from seeing what is the right way. Our Lord speaks of the helplessness of a house divided against itself. How can that be otherwise, when a man is actually divided against himself, and one half sets itself to deceive the other? Now, I ask, can there be any real peace of truth in a heart so divided? Can it be possible for such a heart to feel comfortable? But there lies deeper mischief still, greater discomfort from the rule of untruthfulness, insincerity, deceit in the heart. God is the king of the conscience, and the rule of right and truth is the law of His kingdom. Where, then, we are not thinking and living by rule, where we are dealing untruthfully with ourselves, we must be dealing also untruthfully with God, either doing what we like, without seeking to know His will, or, which is perhaps more common, seeking to find a loophole in His Word through which we can creep and have our own way, heaping up all sorts of weak excuses, false arguments, pretences of many kinds, under which we smother the plain meaning of the known Word of God, "handling the Word of God deceitfully," and "changing the truth of God into a lie." Can there be any comfort in this forced reign of untruth? Can there be any ease or real peace? Happy the man who escapes all this; happy the man who, by the grace of God, has set up the simple law of truth in his heart, who seeks only the truth, "for the truth shall make him free, and freedom will be happiness. He has but one rule, to deal honestly with himself, his neighbour, and his God. If he is open with God, God will be open with him, and the everlasting truth shall be his stay and joy, and exceeding great reward. (*Archdeacon Mildmay.*) In Damascus the governor . . . kept the city . . . with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down.—*The escape:*

—I. THAT THE EMINENTLY GOOD ARE SPECIALLY EXPOSED TO DANGER. 1. Because of the ability which they display in destroying evil (ver. 22). The genius, culture, sagacity, and resolution of Paul. The tallest trees are most exposed to the tempest. Mountain summits rear themselves to the heights where lightnings are kindled and thunderbolts are forged. 2. Because of the influence which they exercise. The presence of Napoleon electrified his troops. The leading of the gifted good multiplies the power of Christians in general. 3. Because of the success which they realise. The conversion of Paul was a revival. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Luther paralysed the papacy. II. THAT THE EMINENTLY GOOD ARE SOMETIMES EXPOSED TO VERY FORMIDABLE DANGERS (ver. 32). The governor of Damascus, instigated by the Jews, surrounded the city with soldiers to secure the apprehension and assassination of Paul. 1. The danger was powerful in its instrumentality. Church and State combined to crush Paul. Antichrist and assassination are synonymous. 2. The danger was skilful in its contrivance. The city was entirely surrounded with guards. The arrangement seemed admirably suited to the purpose—deliverance was hopeless. Sagacity, to a degree, and sin have been linked together from the days of Paradise Lost. Talent has been prostituted ever and everywhere. 3.

The danger was destructive in its design. "To kill him." If the teacher is slain the truth will survive. III. THAT THE EMINENTLY GOOD ARE SOMETIMES VERY SIMPLY DELIVERED OUT OF DANGER (ver. 3). The enemy was baffled by a basket. 1. The escape was novel in its method. "And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall." Windows have often done service to the faithful. Baskets also have been friends in need. Necessity was the mother of invention. 2. It was unexpected in its adoption. The gates of the city were watched. They had not reckoned upon the window superseding the door. 3. It was justifiable in its principle. An act of policy is right if principle is not sacrificed. 4. It was complete in its success. "And I escaped his hands." The secret disappearance through the window was a momentary retreat which led to endless victories. Every man is immortal until his work is done. Peter delivered from prison. Lessons: 1. The value of a true worker for Christ. Paul. "Ye are the salt," &c. "Ye are the light," &c. 2. The world's ignorance of its best friends. It has invariably persecuted the truest philanthropists. 3. The dependence of the great upon inferiors. 4. The ultimate defeat of sin. 5. The over-ruling power of Divine Providence. (B. D. Johns.) *The Damascene Ethnarch; foiled designs*.—1. His name is unknown at present. Future researches may reveal it. His master, Aretas or Hareth, was Emir of Petra and father-in-law of Herod the Great. When the latter turned away from his lawful wife and took Herodias, Aretas, to avenge the insult, seized Damascus, and placed a strong man over the city and its garrison. Paul may have met this governor, and have spoken as plainly to him as afterwards to Felix. He certainly proclaimed the gospel with power, and put to confusion the Jews. They in their deadly malignity planned to get rid of him, and seem to have won the Ethnarch over to their plan. By the way, however, in which the account is given, we should infer that the commandant was himself the subject of an unreasoning prejudice. He had a fixed purpose, and in every way he sought to carry it into effect. He had the gateways carefully watched by day and night, and intended to make short work with the apostle. A bowstring or sword-slash should quench his fiery earnestness and cut short his heretical teachings. 2. Paul was evidently in great danger, and he knew it. He must remain in hiding as long as possible. This would be trying to a restless, energetic man like him. He must attempt something. He is like many at this day who are harassed and see no opening. Every avenue of escape from temptation seems closed on the one hand, or of usefulness on the other. We doubt not that Paul had recourse to God in prayer. He would act as well. The Christians also are anxious. One friendly to him has a suggestion to make. The window of his house is in the wall of defence and he can borrow a basket and a rope from a neighbour. Why should not the apostle escape thereby? Ah, the idea is a good one. Thanks many are expressed and when the night is dark the great apostle of the Gentiles crouches in the creaking basket, and is lowered down. Possibly, instead of a wicker basket, something more silent, a strong net-like basket of rope, one like those oftentimes slung over the camels with fuel or food, was found. 2. Paul can breathe now. The period of intense anxiety made a deep impression upon him, and he refers to it as one of the pivotal points in his life. The man who "kept the city" could not keep all in his power. There was a greater than himself whom he had not taken into account. I. GOD CAN ALWAYS FIND A WAY OF ESCAPE FOR HIS SERVANTS. He is never baffled, although we are constantly. His help comes in the most unexpected manner, and at the extremest point of our needs. Thus Peter found it when shut in prison and the gates were opened by the angel. Thus Daniel found it when God shut the lions' mouths. Thus Jeremiah found it when an Ethiopian eunuch was moved to draw him up out of the miry prison. Thus the Israelites found it when, the foe behind and the sea before, they cried unto God and received the command, "Go forward." And thus many of God's servants have found deliverance—Wyclif when John of Gaunt stood by him, Luther when the Elector Frederick shielded him. Thus God has His window and basket for men now who put their trust in Him—one that will just fit them. He knows where to find it and when to bring it out. Trust Him. An old basket and half-worn rope becomes the salvation of an apostle, and the Cross of shame and torture the sign of the redemption of the world. II. THE WAY OF GOD'S DELIVERANCES IS SOMETIMES HUMILIATING TO THE CARNAL NATURE. We can imagine that when Paul first looked at that basket he would shrink from creeping into it. Shall he who had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, he who was conscious of great ability to rule, have to submit to such humiliation? So it may seem repugnant to some to be saved simply by faith in a crucified Saviour.

We like not to be reduced to depend on another. We have no objection to admire Christ, to attach ourselves to Him as to a great leader, or as an inspiring example of self-sacrifice, but the Cross is still to some a stumbling-block. III. WHEN A SPIRIT ESCAPES FROM ITS SLAVERY TO EVIL HABITS WE CAN IMAGINE HOW THE ARCH-ENEMY OF SOULS WILL GNASH WITH ANGER. The Ethnarch was foiled. Herod was foiled when the wise men went not back to tell where the Christ was born. Pharisees were foiled when the officers they sent to take Christ came back and said, "Never man spake like this man." The forty men who bound themselves under an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul were foiled by the son of Paul's sister, who carried the report to the Roman officers; and the governor of Damascus would doubtless rage when his officers said that Paul had escaped and was preaching in another city. "Foiled, foiled by that Paul!" Thus will the evil one be foiled in respect to those who trust in the work of the Crucified One, and humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. Thus, too, will all the opposition of the world to the truth of God be foiled. Attempts to suppress God's truth will eventually only lead to louder praise and a more telling triumph. IV. WE CAN IMAGINE HOW GREAT WOULD BE THE APOSTLE'S GRATITUDE; and what will not be the depth of our thankfulness when we find we have been for ever delivered from temptation and sin! The God who foiled the Ethnarch and set Paul free can deliver us now and eternally. (*F. Hastings.*) *Humiliating deliverance* (text, and Acts ix. 24, 25):—This incident is mentioned by Paul in a curious manner. He appears to be about to give a history (ver. 30) of "the things that concern mine infirmities." The escape is thereupon narrated in a sharply detailed manner. And next he says, "It is not expedient for me doubtless (then) to glory." It was a ridiculous, humiliating circumstance; most men would have concealed it. Of such odd things the religion of Jesus can make splendid use. I. IT WAS AN INSTANCE OF PECULIAR DISCIPLINE. That there was something in Paul requiring to be thus dealt with we may be certain—an over-sensitiveness that might occasionally make him a trouble to himself and others; a deep-rooted feeling of personal dignity and Jewish pride. In such ways we get the "starch" taken out of us. Of the stiff but brittle Pharisee God was making a keen and flexible weapon. Many would have hesitated to avail themselves of such a means of escape. It tended to make the fugitive ridiculous. It might even be considered destructive of his authority and usefulness. Anything that stands in the way of God's service will He in like manner remove. II. IT WAS A TEST OF THE FAITH OF THE DISCIPLES. There are many who cannot receive the truth apart from extraneous and meretricious recommendation. Moral influence is with them inextricably bound up with personal position and external dignity, &c. It is surprising how very few are able to receive the truth for its own worth. Yet a humble exterior is no proof of real lowering. Splendour may cloak corruption and spiritual death. One might fancy the Damascene Christians exclaiming inwardly, "Where is the miracle, the sign?" So here Paul banters the Corinthians—I am a fool, "bear with me." With men God ever pursues this separative process, dissolving the temporal and accidental elements from the essential and eternal in His Word. III. IT WAS A SPECIMEN OF THE IRONY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE. In certain historical events one seems to detect such a mood. Especially in the more critical moments in the history of nations, churches, &c., does it betray itself. The means of checkmating the moves of the adversary of souls are reduced to a minimum—a ridiculous, preposterous circumstance, but it is sufficient. And when one compares, as he cannot but do, the huge preparations and complex machinery of Satan, with the simplicity and external meanness of the Divine instrumentality, the power and wisdom of God stand forth the more sheer and absolute. Because we feel the battle stern and long and difficult we find it hard to conceive of it being otherwise with God and higher intelligences. But there are traces of contempt for Satan in the Bible. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Paul in a basket*:—Observe—I. ON WHAT A SMALL TENURE GREAT RESULTS HANG. The ropemaker had no idea how much depended on the strength of his workmanship. How if that rope had broken and the apostolic life had been dashed out? On that one rope how much depended! So it has been ever and again. What ship of many thousand tons ever had so important a personage as once was in a small boat of papyrus on the Nile? How if some crocodile had crunched it? The parsonage at Epworth took fire, and seven of the children were safe, but the eighth was in the consuming building. How much depended on that ladder of peasant shoulders ask the millions of Methodists on both sides the sea, ask the hundreds of thousands of people who have already joined their founder. An English vessel put in at Pitcairn

Island, and found right amid the surroundings of cannibalism and squalor a Christian colony with schools and churches. Where did it come from? Missionaries had never landed there. Sixty years before a vessel on the sea was in disaster, and a sailor, finding that he could save nothing else, went to a trunk and took out the Bible which his mother gave him, and swam ashore with the book between his teeth. That book was read and re-read until the heathen were evangelised. There are no insignificances in our lives. The minutia make up the magnitude. If you make a rope make it stout, for you do not know how much may depend upon your workmanship. II. UNRECOGNISED SERVICE. Who are those people holding that rope? Who tied it to the basket? Who steadied the apostle as he stepped in? Their names have not come to us, and yet the work they did eclipses all that was done that day in Damascus and the round world over. Are there not unrecognised influences at work in your life? Is there not a cord reaching from some American, Scottish, or Irish, or English home, some cord of influence that has held you right when you would have gone astray, or pulled you back when you had made a crooked track? It may be a rope thirty years long, three thousand miles long, and the hands may have gone out of mortal sight; but they held the rope! One of the glad excitements of heaven will be to hunt up those people who did good work on earth but never got any credit for it. If others do not make us acquainted with them God will take us through. Come, let us go around and look at the circuit of brilliant thrones. Why, those people must have done something very wonderful on earth. "Who art thou, mighty one of heaven?" Answer: "I was by choice the unmarried daughter that stayed at home to take care of father and mother in their old days." "Is that all?" "That is all." Pass along. "Who art thou?" "I was for thirty years an invalid. I wrote letters of condolence to those whom I thought were worse off than I. I sometimes was well enough to make a garment for the poor family on the back lane." "Is that all?" "That is all." Pass further along. "Who art thou?" "I was a mother who brought up a large family of children for God. Some of them are Christian mechanics, some are Christian merchants, some are Christian wives." "Is that all?" "That is all." Pass along a little further. "Who art thou?" "I had a Sabbath school class on earth, and I had them on my heart until they all came into the kingdom of God, and now I am waiting for them." "Is that all?" "That is all." Pass a little further along the circuit of thrones. "Who art thou, mighty one of heaven?" "In time of bitter persecution I owned a house in Damascus, and the balcony reached over the wall, and a minister who preached Christ was pursued, and I hid him away from the assassins, and when I could no more seclude him I told him to fly for his life, and in a basket this maltreated one was let down over the wall, and I was one who helped hold the rope." III. HENCEFORTH CONSIDER NOTHING UNIMPORTANT THAT YOU ARE CALLED TO DO, IF IT BE ONLY TO HOLD A ROPE. A Cunard steamer had splendid equipment, but in putting up a stove in the pilot house a nail was driven too near the compass. The ship's officer, deceived by that distracted compass, put the ship two hundred miles off the right course. One night the man on the look-out shouted, "Land, ho!" within a few rods of demolition on Nantucket shoals. A sixpenny nail came near wrecking a Cunarder. Small ropes hold great destinies. In 1871 a minister in Boston sat by his table writing. He could not get the right word, and he put his hands behind his head and tilted back the chair, trying to recall that word, when the ceiling fell and crushed the desk over which a moment before he had been leaning. A missionary in Jamaica was kept by the light of an insect called a candle fly from stepping off a precipice a hundred feet. F. W. Robertson declared that he was brought into the ministry through a train of circumstances started by the barking of a dog. If the wind had blown one way the Spanish Inquisition would have been established in England. Nothing unimportant in your life or mine. Place six noughts on the right side of the figure "1," and you have a million. Place our nothingness on the right side, and you have augmentation illimitable; but be sure you are on the right side. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XII.

VERS. 1-10. It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory.—*On Paul being caught up to the third heaven*:—In the words of the apostle, in his Epistle to the Colossians, I call upon you, “If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.” “Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.” Yes, to such an exercise of the affections we have constant need to exhort one another. Perhaps we know too little of the glorious things above in order to love them heartily. First, let us consider the event itself; secondly, what the apostle saw in heaven. 1. Who is the man that speaks to us in our text? The more remarkable the things are which any one relates, the more important it is to know who our informant is, whether he deserves credit. Now, you are aware that the speaker on this occasion is no fanciful enthusiast, no mere sentimentalist. He is a man who in numerous passages of his Epistles zealously opposed religious delusions and a false spirituality, and strove to fix both himself and the Church on the written, firm, prophetic Word, and not on feelings, visions, and ecstasies. Indeed, we may say of him that a calm reflective understanding predominated in him more than in any other of the apostles. He was also a man of learning. It cannot be imagined for one moment that vainglory and self-exaltation prompted him to give the narrative contained in our text. Oh! in what a light do we, imperfect Christians, appear when placed by the side of this great apostle! We who are used to experience only some slight measure of answer to prayer and of spiritual elevation. Only think! for fourteen years he kept this matter to himself! How does this impress on it the stamp of truth! Let us now consider the statements of the apostle. He begins with saying, “It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory.” Do not imagine (he means to say) that I wish to utter this for my own glory. “I knew a man in Christ,” he goes on to say. Paul speaks of himself as of a third person. In looking back on a period of life long since passed, a person feels as if he was contemplating another and not himself. At such a distance a person judges of himself with more freedom, impartiality, and truth. Paul calls himself “a man in Christ.” He enjoyed the great privilege to lose sight of his own personality, and only to view himself in the attire of his Surety. He had a special reason for calling himself on this occasion “a man in Christ.” He wishes in doing so to meet the question how it came to pass that he was so highly honoured; it was because he was a man in Christ that before him the gates of paradise must fly open. He says, “I was caught up”; according to the word used in the original, I was forcibly carried away. He was caught up from the earth. But whither? To some blessed star, from whence, as Moses viewed the promised land, so he might view the land of glory glimmering in the distance? Oh no, his flight went further. He was in the very heart of this land. How often in the dark seasons of his life had he looked with sighs to this distant region! How often had he thought that he would willingly resign everything on earth that only a fleeting glance might be allowed him through the impenetrable veil which covers that land of immortal beauty! There he stood. The tumult of the world was hushed around him. Oh what a life in those serene fields of light and love! In those palmy groves of everlasting peace what forms, what visions, what tones of praise! 2. Was Paul then literally in heaven? Is there, in fact, a world of blessedness behind the clouds? Truly I think that Paul was not the first to inform us of that. He says, “He was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” And his meaning appears to be simply this: what he had heard and seen during this visit to the other world was of such a peculiar kind that it was absolutely impossible to express it in human language. Oh yes, the apostle might have been cordially willing to have painted before our eyes an image of that blessed world, but whence could he take the colours for the painting? Would he have taken something from the light of the sun, from the blooming meadows of our earthly spring, from the groves and solemn stillness of our summer mornings? Alas! he would only have dipped his pencil in poor dull shades. All this the apostle felt, and he preferred being silent. He might have been willing to describe to us how the saints appeared. Oh, gladly would he have told us in what glory his Lord and Saviour there appeared to him. But what could he say? But there is still another circumstance which perhaps gives us a greater idea of the glory of what Paul heard and felt in the third heaven

than even his silence—I mean the ardent longing of the apostle to return again to the blessedness that he had once enjoyed. But his wishes could not be taken into consideration. He was obliged to return to this dark earth and to the toilsome path of his apostleship. But after his return his renunciation of the world and its lusts was rendered complete. His conversation is henceforth in heaven. Paul knew that he could return to the blessedness he had beheld by no other path than death. Well, be it so, no hour was more longed for by him than that. What the apostle saw on this occasion we certainly cannot see in the same way, but we may still behold it in the mirror of an unimpeachable testimony. (*F. W. Krummacher.*)

I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.—*Paul's vision*:—How did St. Paul come to speak of himself under the personality of another? 1. Natural diffidence. For the more refined a man is the more he will avoid direct mention of himself. All along he has been forced to speak of self. Fact after fact was wrung out. 2. St. Paul speaks of a divided experience of two selves: one Paul in the third heaven, enjoying the beatific vision; another on earth, buffeted by Satan. The former he chose rather to regard as the Paul that was to be. He dwelt on the latter as the actual Paul, lest he should mistake himself in the midst of the heavenly revelations. Such a double nature is in us all. In all there is an Adam and a Christ—an ideal and a real. Witness the strange discrepancy often between the writings of the poet or the sermons of the preacher and their actual lives. And yet in this there is no necessary hypocrisy, for the one represents the man's aspiration, the other his attainment. But the apostle felt that it was dangerous to be satisfied with mere aspirations and fine sayings, and therefore he chose to take the lowest—the actual self—treating the highest as, for the time, another man (ver. 5). Were the caterpillar to feel within himself the wings that are to be, and be haunted with instinctive forebodings of the time when he shall hover about flowers and meadows, yet the wisdom of that caterpillar would be to remember his present business on the leaf, lest, losing himself in dreams, he should never become a winged insect at all.

I. THE TIME WHEN THIS VISION TOOK PLACE. The date is vague—"about fourteen years ago." Some have identified it with that recorded (Acts ix.) at his conversion. But—1. The words in that transaction were not "unlawful to utter." They are three times recorded. 2. There was no doubt as to St. Paul's own locality in that vision. So far from being exalted, he was stricken to the ground. 3. The vision was of an humbling character: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

II. PAUL HAD KNOWN MANY SUCH VISIONS (ver. 7). 1. This marks out the man. Indeed, to comprehend the visions we must comprehend the man. For God does not reveal His mysteries to men of selfish or hard or phlegmatic temperaments, but to those of spiritual sensitiveness. There are physically certain sensitivenesses to sound and colour that qualify men to become gifted musicians and painters—so spiritually there are certain susceptibilities, and on these God bestows strange gifts, sights, and feelings not to be uttered in human language. The Jewish temperament—its fervour, moral sense, veneration, indomitable will, adapted it to be the organ of revelation. 2. Now all this was, in its fulness, in St. Paul. A heart, a brain, and a soul of fire; all his life a suppressed volcano; his acts "living things with hands and feet," his words "half battles." A man, consequently, of terrible inward conflicts (read Rom. vii.). You will find there no dull metaphysics; all is intensely personal. So, too, in Acts xvi. He had no abstract perception of Macedonia's need of the gospel. To his soul a man of Macedonia cries, "Come over and help us." Again (Acts xviii.), a message came in a vision. St. Paul's life was with God, his very dreams were of God. He saw a Form which others did not see, and heard a Voice which others could not hear (Acts xxvii. 23). 3. But such things are seen and heard under certain conditions. Many of St. Paul's visions were when he was—(1) "Fasting." "Fulness of bread" and abundance of idleness are not the conditions in which we can see the things of God. (2) In the midst of trial. In the prison, during the shipwreck, while "the thorn was in his flesh." 4. This was the experience of Christ Himself. God does not lavish His choicest gifts, but reserves them. 5. Yet though inspiration is granted in its fulness only to rare, choice spirits, in degree it belongs to all Christians. There have been moments, surely, in our experience, when the vision of God was clear. They were not moments of fulness or success. In some season of desertion you have in solitary longing seen the sky-ladder as Jacob saw it, or in childish purity—for "Heaven lies around us in our infancy"—heard a voice as Samuel did; or in feebleness of health, when the weight of the bodily frame was taken off, Faith brightened her eagle eye, and saw far into the tranquil things of

death; or in prayer you have been conscious of a Hand in yours, and a Voice, and you could almost feel the Eternal Breath upon your brow. III. THE THINGS SEEN ARE UNUTTERABLE. 1. They are "unspeakable" because they are untranslatable into language. The fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, &c.—how can these be explained in words? Our feelings, convictions, aspirations, devotions, what sentences of earth can express them? In Rev. iv. John in high symbolic language attempts, but inadequately, to shadow forth the glory which his spirit realised, but which his sense saw not. For heaven is not scenery, nor anything appreciable by ear or eye; heaven is God felt. 2. They are "not lawful for a man to utter." Christian modesty forbids. There are transfiguration moments, bridal hours of the soul, and not easily forgiven are those who would utter the secrets of its high intercourse with its Lord. You cannot discuss such subjects without vulgarising them. God dwells in the thick darkness. Silence knows more of Him than speech. His name is secret, therefore beware how you profane His stillness. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. To each of His servants He giveth "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it." (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *St. Paul's rapture and thorn in the flesh*:—Paul probably refers to the "trance," or vision, of Acts xxii. I. SOME EXPLANATION OF THIS REMARKABLE PASSAGE. 1. The nature of the vision. It was in a state in which the mental faculties, apart from the senses, are so engrossed by certain objects as to render the mind incapable of attending to any other. Such raptures were one of the ancient modes of inspiration. God spake to Moses, David, and the prophets in visions, and their return in the days of the apostles served to evince the identity of the two dispensations in their origin and authority. 2. The special communications made in this vision. If the "third heaven" is the place where God immediately resides, we are sure that "paradise" is the same, from the promise to the penitent malefactor. There Paul "heard unspeakable words," &c. Doubtless the inhabitants of heaven conceive of objects in a manner as superior to our modes of conception as are the objects themselves to those of earth. How, then, could they communicate their conceptions to beings of our limited and dull faculties! In like manner the apostle on his return to his former state would find an insurmountable impediment to the communications of what he had seen and heard. But though not to be described in the language of sense, it would appear from the effect left on his mind that the revelation was of the most exhilarating nature; a tone had been given to his character, and a new and seraphic passion had been kindled in his soul. He felt for ever afterwards as a man to whom heaven was not altogether future. 3. The affliction with which he was immediately visited. II. THE GENERAL INSTRUCTION WHICH IT FURNISHES. Note—1. The wisdom and goodness of God in those severe afflictions with which even eminent saints may be visited. 2. The Divine nature of Christ, and His immediate presidency over the affairs of the whole Church. This Divine Saviour is particularly employed about the mission of His servants, their qualifications for office, their trials, supports, and deliverance. Hence the propriety of direct address to Him in critical circumstances, while, in the ordinary course of affairs, the ultimate object of address is the Almighty Father. 3. The existence of paradise and a third heaven as the receptacle of the souls of believers. What ground, then, for the notion of a sleepy condition of the soul after death? (*J. Leifchild, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. I knew a man in Christ.—Seven blessings of being "in Christ":—I. DELIVERANCE FROM THE DEADLY CURSE WHICH SIN ENTAILS (Rom. viii. 1). In Noah's ark there was no deluge; in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation. II. EVERLASTING LIFE. Of this Christ is the single source. Paul addresses the Church at Rome as "alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Master said, "Because I live ye shall live also." "It is not I," said Paul, "but Christ that liveth in me." If the nurseryman inserts the graft of a golden pippin into an apple tree, that graft might say truly, It is not I that live, but the whole tree liveth in me. So Divine a thing is this life that it is described as—III. A NEW CREATION. This word "new" signifies also what is fresh, and unimpaired, and unworn, like a bright garment from its maker's hand. How imperative is it that we keep this unspotted by the world! Not for ornament merely is it given, but for use. IV. ACCEPTANCE IN THE BELOVED. If we are received into favour, it is solely for Christ's sake. V. PEACE (Phil. iv. 7). VI. FULNESS OF SPIRITUAL SUPPLY (Col. ii. 10). "Ye are filled full in Christ." Why need I hunger when in my father's house and in my Saviour's

heart are such wealth beyond a whole universe to drain? VII. TRIUMPH. "Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ!" This is the believer's battle-cry and pæan of victory. Jesus gives the victory, and will bring us off more than conquerors. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be.—*Visible character, not private vision, the Christian mark* :—That we may reach the apostle's meaning here it is needful to look at what he writes immediately before our text. The favour which certain false teachers had met with in the Church at Corinth had compelled Paul, out of regard for the safety of the believers there, to remind them, by direct assertion, of his own superior claim. Such self-assertion was not agreeable to his own feelings. Yet his was not the self-assertion of vainglory. First and last he gives God the praise. He rejoices not, nor glories, in his strength, but in his infirmities; for it is through his human infirmities that Divine grace and power become more clearly manifest. These very weaknesses are turned to highest account. As a ground of glorying and of claim to their regard, he might urge the "visions and revelations of the Lord" with which he had been favoured, but he forbears. Meantime, we must note the fact of these visions and revelations. They point to intimate spiritual communications—openings, so to speak, into the higher sphere of God's thought and presence, so bright as to cast into the shade, for the time being, all consciousness connected with the lower sphere of bodily existence. Any philosophy, or way of conceiving of things, which throws doubt on the spiritual contact of God with man, is fatal to spiritual life and growth. For such a way of thinking involves a partial dethronement of the universal God. Never in any age of the world does He shut Himself off from contact with His children. In dealing with claims to spiritual enlightenment and influence, it behoves us to consider them cautiously. And even when we feel sure of them it becomes us to be modest in the assertion thereof. If others assert such claims on their own behalf, we are in nowise bound either to admit or deny them. No man is authorised to demand from others respect for such claims except in so far as he can support them by outward evidence. It becomes us, then, to forbear as the Apostle Paul did. "Visions and revelations from the Lord" we may have—rapt and ecstatic states of mind—sweet and strengthening hours of devout meditation and prayer; but of these it becomes us not to speak in the way of mere assertion as ground of boasting or superiority. From whatever point we approach the matter we find that the last test of true religion is to be found in its manifestation in character and life. "By their fruits ye shall know them," said Jesus. This is the Christian mark. All divinely inspired prophets and apostles speak in the same strain. If the word revealed within is as the candle of the Lord shining there, lighting up truth, justice, and love clearly to our apprehension, it must be borne in mind that such a light has not been given for private and selfish use. If this be forgotten, the light within becomes darkness. The ambition which seeks the regard of others beyond that which its actual merits justify is the sure token of spiritual poverty and vanity. "I forbear," says the great apostle, "lest any man should think of me above which he seeth me to be." And so let every man forbear from boastful reference to his superior illumination and cherish that wholesome fear that he should be judged worthy beyond the measure which his actual life testifies. For to this end was such vision given—that its light should shine by its good works, and God our heavenly Father be glorified in the lives of His faithful children. (*John Cordner.*)

Vers. 7-11. **And lest I should be exalted above measure . . . there was given me a thorn in the flesh.**—*St. Paul's thorn in the flesh* :—1. THESE VERSES TREAT OF CHRISTIAN TRIALS UNDER THE FIGURE OF A THORN IN THE FLESH. We should inquire not what the thorn was, but why it was sent. Some trials are evidently not of the nature of a thorn. 1. A thorn is a small, invisible cause of suffering; some secret trouble. 2. St. Paul's thorn was something evil, for he calls it a messenger of Satan. Pain can be blessed to us, but it is not in itself a blessed thing. Now the Bible calls these things evils, to be got rid of if possible. God does not command St. Paul to think the throb of his thorn enjoyable. 3. A thorn causes unvarying, incessant pain: to forget it is impossible. It seems perversely to come in contact with every obstacle. And some sorrows are for ever smarting; some blot on our birth, or some domestic incongruity which the man may forget at his labour; but the time comes when he must go home, and there is the thorn awaiting him. II. THE SPIRITUAL USES OF THIS EXPERIENCE. 1. To make us humble. "Lest I should be exalted above measure." It is strange that pride is felt for those things over

which we have the least control, and to which we have the least right. In the school the vain boy is not he who has amassed knowledge by hard toil, but he whose genius is often made an excuse for idleness. Hereditary rank, over which we have no control, and which demands that we should be more noble than other men, is often the cause of pride. He is not usually proud of wealth who has toiled for it, but rather he who has won it by a lucky speculation. The real hard worker is seldom proud; he has known so much of his ignorance, his weakness, in the hard work of acquiring. So in things spiritual. The proud man is he who dreams and lives in the third heaven, and is too grand to have to do with this low earth, and who substitutes his frames and fine feelings for good works. Now to bring all this down God sends thorns. Bitter penury will guard a man from extravagance; and great reverses from reckless speculation will often bring to experience the meanness of debt. There is no better humiliator than constant physical pain. By the constitution of our planet there are peculiar trials to our physical frame; in the temperate zone, biting frosts and cold; in the warmer climate, the serpent and the constant fever; everywhere there is the thorn in the flesh. 2. To teach us spiritual dependence. Liberty is one thing—*independence* another; a man is free, politically, whose rightful energies are not cramped by the selfish, unjust claims of another. A man is independent, politically, when he is free from every tie that binds man to man. One is national blessedness, the other is national anarchy. Liberty makes you loyal to the grand law, "I ought"; independence subjects you to the evil law, "I will." So also religious freedom emancipates a man from every hindrance which prevents his right action. Every Christian ought to be a free man, but no Christian is or ought to be independent. "Look not every man on his own things, but on the things of others." "Bear ye one another's burdens." "All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient," &c. Is that independence? There is no independence on earth; we are all dependent on the breath of God. Trial soon forces us to feel this. As well might the clouds that surround the setting sun, tinged with gold and vermilion, boast that they shine by their own light. So when we know ourselves aright we shall feel that we are strengthless and must depend entirely on His all-sufficient grace. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *The thorn in the flesh.*—I. THE APOSTLE'S TRIAL. "There was given to me," says he, "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." 1. Observe, he traces the dispensation to its appointment, "There was given to me." Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." "I was dumb," says David, "and opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it." "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." 2. Observe further, that although St. Paul looks upon his trial as proceeding from God, he still denominates it the messenger of Satan. Does this appear strange? The bitter draught was only administered by Satan; it was prescribed by God. God appointed the evil, and Satan, by His permission, inflicted it. This is all that the devil can do. II. But let us inquire into the DESIGN OF THE APOSTLE'S AFFLICTION. As our heavenly Father gives every trial, so He has some object in view in giving them. "He doth not," says the prophet Jeremiah, "afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." The Physician frequently, however, sends trials not to heal our spiritual maladies but to prevent them. "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me; Thou understandest my thoughts afar off." God does not, therefore, require that sin should manifest itself in the outward conduct in order to attract His notice; He beholds its secret risings in the heart; and often before the storm arises He drives us to a place of refuge. III. THE APOSTLE'S CONDUCT UNDER HIS TRIAL. He did not give way to fretfulness or become sullen and dejected; he did not begin to quarrel with God, to charge Him foolishly, to murmur at His dealings, or to insinuate that the same end might have been attained by less severe means. Three things are deserving of notice in this prayer of the apostle. 1. The subject of it. He prayed that his affliction might be removed. To be patient and submissive under afflictive dispensations is plainly a Christian duty. But prayer for the removal of our trials is not inconsistent with submission under them. 2. And observe how he prayed—(1) Earnestly. "I besought the Lord." His was not a cold and lifeless prayer, the prayer of the formalist who is indifferent about its success. (2) Perseveringly. He besought the Lord thrice. He humbly resolved, like Jacob, to wrestle till he prevailed. He continued to knock till the door was opened. 3. Observe, further, to whom the apostle prayed. It was to Jesus Christ. This is evident, for St. Paul distinctly regards the answer as having come from the Saviour: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." And to whom should we fly in the hour of trial but to the

same almighty Saviour, who "took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses"? He can enter into all the trials of His people. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." IV. The next point for our consideration is, THE ANSWER RECEIVED BY THE APOSTLE. "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." As our prayers are not always answered when we expect, so neither are they at all times answered in the way that we look for. Was it not the same thing to him whether his burden were removed or whether strength were given to sustain him under it? Nay, was it not infinitely better for him that the gold should remain in the furnace since it was promised that the fire should not destroy or injure but only refine it? V. Notice in the last place HIS PIOUS RESOLUTION: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Earnestly as he had before desired the removal of his trial he desires it no longer. (*W. Cardall, B.A.*)

The "thorn in the flesh," or soul schooling:—These words teach us—I. THAT THE EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE IS EXPEDIENT FOR THE BEST OF MEN. Paul required it. "Lest I should be exalted," &c. 1. Pride is a great spiritual evil. (1) Most inimical to soul-progress. "Pride goeth before destruction," &c. (2) Most offensive to God. "He resisteth the proud," &c. 2. Good men have sometimes great temptations to pride. II. THAT THE MODE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE IS SOMETIMES VERY PAINFUL. Paul was visited with a "thorn in the flesh." What the thorn was is a question for speculation; the idea is plain. Note—1. That suffering stands connected with Satan. The great original sinner is the father of suffering. 2. That both suffering and Satan are under the direction of God. He makes them subserve the discipline of His people, the good of the universe, and the glory of His name. III. THAT THE MEANS OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE ARE SOMETIMES MISUNDERSTOOD. Paul prays to be delivered from that which was sent for his good. Note—1. The ignorance which sometimes marks our prayers. We often, it is to be feared, pray against our own interests like a patient seeking the removal of a medicine which alone could restore him. Do you pray for the recovery of a child? Should that child grow up to manhood he might perhaps break your heart; spread vice and misery through the entire circle of his life. There are some blessings which are positively promised by God, such as pardon, &c., for which we may pray not only "thrice," but incessantly; and there are others which we may esteem desirable, but which are not promised. These we must seek in submission to His will. 2. The kindness of God in not always answering our prayers. He knows what is best. He deals with us as a wise and merciful Father. IV. THAT THE SUPPORTS UNDER SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE ARE ABUNDANT. "My grace is sufficient for thee," &c. Observe—1. The nature of this support. What matters the weight of the burden if the "strength" is equal to bear it with ease! "As thy day so shall thy strength be." 2. The principle of the support—"Grace." It comes not from merit. 3. The influence of this support. "Most gladly therefore," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

The thorn in the flesh:—I. DISCIPLINE (ver. 7). 1. It was painful in its nature. 2. It was Satanic in its agency—"The messenger of Satan sent to buffet me." The devil has been the opponent of the good in all ages. Adam. David. Peter. Good out of evil. 3. It was counteracting in its influence—"Lest I should be exalted above measure." Counteraction a great principle in the economy of God. In the moral realm—"goodness and severity" of God. Man is prone to the excesses of despair and pride. Paul's old sin was self. The "besetting sin" before conversion threatens to reassume its old power after conversion. The balloon requires the weight of sandbags. Paul learnt the lesson of humility. He speaks of himself as one "not worthy to be called an apostle"; "less than the least of all saints"; "the chief of sinners." "Only two safe places for the believer," says an old preacher, "the dust and heaven, and of the two, the dust is the safer; for the angels fell from heaven, but no one was ever known to fall from the dust." One way from the valley of humility—upward, and that ends in eternal honour. II. PRAYER (ver. 8). 1. The prayer was Divine in its object—"the Lord." Throne of grace the best resort in trouble. Men are foolish to attempt to carry their own burdens. 2. The prayer was earnest in its spirit—"I besought the Lord thrice." 3. It was ignorant in its request—"That it might depart from me." The "thorn" was not pleasant, but it was profitable. Trials are blessings in disguise. Zigzag is often better than straight—though not so easy. Trials bring triumph, and losses gain. A forest in Germany was consumed by fire, but underneath a precious vein of silver was discovered. III. SUPPORT (ver. 9). 1. Its nature—"My strength."

Conscious weakness is God's instrumentality. Thus there is not the shadow of a doubt who the real worker is. God, not man, to have the glory. "Moses' rod" used to divide the Red Sea. A cannon in itself is a lifeless piece of iron; but when loaded with ball and powder and the spark applied, the ball becomes a thunderbolt, and the powder a flash of lightning, then the fortress comes crashing in ruins to the ground. 2. Its principle—"My grace." Trials of grace are supports of grace. 3. Its effect (ver. 10). "Rejoice in tribulation." Tunnel leads to the terminus. Why should we complain and despair? Let us remember the Master, whose brow was pierced with a crown of thorns. (*B. D. Johns.*) *St. Paul's thorn in the flesh*:—I. SIGNAL MANIFESTATIONS OF DIVINE FAVOUR ARE APT TO BEGET SPIRITUAL PRIDE. It was after he had been signally honoured that Human began to boast. In like manner, it was after Paul had witnessed the glory of heaven that he was in danger of being elevated "above measure." II. AFFLICTION IS INTENDED TO PREVENT AS WELL AS TO RECOVER—"Lest I should be," &c. The prophet Hosea, when speaking of the infatuated inclination of Israel to wander from the Lord, tells us that God determined to hedge her way with thorns, and make a wall about her, that she shall not find her paths. And in this is the goodness of God, as well as His severity, made manifest. III. GOD OVERRULES THE IMMEDIATE ACTIONS OF SATAN FOR HIS OWN GLORY AND GOOD OF HIS PEOPLE. Our text tells us of Satan casting out Satan. St. Paul was preserved from spiritual pride by a "messenger of Satan." IV. PRIDE IS AN OBJECT OF GOD'S UTTER AVERSION. (*J. F. S. Gordon, M.A.*) *Paul's thorn in the flesh*:—1. We have an apostle in danger. 2. We have Christ using means to protect His servant. 3. We have the wonderful effect of the means which Christ used. The danger was a real one. This thorn in the flesh was no needless pain. Given by God, it could never have come without necessity. It was a real spiritual danger which confronted St. Paul. But how? St. Paul tells us that the danger was lest he should be exalted above measure, lest his spiritual joy at the revelations should pass into spiritual pride. It is undoubtedly strange that revelations from God should expose His servants to such danger. Some say that it is impossible that it should be so; that spiritual light could never be a danger, or at least not in the case of such a man as St. Paul. St. Paul knew better; he knew that whatever lifts a man above his fellows is in danger of lifting him too far, exalting him above measure. The lesson here is that even God's best gifts may expose to danger. Illustrations of this may be seen every day in modern life, and the preacher cited the case of a man who had been God's instrument in the salvation of many souls whose own soul was damaged by it. He learned to boast of his power and fell, and died an awful death. St. Paul knew his peril, and, what is more, he acknowledged it. The means employed to protect St. Paul was a gift from God, though a messenger of Satan. We see that it came from God by reason of the aim for which it was sent. Here, then, we have the wary eye of the Great Shepherd on the watch for the good of His servant. This "thorn in the flesh" was an abiding pain. Three times had the apostle prayed for its removal. At the same time it was something which could be removed, or why the prayer? St. Paul obtains a completely new view of life. The one thorn has explained to him all forms of suffering, and now he takes pleasure in them. Though some of his afflictions came by bad men, he recognises them as a gift of God; and this thorn, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, is transformed into a minister of heaven. Many seem handicapped in their life-work by pain and suffering in themselves and others. Take the case of a young man whose sick mother seemed to be a burden to his every effort. In the light of the text we see that that sickness may be, instead of a burden, the very ballast the young man needs to ensure his safety. (*J. A. Beet, D.D.*) *The temptation of St. Paul*:—I. THE TEMPTATION OF PAUL. 1. This was probably some physical infirmity, and if it did not obstruct him in his ministerial labours, it rendered them difficult and distressing. He was like a workman whose hand was smarting from a festering wound, or like a traveller with a foot lacerated and lamed. And his affliction was aggravated by the advantage Satan took of it. The Lord put in the thorn, and for gracious purposes; but Satan endeavoured to defeat those purposes by turning the thorn into a temptation. And so Satan may make our afflictions as well as our blessings snares to us or poisons, instead of medicines and blessings. And the apostle represents it as striking and bruising him, and thus felt disgraced. 2. And how many of us can feelingly place ourselves in St. Paul's situation! We have had thorns in our flesh, shameful marks which the world has seen. Sometimes we are ready to say when suffering under any of these, "Were we really the

servants of Christ, it would not be thus with us," and a scoffing world may say the same; but here is one of the most beloved, honoured, of all the Lord's servants in the same situation as we. And the Bible and Church history show that it has been the lot of the holiest men. II. ITS DESIGN. "Lest I should be exalted." These words show us—1. That the Lord foresees any spiritual danger that is coming on us. 2. That the Lord often graciously guards against the danger He foresees. He sends us affliction sometimes, not to chasten us for having fallen into sin, or to recover us out of it, but to keep us out of it. 3. That the Lord sometimes keeps off evil from us by Satan's efforts to bring us into evil; He overrules temptation by temptation. We shall never know how much we are indebted to Satan till we are safe in heaven, and look back there on all the perilous way which has led us to it. 4. How offensive sin is in the sight of God! He will afflict the servant He loves, rather than allow him to fall into it. 5. What a load of suffering the mere tendency to pride within our souls may bring on us! 6. What danger we are all in of yielding to this hateful and tormenting sin. III. PAUL'S CONDUCT UNDER IT (ver. 8). One end why the Lord sends us temptation is to quicken us to prayer. When all is smooth the spirit of prayer too often declines. Here, too, is a practical carrying out of the truth on which this apostle is so often dwelling—the ability and willingness of Christ to sympathise with us when suffering and to help us. IV. THE RESULT. 1. A virtual denial of his request. Twice he prays—no answer comes. Here then was a death-blow to all Paul's hopes of relief. It was like telling him that he must carry his thorn down to the grave. But this is the way in which the Lord often answers His praying people. We know not what to pray for as we ought. We give way to sense and feeling. But though we may not know what to ask, the Lord well knows what to give. Hence He sifts our prayers before He answers them, sees whether they correspond with our necessities and His purposes. Instead of giving us relief He gives us strength; He leaves the burden on us heavy as ever, but He places His everlasting arm underneath us, and causes it so to bear us up, that we hardly feel our burden. 2. A complete change in the view he took of his affliction. Before he regarded it as an evil to be, if possible, got rid of; but now, observe, he has learnt to "glory" in it and "take pleasure" in it. "My infirmities bring glory to Christ, then let me keep them." (C. Bradley, M.A.) *The thorn in the flesh*:—Apply this to—I. TEMPORAL CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. If we examine closely the lot even of those who seem the most signally favoured of fortune, we shall perceive that their happiness is not full-orbed. Something is wanting. He is rich, but a stranger, it may be, shall inherit all that he has. He is famous in the world, but has no joy at his domestic hearth. A noble career opens to him, but health fails. Fortune seems to give everything, but yet in a strange irony withholds the one thing which would make all the rest to have any true value. This, of course, is still more observable with the many who are not so favoured; everywhere there is some good thing withheld or some sad thing added, some "thorn in the flesh." It is sometimes evident to all the world, in other cases only the sufferer himself knows. 2. How easy it is to grow impatient under a discipline such as this—at first to ask that it might be removed, and then if, as it seems, we are not heard, to fret and murmur. Very often a man is the more irritated because there is nothing romantic or heroic about it. Alas! we do not know that such messengers as these to humble us are a most important part of the discipline of our lives. It takes very little to puff up these vain hearts of ours. The "thorn in the flesh," that is the appointed means to keep us low. II. SPIRITUAL LIFE. There is perhaps nothing which so much disappoints the young and earnest Christian as the slow progress which he makes in holiness, and his exposure to temptations of the lowest, the meanest kind. He had hoped that he was to travel on from one height of Christian attainment to another without hindrance. He, too, having been in his third heaven, counts that he shall never come down from it, or at any rate does not expect that henceforth he shall be liable to the everyday vulgar temptations which he sees to be besetting so many round him. Soon, however, he learns his mistake. God has provided some better thing, not release from temptation, but victory in and over temptation. (Abp. Trench.) *The thorn in the flesh*:—Many desire to gaze on the secret lives of eminent personages. For once we are able to gratify curiosity, and yet minister to edification. We are plainly taught how mistaken we are when we set eminent saints upon a platform by themselves, as though they were a class of superhuman beings. Paul enjoyed more revelations than we have, but then he had a corresponding thorn in the flesh. He was a good man, but he was only a man. Note—I. A DANGER TO

which the apostle was exposed—"Lest I should be exalted above measure." 1. It was natural that he should stand in danger of this. When God lifts us up we may lift up ourselves, and then we fall into serious mischief. How many among us could bear to receive such revelations as Paul had? Now, if Paul was in this danger, so holy, humble, wise, and experienced; if so massive a pillar trembles, what peril surrounds poor reeds shaken of the wind! Observe that in Paul's case the temptation was not one which operates in the common, coarse way. It was that he should say within his own soul, "I have seen as others have not. I am the favourite of heaven." 2. Now, although in Paul's particular form of it, this temptation may not be common, yet in some shape it waylays the best of Christians. (1) Every man loves the commendation of his fellow-men. It is vain for us to boast of not caring about it; we do care about it, and our duty is to keep that propensity in check. (2) There are some men in whom self-consciousness is so strong, that it will come up in the form of being very easily annoyed because they are overlooked, or in being easily irritated because they fancy that somebody is opposing them. (3) Others who, because they have more real spiritual knowledge, and a deeper inward experience when they hear the prattle of young beginners, or the blunders of saints, cannot help saying to themselves, "Thank God, I do know better than that." They have probably also been successful in sacred work, a legitimate source of rejoicing, but a temptation to boastfulness. Among the flowers of gratitude will grow the hemlock of pride. 3. None of the things we have spoken of are justifiable grounds for boasting. What if a believer should have received more Divine illuminations than his fellow? Did not the Lord give them to him? There are two beggars in the street; I give one a shilling and the other a penny; shall the man who obtains the shilling be proud, and glory over his companion? Generally the loudest boasting is excited by accidental circumstances. 4. It is dangerous for a Christian to be exalted above measure, for if he be—(1) He will rob God of His glory, and this is a high crime and misdemeanour. (2) It is equally evil to the Church. Had Paul been lifted up he would have become the leader of a sect; the rival rather than the servant of Jesus. (3) It would have been bad for ungodly sinners, for proud preachers win not men's hearts. He who is exalted in himself will never exalt the Saviour. (4) It would have been worst of all for the apostle himself, for pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. II. THE PREVENTATIVE. 1. Note every word here. (1) "There was given to me." He reckoned his great trial to be a gift. You have not one single article that is a better token of Divine love to you than your daily cross. (2) "A thorn." A thorn is—(a) But a little thing, and indicates a painful but not a killing trial. (b) Yet it is almost a secret thing, not very apparent to any one but the sufferer. (c) A commonplace thing, such as might grow in any field and fall to any man's lot—nothing to make a man remarkable. (d) One of the most wretched intruders that can molest our foot or hand. Those pains which are despised because they are seldom fatal, are frequently the source of the most intense anguish—toothache, headache, earache, what greater miseries are known to mortals? (3) "In the flesh." The evil had an intimate connection with his body. Each expositor seems to have selected that particular thorn which had pierced his own bosom. The apostle did not tell us what it was, perhaps that we may every one feel that he had sympathy with us—that ours is no new grief. (4) "The messenger of Satan." Not Satan, but one of Satan's errand boys. An encounter with Satan might not have humbled him. It is a grand thing to fight Satan face to face and foot to foot; but to be beset by a mere lackey of hell, to be tormented by so mean an adversary, this was galling to the last degree, and therefore all the better for the purpose for which it was sent. (5) To buffet, *i.e.*, to cuff him. Not to fight with him with the sword; that is manly, soldierly work; but to buffet him as pedagogues box the ears of boys. 2. This preventative was well adapted to work out its design, for assuredly it would recall the apostle from ecstasies. He said once, "Whether in the body, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell"; but the thorn in the flesh settled that question. He had dreamed, perhaps, that he was growing very angelic, but now he feels intensely human. This made him feel that he was—(1) A weak man, for he had to do battle with base temptations that seemed not worth fighting with. (2) A man in danger, and needed to fly to God for refuge. 3. From all this I gather—(1) That the worst trial may be the best possession; that the messenger of Satan may be as good as a guardian angel. (2) That the worst and deepest experience may only be the needful complement of the highest and the noblest; it may be necessary that if we are lifted up we should be cast down. (3) That we must never envy other saints.

If we meet with a brother whom God blesses, let us not conclude that his pathway is all smooth. His roses have their thorns, his bees their stings. III. THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF THIS THORN UPON PAUL. 1. It drove him to his knees. Anything is a blessing which makes us pray. 2. In this way Paul was kept from being proud. The revelation now seemed forgotten. A man does not want to tell pretty stories when sharp pains are goading him. 3. Paul continued to pray, till at last he received for an answer, not the removal of the thorn, but the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee." God will always honour our prayers, and sometimes it is a golden answer to deny us our request, and give us the very opposite of what we seek. 4. The result was that the grace given him enabled him to bear the thorn, and to glory that he was permitted so to suffer. Wish not to change your estate. Your heavenly Father knoweth best. IV. THE PERMANENT RESULT. 1. It kept him humble always. Fourteen years rolled away, and the apostle never told anybody that he had been caught up into the third heaven. When he did tell it, it was dragged out of him. 2. It is no small matter when God sends a thorn in the flesh and it answers its end, for in some cases it does not. We have known some whom poverty has made envious, whom sickness has rendered petulant, whom personal infirmity has rendered rebellious against God. Let us labour against this, and if God has been pleased to put a fetter upon us in any shape, let us ask Him not to allow us to make this the occasion for fresh folly, but, on the contrary, to bear the rod and learn its lessons. Conclusion: 1. What a happy people God's people ought to be, when a curse becomes to them a blessing! If the thorn be a blessing, what must the blessing itself be? 2. What a sad thing it must be not to be a believer in Christ, because thorns we shall have if we are not in Christ, but those thorns will not be blessings to us. I understand drinking bitter medicine, if it is to make me well; but who would drink wormwood and gall with no good result to follow? 3. Remember that he who sent Paul thorns for his good once wore a thorn-crown Himself for the salvation of sinners; and if you will trust Him you shall be saved from the thorn of unforgiven sin, the fear of the wrath to come. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The thorn in the flesh*:—The attempt to determine the exact nature of Paul's trial is like the attempt to ascertain the species of the lily Christ alluded to in the Sermon on the Mount. Scientific determination of the plant may be interesting to the botanist, but the lesson of trust in Providence can be learnt equally well from the daisy or violet. So here, many of the ills that flesh is heir to, can effect the same moral discipline produced by Paul's special affliction, if borne in the same spirit. There are, however, two figures applied to it in this passage, which partially characterise it. It was "a thorn in the flesh." Not a crushing stroke, but a protracted trouble, that seemed like a thorn that had buried itself below the skin, and caused a constant sense of irritation. It is also termed "a messenger of Satan" sent to "buffet" him. This expression recognises the frequent connection there is between suffering and moral evil. What is of more importance than a knowledge of the specific nature of "the thorn," is that Paul felt it was designed to produce spiritual results in his character. That Paul was a man of high spirit we gather from several incidents in his history; we also know that he was a man of fine sensibilities, and the combination of these two qualities form a temperament very apt to run into pride. It was not excessive self-esteem of the ordinary sort that constituted his special danger, but self-esteem in its most dangerous form of spiritual pride; exaltation above measure on account of the abundance of the revelations. Religious ecstasy is a gift rather than an acquirement, and those whose temperament leads to it are liable to plume themselves on this account on a supposed superiority to their fellow-Christians. As he could soar, while others had to remain on the level, he might be tempted to underestimate them and to overestimate himself. Whenever such feelings arose, there was the sharp pang of the thorn to recall him to himself, and remind him that he shared the infirmities of humanity. For just such a purpose does God frequently send a permanent trial. An excessive valuation of self is brought down by repeated failures in life, which remind us how narrow are the limits of human power. It was not at first that Paul comprehended the real meaning of his thorn in the flesh. His first impulse was to get rid of it, and he prayed to the Lord for its removal. Christianity never teaches us to value pain for its own sake, never represents it as good in itself. That is the idea of Indian fakirs or mediæval monks. Don't press the thorn into the flesh; extract and throw it away if it is possible; but if all efforts are unavailing, then submit to it as to the will of God. (W. Bird.) *The thorn in the flesh*:—Note—I. PAUL'S DANGER. "Lest I should be exalted," &c.

He was in danger of being raised too high—1. For his usefulness as a minister. Paul had to do with poor mortals upon earth—what was the language of paradise to them? But when he spoke to them of thorns, and prayer, and sustaining grace, he was on their level. 2. For his present condition as a Christian. Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration exclaimed, "Master, it is good for us to be here," &c; but he "knew not what he said." What would have become of his wife and family? As the Saviour does not pray that His followers should be taken out of the world by death, so neither does He draw them out of it by religion. 3. As a favourite of Heaven. Christians are not like the Holy One of God. Owing to the sin that dwelleth in us, we are in danger from everything around us; and therefore must walk circumspectly, and watch and pray. II. HIS PRESERVATION. "There was given to me a thorn," &c. All creatures are in the Lord's hand, and under His control; He gave Joseph favour in the sight of the jailer; brought Elijah food by ravens; and sent Paul safety by Satan himself! Paul does not say, "Because I was exalted above measure," but "lest I should be." Affliction is designed to prevent as well as to recover. You were not vain and worldly—but God saw a train of circumstances which would flatter you into self-importance. He therefore determined to prevent the evil; and it is commonly said, Prevention is better than cure. III. HIS PRAYER. Prayer is the refuge of the afflicted, and cannot be offered in vain; its very exercise brings succour. How does your affliction operate? Does it lead you to quarrel with instruments, or to commit your cause unto God? A man under sanctified affliction will "continue instant in prayer." Thus Paul besought the Lord thrice. The prayer of faith is always heard, but not always immediately answered. The reason is not that God is wanting in kindness, but that He exercises His kindness wisely. We are like children; we wish to gather the fruit while it is yet unripe. But He pulls back our impatient hand. The time of delay is often peculiarly trying. But "he that believeth maketh not haste." IV. HIS ANSWER. 1. The answer does not apparently correspond with the petition. Paul prayed to have the thorn removed: to this God says nothing, but assures him of something unspeakably better. With regard to temporal things we cannot be too general in our prayers, or refer ourselves too much to the pleasure of God. For our prayers, like ourselves, are imperfect; nature sometimes speaks, without our being aware of it, in the tone of grace. Hence God sometimes denies a request entirely; at other times He separates the good from the evil, and grants us a part; while frequently He answers by way of exchange. If a child was to ask of a father a fish, and he should give him a serpent, we should be shocked. But suppose the child, by reason of his ignorance, should ask for a serpent instead of a fish; we should then admire the father if he refused what he asked and gave him what he did not ask. Our Heavenly Father always gives according to what we ought to ask. 2. The answer is yet blessed and glorious. "My grace is sufficient for thee!" Sufficient for what? Write all thy wants underneath. Sufficient for—(1) Thy work, which often discourages thee. "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." (2) Thy warfare, which often alarms thee. But "more are they that are for thee than they that are against thee." (3) Thy affliction, which often depresses thee. But "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee." It is sufficient—(a) To sanctify your afflictions. (b) To render them supportable; yea, to enable you to "glory in tribulation also." (*W. Jay.*) *The thorn in the flesh*:—This has been a thorn in the pulpit expositions of all the Christian ages. By carefully concealing it Paul has made all that want to be wise above what is written uneasy to find it out. But it cannot be of much use to us to know what it was, since the man who suffered from it did not care to tell us, and if we could know that it was a defect in his eyes, or his speech, or a pain in his head, or the want of a foot to his stature, that particular thorn would fasten us down to a particular experience, and we should lose the great general lesson. Note—I. THE THORN IN THE FLESH OF OUR COMMON HUMANITY. 1. We cannot fail to see it in the greatest and noblest lives. It may be a mean thing, like Byron's club-foot, or as great a thing as Dante's worship of Beatrice, or a great vice, like that which held Coleridge and De Quincey, or only like the dyspepsia that darkened the vision of Carlyle. In David it was a great sin; in Peter it was the memory of that morning, when he turned his back on the noblest friend that ever a man had; in Luther it was a blackness of darkness, defying both physicians and philosophy; in Wesley it was a home without love, and a wife insane with jealousy, with an old love that was never permitted to bloom. We need not be anxious about Paul's mystery; some of these things hurt him, and made the poor manhood of him quiver. I was talking with a gentleman who knows inti-

mately one of our greatest living Americans; and I said he must be one of the happiest of men. "There is that in his life," my friend said, "you do not see, and very few are aware of. I knew him a long time before I guessed it: it is a pain that he carries about with him like his shadow; not a bodily, but a mental pain, which he will carry with him to his grave." 2. And what the thorn is to these men in their great estate it may be to us in ours. (1) We feel the pain of personal defect, and very naturally, because the standard of physical beauty and perfection can no more be altered than the standard of geometry. We admire physical perfection. We notice and pity defects. To those who endure them they are a thorn in the flesh, bringing keen suffering and morbid brooding. I never blamed Byron for feeling as he did about his foot. The blame lay in his never summoning to the maimed part the strength that is made perfect in weakness. (2) Paul's thorn may have been a defect in his utterance. What a thorn it is to many that they can never adequately express their thought! "You will find him to be a great lumbering waggon, loaded with ingots of gold," Robert Hall said of John Foster in recommending him to a church, "and I hope you know gold when you see it, or else he will never do for you." They called him, and he failed, as he had failed elsewhere. (3) Nothing but Paul's saintliness has saved him from the guess that his thorn was some bad passion or appetite. Very sore is this pain, and very common. Children are sometimes born with appetites fatally strong. Old Dr. Mason used to say, as much grace as would make John a saint, would barely keep Peter from knocking a man down. I heard a man say once, that for eight-and-twenty years the soul within him had to stand, like an unsleeping sentinel, guarding his appetite for strong drink. II. WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT? We can make the best of it, or the worst of it. If I find myself, *e.g.*, in early life in the possession of a passion that is rapidly growing into a curse, I can submit to its dictate without a struggle, or I can stand up and fight it. There may be manliness where there is little grace. I can be so manly in bearing my burden that my silence shall be golden. "Did I break down? was I unmanned?" a great man said when the thorn in the flesh had hurt him so terribly that he lost his consciousness. He felt he must be a man even then. III. WHAT CAN COME OF THE THORN IF WE FIND OUT PAUL'S WAY OF DEALING WITH IT. He bore his trouble man fashion, as well as he could; but then found himself unable to win much of a victory. The pain was there still, and he felt as if he would have to give way at last, and go down. So, in the simple old fashion, he took the matter into the Supreme Court, and said, "I want this thorn removed; I can bear it no longer." But the Judge said, "No, it must stay. To take it away would be to destroy the grace to which it points. I will not take the bane, but I will give you another blessing." Lately, when I crossed Suspension Bridge, I got talking with a gentleman about the crystallisation of iron. We agreed that every train which crossed the bridge did something to disintegrate the iron particles and break the bridge down, and that if this process could go on long enough, there would be a last train, which would shoot right down into the gulf. But long before this could come to pass all these strands and cables would be made over again in the fire and under the hammer, and come out as strong and good as ever. To take them out and then let them lie at rest on the banks would be no sort of use. The iron-masters would say, "That would make the strands eternally unfit for their purpose; the hammer and fire can make them better and stronger than ever." Is not this also the law of life, that the fineness and strength essential to our best being, and to make us do our best work, come by the thorn in the flesh, which may act in us as the fire acts in the iron, welding the fibre afresh, and creating the whole anew (as the apostle would say) unto good works? (*R. Collyer, D.D.*) *Rejoicing at the misfortunes of others*:—We have all known people who had no greater enjoyment than to see an acquaintance taken down. The misfortune of a neighbour was a real blessing to these miserable creatures, and I have not the least doubt but that among people who knew St. Paul there would be a man here and there envious of the great apostle's gifts and usefulness, who would chuckle over the thorn in the flesh, who in his heart would rejoice at the suffering it caused the apostle. Yet who would not venture to express his secret exultation, but would go about saying, "Oh, that Saul of Tarsus needs it all. Very conceited man; do him a great deal of good. It will take him down; teach him sense; and he needs very much to be taught that!" Cannot you imagine how the envious, malicious, tattling gossips at Corinth would go about from house to house saying that kind of thing? Now, let none of us here give way to this wicked and contemptible fashion of thinking and talking (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*)

Lest I should be exalted above measure.—*Pride and its antidote*:—I. THE DANGER TO WHICH THE APOSTLE FELT HIMSELF EXPOSED, is that of being “exalted overmuch,” or lifted up by pride. In one aspect of the case it seems that of all mere men St. Paul was the least likely to “fall into this snare of the devil.” He was not accustomed to “boast of things without measure” (chap. x. 12, 13). “I have learned, in whatsoever estate I am, therewith to be content,” &c. (Phil. iv. 11–13). The life he lived, the suffering he bore, and the shame and reproach that were cast upon him, are not the things which generally cause men to be “puffed up.” But, in another aspect, it is easy to discover in the apostle a disposition to “think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” His spirit, though patient, serene, and humble, when under the influence of God’s grace, was naturally proud and ambitious. His training, too, had fostered this spirit. His educational attainments were in no way despicable. And further, if we think of the manner in which some churches received him—as “an angel from heaven”; the profound respect in which he was held by some of his fellow-Christians, so that “if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their very eyes, and given them to him”; his equality with the chiefest of the apostles, and his almost unparalleled success in preaching the gospel, we shall have little difficulty in conceiving how Paul would be liable to regard himself as superior to most men of his day. This danger arose not from either of the things we have already named, as likely to produce self-glory, but from the abundance of the revelations God had given to him. And is it not so with ourselves? Our greatest successes are our greatest temptations. Failure humbles us.

II. GOD’S DESIGN IN GIVING PAUL “A THORN IN THE FLESH” WAS TO TEACH HIM A LESSON OF HUMILITY. Humility is the antithesis of pride, and it is also its antidote. It is a grace of the gospel of the choicest quality, and its cultivation is obligatory on all Christians. And yet humility is so repugnant to human nature, is a virtue so difficult of practice, that it seldom occupies its proper place, even in the heart of renewed man. Hence God has to humble us oftentimes by some painful trial. (*T. Turner.*) *Affliction an antidote to temptation*:—I. THE DESIGN OF THE TEMPTATION. The design of this temptation was to subdue the risings of spiritual pride, to which the apostle, from his peculiar circumstances, was peculiarly liable. No one will understand me as saying that this was the design of the tempter. Respecting him, as of Sennacherib of old, it might be remarked, “Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off.” There is no recorded incident which conveys such a significant intimation of the utter depravity of the heart of man as the one under consideration. Here was a servant and apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ made a new creature in Christ Jesus, and living under the constant operation of the indwelling Spirit; yet with so much of remaining corruption, that an extraordinary measure of Divine favour would have provoked the pride and naughtiness of his heart but for the gracious provision made to counteract the danger. It teaches us that human nature, fallen nature, is the same under all circumstances. Subject it to what process you choose—put it into what alembic you may—translate it, if you will, in a chariot of fire into the third heaven—yet until that wondrous hour arrives, when we shall all be changed, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption, it will remain corrupt to the last. Let it not be supposed that it requires an equal amount of attainment and privilege to incur an equal liability to the suggestions of the evil one. Alas! which of us does not know that it needs no elevation into the third heaven to exalt us above measure? A little knowledge soon puffeth up. II. TO INVESTIGATE ITS NATURE. 1. A thorn; 2. The messenger of Satan; and—3. Designed and calculated to buffet the apostle’s spirit. In the text he characterises this temptation as “a messenger of Satan.” And here the remark seems extorted, How few there are who realise the active agency of the prince of the power of the air in the same sense and to the same extent as did Christ and His apostles—now sowing tares in the Church—now sifting the apostles—now entering into Judas—now assailing the Son of God Himself! But this is not the particular feature in his work of evil which the text suggests. He is represented as interfering (doubtless by suzerainty of the Most High) with the daily providences, and outward circumstances, and bodily condition of our life. III. What was his RESOURCE in this time of need? See wherein consists the real benefit of sanctified affliction. It sends you to your knees. IV. Let us now notice the ANSWER GIVEN TO THE APOSTLE’S PRAYER. V. Such was the apostle’s case, and HIS AFTER-ESTIMATE OF THE WHOLE DISPENSATION was to that effect. “Blessed thorn which occasions the power of Christ to rest upon me!” Infinite strength sheltering perfect weakness. How grand, how

comforting, how transporting the idea! God protecting a worm of the earth; nay, and strengthening it with might. Let me suggest this brief exhortation in conclusion. 1. Adore the gracious providence and consummate skill of the Most High in thus from seeming evil still educing good. Thus the Lord leads captivity captive, and Satan himself is in a manner transformed into an angel of light. 2. Lastly, learn to form a proper estimate of your afflictions, and to believe that, painful as it may be, the thorn which mortifies your pride, sends you to the throne of grace, and issues in praise, must be an unspeakable blessing. (*C. F. Childe, M.A.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **For this thing I besought the Lord thrice.**—*Christian trial and ungranted prayer*:—If it is useful to consider prayers granted for encouragement, it is also desirable to reflect on prayers not granted for instruction. We delight to pass in review Abraham, Hezekiah, &c. But it must not be forgotten there are opposite cases that represent in shade, as the others in light, the will and mercy of God. Was it not so with Moses, beseeching the Lord to cancel His prohibition; with David, as he pleaded for the life of his child; with Jeremiah, as he says, “When I cry He shutteth out my prayer”? I. GOD, WHILE BLESSING HIS SERVANTS, OFTEN DOES NOT WITHHOLD FROM THEM PAINFUL SUFFERINGS. A very striking account of special favour is related. Heaven seemed unveiled. But now, in connection with this experience, “a thorn in the flesh” was appointed, to be a memorial, as the halting on the thigh to Jacob, of what he had passed through. This shadows forth the frequent dealings of God with His people. To some strong assurance, peculiar intimacy, are allowed. Exceptional experiences are related by Mr. Flavel and Mr. Tennant. But the cup of trial has often been put into the hands of such. Remember R. Baxter, through fifty long years, worn with a painful malady, writing his books often in agony lying on the ground; R. Hall, a martyr through his life to torturing pain; Dr. Payson, a sufferer from habitual weakness; the eminent Jay grieving over godlessness in his family. So in the rank and file of Christian life. In all sunshine there are shadows, and, like Job, men ask, under the mystery of Providence, Why. Always feel, however, “It is the Lord,” not in anger, but love. II. PRAYER IS THE RESOURCE OF THE SOUL IN TRIAL. The apostle did not submit without an effort to obtain the removal of his suffering. Christianity is not stoicism. Ours is to be—1. The prayer of faith. A real, not imaginary, audience with God. 2. The prayer of earnestness. The little child often a pattern, and in this earnestness not soon baffled, but expecting, hoping, desiring, waiting. 3. The prayer of submission, not of presumption. Paul besought, did not dictate. III. PRAYER, THOUGH NOT GRANTED IN OUR, IS ANSWERED IN GOD’S WAY. 1. Often by revealing the purpose of the trial. “Lest I should be exalted.” If we could see what would develop in our character apart from trial we should better understand. An artist, standing on scaffold, was painting the dome of a cathedral; stepped back to see the effect, unconsciously was going too far—in a moment would have fallen, but a friend dashed a brush with colour against his work. He darted forward and was saved. To save us from backward and perilous steps God often appears to deal severely. 2. By giving ability to bear our trial—My grace sufficient. What a conscious rest we have in God when with all griefs and cares we commit ourselves to Him. Like S. Rutherford we can say, “I rest myself on the bosom of Omnipotence.” 3. By sanctifying the experience of the trial and making it a means of advantage. The apostle found the bane a blessing. Conclusion: 1. It is important sometimes to record even our failures. Some may be kept from despondency. 2. God, by His Divine alchemy, can always bring good out of evil. 3. God glorifies Himself in His people when He comforts them. (*G. McMichael, B.A.*) *Strength in weakness*:—This page in the autobiography of the apostle shows us that he, too, belonged to the great army of martyrs. The original word seems to mean, not a tiny bit of thorn, but one of those hideous stakes on which the cruel punishment of impalement used to be inflicted. Note—1. THE INSTINCTIVE SHRINKING FROM THAT WHICH TORTURED THE FLESH, WHICH TAKES REFUGE IN PRAYER. 1. Paul’s petitions are the echo of Gethsemane; but He that prayed in Gethsemane was He to whom Paul addressed his prayer. 2. Notice how this thought of prayer helps to lead us deep into its most blessed characteristics. It is only the telling Christ what is in our hearts. If we realised this—questions as to what it was permissible or not to pray for would be irrelevant. If anything is big enough to interest me it is not too small to be spoken about to Him. If I am to talk to Christ about everything that concerns me, am I to keep my thumb upon that great department and be silent about it? That is

why our prayers are often so unreal. Our hearts are full of some small matter of daily interest, and when we kneel down not a word about it comes to our lips. Can that be right? The difference between the different objects of prayer is to be found in remembering that there are two sets of things to be prayed about, and over one set must ever be written, "If it be Thy will," and over the other it need not be written. We know about the latter that "if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." But about the former we can only say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." With that deep in our hearts, let us take everything into His presence, thorns and stakes, pin-pricks and wounds out of which the life-blood is ebbing, and be sure that we take none of them in vain.

II. THE INSIGHT INTO THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH FOR, AND THE PURPOSE OF, THE THORN THAT COULD NOT BE TAKEN AWAY. 1. The answer is, in form and in substance, a gentle refusal of the form of the petition, but it is more than a granting of its essence. There are two ways of lightening a burden, one is diminishing its weight, the other is increasing the strength of the shoulder that bears it. And the latter is God's way of dealing with us. 2. The answer is no communication of anything fresh, but it is the opening of the man's eyes to see that already he has all that he needs. "My grace" (which thou hast now) "is sufficient for thee." If troubled Christian men would learn and use what they have they would less often beseech Him with vain petitions to take away their blessings which are the thorns in the flesh. 3. How modestly the Master speaks about what He gives! "Sufficient"? Yes; but the overplus is "exceeding abundant." "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient that every one may take a little," says Sense. Omnipotence says, "Bring the few small loaves and fishes unto Me"; and Faith dispensed them amongst the crowd; and Experience "gathered up of the fragments that remained" more than there had been when the multiplication began. So the grace utilised increases; the gift grows as it is employed. "Unto him that hath shall be given." 4. The other part of this great answer unveiled the purpose of the sorrow, even as the former part had disclosed the strength to bear it. "My strength is made perfect"—that is, of course, "perfect in its manifestation or operations, for it is perfect in itself already"—"in weakness." God works with broken reeds. If a man conceits himself to be an iron pillar, God can do nothing with or by him. His strength loves to work in weakness, only the weakness must be conscious, and the conscious weakness must have passed into conscious dependence. There, then, you get the law for the Church and individual lives. Strength that conceits itself to be such is weakness; weakness that knows itself to be such is strength. So when we know ourselves weak, we have taken the first step to strength; just as, when we know ourselves sinners, we have taken the first step to righteousness. All our hollownesses are met with His fulness that fits into them. III. THE CALM, FINAL ACQUISITION IN THE LOVING NECESSITY OF CONTINUED SORROW. "Most gladly, therefore," &c. (ver. 9). The will is entirely harmonised with Christ's. He is more than submissive, he gladly glories in his infirmity in order that the power of Christ may "spread a tabernacle over" him. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," said the old prophet. Paul sounds a higher note. Far better is it that the sting of our sorrow should be taken away, by our having learned what it is for, and having bowed to it, than that it should be taken away by the external removal which we sometimes long for. And if we would only interpret events in the spirit of this great text, we should less frequently wonder and weep over the so-called insoluble mysteries of the sorrows of ourselves or of other men. They are all intended to make it more easy for us to realise our utter hanging upon Him, and so to open our hearts to receive more fully the quickening influences of His all-sufficing grace. Here, then, is a lesson for those who have to carry some cross, knowing they must carry it throughout life. It will be wreathed with flowers if you accept it. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee.**—*Grace sufficient*:—We may take this comforting promise to ourselves and apply it—I. TO SUCH OF OUR TRIALS AS, LIKE ST. PAUL'S, ARE SECRET. You may be called to endure chastenings from God's hand which no one but yourselves can know or appreciate. Perhaps your affliction also exposes you to misconception from your fellow-men, who condemn your conduct as eccentric and unchristian, when if they knew the reason of it they would compassionate rather than censure. Eli condemned Hannah as a drunkard, when he afterwards discovered that she was praying in a sorrowful spirit. Christ can understand your case, and His "grace is sufficient for thee." II. TO THOSE TRIALS WHICH ARE MORE OPEN. Take, *e.g.*, one of the most common

of our earthly troubles, that caused by the voice of calumny. You may be conscious that you are innocent, and it is all very well to talk of superiority to calumny. When Christ was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a Samaritan and a devil, and crucified as a malefactor, He did not wrap Himself up in His conscious innocence and look with perfect indifference upon the malignant assaults of His enemies. It was one of the severest parts of His earthly trials. And here is our hope, viz., that the Saviour, who has Himself known the trial, will make His "grace sufficient for us." There is one Friend whom the slanderer cannot alienate. No falsehood breathed against any man ever injured him in the estimation of Jesus, but, on the contrary, made him more peculiarly the object of the Saviour's care. III. FOR THE DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. How arduous those duties are! And many have drawn back from them. "My grace is sufficient for thee," is not a promise for those who neglect duty, but for those who engage in it. The fullest stream cannot move the wheel till the water gate is raised, but then when that is done, it comes down steadily upon it, and as each turn makes place for more, another gushing flood comes down and turns it again, and keeps it ever moving. So is it in our duties. Let us engage in them, let us remove the obstacles, let us draw up the gate, and then it is Christ's part to send down grace to keep the machinery of the spiritual life in constant motion. It is the absurdest thing to shrink from duties because of our weakness, when the almighty power of Jesus is pledged to be present with us. IV. TO ALL THAT YET LIES BEFORE US, OF TRIAL AND OBEDIENCE. We can fancy many dreadful evils in the coming future. We have, at least, one great trial to endure, the severing of friends from us by death, and our own last conflict with the great enemy. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *The moral power of Christianity*:—A human life is a problem of forces. Powers from all worlds are met on this earth and contend for the mastery over us. Influences from all the ages flow in the veins of humanity and beat in the heart of each new-born child. It is a question of forces—physical, moral, spiritual—what shall become of every one of us. Our whole scientific conception of things is formed now in equations of force. The earth quivers to its centre to the influences of the stars. Elemental forces hold each other in firm embrace in the great mountains and in the ancient order of the heavens. It is with the primal and eternal forces that we have to do even in the quietest of things. Human history, no less than the physical processes of nature, is a ceaseless transformation and conservation of energy. Human destiny is a problem of forces. This dynamical conception of history, this view of every human life as a drama of supernal powers, presents a most fascinating study of events and characters and destinies. Not only in the few great lives, but in the passion and action of every soul, universal powers contend for the supremacy, and the issues of eternal life or death are the results of the conflict. When we think thus of each life from earliest childhood as a problem of forces, powers from everywhere contending for the mastery in it, and eternal life or death being its moral victory or defeat, nothing that touches and influences, nothing that may help or hurt the soul in this great conflict of its destiny, can seem indifferent to us. The question of its triumph or its shame, its virtue or its loss, will become a question of motive and of motive-power: in the power of what motives can the victory of spirit be gained? What motive-power is sufficient to reduce all the conflicting forces that work upon us and in us to one harmonious, happy, and everlasting life? Now, our Christian faith has a clear answer to give to this question concerning the sufficient motive-power of a life. When the Apostle Paul preached at Athens or Rome there was one question which he might have asked the philosophers, to which he would have received evasive and very unsatisfactory replies, viz., How can a bad man become a good man? How can a virtuous man overcome all evil? Some one at Athens or Rome might have quoted Aristotle to him, and answered, The good can become better by the practice of virtue; and as for the bad, the State must look after them by the exercise of force. Or some one might have quoted Plato to the apostle, and said, The way of virtue is the way of contemplation; lift your eyes to the eternal ideas, behold their beauty—an answer which might be serviceable to the few wise souls, but which would have no meaning for those born blind, without spiritual eyes clarified for the vision of supernal truths. But St. Paul carried with him in his new Christian experience an answer concerning the moral motive-power of a true life, such as all the books of the ancients did not contain. Let us consider how he had reached that answer, and what his Christian solution of life as a problem of forces was. He had reached it through two courses of experience. First, he had tried the best method which he knew of making

himself a master of all virtue, and he felt that he had miserably failed. He had succeeded well enough according to the moral standards of his neighbours and friends, but in his own sober judgment of himself he had failed to reach the one object of his moral ambition, and to become a perfect master of righteousness. He had tried to live by rule, and he had found that to be a very unsatisfactory method of virtue. Then, having failed to live perfectly by rule, he had been taught by a vision of the Lord another method of life—the method of faith and love. The new Christian motive lifts him up and leads him on. And his Epistles ring with a consciousness of power. Among the most frequently-repeated words in these Epistles of the great apostle is this word “power.” St. John has three characteristic words, denoting his pure, fair, Christian conception of what we shall be—the words light, life, love. St. Paul also has three words, oft-recurring, which disclose his new Christian consciousness of redemption—grace, faith, power—in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, the power of the resurrection, the power of Christ. Who is this one man to claim discovery of the secret of a supernal power for life and over death? Who is this man who claims to succeed where all our philosophies fail? What impossible motive-power of life is this of which the converted Jew boasts? St. Paul’s answer, however, concerning the sufficient motive-power for life, others around him began to try, and they succeeded by it. It has been verified in men’s experience thousands of times, and under most widely differing conditions of life. A modern unbeliever, who thinks that the only hope for making men better is through good breeding scientifically carried out, admits that the Christian motive has power over certain high and rare spirits, but it does not much influence, he thinks, the generality of people. But an unbeliever in the second century raised precisely the opposite objection against the new Christian faith, and complained that the Christian converts were made from the wool-dressers, and the cobblers, and the ignorant masses. If we put the two objections together, the ancient and the modern, they render this just tribute to the power of the gospel, that it appeals to the humblest and the worst, while it also has a nobler inspiration for the rarest spirits. Such being the incontestable fact, we may proceed next to consider what this moral motive-power is which St. Paul carried within him to Rome. Our text puts the whole matter in the simplest form—the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ, His power resting on the disciple. We are not, perhaps, accustomed to think of the life of Jesus as the strong life; yet it was the life of strength. We think of Him as the merciful One, who went about doing good; we think of Him as the Man of Sorrows. Gentleness, patience, self-denying, suffering, submission—these are the pre-eminent Christian virtues; and Christ-likeness means self-forgetfulness. Yet the brave, great-hearted apostle seems to have been wonderfully impressed with the strength of the Christ. The power of Jesus commanded him. The despised Nazarene, he discovers, was Lord. The Crucified One, he sees, is Emperor of all worlds. St. Paul receives the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of power. From beginning to end Jesus’ life was characterised by these three distinguishing moral marks of the highest human power—perfect self-poise, instantaneous decision, sure and unbroken purpose. Estimated by such tests of power, the life of the Son of man was the strongest life ever commissioned of the Eternal upon this earth. First, it is as the personal influence of Jesus. That is to-day the strongest thing in the world. There is no greater force under the stars than the personal influence of the Christ. The generations cannot pass from the spell of it. There is no type of virtue which has not been strengthened by it, no grace of character that has not been enhanced by it. The personal example of the Christ is the kingly and commanding power of modern history. Secondly, in this power of Jesus, of which St. Paul was profoundly conscious, is contained great material of truth for character and conduct. The truths which the gospel presents are truths which are directly convertible into character; they easily break into the pure flame of consecrated spirit. All truths have some relations, direct or indirect, to conduct; but these Christian truths are pre-eminently truths to be done; they are rich in material for motive. This is the value of the Christian doctrines; they are materials for life. The doctrines of the Epistles branch at once into the practical precepts of the Epistles: the truths of the gospel bear the fruits of righteousness. If in our trials, temptations, anxieties, responsibilities, or bereavements, we wish to find truths that shall keep our hearts always young, and impart to us an exhaustless spiritual strength, we must open our Bibles, and let these words of inspiration renew our courage, calm our spirits, set our daily duties to celestial music, impart to us in the midst of the conflicts of the world something of the strength of Jesus

and the peace of the Eternal. Thirdly, the power of Jesus, which an apostle prayed might rest upon him, was not only the influence of the remembered life of the Lord, nor was it wholly the strength to be gained by assimilating the truths of the gospel; it was also the living power of the Spirit of Christ. The motive to all goodness in the lives of believers, and the power of the perseverance of the saints, is to be the influences with the soul of the ascended Lord and the working of the Holy Spirit, who uses all the Christian revelation of God as the means and channel of the redemptive power of God's love on earth. What, then, do we see? What do we find? Everywhere around us—yes, and within us—a conflict of forces, good and evil; and the eternal destinies waiting the issues of this combat of our mortality. (*Newman Smyth.*) *The power of Divine grace*:—The close connection between a sincere recognition of all that is implied in the sin of the world and an appreciation of the reality of grace, has been clearly shown in the history of error. It held together the two denials which characterised the Pelagian heresy of the fifth century. For it has been truly said that "it was only by ignoring the great overthrow that Pelagius could dispense with the great restorative force." He had to say "we have no inborn sin" in order that he might say "we need no inward grace." And at all times there is no more certain way to drain the life out of our religion, and to quench all brightness in the things of faith, than to trifle with the idea of sin—to mitigate the verdict of conscience in regard to it, to try to explain it away, or to make ourselves easy in its presence. We disguise from ourselves the gravity of the disease, and then the remedy seems disproportionate and unnecessary. But when the conscience is unsophisticated and outspoken; when we do justice in our thoughts to the power and tyranny of sin; then we feel that nothing save a real and living energy could cope with such a misery; that grace must be a reality if it is to deal with the sin of the world. And grace is indeed most real. It is an energy at least as true, as traceable in the large course of human history as any influence that we can find there. But before we try to see its work it is necessary that we should know what grace means in Christian thought and teaching. "Grace," writes Dr. Mozley, "is power. That power whereby God works in nature is called power. That power whereby He works in the wills of His reasonable creatures is called grace." Again, in Dr. Bright's words, "Grace is a force in the spiritual order, not simply God's unmerited kindness in the abstract, but such kindness in action as a movement of His Spirit within the soul, resulting from the Incarnation, and imparting to the will and the affections a new capacity of obedience and of love." And yet once more, Dr. Liddon writes, "Grace is not simply kindly feeling on the part of God, but a positive boon conferred on man. Grace is a real and active force: it is the power that worketh in us, illuminating the intellect, warming the heart, strengthening the will of redeemed humanity. It is the might of the everlasting Spirit, renovating man by uniting him, whether immediately or through the sacraments, to the sacred Manhood of the Word Incarnate." Such is grace as a Christian thinks of it and lives by it. It is the work, the presence of God the Holy Ghost in us, bringing to us all that our Saviour died and rose again to win for us. But here we are moving upon ground which may be resolutely denied to us. The doctrine of grace is as little congenial to natural reason, or to a superficial view of human life, as is the doctrine of the Fall. But here too, I believe, a deeper and more appreciative study of the facts betrays the working of some power, for which it is very difficult to account by any merely natural estimate. As the truth of original sin is at once the most obscure and the most illuminating of mysteries; as all the phenomenon of sinful history forces us back to that imperceptible point, where by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: so may grace be said to be at once the most inscrutable and the most certain of all the forces that enter into the course of life. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; but as the great trees sway like reeds, as the clouds scud across the sky, as the ship leaps forward over the waves and strains towards the haven, you do not doubt the reality of the force that is astir. And grace, the great energy in the spiritual order; grace, the Almighty Power of God in the wills of His reasonable creatures, has its phenomena, its effects, at least as real, as difficult to deny or to explain away—though not so difficult to ignore—as such tokens of the viewless wind. Aleiphron, the minute philosopher of Bishop Berkeley's dialogue, the witty and freethinking gentleman of his day, assails Christianity from this very ground. Grace, he truly says, is the main point in the Christian dispensation; but then he complains thus: "At the

request of a philosophical friend, I did cast an eye on the writings he showed me of some divines, and talked with others on this subject, but after all I had read or heard could make nothing of it, having always found whenever I laid aside the word grace and looked into my own mind a perfect vacuity or privation of all ideas." And he adds with ingenuous self-confidence: "As I am apt to think men's minds and faculties are made much alike, I suspect that other men, if they examine what they call grace with exactness and indifference, would agree with me that there was nothing in it but an empty name." Alciphron is opposed by Euphanor with an argument which is quite sufficient for its purpose. He is invited to contemplate force as he had contemplated grace, "itself in its own precise idea," excluding the consideration of its subject and effects; and here, too, he is compelled to discover the same mental vacuity and privation; he closes his eyes and muses a few minutes, and declares that he can make nothing of it:—and so his contention, if it has any value, would involve the denial of force as well as grace; and for this he is not prepared. But what strange narrowness of horizon; what failure of sympathy and imagination; what readiness to be soon contented with one's own account of one's own fragment of the world—is shown when Alciphron or any one else can think that there is nothing to be found or studied where Christians speak of grace; that "a perfect vacuity and privation of ideas" is a philosophic state of mind in regard to it; that it can be dismissed with scorn or compassion as a mere empty name. For grace is not offered for attention and consideration as a mere subjective phenomenon, simply an experience of the inner life, supported by a bare assertion, incapable of tests and evidence; no, it has its facts to point to, its results written in the history of men and patent in their daily life; its achievements, accredited to it by those who were certainly nearest to the occurrences, achievements hardly to be explained away, and never to be ignored by any mind that claims the temper of philosophy. The effects assigned to grace in life and history are as serious and distinct, as necessarily to be recognised and dealt with, as the effects of force, or sin, or passion. Take but one great instance out of history. When the power, the dignity, the character of Rome was breaking up; when poets and historians had seen and spoken out the plain truth that society was sinking down and down, from bad to worse; when all the principles of national or individual greatness seemed discredited and confused, when vice in naked shamelessness was seizing upon tract after tract of human life—then suddenly the whole drift of moral history, the whole aspect of the fight was changed. A new force appeared upon the scene. "It seems to me," says the Dean of St. Paul's, "that the exultation apparent in early Christian literature, beginning with the Apostolic Epistles, at the prospect now at length disclosed, within the bounds of a sober hope, of a great moral revolution in human life, that the rapturous confidence which pervades these Christian ages, that at last the routine of vice and sin has met its match, that a new and astonishing possibility has come within view, that men, not here and there, but on a large scale, might attain to that hitherto hopeless thing to the multitudes,—goodness,—is one of the most singular and solemn things in history." "The monotony of deepening debasement," "the spell and custom of evil" was broken now, and "an awful rejoicing transport filled the souls of men as they saw that there was the chance, more than the chance, the plain fore-running signs, of human nature becoming here, what none had ever dared it would become, morally better." That was a real achievement, if anything in history is real. Such is the unanimous witness of all those through whose lives and labour God wrought that mighty work, and renewed the face of the earth. That rallying of all hope, that surprising reassertion of goodness against the confident tyranny of evil, was the work of grace. Grace was the power that came in and turned the issue of the fight, the tide of human history. His grace is sufficient for us; His grace which day by day does change the hearts and lives of man; His grace which gives the poor their wondrous patience and simplicity and trust; His grace which can uphold a patient, self-distrustful woman through the dreariest and most revolting tasks of charity and compassion; His grace which holds His servants' wills resolute and unflagging through the utmost stress of overwork and suffering, on in the very hours of sickness, on into the very face of death; His grace which changes pride to penitence and humility, which wins the sensual to chastity, the intemperate to self-control, the hard and thankless to the brightness of a gentle life. His grace which everywhere, in the stillness where He loves to work, is disentangling the souls of men from the clinging hindrances of sin, repairing, bit by bit, the ruin of our fall, renewing to all and more than all its

primal beauty, that image and likeness of Almighty God, in which at the first He fashioned man to be the lord, the priest, the prophet of the world. So is His grace ever working, striving round about us: so is it ever ready to work and strive and win, be sure, in each of us. No aim is too high, no task too great, no sin too strong, no trial too hard for those who patiently and humbly rest upon God's grace: who wait on Him that He may renew their strength. (*Dean Paget, D.D.*) *My grace is sufficient for thee*:—I. There is grace always promised to the people of God in their necessities, BUT NOT GRACE MORE THAN IS NEEDED FOR THE OCCASION THAT CALLS IT FORTH. God does not fling the gifts of His grace carelessly from His throne without reference to the special circumstances or need of His people. Strength is imparted accurately meted out to the emergency. Were grace imparted more than sufficient for the present need it would be positively injurious. If, after overcoming the trial of to-day, the Christian had still a store in hand that might suffice for to-morrow, he would feel as if absolved from the necessity of prayer and watchfulness for the future. God knows too well our proneness to self-righteousness to give the temptation to independence; He knows too well how inclined men are to security and sloth, to lay in their way this inducement to inactivity. Yet how many are there, even of the children of God, who murmur against such an arrangement, and passionately long for such a store of grace as shall exempt them from the feeling of present weakness, and set them at ease on the score of coming danger! There is a striking analogy in this respect between the dealings of God in His providence and the dealings of God in His grace. The petition in the Lord's prayer, "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke xi. 3), sufficiently points out the limits of a Christian's duty and expectations in regard to his worldly portion. And just as the man who gathers perishable wealth is often seen striving to be rich, that he may at last say to himself, "Soul, take thine ease: thou hast much goods laid up for many years"; so, in like manner, the Christian, in the midst of his weakness and fears, is often seen eager for such a measure of grace and strength as may not only meet the present difficulty, but set his soul at ease as regards future trouble or temptation. But it may not be. Your life in this world must be a life of constant, childlike, entire dependence on God. II. There is grace promised to the believer in every season of trial, BUT NOT GRACE BEFORE IT IS NEEDED. Both in regard to the measure of grace communicated to His people, and in regard to the time when it is imparted, God would distinctly teach us that He keeps the matter in His own hand. God gives grace to His people in their necessities, but not until the necessity occurs. And why is the grace thus delayed until the hour when it is required, and not imparted beforehand to sustain the soul in the prospect, as well as in the experience, of the conflict? Just because "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of his God" (Lam. iii. 26). What shall we say to such a burdened and trembling disciple? We would say, It is not right to compare your present spiritual state with your future or possible trials in the months or years that are to come. The grace that God has given you to-day is intended for the duties of to-day; and it is sufficient for them. If the duties that are allotted for you in the future, or the temptations that shall assail you, are harder to meet than the present, then you may rest assured that a larger measure of strength than you now enjoy will be imparted. And yet, how many are there of the children of God, weak in faith and faint in hope, who disquiet themselves in vain, and draw their souls into trouble by such unwise anticipations of the future as these! III. There is grace promised to the people of God in their necessities, and GRACE NOT LESS THAN IS NEEDED. The dying man, though weak and worn, has found in that hour provision against all its trials. Like the patriarch of old, he has gathered up his feet into the bed, ready, yea eager, to be away. (*Jas. Bannerman, D.D.*) *Sufficient grace*:—I. Observe that the text GUARDS US AGAINST AN OVER-ANXIOUS ANTICIPATION OF THE FUTURE. II. But again, the text OFFERS US GRACE IN PROPORTION TO OUR NEED. This most precious promise is extended to all who are willing to receive it. There are many aspects in which this offer claims our attention. 1. It is universal in its range. There is no case which it does not meet. However varied men's circumstances, there is something here quite adequate to all their variety. One dreads poverty; another fears the temptations of prosperity. 2. And it is judicious in its purport. It is intended not to gratify our wishes, which are often foolish, but to meet the real exigencies of our case. We should like to choose blessings for ourselves, or at least to know what they are to be. Yet we are never so likely to err as when we are surest of ourselves. How often we see men behaving differently in changed

conditions of life from their intended conduct! 3. This is an offer, further, very tender in its compassion. It is rich in mercy of the most considerate kind. 4. Then how rich are the blessings which are thus secured! No day, however dreaded, is without its gracious promise to the ear of faith. III. If, then, these things are true, WE MUST USE GOD'S GRACE IN THE DOING OF OUR DAILY WORK. Only in so far as we are strong in the Lord now, are we at liberty to expect His strength for the future. On the other hand, there is far more in this text to encourage than to reprove. It bids us not be disheartened with the vastness of the soul's salvation. We must not think that all that is implied in that expression can be at once accomplished. The story of the discontented pendulum cannot be too often repeated even to grown-up people. The pendulum began to reflect how often it had swung in the hour, and then, multiplying its strokes by the hours of the day, and these again by the days in the week, and these finally by the weeks in the year, it came to see how very often it would have to move backwards and forwards in one year; and overwhelmed with the thought, it suddenly stopped. It began to swing again, only when reminded that, after all, it was never required to move oftener than once a second, and that it had nothing to do with the future. That assurance we all need to lay to heart. It is to our present duty, and to it only, that such a text as this summons us. The Divine plan of strengthening us is by degrees. It forms habits of trustfulness and submission and activity. Put away from you all unreasonable expectations of getting more from God's grace than is sufficient for you, and do not wonder if you get it only as you need it. Were a youth to reckon up the number of mental efforts he must put forth to master any branch of knowledge, would he not despair? Had the Israelites known of all their wanderings, would they have come out of Egypt? God's grace does its work in every Christian from day to day. (*A. MacEwen, D.D.*) *The sufficient grace of God:—I. WHAT A NEED THERE IS FOR ANY TRUE LIFE THAT IT SHOULD HAVE SOME CONCEPTION OF ITSELF WITHIN WHICH ALL ITS SPECIAL ACTIVITIES SHOULD MOVE AND DO THEIR WORK.* What the skin is to the human body, holding all the parts of the inner machinery compactly to their work; what the simple constitution is to a highly-elaborated state, enveloping all its functions—such to the manifold actions of a man is some great simple conception of life, surrounding all details, giving them unity, simplicity, effectiveness. The degree in which the life is immediately and consciously aware of its enveloping conception may vary very much indeed. Some would have to stop and re-collect their consciousness before they could give you a clear statement of it. Nevertheless the dignity, beauty, usefulness of human lives seem to depend on it. Here is a man all scintillating with brightness: every act he does, every word he says, is a single, separate point of electricity, shining the more brilliantly just because of its isolation. Here is another man of far less brilliancy; his electricity does not sparkle at brilliant points, but it lives unseen and powerful through everything he does and is. Now it is to the second man, not to the first, the world must look for good and constant power. II. NOTE THE SPECIAL CONCEPTION OF LIFE WHICH IS IN THE TEXT. That man's life is to have abundant supply for all it needs, and yet all this abundance is not to come by or in itself, because the human life itself is part and parcel of the Divine life. 1. This conception excludes two ideas—the first, that there is no sufficiency for man; the second, that man carries his sufficiency within himself. How these two ideas divide among themselves the hearts of men! The timid, tired, discouraged men say, "Human life a predestined failure: full of wants for which there is no supply, of questions for which there is no answer." The self-confident, self-trustful say, "Man is satisfied in himself. Let him but put forth all his powers and he shall supply all his own needs and answer all his own questions." And then God says, "Nay, both are wrong; you must be satisfied, but you must be satisfied in Me; you must have sufficiency, but My grace must be sufficient for you." 2. Now man cannot rest in the settled conviction of insufficiency. He has a deep and true conviction that he has no power or need for which there is not a correspondent supply somewhere within reach, *e.g.*, his power of adoring love brings him assurance that there is a being worthy of such love. Then, on the other hand, that man shall find humanity sufficient for his powers and needs is made everlastingly impossible by the strange fact to which all the history of man bears witness, that man, though himself finite, demands infinity to deal with and to rest upon. That fact is the perpetual witness that man is the child of God. The child may be reminded of his limitations, and yet he always mounts up to claim the largeness of his father's life for himself. You never can

rule lines around the realm of knowledge and say to man, "That is the limit of what you possibly can know." He will rub out your lines, and choose those very things to exercise his knowing faculty upon. What man ever truly loves and sets a limit to the loveliness of that which he is loving? Who that with the best human ambition is seeking after character can fix himself a goal and say, "That is as good as it is possible for me, a man, to be"? There comes no real content until, behind all the patterns which hold themselves up to him, at last he hears the voice far out beyond them all calling to him, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Then the finite has heard the voice of the infinite to which it belongs, to which it always will respond, and straightway it settles down to its endless journey and goes on content. III. IT IS IN VIEWS LIKE THESE THAT I FIND MY ASSURANCE IN THESE DAYS OF DOUBT ABOUT THE NATURE AND DESTINY OF MAN. If man is God's child, then man cannot permanently be atheistic. This poor man or that may be an atheist, perhaps; this child or that may disown or deny his father; but the world-child, man, to him the sense that he was not made for insufficiency, and the sense that he is not sufficient for himself, will always bring him back from his darkest and remotest wanderings, and set him where he will hear the voice which alone can completely and finally satisfy him, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee." IV. AND NOW, IF THIS IS WHERE THE SOUL OF MAN MUST REST, LET US SEE WHAT IS THE REST WHICH MAN'S SOUL WILL FIND HERE; what will it be for a man when the secret and power of his life is that he is resting on the sufficiency of the grace of God? 1. This grace of God must be a perpetual element in which our life abides, and not an occasional assistant called in to meet special emergencies. I say to one man, "Who is your sufficiency? On whom do you rely for help?" and his reply is, "God"; and it sounds exactly as if he thought that God was a man in the next house, some one at hand when wanted. I ask another man the same questions, and he answers, "God"; and it sounds as if the sunlight talked about the sun, as if the stream talked of the spring, as if the blood talked of the heart, as if the plant talked of the ground, as if the mountain talked of the gravitation that lived in every particle of it and held it in its everlasting seat; nay, as if the child talked of his father "in whom he lived and moved and had his being." 2. Take special instances. (1) Here is our bewilderment about truth. One doubter, when his hard question comes, says with a ready confidence, "I will go and ask God," and carries off his problem to the Bible, to the closet, as if he went to consult an oracle, and as if, when he had got, or failed to get, an answer, he would leave the oracle and come back and live on his own resources until another hard question should come up. I do not say that that is wholly bad; but surely there is something better. Another doubter meets his puzzling question with, "God knows the explanation and the answer. I do not know that God will tell me what the answer is. Perhaps He will, perhaps He will not; but He knows." (2) And so it is with regard to activity and efficiency. One man says, "Here is a great work to be done; God will give me the strength to do it"; and so when it is done he is most apt to call it his work. Another man says, "Here is this work to be done; God shall do it, and if He will use me for any part of it, here I am. I shall rejoice as the tool rejoices in the artist's hand." When that work is finished, the workman looks with wonder at his own achievement, and cries, "What hath God wrought!" (3) Again, one sufferer cries, "Lord, make me strong"; another sufferer cries, "Lord, let me rest upon Thy strength." 3. Always there are these two kinds of men. The scene in the valley of Elah is always finding its repetition. David and Goliath are perpetual: proud, self-reliant, self-sufficient strength on the one side; and on the other the slight Judean youth, with nothing but a sling and stone, with his memories of struggles in which he has had no strength but the strength of God, and has conquered, with no boast, nothing but a prayer upon his lips. Goliath may thank his gods for his great muscles; but it is a strength which has been so completely handed over to him that he now thinks of it, boasts of it, uses it as his. David's strength lies back of him in God, and only flows down from God through him as his hand needs it for the twisting of the sling that is to hurl the stone. 4. It is sad to see even Christian men and times fall into the old delusion. The Christian Church seems to have been far too often asking of God that He should put His power and His wisdom into her, and make it hers; far too seldom that He should draw her life so close to His that His wisdom and power, kept still in Himself, should be hers because it is His. V. I FIND IN ALL THE LIFE OF JESUS THE PERFECT ILLUSTRATION AND ELUCIDATION OF ALL I HAVE BEEN SAYING. 1. He never treated His life as if it were a temporary deposit of

the Divine life on the earth, cut off and independent of its source; he always treated it as if it lived by its association with the Father's life, on which it rested. Jesus was always full of the child-consciousness; He always kept His life open that the Father's life might flow through it. "Not My will, but Thy will, O My Father"; that was the triumph of the Garden. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" that was the agony of the Cross. 2. What Jesus wanted for Himself He wants for His disciples. Not self-completeness. When He calls us to be His, He sees no day in which, having trained our characters and developed our strength, He shall send us out as you dismiss in the morning from your door the traveller whom you have kept all night, and fed and strengthened and rescued from fatigue, and filled with self-respect. No such day is to come for ever. And with that in our minds how much that seemed mysterious grows plain to us! If He is moving our life up close to His, henceforth to be a part of His, what wonder is it if, in order that that union may be most complete, He has to break down the walls which would be separations between Him and us. The going down of the walls between our house and our friend's house would be music to us, for it would be making the two houses one. The going down of the walls between our life and our Lord's life, though it consisted of the failure of our dearest theories and the disappointment of our dearest plans, that too would be music to us if through the breach we saw the hope that henceforth our life was to be one with His life, and all His was to be ours too. 3. And how clear, with this truth before us, would appear the duty that we had to do, the help that we had to give to any brother's soul. Not to make him believe our doctrine; but to bring him to our God. Not to answer all his hard questions; but to put him where he could see that the answer to them all is in God. Not to make him my convert, my disciple; but to persuade him to let Christ make him God's child. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*)

On the nature and efficacy of Divine grace.—I. THE GRACE OF CHRIST IS INDISPENSABLY NECESSARY TO SALVATION. II. The grace of Christ, as necessary to salvation, is PLACED WITHIN THE REACH OF EVERY MAN. III. THE MEANS, BY WHICH THE GRACE OF GOD IS TO BE OBTAINED, ARE DISTINCTLY REVEALED TO US. IV. I propose to set before you THE TESTS AND PROOFS BY WHICH THE EFFECTUAL ACQUISITION OF DIVINE GRACE IS ASCERTAINED. A tree is known by its fruits. V. The grace of Christ is ALL-SUFFICIENT. 1. Divine grace is sufficient to supply strength to withstand temptation. 2. The grace of Christ is sufficient to enable His servants to perform efficaciously unto His glory the undertakings with which He entrusts them. 3. The grace of Christ is sufficient to give comfort under afflictions, and to convert them into means of improvement in faith and holiness. 4. The grace of Christ is sufficient for salvation. 1. I would in the first place address myself to those persons who have hitherto neglected or despised the grace of God. 2. To those among you who have laboured to obtain the grace of Christ, and to apply to its proper object the strength which is granted from above, meditations on the nature and the efficacy of the promised gift of the Spirit of God are perhaps not less important than to the careless or the hardened sinner. Grieve not then the Holy Spirit of God. (*T. Gisborne, M.A.*)

Sufficiency of grace.—"And He said." The Greek tense here, by a beautiful delicacy of the language, signifies "He has said! He is saying it now!" That one assurance was vocal for every day of Paul's life, and over every step of his heavenward road. So that by the very principle of the text it becomes ours. Let us describe some of our necessities, showing how they may all be met and fully supplied by the Saviour's all-sufficient grace. I. SOMETIMES THERE IS A GREAT CONSCIOUS NEED JUST AT THE BEGINNING OF A CHRISTIAN CAREER. "The Lord knoweth," not only "them that are His," but also those who are becoming His. And amid all the changes and uncertainties of such a time, He holds in nearness, and offers sufficient grace. II. THINK OF THE TRANSITION AS MADE. After the fervours of the first love are somewhat abated, and after the sweet freshness has passed from the actings of the newborn soul—then comes a coldness and a pause. The young soul, new to the ways of grace, is in danger of falling into a practical unbelief. "Is it so soon thus with me, while I have yet so far to travel, and so much to do? Ah, what must I do in such a strait as this? Were it not better to return as best I may with the burden of this disappointment into the world again? Better profess nothing than profess and fail." And that feeling would not be at all unreasonable on the naturalistic view of human life. Israel in the wilderness reasoned well from their own point of view. Egypt was far better than the wilderness as a place to live in; and if they had been out in that wilderness on some chance journey, the murmurers would have been

the wise men, and Moses and Aaron the foolish ones. But what is that small white thing on the ground every morning? How comes that hard rock to yield the gushing stream? Who is lighting up that pillar of fire for the night? Whence comes that rich glory which shines above the door of the tabernacle? Ah, how do these things change the wilderness state! Even so, we say to every young discouraged soul, if the Lord has brought you out of Egypt, and left you in the wilderness; if He has just come down to convert you and then gone up again to heaven, leaving you to plod earth's weary way alone—why, then you may as well go back to Egypt. But how is the whole case changed, when you hear the text sounding over your present life! “The Lord is saying now, My grace is sufficient for thee.” The reference is not to a dead grace which was sufficient, but to a living grace which is. “As thy day, so shall thy strength be.”

III. A LITTLE FARTHER ON WE MEET WITH ONE ON WHOM WHEN HE OUGHT TO BE FEELING THE FULL POWERS OF SPIRITUAL MANHOOD, THERE HAS COME A CHILLING AND WEAKENING CHANGE. Like Job, he takes up his parable and says, “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me!” &c. And this change has come he knows not how. Not by any known declensions. Not by any wilful sins. You are omitting no social duty; you are still bowing the knee in prayer; but the sweet experiences are gone. Now there may be many ways of recovery. You might, for example, search out that secret sin which has been working at the roots of your life. Or, conscious that you have been too ready to yield your whole nature to the mood of the moment, you might lift yourself by a purely intellectual effort above too much dependence on your own ever-varying feelings. Or, you might, under the conviction that all has gone wrong, seek for a second conversion—a thing which many Christian men greatly need. But quicker and better way is the way of the text. Take fast hold of that, and the roots of your faith will grip the soil again; and through all the inner channels of your life the nourishing stream will flow; and your “leaf” will grow green; and your fruit will colour and ripen to its “season.”

IV. ANOTHER STANDS OUT STRONG AND DARK TO OUR VIEW, AS IF THE SHADOW OF A COMING CALAMITY LAY OVER HIS LIFE. He has run well, and is not without hope that he may run again. Meantime he can hardly stir. Within him are the strugglings of a tempted soul. He would flee, but he cannot. He must go through or fall, unless God shall make a way of escape. And you hear him ask, “What shall I do? How shall safety and deliverance come to me here?” They will come out of the text. Otherwise God's providence would be stronger than His grace. He would be leading men into states and perils from which He would know there could be no deliverance. When a temptation comes purely in God's providence, it will very often be found that “with the temptation” comes the way of escape. God is faithful. Call upon Him, and He will deliver thee.

V. SEE HOW THE SOFTENING SHADOW OF THE TEXT WILL COME OVER THE SOUL THAT IS IN TROUBLE. But what picture shall we take from among the children and the scenes of sorrow? Shall we take the man with the sunny face, the helpful hand, who yet at times has a sorrow like death weighing on his heart; or the physical sufferer; or the widow? We had better not select. Let every sufferer hear for himself; then let him apply the sure word of promise; then let him carry it home to all whom it may concern, as the word of a God who cannot lie.

Conclusion: 1. “For thee.” If you lose the personal application, you lose all. This text is not for a world, but for a man. “Sufficient for thee,” young pilgrim, wearied runner, tempted spirit, &c. 2. “For thee.” It is for thee now to change the pronoun and say, with a wondering grateful heart, “To-day, and every day, from this time forth, and even for evermore, His grace is sufficient for me.” (A. Raleigh, D.D.)

Grace equal to our need:—Whenever the Lord sets His servants to do extraordinary work He always gives them extraordinary strength; or if He puts them to unusual suffering He gives them unusual patience. When we enter upon war with some petty New Zealand chief, our troops expect to have their charges defrayed; and accordingly we pay them gold by thousands, as their expenses may require; but when an army marches against a grim monarch, in an unknown country, who has insulted the British flag, we pay, as we know to our cost, not by thousands but by millions. And thus if God calls us to common and ordinary trials, He will defray the charges of our warfare by thousands; but if He commands us to an unusual struggle with some tremendous foe, He will discharge the liabilities of our war by millions, according to the riches of His grace which He has abounded to us through Christ Jesus. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Grace, secret of:—Some living creatures maintain their hold by foot or body on flat surfaces by a method that seems like magic, and with a tenacity that amazes the observer. A fly

marching at ease with feet uppermost on a plastered ceiling, and a mollusc sticking to the smooth water-worn surface of a basaltic rock, while the long swell of the Atlantic at every pulse sends a huge white billow roaring and hissing and cracking and crunching over it, are objects of wonder to the onlooker. That apparently supernatural solidity is the most natural thing in the world. It is emptiness that imparts so much strength to these feeble creatures. A vacuum, on the one side within a web-foot, and on the other within the shell, is the secret of their power. By dint of that emptiness in itself the creature quietly and easily clings to the wall or the rock, so making all the strength of the wall or rock its own. By its emptiness it is held fast; the moment it becomes full it drops off. Ah! it is the self-emptiness of a humble, trustful soul that makes the Redeemer's strength his own, and so keeps him safe in an evil world. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Strengthening words from the Saviour's lips*:—1. Paul, when buffeted by the messenger of Satan, addressed his prayer to Christ, which is a proof of our Lord's divinity; and Christ was a fit object for such a prayer, because He has endured the like temptation, and knows how to succour them that are tempted. Moreover, He has come to earth to destroy the works of the devil, and it was by His name that devils were expelled after He had risen. 2. This prayer was not only addressed to, but was like the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane. I see the Lord Jesus reflected in Paul, and hear the three-times repeated prayer, mark the cup standing unremoved, and see the strength imparted in the midst of weakness. 3. Our text fell from the lips of Christ Himself, and when Jesus speaks a special charm surrounds each syllable. 4. The exact sense of the Greek it is not easy to translate. The apostle does not merely tell us that his Lord said these words to him fourteen years ago. Their echoes were still sounding through his soul. "He has been saying to me, 'My strength is sufficient for thee.'" The words, not merely for the time reconciled him to his particular trouble, but cheered him for all the rest of his life. In the next we notice—**I. GRACE ALL-SUFFICIENT.** 1. Taking the word *grace* to mean favour, the passage runs—Do not ask to be rid of your trouble, My favour is enough for thee; or, as Hodge reads it, "My love." If thou hast little else that thou desirest, yet surely this is enough. 2. Throw the stress on the first word, "My," *i.e.*, Jesus. Therefore it is mediatorial grace, the grace given to Christ as the covenant Head of His people. It is the head speaking to the member, and declaring that its grace is enough for the whole body. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell," and of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. 3. Put the stress in the centre. "Is sufficient." (1) It is now sufficient. It is easy to believe in grace for the past and the future, but to rest in it for the immediate necessity is true faith. (2) This sufficiency is declared without any limiting words, and therefore Christ's grace is sufficient to uphold, strengthen, comfort thee, sufficient to make thy trouble useful to thee, to enable thee to triumph over it, to bring thee out of ten thousand like it, and to bring thee home to heaven. Whatever would be good for thee, Christ's grace is sufficient to bestow; whatever would harm thee, His grace is sufficient to avert; whatever thou desirest, His grace is sufficient to give thee if it be good for thee; whatever thou wouldst avoid, His grace can shield thee from it if so His wisdom shall dictate. 4. Lay the emphasis upon the first and the last words: "My . . . thee." Surely the grace of such a one as my Lord Jesus is sufficient for so insignificant a being as I am. Put one mouse down in all the granaries of Egypt when they were fullest after seven years of plenty, and imagine that one mouse complaining that it might die of famine. Imagine a man standing on a mountain, and saying, "I breathe so many cubic feet of air in a year; I am afraid that I shall ultimately inhale all the oxygen which surrounds the globe." Does it not make unbelievably ridiculous? **II. STRENGTH PERFECTED.** Remember that it was so with Christ. He was strong as to His Deity; but His strength as Mediator was made perfect through suffering. His strength to save His people would never have been perfected if He had not taken upon Himself the weakness of human nature. This is the strength which is made perfect in weakness. 1. The power of Jesus can only be perfectly revealed in His people by keeping them, and sustaining them when they are in trouble. Who knows the perfection of the strength of God till he sees how God can make poor puny creatures strong? When you see a man of God brought into poverty, and yet never repining; when you hear his character assailed by slander, and yet he stands unmoved like a rock—then the strength of God is made perfect in the midst of weakness. It was when tiny creatures made Pharaoh tremble that his magicians said, "This is the finger of God." 2. God's strength is made perfect to the saint's own apprehension when he is weak. If you

have prospered in business, and enjoyed good health all your lives, you do not know much about the strength of God. You may have read about it in books; you may have seen it in others; but a grain of experience is worth a pound of observation, and you can only get knowledge of the power of God by an experimental acquaintance with your own weakness, and you will not be likely to get that except as you are led along the thorny way which most of God's saints have to travel. Great tribulation brings out the great strength of God. 3. The term "made perfect" also means achieves its purpose. God has not done for us what He means to do except we have felt our own strengthlessness. The strength of God is never perfected till our weakness is perfected. When our weakness is thoroughly felt, then the strength of God has done its work in us. 4. The strength of God is most perfected or most glorified by its using our strengthlessness. Imagine that Christianity had been forced upon men with the stern arguments which Mahomet placed in the hands of his first disciples, the glory would have redounded to human courage and not to the love of God. But when we know that twelve humble fishermen overthrew colossal systems of error and set up the Cross of Christ in their place, we adoringly exclaim, "This is the finger of God." And so when the Lord took a consecrated cobbler and sent him to Hindostan, whatever work was done by William Carey was evidently seen to be of the Lord. 5. All history shows that the great strength of God has always been displayed and perpetuated in human weakness. What made Christ so strong? Was it not that He condescended to be so weak? And how did He win His victory? By His patience, by His suffering. How has the Church ever been strong? What has brought forth the strength of God so that it has been undeniably manifest, and consequently operative upon mankind? Has it been the strength of the Church? No, but its weakness, for when men have seen believers suffer and die, it is then that they have beheld the strength of God in His people. The weakness of the martyr as he suffered revealed the strength of God in him, which held him fast to his principles while he was gradually consumed by the cruel flames. Quentin Matsys had to make a well-cover in iron one morning. His fellow-workmen were jealous, and therefore they took from him the proper tools, and yet with his hammer he produced a matchless work of art. So the Lord with instruments which lend Him no aid, but rather hinder Him, doeth greater works of grace to His own glory and honour. III. POWER INDWELLING. The word "dwell" means to tabernacle. "Just as the Shekinah light dwelt in the tent in the wilderness, so I glory to be a poor frail tent, that the Shekinah of Jesus may dwell in my soul." 1. Paul puts the power of Christ in opposition to his own, because if he is not weak, then he has strength of his own; if then what he does is done by his own strength, there is no room for Christ's; but if his own power be gone there is space for the power of Christ. 2. But what is the power of Christ? (1) The power of grace. (2) Christly power: the kind of power which is conspicuous in the life of Jesus. The power of Alexander was a power to command men, and inspire them with courage for great enterprises. The power of Demosthenes was the power of eloquence, the power to stir the patriotic Greeks. Love and patience were Christ's power, and even now these subdue the hearts of men, and make Jesus the sufferer to be Jesus the King. (3) It was a part of the "all power" which our Lord declared was given unto Him in heaven and in earth; "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." Paul desired to have that power tabernacling in himself, for he knew that if he had to "go and teach all nations" he would have to suffer in so doing, and so he takes the suffering cheerfully, that he might have the power. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Courage*:—This saying has a paradoxical sound, but many paradoxes hide a deep and true meaning. Let us see what meaning is latent in this declaration of Paul. There are two theories of moral force; one we will call the Pagan theory, the other the Christian theory. Paganism says: "The secret of power is in self-confidence, self-esteem, self-reliance. Believe in yourself, then others will believe in you. Speak boldly, confidently, with assurance, and you will convince and persuade. Assume that you know, and you will have the credit of knowing. The race is to the swift, and the battle to the strong. God is on the side of the heaviest battalions. The men who have self-confidence carry everything before them. He who claims the most will get the most. Confidence carries everything before it; it gives success to the lawyer, merchant, physician, clergyman, politician. It is an element in all popularity." Thus speaks the Pagan theory of force, and there is much truth in it; for if there had not been some truth in Paganism, it would not have lasted as long as it has. This Pagan doctrine still rules, and passes for wisdom. The Christian theory of moral force is opposite to this. It says: "The kingdom of heaven belongs

to the poor in spirit. He who exalteth himself shall be abased; he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Jesus, on all occasions, emphasised this law. Even in so small a matter as the point of precedence at a feast, He called the disciples' attention to the fact that those who pushed forward to the best places were requested to retire, and that those who took the lowest places were invited to go up higher. I suppose all will admit that the Christian theory is the most sound as regards knowledge. The first condition of learning anything is to confess our ignorance. In seeking truth, said Socrates, we must begin by admitting our ignorance. In seeking goodness, said Jesus, we must begin by admitting our sinfulness. The work of Socrates, as he himself describes it, was to make men understand how little they knew. By his keen questions he brought one after another of the young men of Athens to admit that he really was totally ignorant of what he professed to understand. And, in fact, one of the chief obstacles to knowledge is our fear of being thought ignorant. Weakness is often strength, and strength only weakness. A human infant is the weakest of living creatures. It is unable to help itself, and therefore it is strong in the help of others. Its cry calls to its aid the tenderness and most watchful care. The same principle is often seen in national affairs. Consider the case of the Ottoman Empire. At one time it was so strong that it seriously threatened the safety of all Europe. It brought together vast armies of the bravest soldiers from Egypt, Persia, Hungary, and Asia Minor. Proud and defiant, they prepared to march through Vienna to Rome. But their pride went before destruction. Their terrible strength gave them such arrogant confidence that they were destroyed. Now Turkey is weak; weaker than any of the great nations of Europe. But because she is so weak that no one fears her, the nations of Europe protect her. They prevent Russia, whose strength they fear, from taking Constantinople from the Turks, whose weakness they know. In like manner the weakness of Denmark, Belgium, Switzerland, have given them safety amid the revolutions of Europe. In all practical matters, only he who sees the difficulties of his task is prepared to overcome them. The merchant knows how hard it is to acquire a great estate; the scholar knows what long and laborious days must be spent in the pursuit of knowledge. No man is fitted to be a reformer who has not infinite resources of patience and inexhaustible supplies of hope. Then he will trust, not in himself, but in the principle he advocates, and out of weakness he will be made strong. There is a power in the silent appeal of weakness to strength. When Alexander, in his amazing conquests, had overcome Persia, he came to the tomb of Cyrus, which to-day is still to be seen. On that tomb he read the inscription, "O man! whosoever thou art, and whencesoever thou comest (for come thou wilt), I am Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire. Envy me not the little earth that covers my body." Alexander was much moved by these words, and gave orders that this tomb should be respected. The weakness of the grave was stronger than the armies of the Persian king to prevent the desecration of the tomb of Cyrus. But though the knowledge of evil is necessary to make us cautious and prudent, it is the sight of the good which gives us courage and energy to attack the evil. The inspiration which gives us power does not come from that habit of mind which dwells on evil, but on the opposite habit which loves to look at good. Everything great, noble, generous, and brave comes from keeping in sight this heavenly ideal, this supreme glory and beauty which descends from God into all hearts that trust Him. The great danger, therefore, is of being discouraged by dwelling exclusively or mainly on the dark side of the world; for this ends in despondency, apathy, and moral indifference. To work without hope is discouraging. We need the sense of progress to cheer and sustain us. To go round and round in a treadmill of mere drudgery takes our spirit out of us. Therefore we need a deeper and larger hope. We need to have faith in mental, moral, and spiritual progress; in the growth of the soul; in the unfolding of its higher powers, its larger faculties. When we have this sense of spiritual progress, we can bear outward disappointments more easily, sure that pain and sorrow may work for our highest good. But suppose we have no such sense of spiritual progress; that we do not seem to be growing wiser or better as the years pass by; that we often find ourselves, in some respects, worse than we were; that our conscience is not as sensitive, our purpose to do right not as fixed, our aim not as high. This is the most discouraging fact of all. I suppose that this is the very time when faith in Christ comes to our help. When we find nothing in ourselves on which to lean, Christ teaches us to lean more entirely on the pardoning grace of God and God's spiritual help. The meaning of the gospel of Jesus is this: that He does not come as a physician to those who

are whole, but to those who are sick. He comes to the poor in spirit; to the spiritually poor; to those who find little in themselves in which to trust. Jesus comes to us all to say, "Do not be discouraged. Never be discouraged." Though evil may abound, and the love of many grow cold, though we see no way out of surrounding difficulties, though even our brethren discourage our heart by their gloomy forebodings, and abandon the good cause, leaving us alone, still, let us never be discouraged. The Lord reigns. Chance does not reign. Bad men do not reign. He reigns who for ever educes lasting good out of transient evil. It is this perfect trust in a Divine Providence that gives us new power, and prevents us from being discouraged. Do not be discouraged about public affairs. In this country we have the least reason to fear; for experience here shows us that, in the long run, things come right. Courage can here overcome the worst dangers. Do not be discouraged because there seems so much to be done. If there is a great deal given us to do, there is plenty of time given us wherein to do it. Do not be discouraged in doing good. It may often seem as if you accomplished very little, as if, with all your efforts, you cannot effectually help those whom you wish to serve. When you lift them up, they fall again. But I believe we have, not merely to help ourselves, but to help each other. We may often make mistakes. We may sometimes do harm. But the greatest mistake of all would be to stand aloof from human sorrow. Best of all blessings is that human love, that generous sympathy which puts itself in the place of the sufferer, and gives him the comfort of knowing that he is not alone in the world, not forgotten by his fellow-men. The good of this is never lost. And let us not be discouraged by the amount of suffering, sin, and crime which we see around us. If the vast majority of men did not tell the truth, keep their promises, hold fast to honesty, society would dissolve and become a heap of sand. Be not discouraged, then, because you see and hear so much of what is evil in the world, but be sure that the good is much more widespread and more powerful. Thus we see that we cannot live without courage, and that courage comes to us from faith in things unseen and eternal. Courage comes to us from faith in an infinite Providence guiding all things aright, and making all things work together for good. Courage comes from knowing that when we stand by what is true and right, all the great powers of the universe are working with us. (*J. F. Clarke.*)

Man's extremity, God's opportunity :—I. IT IS CHRIST WHO SAYS THESE WORDS. It is the "strength," therefore, of a man—of One who knows weakness, and has been through weakness. This at once gives a reality to the promise, and makes it practical. Jesus, who had "strength" given to Him, says it. There is the same propriety and adaptation as when He says, "My peace"—the peace you see Me have—the peace I carry—"I give unto you." Then think of what "strength" Jesus had upon this earth to resist sin—to labour in those mighty works—to endure the reproaches, the unkindnesses, the treachery, the Cross, and then read these words.

II. WHAT IS IT TO "MAKE PERFECT"? 1. It means, "My strength finds its occasion and opportunity to work itself out, to consummate itself in weakness." Man's impotence invites and gives scope for the opportunity to display God's omnipotence. So God is strong for us just in proportion as we are helpless. He cannot and will not act where there is self-sufficiency. The ground is pre-occupied. You have only to be "weak" enough, to put out self enough, and give God range enough, then, if you will only believe it, as necessarily as nature always fills up her vacuums, God will come in to supply all your lack, and "His strength will be made perfect in your weakness."

2. All history and all experience bear their testimony to this truth. The "weak" ones have done all the work, and "the lame take the prey." What arm slew the greatest giant on record? A stripling's. Who changed the moral character of the whole world, and established a system which has out-lived and outgrown all the empires of earth? A few ordinary unlettered fishermen. Or, say, when have you done your best works? In what frame of mind were you when you performed the things on which you now look back with the greatest satisfaction? The lowliest. 3. Here is the comfort to our ministry. God does His own work in the way in which He may best magnify Himself. Therefore He does not employ "the angels," which "excel in strength," but the most unlikely of sinful men (1 Cor. i. 26-31). There is much ministerial work in the Church which seems to do great things; but that of which the effect is deep and abiding is almost always that of which, at the time, there was little praise, and no celebrity.

III. INFERENCES.

1. Every one ought to have in hand something which they feel to be quite beyond them, and therefore compels them to cast themselves on the broad undertaking of God. 2. Whatever is strong in you, whatever you may call your talent, always

recognise it as something in you, but not of you. 3. Never be afraid of any work which is clearly duty. Your capital may be nothing; but your resources are infinite. 4. Wherever you find yourself fail in anything, you have nothing to do but to go down a little lower, and make yourself less. Think more of emptying than of filling. To fill, is God's part; to empty, yours. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) **Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**—*The quietness of true power*:—Men are often deceived about power. Sometimes the man who appears strong is delicate, because his heart is weak. The bravado is generally a coward. We are tempted to admire power, after the type of Caesar and Napoleon. But the gospel gives us a new revelation of what power is. It elevates our idea of the power of God, to begin with. Jove came down with his thunder from the old Olympian Hills, and departed. Christ gave a manifestation of God's power in gentleness. Quiet power is—I. **CONSTRUCTIVE POWER.** There is the power of the cannon and the power of the trowel; the sculptor's power and the mitrailleuse power! So it is in life! There is destructive power; you can blast the reputation; you can inflame the passions of the mob. Yes, and there is an iconoclasin that destroys the temples of lust. John the Baptist did a great work in blasting the citadel of evil; but Christ came and took the living stones, and built a temple. But then it is quiet, slow! There is no sound of hammer; and the true power of the gospel is in that quiet influence which, day by day, comes upon your heart and life, and so distils as the dew. II. **A WISE POWER.** Everything depends upon adaptation. A sentence may save a soul; a word fitly spoken may never be forgotten. How many people are strong, but wrong! How much more would they have done if they had been quiet! "Christ the power of God"; let me add, "Christ the wisdom of God." Take His parables. The humblest peasant in Judæa could understand them. Take His warnings. How quiet they are! Take His tender, delicate, refined way of handling guilt. There is no rude touch there. III. **A BEAUTIFUL POWER.** Such a power is that which we exercise at home. The sceptre is full of jewels that are rich in loveliness, held in a mother's hands. Oh, how beautiful is the power of God! It is the power of grace. Quietness is power, and we admire it in every sphere. There is no power in dress that is loud and full of glaring colours. When all the young guests have gone into the room, the one in the muslin dress with a summer rose wins the supremacy of glory. So it is in speech. It is only over very uneducated minds that language full of coarse colour has a charm. The beauty of truth needs no adornment! So in highest things we see power always allied with beauty in religion. IV. **CHRIST-LIKE POWER.** All power is given to Christ. Yet it seems as if it broke upon the world without men knowing it! There was no earthquake, no storm! So it is now with the Christian man coming into a house; there is nothing startling about it! So it is where Christian woman wields her might of influence. It is not the notes of exclamation which make a powerful writing or a powerful life! "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." The lives that have exercised the most potent influence have been the "silent rivers" that never broke over the boulders and the rocks! Not the Mississippi or Missouri, the Niger or the Nile! not Abana or Pharpar have exercised the most influence in history—but the little Jordan! V. **LASTING.** The noisy little decanter bubbles and chokes in its throat, makes a noise, and is empty; the stream flows on and on. I have been at Dolgelly, and have gone out a few miles, after a storm, to see the majesty of the waters; and I remember how grand appeared the torrent, and how beautiful the colour in the waterfall. Other guests, however, went two days afterwards, and found it just a little trickle. All its power was spent. So it often is in life. There is your very fast and furious friend, the man boiling over with adjectives; and there is the less demonstrative, quiet, steady friendship. VI. **TERRIBLE POWER.** The Word of God is quick and powerful. I preach the retribution of conscience and memory, an absent God, and an avenger within; and that is a punishment greater than you can bear. VII. **THE SPIRIT'S POWER.** "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." (*W. M. Statham.*)

Ver. 10. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities . . . for Christ's sake.—*The use of infirmities*:—"Some of the arable land along the shore on the south-east coast of Sutherland is almost covered with shore stones, from the size of a turkey's egg to eight pounds weight. Several experiments have been made to collect these off the land, expecting a better crop; but in every case the land proved less productive by removing them; and on some small spots of land it was found so

evident, that they were spread on the land again, to ensure their usual crop of oats or pease." We would fain be rid of all our infirmities which, to our superficial conceptions, appear to be great hindrances to our usefulness, and yet it is most questionable if we should bring forth any fruit unto God without them. Much rather, therefore, will I glory in infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sanctifying power of sorrow*:—"For Christ's sake," that is the main point: the apostle took pleasure in pain, not as pain, but for Christ's sake. In itself sorrow is not sanctifying. It is like fire, whose effect depends upon the substance with which it comes in contact. Fire melts wax, inflames straw, and hardens clay. So it is only in afflictions borne for Christ's sake, that is, in Christ's name, and with Christ's spirit, that we can rejoice. Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered in the flesh, arm yourself likewise with the same mind. The Cross alone extracts life out of pain; without this it is death-giving. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *For when I am weak, then am I strong.—Weakness a source of strength*:—I. PAUL'S WEAKNESS. That is a quality which we are not accustomed to associate with the apostle, knowing what we do of his labours; but when we go deeper we discover that one of the most distinctive preparations for the work which he accomplished was his feebleness. Wherein, then, did it consist? 1. It was not intellectual. Even his vilest detractors could not deny his mental superiority. 2. It was not moral. There was no vacillation about him. 3. It was physical. Paul had to contend with some distressing bodily infirmity. II. THE CONNECTION OF PAUL'S WEAKNESS WITH HIS STRENGTH. 1. There was a strength in his weakness. In the Divine administration there is a wonderful law of compensation. 2. There was strength as the result of his weakness. (1) The consciousness of his own weakness led him to cast himself unreservedly upon the Divine help. (2) But looking toward man, the result of this weakness was in Paul a great outflow of tenderness. One cannot read his letters without feeling the heart-beat of his sympathy. 3. But there was, also, strength surmounting his weakness. In spite of his infirmity, he laboured on just as though he had nothing of the kind about him. He was impelled to do this. (1) By his faith. Men as they looked on Dante when he walked the streets after he had written his "Inferno," and marked the intensity of his earnest face, said one to another, "See the man who has been in hell." The apostle moved in the midst of unseen realities. (2) By gratitude. Never was consecration more thorough than his. He felt that he owed everything to Jesus, and to Jesus he yielded all. Conclusion: 1. Here is a use of explanation. You wonder, perhaps, why you have such feebleness. When you see others with robust frames and unbroken health, you are apt to say, "Ah, if I had but their strength how much more might I do for my Saviour!" But you are mistaken. If you had their strength you might not really be so strong as you are now. 2. A use of consolation. You wish to work for the Lord, and think you can do nothing because of your feebleness. Then see in Paul's life how much can be accomplished, weakness notwithstanding. Nor is he a solitary instance. Think of Calvin and his irritable temper and a fragile and diseased body. 3. A use of direction. We can overcome our weakness only through a faith and a consecration like Paul's. The one answer that will avail to the cry "Who is sufficient for these things?" is this: "My sufficiency is of God." "Out of Saul, what has made Paul?" Faith. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Strength in weakness*:—Note—I. THIS GENERAL LAW APART FROM ITS RELIGIOUS BEARINGS. 1. Weakness is sometimes perfected in strength. Its greatest manifestations are constantly seen in those whom the world deems the strongest. A strong man is likely to be a self-reliant man, and such a man is morally certain to display some weakness. A man, again, who is consciously strong at some point, is likely to think that his strength at that point will make up for his carelessness at other points. For instance, you often see men of great intellect who are morally weak and loose, and who count on their intellectual strength to cover their moral deficiency. The man who is financially strong is now and then tempted to believe that money can carry him over the lack of courtesy or consideration for others. The strong men of the Bible are also its weak men. Abraham's falsehood, Noah's excess, Jacob's worldliness, Moses' unhalloved zeal, Elijah's faithless despair, David's lust and murder, Solomon's luxuriousness and sensuality—all tell the same story which we read in the biographies of the scholars, statesmen, monarchs, and generals of later times. 2. On the other hand, strength is perfected in weakness. Let an ignorant but conceited man go to a foreign city. He says, "A guide is a nuisance, and I will have none of them. I will find out

the objects of interest for myself." And so he goes blundering along, exposing himself to insult and even to danger, wasting hours in his search for a palace or an art-gallery—a sorry exhibition of weakness. Another man goes into the same city, quite as ignorant, but follows a trustworthy and intelligent guide. He gains new ideas, while the strong man, so independent of help, is standing at street corners and painfully studying his guide-book. When they return home, the man who was weak enough to accept guidance is the stronger man in knowledge. Can you imagine any object more weak and helpless than a blind child, and yet what a strength it wins from that very weakness! Out of weakness the child is made strong. And then there is the familiar fact of the increased power imparted to touch and ear by the very infirmity. Then, again, the consciousness of infirmity often makes its subject so cautious that he really accomplishes more than another who is free from infirmity. The man whose health and strength are exuberant, is likely to be careless of them; while he who rarely knows what it is to be without an aching head or a feverish pulse, therefore works by rule and economises minutes and brings discipline to bear on rebellious nerves and muscles. It is this power of self-mastery wrought out through weakness, which gives such power over other minds and hearts.

II. THE TRUTH ON ITS RELIGIOUS SIDE. 1. Real strength comes only out of that weakness which, distrustful of itself, gives itself up to God. (1) Take the case of Paul. Here is a man beset with various infirmities. And yet at this distance we can see that that very weakness of Paul was his strength. For it gave God's power its full opportunity. It is a strange gift that we have of preventing God from doing for us all that He would. God often sees fit to use the very elements you and I would throw away. We do not count weakness among the factors of success. The world is at a loss what to do with it; but when God takes hold of weakness it becomes another thing and works under another law. So then Paul, having abandoned the idea of doing anything by himself, God took this weakness and wrought out victory for Christ's cause and for Paul by means of it. (a) Take the impression which the character and history of Paul make on your own minds. You know something of the power which Luke's record of his life and labours exerts in stimulating Christian zeal and in educating character. Do not all these things get a stronger hold on you through the very sympathy which the apostle's sufferings call out? Did not his very infirmities endear him to the churches in his own day? Had not these somewhat to do with the liberal supplies from Philippi, and with the heart-breaking sorrow of the Ephesian elders at Miletus? (b) After all that we read of Paul, we rise from his story and from his writings with a stronger impression of Christ than of him. The radiance of the light eclipses the wonder of the lamp. That is as Paul would have had it. (2) Or go farther back. Christ called Peter a rock; and yet at that stage Peter reminds us rather of those rocks which one meets with in clay-soil regions, which crumble at the touch, and are, least of all stones, fit for foundations. Peter, blustering, forward, boastful, with a great deal of strength of his own, which crumbled into weakness at the first touch of danger—and yet—"On this rock will I build My Church," &c. The Church which began under the ministry of weak Peter is surely no feeble factor in to-day's society: but the Peter of Pentecost was not the Peter of Gethsemane. Between these two he had learned a great deal about the weakness of human strength and the strength which God makes perfect in human weakness. The consequence is that whereas in Gethsemane Peter asserts himself, at Pentecost he asserts Jesus. Where he asserts himself the issue is a coward and a traitor. Where he passes out of sight behind Jesus, he is the hero of the infant Church, whom we love and honour.

2. The text is no encouragement to cherish weakness. The object of Christian training is to make men strong: and Paul can do all things, but only through Christ that strengtheneth him. How beautifully the context brings out this thought! What was the ark of the covenant? Nothing but a simple box overlaid with gold, such a thing as any skilful workman could make. And yet, when it fell into the hands of Israel's enemies, the priest declared "the glory is departed from Israel." What gave it this importance and meaning? It was that which rested upon it—the glory which made its resting-place the holiest spot in the world. And so, when the power of Christ rests upon a life, all its commonplace, its weakness, are transfigured, and the weak things of the world confound the things which are mighty. Thus it comes to pass that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God ordains strength. 3. The truth of the text is wider than some of us have been wont to think. It asserts not only that God will assist our weakness, but that He will make our weakness itself

an element of strength. We are, naturally, like one who carries round with him a rough precious-stone, ignorant of its value, and ready to throw it away or to part with it for a trifle. This thing, weakness, we should be glad to throw away. Christ comes like a skilful lapidary and shows us its value. I remember a little church among the mountains, which sprang up through the labours of a man the best of whose life was spent in trouble—a church founded among a population little better than heathen; and in the church building there was framed and hung up a magnificent rough agate which he had picked up somewhere among the hills, with the inscription, “And such were some of you.” And that stone tells the story of our text—the story of the Church on earth; a weak, erring church, its leaders stained and scarred with human infirmity, yet with a line of victory and spiritual power running through it like a track of fire: rough stones hewn out of the mountains, carved into polished pillars in the temple of the Lord. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*)

Vers. 11–21. **I am become a fool in glorifying; ye have compelled me.**—*Paul's state of mind concerning his connection with the Church at Corinth*:—I. IN THE PAST. 1. He remembers the ill-treatment which forced him to speak with apparent boastfulness of himself (ver. 11). The words are partly ironical, partly speak of an impatient consciousness, that what he had been saying would seem to give colour to the opprobrious epithets that had been flung at him. 2. He remembers the work which he had done amongst them, and which raised him above all the apostles (ver. 21). Paul possessed supernatural power, and wrought supernatural results. This they could not deny (1 Cor. ii. 4). Can a man who was conscious of such power as this be charged with egotism in proclaiming it in the presence of his detractors? Does he become “a fool in glorying”? 3. He remembers that for his labours amongst them he had not sought any temporal assistance (ver. 13). Probably it had been insinuated that Paul cared less for the churches at Corinth than for those at Macedonia, because he had maintained his independence and sought no gifts. II. PROSPECTIVELY. Here are—1. Loving resolves (ver. 14). He resolves that he would not be burdensome to them, but pursue the same independency and act as a father laying up for them, not they for him, &c. And all this, whether they love him or not. What noble generosity breathes in all these resolves! 2. Painful memories (ver. 16). This, again, is ironical. You say that although I made no demand on your purses for myself, that I did want a collection for the “saints,” and that out of that I would craftily take what I wanted. He seems to fling back upon them their accusation of his being crafty, and catching them “with guile” (vers. 17, 18). Neither Titus, &c., nor he had ever sponged on them, but had maintained their high independency. In saying this, he deprecates the idea that he was amenable to them for his conduct, but to God only (ver. 19). 3. Anxious apprehensions (ver. 20). His tender nature seemed to shrink at the supposition of the old evils still rampant there (ver. 21). The great thing to be dreaded is sin. It is the “abominable thing,” the soul destroyer of humanity. Conclusion: 1. Do not judge any minister by the opinions of his brethren. Paul was the best of men; but in the opinion of his brethren he was the worst. 2. Do not cease in your endeavours to benefit men because they calumniate you. The worst men require your services most, the “whole need not a physician.” 3. Do not sponge on your congregation. Do not seek theirs, but them. 4. Do not cover before anything but sin. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Though I be nothing.**—*A sermon upon one nothing by another nothing*:—1. The Divine discipline had succeeded well with Paul. There was danger of his being exalted above measure, and therefore there was given him a thorn, &c. His humility comes out in the incident before us. He was compelled to defend himself, and in the midst of strong expressions of self-assertion, every one of them severely truthful, his true humility is manifest. 2. Although Paul was undoubtedly humble, yet there is not a particle of cant in any of his expressions. There is no humility in such self-depreciation as would lead you to deny what God has wrought in or by you: that might be wilful falsehood. Mock humility creeps around us, but every honest man loathes it, and God loathes it too. Now, the apostle says that he is not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, &c., and yet for all that he finishes his detail of experience by saying, “Though I be nothing.” I. THIS WAS OTHER MEN'S ESTIMATE OF HIM. You may be starting the Christian life full of zeal; but you dwell among a people who count you hot-headed and self-conceited, and do their best to thwart you. Be comforted, for if Paul heard that, in the judgment of many, his personal presence was weak,

&c., you need not wonder if the like thing happens to you. The case is harder with older servants of God. After a long life of usefulness the churches often forget all that a man was and did in his vigorous times, and now they treat him with indifference. You must not marvel. The apostle of the Gentiles, when he was "such an one as Paul the aged," knew that to many he was nothing. Paul was nothing—1. In the estimation of hatred. His Jewish brethren, when he was an advocate of their principles, thought him some great one; when he went over to the hated sect he was nothing. Such is, in a measure, the case when men become thoroughly followers of Jesus. If a scientific man is of infidel principles he is cried up as an eminent thinker; but should he be a Christian, he is antiquated and narrow. 2. In the valuation of envy. There arose even in the Church certain brethren who loved pre-eminence, and found the apostle already in the highest place. They strove to rise by pulling him down. It is an unfortunate thing for some men, if they love their own ease, that they have risen to conspicuous usefulness, for in a middle place they might have been allowed to be something, but jealousy is now resolved to rate them at nothing. 3. To those who desired that Christianity should make a fair show in the flesh. Certain brethren had thought to adorn the doctrine of Christ with human wisdom. Our apostle abhorred this. "We use," saith he, "great plainness of speech," and therefore they retaliated by declaring that he was not a man of great mind—that, in fact, he was nothing. Other teachers arose who took the way of tradition and ritualism. To which Paul replied, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." Straightway the High Churchmen discovered that Paul was nothing.

II. HIS OWN ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF. 1. This is a very great correction upon his original estimate of himself. 2. This corrected estimate resulted from the enlightenment which he received at his conversion. What a flood of light does the Lord pour in upon a man's soul when He brings him to Himself! Then great Saul dwarfed into little Paul, and the learned rabbi shrivelled into a poor brother, who was glad to learn from humble Ananias. 3. The force of that estimate had increased by a growing belief in the doctrine of grace. In proportion as he learned the fulness, freeness, richness, and sovereignty of Divine grace did he see, side by side with it, the nakedness, the filthiness, the nothingness of man, and so he who could best glory in the grace of God thought less and less of himself. 4. His own internal experience had very much helped him to feel that he was nothing, for he had experienced great spiritual struggles. "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" 5. When the apostle said this he meant that he was—(1) Nothing in comparison with his Lord. (2) Nothing to boast of. Albeit he had been a faithful sufferer for Christ, that he had preached the gospel in the regions beyond. If we rise very near to God, and conquer open sin, we shall still have to look within, and say, "I am nothing." Boasting is a sure sign of failure. Gilded wood may float, but an ingot of gold will sink. (3) Nothing to trust in. I am strong in the Lord when He strengthens me, but I am as weak as an infant without His aid. "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." (4) Nothing worth considering. "If there is any good thing for me to do, I never calculate whether I shall be a loser by it or a gainer, for I am not worth taking into the account. If Christ's kingdom will but come, it does not matter whether Paul lives or dies." Christ's kingdom will go on without me. Conclusion—1. May we all be made by Divine grace to say "Though I be nothing." (1) It will prevent pride. It will prevent our being mortified, because notice is not taken of us. No man will look for honour among his fellows when he owns that he is nothing. (2) It will also prevent severe censures of others. We are all very handy at picking holes in our brethren's coats; but when we are nothing we shall draw back our hand. I wish that those who criticise ministers would think of this. (3) It will help us to avoid all self-seeking. A man who feels himself to be nothing will be easily contented. (4) It will inspire gratitude. "Though I be nothing, yet infinite grace is mine." 2. When the apostle says, "Though I be nothing," that word shows that there was a fact in the background. (1) He had been caught up into the third heaven, and had enjoyed a special revelation of Christ. We, too, have been very near the Beloved, and He has manifested Himself to us as He does not unto the world. All this you know, and I also know it, "though I be nothing." (2) "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad," by enabling us to serve His cause. This we are right glad of, though we heartily add, "though I be nothing." (3) We can also believably say, "though I be nothing," yet the Spirit of God dwells in me. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 12-15. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you.—*The signs of an apostle* are frequently referred to by Paul, and are of various kinds. By far the most important and frequently insisted on is success in evangelistic work. He who converts men and founds churches has the supreme and final attestation of apostleship (1 Cor. ix. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 1-3). In this passage Calvin makes patience a sign. Patience is certainly a characteristic Christian virtue, and it is magnificently exercised in the apostolic life, but it is not peculiarly apostolic. Patience, here—"every kind of Christian patience," rather—brings before our minds the conditions under which Paul did his apostolic work. Discouragements of every description, bad health, suspicion, dislike, contempt, moral apathy and moral licence—the weight of all these pressed upon him heavily, but he bore up under them, and did not suffer them to break his spirit or to arrest his labours. His endurance was a match for them all, and the power of Christ that was in him broke forth in spite of them in apostolic signs. There were conversions, in the first place; but there were also miracles, viewed under three different aspects. 1. "Signs," as addressed to man's intelligence, and conveying a spiritual meaning. 2. Wonders, as giving a shock to feeling, and moving nature in those depths which sleep through common experience. 3. Powers, as arguing in him who works them a more than human efficiency. But no doubt the main character they bore in the apostle's mind was that of *charismata*—gifts of grace, which God ministered to the Church by His Spirit. It is natural for an unbeliever to misunderstand even N.T. miracles, because he wishes to conceive of them, as it were, *in vacuo*, or in relation to the laws of nature; in the N.T. itself they are conceived in relation to the Holy Ghost. Even Jesus is said in the Gospels to have cast out devils by the Spirit of God; and when Paul wrought "signs and wonders and powers," it was in carrying out his apostolic work, graced by the same Spirit. What things he had done at Corinth we have no means of knowing; but the Corinthians knew, and they knew that these things had no arbitrary or accidental character, but were the tokens of an apostle. (*J. Denney, B.D.*) **What is it wherein ye were inferior to other Churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you?**—*Burdensomeness*: What the word signifies is evident, for it was what the apostle steadily declined to do—viz., live at the expense of the Corinthians. Now there are in all languages many ways of expressing this idea, mostly more or less uncomplimentary. It is likely that the apostle would in this place have used one of the more disparaging expressions, for evidently there is a good deal of restrained sarcasm and scorn of mercenary motives in this part of his letter. Yet the word does not at first sight appear to have much point, for it is generally translated "render numb" or "make torpid" (*cf. Gen. xxxii. 25, LXX.*), and is a verb formed from *βάρον*, the name of a kind of torped which has a reputation for numbing the hand that touches it. But I venture to go back to the fish itself, and to suggest that the popular use of the word was a somewhat different one. Was not the torped supposed to attach itself by suction to some creature of larger growth, and to make use of it for its own support? Whether it does so is of comparatively small concern, for neither then nor now has popular language had much regard for the facts of natural history. I strongly suspect that the idea really embodied in the word is that vulgarly expressed by our own phrase, "to sponge upon." I can only guess that this latter phrase borrows its meaning from the real or supposed parasitic habits of the sponge as a living creature. If it be so, then there would be a singular resemblance in history and meaning between the two expressions, each borrowed by a seafaring people from the apparent habits of a marine animal, and applied with some contempt to the conduct of unworthy men. At any rate, it does not seem to me at all unlikely that the apostle would have used such an expression as "sponging upon" here. He was never careful of the elegance of his language when he wished it to be forcible, and in this Epistle especially he makes no attempt to be dignified. Evidently he had in his mind the very words and phrases which his vulgar detractors at Corinth had used concerning him. They had reached him in no mild dilutions, and he made no pretence of not feeling their point. They had accused him, as I think, of having "sponged upon" other Churches, while, with a truly natural inconsistency, they did not conceal their vexation at his refusal to put himself under any obligation to them. Wonderful is the lofty earnestness with which he deals with these vulgar topics, gilding the muddy levels with the glow and sparkle of his own ardent charity. But I think he did not hesitate to repeat their own slang. He had not "sponged upon" them, it was true, and did not intend to sponge upon them, however often he came to them. (*R. Winter-*

botham, M.A., B.Sc., LL.B.) **I seek not yours, but you.**—*The property right we are to get in souls* :—It is our common way, as well as delusion, to be desiring what men have, and not the men themselves, to get a property, if possible, out of their property, and not to create the same by our own industry. The manner of our great apostle is exactly contrary. The value one man has to another; or, what is the same, the real interest of property which a true disciple has, or may have, in the souls of other men. I propose to show the real value of one soul, or man, to another. I suppose there may be some who had never such a thought occur to them in their lives. We have so many public wars and private quarrels, so many rivalries, that it becomes a great part of our life to keep off or, if possible, to keep under, one another. Furthermore, we get accustomed to the idea that there is no property but legal property—no property right, therefore, in a man to be thought of, save the ownership that makes him a slave. Whereas the dearest, broadest properties we have are not legal. The wife does not legally own her husband, though she says, with how much meaning, “He is mine.” No man legally owns his friend, or the landscapes, or the ranges of the sea. Putting aside, then, all such false impressions, I now undertake to show that one man has to another a value more real than gold, or lands, or any legal property of the world can have. And I open the argument here by calling your attention to the fact that God so evidently means to make every community valuable to every other and—so far, at least—every man to every other. We see this on a magnificent scale in the article of commerce. Here we find the nations all at work for each other, Your breakfast is gotten up for you, as it were, by the whole world, and so far you possess the world. The same, again, is true of all the arts, professions, trades and grades of employment in a given community. They are at work for each other in ways of concurrent service. All injustice, wrong, and fraud excluded, they so far own each other. Their industries and gifts are all so many complementary contributions. And again, what we discover in these mere economic relations is the type of a mutual interest and ownership in qualities that are personal. The very idea of society and the social nature is that we shall be a want and a gift of enjoyment one to another. We possess, in short, society, and society is universal ownership. To see what reality there is in this, you have only to imagine how desolate and how truly insupportable your life would be in a state of complete solitude or absolutely sole existence. Not that you want merely to receive outward conveniences; you want society of soul, to speak and be spoken to, to play out feeling and have it played back by some answering nature. You wade the rivers, and creep through the forests, and climb the hills, looking for you know not what, resting nowhere, sighing and groaning everywhere. What we call society, in this manner, is the usufruct we have of each other, and has a property value as truly as the food that supplies our bodies. Again, what interest every soul may have, or what property get, in other souls will be seen still more affectingly in the fact that, bittered as we are by selfishness, almost everything we do looks, in some way, to the approbation, or favouring opinion, or inspiration of others. We dress, we build, we cultivate our bestowments generally with a view to the impressions or opinions of others. I have lingered thus in the domain of the natural life because the illustrations here furnished are so impressive. Let us enter now the field of Christian love and duty, and carry our argument up into the higher relations here existing. If selfishness even finds so great value in the sentiments, opinions, homages of other men, how shall it be with goodness and beneficence? Here it is that we come out into the great apostle’s field, where he says, “Not yours, but you.” “It is not,” he would say, “what you can give me or withhold from me, but it is what I can do to you, and be in you, and make you to be—to raise you up out of sin into purity and liberty and truth, to fill you with the light of God and His peace, to make you like God. This is my reward, which, if I may get, I want no other. For this I journey, and preach, and write.” He makes them in this manner a property to himself. Let us look a little into this matter of property. How does a man, for example, come to be acknowledged as the owner of a piece of land and to say to himself, “It is mine”? The general answer given to this question is that we get a property in things by putting our industry into them, in ways of use, culture, and improvement. This makes our title. Just so when a Christian benefactor enters good into a soul; when he takes it away from the wildness and disorder of nature by the prayers and faithful labours he expends upon it, the necessary result is that he gets a property in it, feels it to be his, values it as being his. Neither is it anything to say that he gets, in this manner, no exclusive title to it, therefore no

property at all. No kind of property is exclusive. God is still concurrent owner of all the lands we hold in fee. The State is so far owner. So a man may get ownership in his neighbour and his poor brother, and the State may have ownership in both, and God a higher ownership in all. And the ownership in all cases is only the more real because it is not exclusive. And how great and blessed a property it is to him we can only see by a careful computation of the values by which he measures it. First, as he has come to look himself on the eternal in everything, he has a clear perception of souls as being the most real of all existences—more real than lands and gold, and a vastly higher property. Next, finding this or that human spirit or soul in a condition of darkness and disease and fatal damage, he begins forthwith to find an object in it, and an inspiring hope to be realised in its necessity. He takes it thus upon himself, hovers round it in love, and prayer, and gracious words, and more gracious example, to regain it to truth and to God. For if it be a matter so inspiring to a Newton that he may put into other minds the right scientific conception of light or of the stars, how much greater and higher the interest a good soul has in imparting to another goodness, the element of its own Divine peace and well-being. Then again, as we get a property in other men by the power we exert in them, how much greater the property obtained by that kind of power which is supernaturally, transformingly beneficent, that which subdues enmity, illuminates darkness, fructifies sterility, changes discord to harmony, and raises a spirit in ruin up to be a temple of God's indwelling life. What a thought, indeed, is this for a Christian disciple to entertain, that he may exalt the consciousness of a human soul or spirit for ever, and live in it for ever as a causality of joy and beauty. Furthermore, when one has gained another to a holy life, there is a most dear, everlasting relationship established between them. Hence, also, it is that the Scriptures of God's truth are so much in the commendation of this heavenly property. If we go after fame, they tell us that the name of the wicked shall rot. If we go after riches and cover ourselves with the outward splendours of fortune, they tell us that we must go out of life as poor as any, for that, having brought nothing material into the world, we can carry nothing material out. And then they add, do the works of love and truth, and these shall go with you. He that winneth souls is wise. If thy brother sin against thee, gain, if possible, thy brother. Just here, in fact, will be opened to your now purified love the discovery of this great truth, viz., that there is indeed no real property at all but spirit-property, or property in spirit—a possession, that is, by each soul of what he has added to the moral universe of the good. All values here become social, values of truth, and feeling, and worship, and conscious affinity with God. And this is heaven, the state of mutual ownership and everlasting usufruct, prepared in all God's righteous populations by what they have righteously done. Accepting now the solid and sublimely practical truth thus carefully expounded, the salvation of men is seen to be a work that ought to engage every Christian, and a work that to be fitly done must be heartily and energetically done. To this end consider well that you are set to gain a property in every man you save. In some dearest, truest sense he is to be yours for ever, to own you as his benefactor, and to be your crown of rejoicing, having your life entered into and working through his for ever. Consider, also, how this double-acting property relation holds good, even between Christ and His people. "Not yours, but you" is the principle that brings Him into the world. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *Not yours, but you*:—Men are usually quick to suspect others of the vices to which they themselves are prone. It is very hard for one who never does anything but with an eye to what he can make out of it to believe that there are other people actuated by higher motives. So Paul had over and over again to meet the hateful charge of making money out of his apostleship. Where did Paul learn this passionate desire to possess these people, and this entire suppression of self in the desire? It was a spark from a sacred fire, a drop from an infinite ocean, an echo of a Divine voice. I. So, then, first of all I remark, CHRIST DESIRES PERSONAL SURRENDER. "I seek not yours, but *you*," is the very mother-tongue of love; but upon our lips, even when our love is purest, there is a tinge of selfishness blending with it, and very often the desire for another's love is as purely selfish as the desire for any material good. And that is the only kind of life that is blessed; the only true nobleness and beauty and power are measured by and accurately correspond with the completeness of our surrender of ourselves to Jesus Christ. As long as the earth was thought to be the centre of the planetary system there was nothing but confusion in the heavens. Shift the centre to the sun, and all becomes order and beauty.

The root of sin and the mother of death is making myself my own law and Lord; the germ of righteousness and the first pulsations of life lie in yielding ourselves to God in Christ, because He has yielded Himself unto us. And be sure of this, that no such giving of myself away in the sweet reciprocities of a higher than human affection is possible, in the general and on the large scale, if you evacuate from the gospel the great truth, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." II. CHRIST SEEKS PERSONAL SERVICE. "I seek . . . you"; not only for My love, but for My tools, for My instruments in carrying out the purposes for which I died, and establishing My dominion in the world. I cannot imagine a man who in any deep sense has realised his obligations to that Saviour, and in any real sense has made the great act of self-renunciation and crowned Christ as his Lord, living for the rest of his life, as so many professing Christians do, dumb and idle in so far as work for the Master is concerned. It is no use to flog, flog, flog at idle Christians, and try to make them work. There is only one thing that will set them to work, and that is that they shall live nearer their Master, and find out more of what they owe to Him. This surrender of ourselves for direct Christian service is the only solution of the problem of how to win the world for Jesus Christ. Professionals cannot do it. This direct service cannot be escaped or commuted by a money payment. In the old days a man used to escape serving in the militia if he found a substitute and paid for him. There are a great many good Christian people that seem to think that Christ's army is recruited on that principle. But it is a mistake. "I seek you, not yours." III. CHRIST SEEKS US AND OURS. Not you without yours, still less yours without you. Consecration of self is extremely imperfect which does not include the consecration of possessions, and, conversely, consecration of possessions which does not flow from and is not accompanied by the consecration of self is nought. If, then, the great law of self-surrender is to run through the whole Christian life, that law, as applied to our dealing with what we own, prescribes three things. The first is stewardship, not ownership, and that all round the circumference of our possessions. Again, the law of self-surrender, in its application to all that we have, involves the continual reference to Jesus Christ in our disposition of these our possessions. Again, the law of self-surrender, in its application to our possessions, implies that there shall be an element of sacrifice in our use of these, whether they be possessions of intellect, of acquirement, of influence, of position, or of material wealth. The law of help is sacrifice. So let us all get near to that great central fire till it melts our hearts. Let the love which is our hope be our pattern. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Property in souls:—1. The instinct of acquisition is a primordial element of human nature that ought to be gratified. Not to acquire property of some kind or other is to be a pauper, a parasite, a leech. We all are born poor, though sons, it may be, of a Cæsar; but, unless we die rich, life is a failure. By pulling at the oar we gain muscle; by the sail or the engine we subdue the sea; and by intellectual and spiritual mastery of forces we make higher possessions really ours. 2. Christianity appeals to this instinct. The Master tells us it is His good pleasure to give us the kingdom. Lord Bacon wanted all knowledge; Alexander wanted other worlds to conquer. So would I desire a title-deed to heaven—nay, more, be able rightfully to say to God, "Thou art mine!" I will not consent to be a pauper; possession alone can gratify my aspiration for property. I. WHAT IS PROPERTY, AND HOW CAN IT BE RIGHTFULLY OURS? Property is my other self; it is that into which I put my spirit, life, toil, culture, and affection. Thus it acquires a value, as it represents all these. Christ sees the travail of His soul, and is satisfied in the redemption of this world. The universe is God's. He has put Himself into it, His wisdom, power, and love. The Church is Christ's; He has put Himself into it. So that is mine into which I put myself, whatever may be the legal view of it. Let us try the key to different locks. Look at—1. Material wealth. The millions which a gambler wins are not really his property. Reckless speculation does not create wealth. Inheritance is not real property till I make it mine. Caleb gave away Hebron, but the sons of Anak were to be dispossessed. A rich man leaves property. It is merely "addendum" till the son puts his impress of thought and enterprise upon it; otherwise it is a mere income, as is the cheese on which the mouse nibbles in the granary. The name of the originator sticks to an invention, or to whatever has creative art in it, though the man be dead. We say, Morse's Telegraph, Fairbank's Scales, Raphael's Madonna. 2. Art. I build and furnish a house. Paintings are hung up; but I know nothing of art, and cannot get into the creations of a Claude or a Titian. My neighbour studies them, feasts on them,

for they represent and reflect his beautiful soul. The pictures are really *his*. 3. Literature. I buy a book, but cannot understand it. My neighbour borrows, reads, understands, and appropriates it. He returns it—no, only the leather, paper, and ink, for the thoughts, spirits, and life are his. Thus all theology, philosophy, and history come to be my own. II. BUT IT IS IN HUMAN SOULS THAT THE THOUGHT OF THE TEXT IS REALISED. It is our privilege to have property in another, to call them ours. We may even say of Christ, of the Holy Ghost, and of the Father, "Thou art mine!" When we are one with Him in fellowship and love, we live in Him and He in us. But look at the three ways of securing property in human souls. 1. By friendship. I open my heart and let another in. He opens his heart and lets me in. Some hearts we cannot enter; they are mean, coarse, unclean, uncharitable. We should not be tolerated could we force our way in. But when we come to our own, to those who respond to our tastes, desires, and plans, how enriching and exalting is the mutual ownership enjoyed! 2. By education. A true teacher is a king; he gets property in souls. Dr. Arnold put his soul into his pupils, and to-day the broadened thought of England is, in part, a result of his work. 3. By redemption. This is the *Via Sacra* of our Lord. Into the lost soul, the unclean, the poor, the dead He went with purity, riches, and life. So Paul could say that he was ready to give his own soul to those who in the gospel were dear unto him. Yet Paul could truly say, "I seek not yours, but you." His converts were his children, begotten in the gospel. He won them, not by imparting truth merely, but by giving his very life. (*C. B. Crane, D.D.*) **The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.**—*Parents and children*:—Note—**I. THE WAY IN WHICH THIS DICTATE OF NATURE IS SECONDED BY THE EXAMPLE OF GOD IN HIS DEALINGS WITH HIS FAMILY.** He is as a parent providing for his children. Behold Him as the God of providence. He is the great housekeeper of the universe. But it is more important still to consider God as the God of grace, for here you will see in a more striking manner how God the Father has laid up for His children, and not they for Him, that He is the giver and they the receivers from first to last (*Ezek. xvi. 8, &c.*). Thus God has provided washing, clothing, ornaments, and food for all the members of His family. Moreover, God not only provides present maintenance, but a future inheritance for His children. **II. THE DUTY OF PARENTS WITH RESPECT TO THEIR CHILDREN.** They are bound to make temporal provision for them. Even the beasts of the field, the monsters of the sea, provide for their young. But we are least likely to err on this point. Oh, that our concern about it were always regulated with a view to the spiritual interests of our children and to the glory of God! But how many are there who neglect the spiritual welfare of their children, like the folly of a man who would expend much in decorating and adorning a house which was ready to crumble and fall into ruin, while he neglected one which was substantial and likely to last for many generations. (*H. Verschoyle, A.B.*) **And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.**—*Self-devotion*:—**I. SPENDING ONE'S SELF.** The ministry is a work. Its duties, if faithfully discharged, require great skill and ability. Paul was laboriously employed in preaching and travelling by sea and land about thirty years, and during those years scarcely ever ceased from his beloved work. Thus it was that he was willing to spend till he was spent. **II. FOR WHOM I FEEL THIS SELF-DEVOTION.** The apostle felt this self-devotion, or self-sacrifice, for the Corinthians. Why for the men at Corinth? Because St. Paul had been instrumental in their conversion. The believers in that city were all, or nearly so, seals of his ministry. Can we then wonder at the strength of his love of them? What will not an earthly parent do for his sons or his daughters? No; warmed by the love of Christ, he will cheerfully spend himself for their spiritual edification, welfare, and comfort. (*R. Horsfall.*) *The cost of saving souls*:—Paul is conspicuous among men for his self-sacrifice. **I. THE APOSTLE'S AIM**—the souls of men. 1. Certainly to be kept steadily in view by preachers. 2. But not by ministers alone, for we all influence for better or for worse the soul life of each other. 3. To injure it is an offence in God's eyes (*Matt. xviii. 6*). **II. THIS AIM REQUIRES NOT ONLY THAT WE "SPEND," BUT THAT WE "BE SPENT,"** for the higher the life we seek to develop, the deeper is the sacrifice we must make. If a father wishes only physical life in his child the cost is little—food, soap, and clothing. If he wishes the mental life of his child to grow strong and full, then the cost is greater, not only in money, but in his own patience, &c. But if he wishes the highest life of all—the moral life—the life of the lad's soul to flourish and bear fruit—the sacrifice is deeper still. **III. THIS IS PRECISELY THE KIND OF SACRIFICE WE ARE LEAST WILLING TO GIVE.** 1. In almsgiving—works of

charity. We give money, the cheapest sacrifice we can give. 2. In church life. Again we give money or a speech to escape the deeper sacrifices. 3. In social life. How few will forego the utterance of a bitter word or a doubtful deed lest they hurt the soul-life of those around us. IV. COMPARE THIS RELUCTANCE WITH THE ALACRITY OF PAUL. He said, "I will very gladly spend," &c. Better still compare it with the spirit of Christ (John x. 15, 18). 1. The loveliness of Christian sacrifice is its voluntariness. "God loveth a cheerful giver" (chap. ix. 7). 2. The blessed life either on earth or in heaven is not one exempt from sacrifice, but where its joy overwhelms its pain (2 Chron. xxix. 28). (*J. Telford, B.A.*) *Ministerial affection poorly requited*:—It is love that speaks, and unkindness that is spoken to. Many ways it may be manifest that St. Paul loved the Church of Corinth more than many other. By the time he spent with them, a year and a half full: scarce with any so much. By his visiting them three several times, not any so oft. By two of his largest Epistles sent to them: not to any the like. Now there should be in love the virtue of the loadstone, the virtue attractive, to draw like love to it again. There should be, but was not. For their little love appeared by their many unloving exceptions which they took to him. This cold infusion of so faint regard on their parts might have quenched his love. 1. There was a world when one said, bestow your heart on me, and I require no further bestowing; and the bestowing of love, though nothing but love, was something worth. 2. Such a world there was, but that world is worn out. Love and all is put out to interest. 3. Such is now the world's love, but specially at Corinth, where they set love to hire and love to sale. 4. There is no remedy then. St. Paul must apply himself to time and place wherein love depends upon yielding and paying. 5. Now, there is nothing so pliant as love, ever ready to transform itself to whatsoever may have likelihood to prevail. 6. St. Paul therefore cometh to it; and as he maketh his case a Father's case towards them. 7. Yea, "I will bestow." Now, alas! what can Paul bestow? Especially upon so wealthy citizens? What hath he to part with but his books and parchments? Ware, at Athens perhaps somewhat; but at Corinth, little used and less regarded. But, by the grace of God, there is something else. There be treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ Jesus. Indeed, this it is St. Paul can bestow; and this it is Corinth needs, and the more wealthy it is the more. But it is much more to be bestowed than to bestow. 1. For, first, they that bestow give but of their fruits; but he that is bestowed giveth fruit, tree, and all. Himself is in the deed of gift too. 2. Secondly, before there was but one act; here, in one, are both bestowing and being bestowed, and there being both must needs be better than one. 3. Thirdly, before that which was bestowed, what was it? Our good, not our blood; our living, not our life. 4. And indeed we see many can be content to bestow frankly, but at no hand to be bestowed themselves. But hither, also, will St. Paul come without any reservation at all of himself; to do or suffer, "to spend or be spent." How to be spent? will he die? Yea, indeed. What, presently here at Corinth? No; for at this time and long after he was still alive. If there be no way to be bestowed but by dying out of hand; they that in field receive the bullet, or they that at the stake have the fire set to them, they and they only may be said to be bestowed. That is a way indeed, but not the only way. And that is said to be bestowed, not only that is defrayed at one entire payment, but that which by several sums is paid in, especially if it be when it is not due, nor could not be called for. By intentive meditation (for his books and parchments took somewhat from his sum), by sorrow and grief of heart he bestowed himself by inchmeal. And so far it is the case of all them that be in his case, as Christ termeth them the light of the world, lighting others and wasting themselves. True it is we value the inward affection above the outward action or passion. With men it is so too. When a displeasure is done us, say we not, we weigh not so much the injury itself as the malicious mind of him that did offer it? And if in evil it hold, why not in good much more? And will you see the mind wherewith St. Paul will do both these? Bestow he will and be bestowed too, and that not in any sort be contented to come to it, but willingly; willingly, nay readily, readily, nay gladly, most gladly. And now must we pause a little to see what will become of all this, and what these will work in the Corinthians. We marvel at the love, we shall more marvel when we see what manner of men on whom it is bestowed. He complaineth though that, seeking their love, and nothing else, so hard was his hap, he found it not. And as he to be pitied, so they to be blamed. All other commodities return well from Corinth, only love is no traffic. St. Paul cannot make his own again, but must be a great loser withal. But all this while he lived still under hope, hope of winning their love

for whose sakes he had trod under foot the love of himself. Love endureth not the name of difficulty, but shameth to confess anything too hard or too dangerous for it. For, verily, unkindness is a mighty enemy and the wounds of it deep. It serveth first to possess our souls of that excellent virtue, the greatest of the three. Nay, the virtue without which the rest be but ciphers—love. But love, the action of virtue, not the passion of vice. Love, not of the body, but of the soul, the precious soul of man (Prov. vi.). And for them and for their love to be ready to prove it by St. Paul's trial. They that do thus, no good can be spoken of their love answerable to the desert of it. Heavenly it is, and in heaven to receive the reward. But when all is done we must take notice of the world's nature. For, as St. Paul left it, so we shall find it (that is) we shall not perhaps meet with that regard we promise ourselves. Surely, if love or well-doing or any good must perish (which is the second motive), and be lost through somebody's default (where it lighteth), much better it is that it perish in the Corinthians' hands than in Paul's; by them, in their evil receiving, than in his not bestowing. For so the sin shall be theirs, and we and our souls innocent before God. But perish it shall not. For howsoever of them it may be truly said, the more we love the less they; of Christ it never can nor ever shall be said. For St. Paul, for the little love at their hands, found the greater at His. Not lost, but laid out; not cast away, but employed on Him for whose love none ever hath or shall bestow aught but he shall receive a hundred-fold. (*Bp. Andrewes.*)

CHAPTER XIII.

VERS. 1-14. This is the third time I am coming to you.—*Paul's epistolary farewell to the Corinthians*:—There is no evidence that Paul wrote a word to them after this. The letters had evidently been a task to a man of his tender nature. No doubt he felt a burden rolled from his heart, and a freer breath, when he dictated the last sentence. **I. WORDS OF WARNING.** He warns them of a chastisement which he was determined to inflict upon all offenders against the gospel of Christ. 1. The discipline would be righteous (ver. 1). He will not chastise any without proper evidence. Therefore the true need not fear; the false alone need apprehend. 2. The discipline would be rigorous (ver. 2). He had threatened this in his former letter (1 Cor. iv. 13-19). There is no more terrible chastisement than excommunication from the fellowship of the good. 3. The discipline would demonstrate the existence of Christ in him (ver. 3). He could have given this proof sooner, but he acted in this respect like Christ, and was content to appear "weak" amongst them, in order that his power might be more conspicuously displayed (vers. 3, 4). **II. WORDS OF EXHORTATION** (ver. 5). Self-scrutiny is at once a duty the most urgent and the most neglected. Observe—1. The momentous point to be tested in self-scrutiny. 2. The momentous conclusion to be reached by self-scrutiny. "Know ye not" (emphatic), &c. If you are in the faith He is your life. Should you find you are not in the faith, ye are counterfeits, spurious, not genuine; tares, not wheat. **III. WORDS OF PRAYER** (ver. 7). Not for his own reputation or himself, but—1. That they should be kept from the wrong. "Do no evil," nothing inconsistent with the character and teaching of Christ. 2. That they should possess the right. "Not that we should appear approved," &c. **IV. WORDS OF COMFORT** (ver. 8). 1. Truth is uninjurable. Man may quench all the gas lamps in the world, but he cannot dim one star. Men can destroy the forms of nature, level the mountains, dry up the rivers, burn the forests, but can do nothing against the imperishable elements of nature, and these elements will live, build up new mountains, open fresh rivers, and create new forests. You can do nothing against the truth. 2. Goodness is unpunishable (ver. 9). (1) Because it is goodness. The best of men are too "weak" in authority to punish those who are "strong" in goodness. The way to paralyse all penal forces is to promote the growth of goodness. (2) Because it is restorative. (ver. 10). Its destiny is edification, not destruction. **V. WORDS OF BENEDICTION.** 1. Be happy. "Farewell," which means "rejoice." 2. Be blest of God. "The grace of our Lord," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 3-5. Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me.—*The proof of our ministry*:—Notice—**I. GOD'S METHOD OF OPERATION IN THE CHURCH BY HIS APPOINTED**

SERVANTS. 1. The rebellious Corinthians had spoken ill of the apostle as lacking in power: his personal presence was not commanding, his speech was not fascinating. Paul does not deny the charge, but declares the general principle of power in weakness, by which the Lord conducts the gospel dispensation. (1) Life, born of death, is the life of our souls (ver. 4). By assuming our weakness Christ gained the power to act as our substitute, and put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Because of His being obedient to death, even the death of the Cross, "God also hath highly exalted Him," &c. By this sign He conquered: the ensign of His Cross is the seal of victory. It is Himself thus slain which is His power to pardon and to save. (2) Our Lord's power over our hearts comes by His great love, and this matchless manner of His showing it. Stooping so low to save such unworthy ones He conquers our hearts. His dying love has begotten living love within us. 2. Why did Paul interject this teaching? To show us that God does not save by the strength of His ministers, but by their weakness. (1) Paul was willing to lose all personal honour, though, in truth, not a whit behind the chief of the apostles. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," &c. He cheerfully sank that his Lord might be exalted. (2) In those days there was a great liking for philosophy. But Paul determined not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. "But at least," they said, "what he has to say ought to be delivered with the graces of oratory." "No," says Paul, "my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (3) He might have come among them and said, "I am an apostle; I have supreme power over churches; out of this Church I shall eject offenders without any question"; yet he never used such authority; on the contrary he was the servant of all, gentle, unselfish. If any one was grieved, Paul was grieved with him; if any suffered trial, Paul was tried. Thus he was a power among them. By laying aside authority he became mighty to influence them for good. All who desire to be useful must learn that in self-sinking their usefulness will be found. He who becomes least is greatest of all. / "When I am weak, then am I strong." II. THE SURE PROOF OF POWER; the indisputable evidence of any minister's call from God to preach the gospel. 1. "Ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me." (1) He did not care about what they thought of his own speaking; but he was greatly concerned that they should not think lightly of the Lord Jesus who spoke in him. (2) Further, the apostle declares that even the power of the living Christ is the power of God. Our Lord kept nothing to Himself, but His weakness through which He was crucified, for He liveth by the power of God. Such must be the power of every Christian worker. (3) Then, says Paul, "If you want a proof of Christ's speaking in me with power, look at yourselves." He says elsewhere, "Ye are our epistle." "Ye are God's husbandry," and the test of how far our husbandry has been the Lord's husbandry must be found in your fruitfulness. The proof that Christ really doth speak by us is that He has wrought by that speaking in you after such a fashion as proves the doctrine to be Divine. Your souls are the seals of Christ's power. If ye seek any proof of Christ speaking by me, ye have it in your —1. Conversion. When the chief priests and scribes saw the man that was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them. Conversion proves that He by whose means it was wrought was sent by God. 2. Comfort. If by our speaking the Lord strengthens your weak hands and confirms your feeble knees, He points us out to you as His messengers. 3. Correction. Have you not sometimes felt your hearts turned inside out, as if the spirit of burning were scorching and purging you? Was not that of the Lord? 4. Conduct. My heart sinks within me when I hear of some who have been numbered with us. Do people say, "These are members of Spurgeon's church"? You are either our joy and crown, or else our sorrow and dishonour. You must estimate whether a man farms well by the crops which he raises. True you cannot condemn him if a few thorns and thistles spring up in the hedgerows, but if there is a preponderance of weeds, everybody says, "This is wretched farming." 5. Consecration. When your zeal burns, when you speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, then again I can say, seek ye a proof of Christ speaking by me? You are my witnesses inasmuch as by our word you have been stirred up to speak in the power of the Holy Ghost for the winning of souls. 6. Completion of the Christian character, and the display of it in the last hours. I have come down many times from the chamber of dying Christians with faith confirmed and joy increased. No dying man has looked me in the face and said, "Sir, you did not preach a religion which a man can die with." III. A NEEDED PROOF OF OURSELVES. 1. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."

It is something to have our ministry attested, but it is much more to have your salvation attested. (1) Therefore you are not to take it for granted that you are saved. In London years ago every shop had its sign, and they had a saying that the house which had the sign of the sun in a certain street was darker than any other. So there are some who have grace for their sign, but no sign of grace. To have a name to live is a wretched thing if we be really dead. (2) Of course we are to examine our lives, but he says, "Examine yourselves." Sin within will ruin even if it be not seen in act. Of course we are to examine our doctrines, but even more we are to examine ourselves. Heart error is more deadly than head error. (3) "Prove your own selves." Pry deeper. You have already given yourself a sifting; take a finer sieve and go to work again. You have already been in the crucible—go in again, and become as silver tried in a furnace purified seven times. A man cannot make too sure work about his own salvation. But can we not be certain of our safety? Yes, we can; but certain because we have not shunned the most rigorous self-examinations. 2. And what is to be the point of search? "Whether ye be in the faith," whether what ye believe is true, and whether you truly believe it. 3. Dwell mostly on this point, "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Is Jesus Christ in you? I know all about Him. Yes, but is He in you? I read of Him. Read on, but is He in you? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 5. Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. . . . Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?—*The professing Christian tried*:—All are not Israel who are of Israel. All who are professing Christians are not real believers. Tares and wheat grow together. This state of matters is of very ancient date. When Adam and his family constituted the Church, there was in her a wicked Cain. When the Church floated in Noah's ark, there was at least within her pale an impious Ham. An Ishmael was in Abraham's family—a profane Esau in the family of Isaac. I. Regarding the DUTY OF SELF-EXAMINATION, we observe—1. That it is a commanded duty. It is not imposed by human authority. Now, the duty of self-examination is plainly implied in several commands in Scripture. It may be inferred from the injunction to confess Christ before men; for how could one rightly confess Christ before he had ascertained that he belonged to Him? It is implied in the command to rejoice evermore; for how could one rejoice before he knew that there was reason for his joy? 2. A knowledge of our state is attainable. It will hardly be doubted that an impenitent sinner may discover his state of condemnation and wrath. This is what is meant by conviction of sin and misery. And it may be proved, from several instances in Scripture, that an assured confidence of our being in a state of grace may likewise be gained. Jacob could say with the utmost confidence that the Lord God had appeared to him at Luz and blessed him. David could say, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength." 3. The persuasion that one is a real Christian would assist greatly in the performance of duty. Why is it that professing Christians are so dull in the performance of duty? It arises to a great extent from the uncertainty which hangs over their state. The persuasion of the love of God would make their souls, like the chariot of Aminadab, to run swiftly and smoothly in the way of new obedience. 4. Self-examination is necessary, from the danger of self-deception. If there was no hazard of mistaking the way to heaven, there would be no need to inquire whether we were walking therein. 5. It is necessary for the believer's real comfort. In no case is a state of doubt a happy condition. Though the matter should be comparatively trivial, yet if the mind is doubtful regarding it, there will be little inward peace. 6. We must sooner or later undergo a trial. It is evident, from what we have already said, that self-examination is an indispensable duty. We were—II. Regarding SOME EVIDENCES OF BEING IN THE FAITH—THAT IS, OF BEING REAL CHRISTIANS. 1. Those who are in the faith run not to the same excess of riot with others. If persons are habitually indulging in known sin, they give evidence that they belong not to Christ. It matters not what zeal such persons may possess. Jehu could say, "Come here, and see my zeal for the Lord." Nor does it alter the case that they have performed deeds of benevolence and of outward religion. Achish protected a persecuted David. Another class consists of those who persevere in known sin more secretly. They restrain themselves before men; but in their retirements they transgress with avidity. 2. Those who are in the faith are a people zealous of good works. 3. We remark again, that those in the faith have peculiar views of sin.

4. Those who are in the faith have peculiar views of the Redeemer. Others see no beauty in Him. 5. Those who are in the faith, differ from others in the views which they take of themselves. A little consideration will satisfy us that the generality of men are high-minded. It belongs to you to make conscience of the work of looking into your hearts. 1. And you ought to engage in the duty often. It is not enough that you examine yourselves before such solemn occasions as the Lord's Supper. It ought, like secret prayer, to be performed daily. 2. Further, let not your examinations be superficial. Keep searching your hearts until you arrive at a conclusion regarding your state. Endeavour to probe your heart to the very bottom. 3. Beware of being discouraged from the duty. Let not the fear of exposing yourselves before your own eyes, deter you from it. 4. Above all, put the case into God's own hand. "Search and try us, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting." (*A. Ross, M.A.*) *Self-examination.*—I. THE DUTY OF SELF-EXAMINATION based upon self-ownership and self-competence. 1. Self-ownership. "Your own selves." Christ paid profound deference to the individual man. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" His own soul, which he can never abdicate, nor alienate. No power, no process, can cut off the entail of your own personality; but what an awful moment is that when a man like the prodigal comes to himself, and sees for the first time the being that must be his own for evermore. This is the crisis which we call conversion. 2. Out of this arises self-trusteeship. No executor, ecclesiastical or other, can take that off your own hands. It is said of a duke when he went over to the Roman Church, the Roman Catholics undertook that if his soul was lost they would bear his damnation for him, and he could never find any other sect that would undertake that. "Thou fool! thy soul shall be required of thee." We cannot relieve you of the responsibility. 3. Self-competence. "Know ye not your own selves?" Every man's interior nature is a *terra incognita* to everybody else. "No man knows the spirit of a man," &c. But it does not rest there only. Paul is speaking to people who have heard the gospel, and so Christ says to those who had the Old Testament, "Judge ye not that which is right." Self-searching and Scripture-searching must be carried on contemporaneously. Then you have the Holy Spirit to enlighten you. "They shall be all taught of God." It is this which constitutes your self-competence, running parallel with your self-ownership. God's ministry is not intended to rescue God's people from the labour and exercise of thought upon the subject of their religion. We are to think to set you a-thinking.

II. THE PROCESS OF SELF-EXAMINATION. Examine yourselves; then prove yourselves. The word "prove" in Scripture means both to prove and to approve. "If we would judge ourselves we should not be condemned in the world." 1. This process of self-examination is based upon the selfsame principles on which all examinations are held. First examine and then prove, as the man of science does, and then draws his generalisation; as the judge, who collects the evidence and then gives his charge to the jury; as the medical man, who finds out the symptoms and examines until he obtains a diagnosis of his case, and then gives the prescription of the treatment; as the examiner, who puts his questions and then decides upon the classification of the examined. We must get all the facts together as clearly as we can, and then determine our classification in the sight of God. 2. A man examines himself when he studies his own past history, when he lays bare the habits of his life, when he asks himself what difficulties and temptations lie across his path, and considers with what aids and weapons he can best meet them, and when he calls up before him the last strong fainting agony, and asks with what strength he is provided for that terrible moment; when he sends out his thought to that interminable duration that goes beyond the grave, and asks how he is provided to meet the exigencies of the eternal world; then, and then only, does he examine himself. III. To WHAT THIS SELF-EXAMINATION IS DIRECTED: "Whether ye be in the faith." Faith is the moral element, the spiritual atmosphere in and by which we have our being. When we say a man is in a rage, or in love, or in drink, we mean that rage, love, or drink has got possession of him. And so with a man "in the faith." It means that his views are coloured by, and that all his affections and habits are under the mastery of, faith. Now, a man may entertain strong affection or resentment, and yet not be in a rage or in love; and so a man may have the faith in himself and yet not be in the faith; may have no doubt as to the historical verity which constitutes the faith, and yet not be in it. How sad it is that with all this preaching, and singing, and school-teaching, the faith has so little influence over us. That is what we must examine ourselves about. 2. There are two classes in the present day. (1) One

says the question is whether you be in the right; "For creeds and forms let graceless zealots fight," &c. This is neither the beginning nor the end of the matter at all, unless the beginning be to be right at first. Everybody knows that the moral quality of an action depends upon the motive of that action. More than that; a man's motives grow out of his heart. A good heart cannot produce bad motives. A bad heart cannot produce good motives. Now the moral and spiritual quality of the heart depends upon and is derived from the object upon which a man's heart is set. If a man's highest object in life is self, then selfishness is the ruling motive of his actions. And if a man's heart is set on Christ, he lives a Christly life, and will be thus judged at last. Are you then in the faith? (2) Nor will it do to say if a man is in the Church he must be all right. No doubt if you are in the faith you will do what Paul did, "essay to join yourselves to the disciples." You will do it by a necessity of your own nature. IV. WHAT IS THE TEST OF BEING IN THE FAITH? 1. Is Christ in you? That will determine that matter. Is He now—(1) In your thoughts? Does Christ dominate the whole field of your life as some grand cathedral rises above the spires of a city, or as some mighty mountain range visible from every part of a continent? (2) In you, the chief of your affections? Have you thrown open the state apartments of your heart to Him, and does He reign there? When Christ enters the heart He does not come *incognito*. When the doors are lifted up that the King of Glory may come in, the soul knows it. 2. But what is the terrible alternative? "Except ye be reprobate"—rejected and cast away. The idea of judgment is kept up all the way through. This is the subject of examination. Examination arises respecting the last decisive test. If when you come before the bar of God, and the secrets of your hearts are judged according to the gospel, Christ is not in you, you must be a wandering wreck for ever—cast into outer darkness, where is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. (*B. Gregory, D.D.*) *Self-examination*:—It is readily admitted that self-knowledge is about the most necessary of all knowledge. From of old it has been accounted a precept of the highest wisdom, "Know thyself." Might we not, then, wonder that attention should be so much averted from this concern? Can it be that men do not think it worth while? Or is it from fear lest the state of the case should be less satisfactory than is assumed? If so, here is a strange spectacle. A soul afraid of itself. It is easily apprehended how a human spirit might be afraid of another spirit in a human body, or of a disembodied spirit, evincing its presence by voice or appearance; or of a spirit of mightier order. But think of a human soul in dread of itself. A man uneasy in a local situation, or in the presence of other men, may think of escape; but in his own soul! there he is, and is to be perpetually. But now think of the pernicious operation of such fear. To fear that there may be, or is, something incompatible with safety, and therefore decline ascertaining it! Not to be willing to see how near is the precipice! In short, to abandon ourselves to be all that we fear—rather than encounter the self-manifestation and the discipline necessary for a happy change. I. THE NECESSITY OF SELF-EXAMINATION. Every one actually stands placed against a standard unseen, but real—that by which God judges—the eternal law—the rule of Christian character. Think of all our assembly thus placed! If the fact could be an object of sight, whatever inquisitiveness each might feel respecting the rest, surely his own marked state would be the chief object of his eager attention. Well, but should it be less so when he considers and knows it is so discriminated in the sight of God? Is there anything in the world so important for him to know? II. THE OBJECTS OF SELF-EXAMINATION. We might ask a man, "What are you most concerned to know of yourself? Something in which you hope for a gratification of your pride? Your merits as contrasted with those of other men? Instead of this, we would advise—examine in that as to which you most feel you need to know when you approach the throne of God. Examination should be directed towards the points made by the apostle. 1. "Whether ye be in the faith." Whether you are decidedly more than a cold assenting believer in the Christian doctrines. That a man may be, and yet at the same time be in a spirit opposite to all these heavenly truths. But—in the faith so as to be powerfully withdrawn from the spirit and dominion of the world? So as to have a habitual prevailing order of views, feelings, &c., animated by it? So as to be in a zealous league with its faithful adherents? 2. "That Jesus Christ is in you." Is He in the thoughts as a commanding object of contemplation? Is He in the affections—the object of love, and of awful reverence? Is He in the conscience, as an authority? Is He in the soul, in the sense that somewhat of His likeness is impressed upon it; an indwelling presence, without which it were

lifeless and hopeless? In all such important points, let men beware of assuming, without the process of "proving." III. THE CORRECT AND SALUTARY PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY. 1. Two things are necessary. (1) A distinct, strong, steady apprehension of the pure standard fixed by the Divine authority. (2) A habit of reflection. There can be no effective self-examination without a resolute and often repeated effort to retire inward, and stay awhile, and pointedly inspect what is there. 2. Self-examination—(1) Should not expend its chief exercise on the mere external conduct; for if that alone were to be taken account of, a well-regulated formalist or Pharisee, nay possibly a hypocrite, might go off with considerable self-complacency. (2) Should be exercised on a principle of independence of the estimates of others. It is true, that good use may be made of these, but they may have a wrong effect. (a) If they are partial and favourable, to a highly flattering degree, will not the man be mightily inclined to take this for just? (b) Suppose the contrary case, then an excitement of all the defensive feelings! "All these censures are from ignorance, perverseness, or perhaps even from jealousy." There is, therefore, a necessity for cool, deliberate independence of judgment. And this will be promoted by a solemn sense of standing before the judgment of God—the grand requisite in all self-examination. (3) Should avail itself of the circumstances and seasons which may aid self-revelation. (4) Slight symptoms should not be disregarded. In medical science, what seem slight symptoms are sometimes regarded as of great significance; the skilful judge is struck by their recurrence as indications of something serious, and as deciding what it is. (5) Should take a comprehensive account. For, if a man contents himself with selecting only some particular points, his self-partiality will almost be certain to choose those which seem the most favourable; and he may be betrayed to make these the interpreters or substitutes of all the rest. (6) Must beware of making some mere doctrinal point the great test and assurance, in self-defence under the absence of immediate experimental and practical evidence. (7) Should be strongly enforced, by doubt and uncertainty. (*J. Foster.*) *Self-examination*:—I. Self-examination being so important an exercise, permit me to direct your attention towards it IN REGARD TO THE GENERAL MANNER IN WHICH IT ought to be conducted. 1. Seriousness is the first requisite of self-examination. 2. For similar reasons self-inspection must be frequent. An account with conscience, like worldly accounts, unless often looked into, is apt to run into confusion. Besides this daily reminiscence, the more solemn return of the Sabbath, in which all classes of men may find some leisure for their spiritual concerns, may well be employed, in part, in the useful business of self-inspection. 3. Self-examination, thus solemn and frequent, ought moreover to be conducted with candour. The introverted eye must search the remotest recesses, and penetrate with keen glance the darkest foldings of the soul. Men are but too apt to satisfy themselves on false grounds with respect to the security of their condition. Deal with thyself plainly, impartially, strictly. Scrutinise the foundation of thy confidence towards God. 4. But all this seriousness, frequency, and candour will be of little avail if unaccompanied by earnest prayer unto Him who is the presiding judge, and the all-seeing witness, in the secret court of self-inspection. Unless there be a deep sense of His presence, His purity, His infallibility. II. Seek a more particular qualification for the work of self-inspection, BY FURNISHING OURSELVES WITH THOSE INQUIRIES OF WHICH ITS SUBSTANCE OUGHT TO CONSIST. Self-examination respects the past, the present, and the future. 1. As it respects the past, it is requisite that Christians carry back their investigation to the earliest period of their lives; and mark in what instances they have failed of their duty to God, their neighbour, and themselves. Take note of all your minuter but habitual and ingrained faults. Do we own, on the whole retrospect, that we are inexcusable before God, and have only to throw ourselves upon His mercy, through Christ, for spiritual health and for salvation? 2. From these reflections the Christian will be led forward to inquire into the tenor of his present conduct. How stand now his affections towards God? Do they centre all in God, as the supreme object of love? Does he think of Christ as his only stay—of the Holy Spirit as his essential guide? His other motives—are they those of the gospel? How have these principles, if genuine, operated in detail? Has their efficacy been manifested by any substantial improvement in holiness? Is anything perverse in his disposition corrected? 3. Anticipation of the future is now the last link in the chain of self-examination, and is as intimately connected with attention to the present as that is with reflection on the past. A mighty conqueror of old sat down and wept because he found no more of territory to subdue; but this can never happen in the Christian warfare. The Canaanites are still in the fastnesses of the

land; and even in the repose of conquest there remaineth much country to be gained. How have they made up their minds to encounter temptations yet to come? Are they not inclined to anticipate apologies for future remissness? 4. In conclusion, may we not observe, that the happiest effects can be prognosticated from self-examination thus wisely conducted? (*J. Grant, M.A.*) *Self-examination*:—The Corinthians were the critics of the apostle's age. They criticised Paul's style. "His letters are weighty, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." Nay, not content with that, they denied his apostleship. So he wrote two letters to them in which, having wrested the sword of their criticism out of their hands, he pointed it at their own breasts, saying, "Examine yourselves." You have disputed my doctrine; examine whether ye be in the faith. You have made me prove my apostleship; "prove your own selves." The fault of the Corinthians is the fault of the present age. Let not any one of you say "How did you like the preacher? What did you think of the sermon this morning?" Do you come here to judge God's servants? Ye should say, "Let me take unto myself that which I have heard, and I come up here to be judged of God's Word, and not to judge God's Word." I shall—I. **EXPOUND MY TEXT.** 1. "Examine," that is—(1) A scholastic idea. A boy has been to school a certain time, and his master questions him, to see whether he has made any progress. Christian, catechise your heart to see whether it has been growing in grace. (2) A military idea. Just as the captain on review-day is not content with surveying the men from a distance, but looks at all their accoutrements, so do you examine yourselves with the most scrupulous care. (3) A legal idea. You have seen the witness in the box, when the lawyer has been cross-examining him. Question your heart backward and forward, this way and that. (4) A traveller's idea. In the original it is "Go right through yourselves." Stand not only on the mountains of your public character, but go into the deep valleys of your private life. Be not content to sail on the broad river of your outward actions, but go follow back the narrow rill till you discover your secret motive. 2. "Prove your own selves." That means more than self-examination. A man is about to buy a horse; he thinks that possibly he may find out some flaw, and therefore he examines it; but after he has examined it, he says, "Let me have it for a week, that I may prove the animal before I invest in him." A ship, both before and when launched, is carefully looked at; and yet before she is allowed to go to sea, she takes a trial trip; and then when proved she goes out on her long voyages. Now, many a man's religion will stand examination that will not stand proof. It is like some cotton prints that are warranted fast colours, and so they seem when you look at them, but they are not washable when you get them home. It is good enough to look at, and it has got the "warranted" stamped upon it; but when it comes out into actual daily life, the colours soon begin to run, and the man discovers that the thing was not what he took it to be. 3. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Oh! says one, "You may examine me; I am an orthodox Christian." But the question now is not whether you believe the truth—but whether you are in the truth! Take an illustration. There is the ark; and a number of men around it. "Ah!" says one, "I believe that ark will swim." "Yes," says another, "it is strong from stem to stern." Ay, but when the flood came, it was not believing the ark as a matter of fact—it was being in the ark that saved men. 4. "Know ye not your own selves?" If you do not you have neglected your proper study. What avails all else that you do know if you know not yourself? You have been roaming abroad, while the richest treasure was lying at home. And especially know ye not this fact, that Jesus Christ must be in your heart, formed and living there, or else ye are reprobates? Now, what is it to have Jesus Christ in you? The true Christian carries the cross in his heart. Christ in the heart means Christ believed in, beloved, trusted, espoused, Christ as our daily food, and ourselves as the temple and palace wherein He daily walks. II. **ENFORCE THE TEXT.** "Examine yourselves," because—1. It is a matter of the very highest importance. Tradesmen may take coppers over the counter without much examination; but when it comes to gold, they will ring it well; and if it comes to a five-pound note, there is still more careful scrutiny. Ah! but if ye be deceived in the matter of your own souls, ye are deceived indeed. Look well to the title-deeds of your estate, to your life policies, to all your business; but, remember, all the gold and silver you have are but as the rack and scum of the furnace, compared with the matter now in hand. It is your soul. Will you risk that? 2. If ye make a mistake ye can never rectify it, except in this world. A bankrupt may have lost a fortune once, and yet may make another; but make spiritual bankruptcy in this

life, and you will never have an opportunity to trade again for heaven. A great general may lose one battle, and yet win the campaign; but get defeated in the battle of this life, and you are defeated for ever. 3. Many have been mistaken, may not you be? Methinks I see the rocks of presumption on which many souls have been lost, and the siren song of self-confidence entices you on to those rocks. Stay, mariner, stay! Let yon bleached bones keep thee back. Do not tell me that you are an old Church member; for a man may be a professor of religion forty years, and yet there may come a trial-day when his religion shall snap after all. 4. God will examine you. 5. If you are in doubt now, the speediest way to get rid of your doubts and fears is by self-examination. Look at that captain. He says to the sailors, "You must sail very carefully, and be upon your watch, for I do not exactly know my latitude and longitude, and there may be rocks very close ahead." He goes down into the cabin, he searches the chart, he takes an inspection of the heavens, and then says, "Hoist every sail, and go along as merrily as you please; I have discovered where we are; the water is deep, and there is a wide sea room." And how happy will it be with you if, after having searched yourself, you can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." And what if it should have a bad result? Better that you should find it out now than find it out too late. III.

TRY AND HELP YOU TO CARRY THE TEXT INTO PRACTICE. 1. Begin with your public life. Are you dishonest? Can you swear? Are you given to drunkenness? &c. Make short work with yourself; there will be no need to go into any further tests. "He that doeth these things hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God." And yet, Christian, despite thy many sins, canst thou say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; but I seek to live a righteous, godly, and sober life, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Remember, by thy works thou shalt be judged at last. Thy works cannot save thee, but they can prove that thou art saved; or if they be evil works, they can prove that thou art not saved at all. 2. How about your private life? Do you live without prayer, without searching the Scriptures? If so, I make short work of the matter; you are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." But if thou art right at heart, thou wilt be able to say, "I could not live without prayer; I do love God's Word; I love His people; I love His house." A good sign, Christian, a good sign for thee; if thou canst go through this test, thou mayest hope that all is well. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Self-examination* :—

I. WHAT IT IS ABOUT OURSELVES WHICH WE HAVE TO EXAMINE. 1. Our principles. Let us ascertain whether they are according to the word of truth, or whether they are the mere inventions of men, if they be not indeed the conjectures of our own unthinking minds. 2. Our feelings. Is the love of God and Christ indeed in us? This affection is the root of all others. 3. Our practice (Gal. vi. 4). II. BY WHAT RULES WE ARE TO CONDUCT THIS VERY IMPORTANT INVESTIGATION. There is no other standard than the Word of God; and this work of self-examination has perhaps been more marred by the overlooking of this circumstance than by anything else. The Word of God gives us the fruits of the Spirit, it gives us the works of the flesh. Take each list and see which contains the lineaments of your character. It presents to us various precepts which we are called upon to obey. Examine if they are the outlines of your everyday doings. But how is the examination to be conducted upon this high standard? 1. Deliberately. 2. Frequently, for we are constantly changing. 3. With a view to improvement. The man who examines himself merely to know that he is safe is a selfish man. When he goes further, and endeavours to know what as a saved being he is to do, he is pursuing a course which, while it will discover to him his defects, will at the same time point out the means of his further progress. 4. In reference to the world at large. How far are we setting before the world, by our example, the Christianity by which we think we are ourselves saved? 5. In reference to all the situations in which the providence of God may place us. 6. In reference to all the principles that we discuss. There is no principle deserving discussion if you do not think it worth your while afterwards to inquire how far you have made it useful. (J. Burnet.) *Self-examination* :—This verse has been made to sanction a doctrine of morbid self-scrutiny utterly at variance with the healthiness and reasonableness of the New Testament. Narcissus, becoming enamoured of his own beautiful image reflected in the silvery fountain, was changed into a flower; but what toadstool kind of transformation is likely to follow persistent brooding over the vision of sin disclosed in the turbid depths of our own heart? It will pay us much better to look up at a fairer vision. Self-vivisection is one of the worst forms of that illegal science. Still, self-acquaint-

ance is a duty—a duty to be performed in a wise spirit, and we ought from time to time to assure ourselves of our heart, our character, our walk. 1. “Examine yourselves”: not your neighbours. The Corinthians had been busy in their criticisms on the apostle; he asks them for a while to turn the keen investigation upon themselves. One of the Puritans says: “The windows of the soul should be like the windows of Solomon’s temple, ‘broad inward.’” We are to watch ourselves, to judge ourselves, to condemn ourselves, far more severely than we do the Church or the world. 2. “Examine yourselves”: do not confuse yourself with others. “Prove your own selves.” The other day I saw two lads weighing themselves on a weighing-machine; they put the penny in the slot, and together got upon the scale. They thought to defraud the proprietor of the machine by their cleverness, two occupying the scale intended for one. But the result must have been very unsatisfactory to the astute youths. They knew their aggregate weight, but neither of them knew his personal weight. As I watched the lads, it struck me that in making our moral estimates we sometimes fall into a similar fallacy. We do not detach ourselves and seek to ascertain our personal merit; we ingeniously confuse ourselves with others. We are sons and daughters of parents who have passed into the skies. We do not isolate ourselves and prove our own selves. We shall at last be weighed in the balances one by one, and we had better weigh ourselves that way now. 3. “Examine yourselves”: know your real selves, not your seeming selves. We sometimes fancy that we know ourselves, when, in fact, we know only our seeming self. The Chinese are said to be fondest of the dress which most effectually conceals their true figure; and by a variety of sophistries we hide our real selves from ourselves. If we strictly examine our virtues, they may turn out no virtues at all. Zeal keenly tested proves to be temper; charity reveals itself as vaingloriousness; economy is disguised covetousness; courage is presumption; honesty is expediency with a fine name; conscientiousness is only the subtle working of self-will; contentment is really sloth; and amiability an easy-going disposition that lets things slide. We must not be content to note the surface. 4. “Examine yourselves”: your present selves, not your old selves. It is rather a common thing to judge ourselves by what we knew and felt and did in past years. A disastrous change has taken place, and taken place so gradually that we have failed to note it. Are we converted men and women now? Is the Divine fire burning still? Are our prayers availing to-day? Are our last works more than the first? These are the questions. 5. The grand test in self-examination is this: “Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” One of the great perversions of the duty of self-examination is that we make it more a quest for the evil that is in us than a quest for the good. The miner does not look for the dust and dirt of the mine; he watches for the streak of gold. And we must not search our heart for the beast and the devil, but for the manifestations of the indwelling Christ. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Self-examination*:—I. Self-examination is a NECESSARY DUTY belonging to every one in the Church, and requires much diligence in the performing of it. 1. It is a necessary duty, in regard of our comfort. What comfort in Christ, in His meritorious passion, in His triumphant resurrection and ascension, in His prevalent intercession, unless we know that by faith we are united to Him? It is necessary—(1) Because there are common graces. There is an acceptance of the law for an outward practice, without an affection to the lawgiver, or an esteem of the spirituality of the law itself. (2) Because there are counterfeit graces. There is much false coin in the world. Good things may be imitated, when they are not rooted. The apostle speaks of a dead faith (James ii. 26). There is a repentance unto life (Acts xi. 18) which supposeth a dead repentance. (3) Because every man is in a state of grace or nature. There is a state of grace (Rom. v. 1); a state of wrath (Eph. ii. 3). It is necessary, therefore, to inquire whose we are. 2. It is a duty that requires diligence and care. That which is of infinite consequence in the state of your souls ought not to be built upon sandy and slight foundations. It is called communing with a man’s own heart (Psa. iv. 4). Not a slight glance and away: sweeping and looking with a candle (Luke xv. 8), wherewith every cranny and chink is pried into. (1) Diligence is requisite, because the work is difficult. It is no easy matter to be acquainted with ourselves. The judgment of man is corrupted, and misrepresents things. Where grace is small, and corruptions many, it must be hard to discern it, as it is for an eye to discern a small needle, especially if in the dust and rubbish. The roots of sin also lie deep, not easily to be found without good directions. (2) Diligence is requisite, because man is naturally unwilling to this duty. Men are more willing to have their minds rove through all the parts

of nature, than to busy themselves in self-reflection; would read any book or relation rather than the history of their own heart. We are nearest to ourselves physically, and furthest from our own selves morally. Men whose titles are cracked and unsure, are loth to have them tried before the Judge and come under the siftings of conscience. Ever since the fall we run counter to God. Satan is no mean instrument in this; he is said to blind the world that they might not know their state. This unwillingness ariseth—(a) From carnal self-love. It is natural to man to think well of himself, and suffer his affections to bridle his judgment. Every man is his own flatterer, and so conceals himself from himself. Very few that are uncomely in body, or deformed in mind, but think themselves as handsome and honest as others. Every blackamore fancies himself to have a comely colour. And this self-love keeps men off from this work, for fear they should behold their own guilt, and their souls be stung with anguish. (b) From presumption and security. (3) Diligence is requisite, because man is hardly induced to continue in this work. That self-love which makes them unwilling to enter upon it, renders them unfit to make any progress in it. When we do begin it, how quickly do we faint in it! How soon are our first glances upon ourselves turned to a fixedness upon some slighter object! (4) Diligence is requisite, because we are naturally apt to be deceived, and to delude ourselves. How many extend their hopes as far as their wishes, and these as far as a fond fancy and imagination! (5) Diligence is necessary, because, to be deceived in this is the most stinging consideration. To drop into hell, when a man takes it for granted that he is in heaven, to dream of a crown on the head, when the fetters are upon the feet, will double the anguish. (6) Diligence is necessary, because many have miscarried for want of it. II. THE USE.

1. If this be our duty to examine ourselves, then the knowledge of our state is possible. If we are to examine ourselves, we may then know ourselves. Reflection and knowledge of self is a prerogative of a rational nature. We know that we have souls by the operations of them. We may know that we have grace by the effects of it. Grace chiefly lies in the will, and it discovers itself in actions. There can be no sufficient reason given why the understanding should not as well know the acts of the soul and will, as the acts of the sense, and the motions of the body. We know our particular passions and the exercises of them. There is no man that fears a danger or loves an amiable object but he knows his own acts about them, as well as the object of those acts. If a man have faith and love, why should he not be as able to know the acts of faith and love as to know the acts of his particular affections? 2. How foolish is the neglect of this duty! III. USE OF EXHORTATION. It is our highest advantage to know what should become of our souls in eternity. I shall, lastly, give you some directions about this duty of self-examination. 1. Acquaint yourselves with those marks that are proper only to a true Christian. Overlook all those that are common with the hypocrite, such as outward profession, constant attendances, some affections in duties. Let us not judge ourselves by outward acts: a player is not a prince because he acts the part of a prince. But we must judge ourselves by what we are in our retirements, in our hearts. He only is a good man, and doth good, that doth it from a principle of goodness within, and not from fear of laws, or to gain a good opinion in the world. Grace is of that nature that it cannot possibly have any by-end. As it is the immediate birth of God, so it doth immediately respect God in its actings. Let us examine first the truth of grace, and afterwards the height of grace. A little of the coarsest gold is more valuable than much of the finest brass. See how the habitual frame and inclination of the heart stands. One sound and undeniable mark is better than a thousand disputable ones. 2. Let us make the Word of God only our rule in trials. This is the only impartial friend we can stick to, and therefore it ought to be made our main counsellor. It is safe for us to take that rule which God Himself will take. 3. Take not the first dictates of conscience. He that trusts his own heart is a fool (Prov. xxviii. 26), *i. e.*, without a diligent inquisition it is not wisdom to do so; but he that walks wisely shall be delivered: he that makes a strict inquiry into it shall be delivered from its snares and his own fears. It is a searching, examining, proving our hearts that is required, not taking them at the first word. There may be gold at the top and dross at the bottom. 4. In all implore the assistance of the Spirit of God. Natural conscience is not enough in this case, there must be the influence of the Spirit. It is God's Interpreter that can only show unto a man his righteousness (Job xxxiii. 23). The sun must give light before the glass can reflect the beams. 5. Let us take heed that while we examine our graces and find them, our hearts be not carried out to a resting upon them. We may draw some comfort

from them, but must check the least inclination of founding our justification upon them. Graces are signs, not causes of justification. 6. In case we find ourselves not in such a condition as we desire, let us exercise direct acts of faith. (*Bishop Hackett.*) *Self-examination*:—Observe—1. WHAT IS PREMISED IN THE TEXT. We are exhorted to examine ourselves. We may err in supposing—1. Educational influence as synonymous with the faith. 2. In confounding a regard for, and an attendance on, religious services with being in the faith. 3. In mistaking inward emotions with being in the faith. II. TO WHAT THE TEXT DISTINCTLY REFERS. “Being in the faith,” evidently, having the true faith of a disciple of Christ. Now if we are in the faith, then manifestly—1. The faith of the gospel will be in us. 2. The experience of faith will be in us. 3. The signs of faith will be upon us. III. THE COURSE THE TEXT ENJOINS. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.” And—1. Do this with earnestness of spirit. 2. Do this with the Word of God as your rule. 3. Do it in the spirit of prayer. 4. Do it from time to time. IV. SOME MOTIVES BY WHICH THIS COURSE MAY BE ENJOINED. We should regard it—1. As a duty. We should regard it in reference—2. To our comfort. It is for the comfort of the traveller to know he is in the right way; for the mariner to know his course of sailing is correct; for the heir to be sure that his title is unquestionably valid. 3. It is connected with our safety. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *On being in the faith*:—To be in the faith therefore implies—1. That we make an open confession of Christ, as the founder of the Christian religion, by union with His professed followers (*Matt. x. 32, 33*). 2. A sincere and hearty belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Corinthians, before they embraced Christianity, were idolaters. Paul wished them to examine and see if they had really renounced all dependence upon their idols, and were putting their trust in the living and true God alone, and in Jesus Christ whom He had sent. It is possible, too, to embrace Christianity from interested motives. Any new system will attract some admirers. The apostle, therefore, was afraid lest their faith should be insincere or superficial, and hence wished them to examine carefully into their motives and character. 3. The phrase “in the faith” means an actual participation in the blessings of Christianity. (1) If “Christ is in you,” you are conscious of communion with Him. (2) As your Lord and Master you admit Him, for instance, as the Lord of your faith, your Teacher, leaning not to your own understanding, but meekly sitting at His feet and saying, “Lord, what I know not, teach Thou me.” (3) If you are in the faith, Christ is in you as your Sanctifier. (4) As a Comforter. (*C. Williams.*) **Know ye not your own selves.**—*Self-knowledge*:—The question, “Know ye not,” &c., is exceedingly impressive as addressed to the Corinthians. They prided themselves in the Greek philosophy, whose wisest precept was, “Know thyself.” Put to them, therefore, the question expressed—1. Astonishment, in view of their real self-ignorance. 2. Irony, in view of their pretended self-knowledge. We do not know our own selves. I. PHYSICALLY. If men thoroughly understood the body and perfectly obeyed the laws of physical life, probably most would attain to the full threescore years and ten. How strange, nay, how sinful, is this ignorance! True, we excuse it by our reliance on medical science. And the excuse would be good if we employed physicians to keep us in health, rather than to aid us in sickness. II. INTELLECTUALLY. Many men practically ignore their intellectual faculties. Their only self-culture consists in taking care of the body. Some men never think at all. And even among those who recognise their intellectual nature, how strangely is it treated! Every man has his special intellectual gift, which often he does not discover till too late to develop and employ to profit. III. MORALLY. 1. Self-knowledge here promotes comfort. Of the passions and emotions which belong to our moral nature, some are painful and some pleasurable, and our happiness depends upon quickening the play of the latter and diminishing the power of the former. The soul of man is a dwelling of many apartments. In it love may be supposed to have a fair banqueting hall—anger a dark cell; faith and hope to have glorified chambers looking heavenward, and the lower passions dungeons of gloom. And possessed of such a house, how foolish to practically ignore those loftier and lovelier pavilions of gladness—deliberately choosing to abide in the dungeons of envy, anger, impurity, rather than to sit at love’s great banquet, or to recline in the pavilion where benevolence makes sweet music, or to ascend to the bright chamber of faith and hope, and look forth upon heaven from their open casements. 2. Our character depends upon it. It is marvellous how little most men know morally of themselves! And this, not because they cannot, but because they will not. They do not look carefully after those favourite or easily-besetting sins which colour, yea,

constitute character. Reading himself wrongly, a man manages himself wrongly. Every man, possessed of a moral nature, whose development must be into immense growths either of good or evil, should understand it thoroughly, that the flowers and fruits of its culture may be good and glorious. IV. SPIRITUALLY. 1. There are persons who think themselves Christian, but are not. Such self-deception is altogether unnecessary. Surely if there be anything made plain in the Bible, it is the evidence of true Christian character. A true Christian—(1) Loves God. (2) Believes in Christ—not merely with a speculative faith but with a loving trust as his Saviour. (3) Sincerely repents of sin. (4) Loves the duties of religion. (5) Loves his brethren. And he knows that he hath passed from death unto life because he does so. Now these are the obvious evidences of regeneration. How strange, then, is it that men should be self-deceived! 2. There are some not thinking themselves Christians, who are yet real children of God. Sometimes this self-distrust arises from—(1) A temperament constitutionally gloomy. The man who looks habitually on the dark side of everything, of course looks on the dark side of his religious character. (2) Bodily infirmity. What the man wants to make him a hopeful and joyous Christian is bodily regimen and exercise, and not theological casuistry. (3) An over-estimate of the particular manner or circumstances of conversion. They can indeed perceive a radical change in their own feelings and conduct; but the manner and manifestation of the change does not satisfy their conscience. As if it mattered how a blind man's eyes were opened! or with what instrumentality the drowning man was saved! (4) Assuming false tests and standards of Christian character. They entertain extravagant notions of the effects even of regeneration. They have read the biographies of distinguished Christians, wherein it seems as if life were uninterrupted in its wrapt communion with God, but wherein there is no mention of faults and failings. And thus the humble man, finding his own experience so different, turns away in despair. Conclusion: The text appeals—1. To the self-deceived. To be in the Church without piety is of all conditions the most dreadful. Not because false professors are more sinful than other men—though even this may be true, but because there is less hope of their conviction and conversion. Let us, then, be willing to know the very worst of our character and condition! 2. To the self-distrustful. Your trust for salvation is not in what you are, but what Christ is. If, with a penitent, and believing, and loving heart, you cast yourselves upon the Redeemer, then you know you are Christians! For He says you shall “in no wise be cast out,” and “shall never perish!” And thus, “knowing your own selves,” your place should be in Christ's visible Church. 3. To the openly impenitent. In one sense, indeed, these men do “know their own selves.” They know that they are unconverted. They stand boldly in the ranks of rebellion against Jehovah. But “Know ye not your own selves?” that you are not beasts that perish, but immortal creatures! Two eternal worlds watch you and strive for you. Come to Christ Jesus for life. 4. To the Church. The text intimates that between the professing people of God and the world there is so little visible difference, that it is difficult to distinguish them. Surely, then, it is time for us to rise into higher frames and spheres of religious life! (C. Wadsworth, D.D.)

Vers. 7-9. Now I pray to God that ye do no evil.—Paul's prayer for the restoration of the Corinthians to corporate perfectness:—The prayer is—I. FOR THE PERFECT RECOVERY WHICH WOULD RESULT FROM “NOT DOING THE EVIL.” The vices that infested the Corinthian Church are those which have been the bane of the Church from the beginning. 1. Rebellion against the supreme authority of the Divine Revealer and Inspirer of truth in the person of the apostle. There was a tendency to rely on the light of their own reason, and to criticise revelation. Rationalism in the individual is fatal to religious stability and growth, and in the Church is the root of all disorganisation, and must be put away before either can put on “perfection.” 2. Lax maintenance of some of the vital doctrines of the Christian confession—the direct result of the former. The Corinthian heretics assailed the resurrection generally, and Christ's resurrection in particular. Hence their doctrinal errors went perilously near to an abandonment of the atoning death of Christ; and it was not to be wondered at that they misapprehended the design of the Sacrament. Obviously the integrity of their faith was in his thought in verse 8. 3. Neglect and irreverence in divine service, which invariably follow hard upon laxity of doctrine. The flagrant disorders rebuked in the First Epistle were doubtless checked, but this Epistle indicates that the same leaven was at work; and the final prayer includes the removal of that

spirit of disorder, and the observance of all that is "decent" (ver. 7) in its wish for their restoration to perfection. Never was this prayer more needed than now. Two kinds of dishonour are done to the divine service—the one taking away its simplicity and discerning more in ordinances than they have to show; the other robbing everything external and symbolical of its true value, and reducing religious ceremonial to the level of mere human arrangement. Both are equally distant from ecclesiastical perfection. From the equal sins of excess and defect may we be saved.

4. The spirit of faction, closely connected with the preceding elements of disorder and imperfection. This evil seems to have been rebuked by the First Epistle in vain (chap. xii. 20), and it might seem as if the apostle had a presentiment of the calamities which would befall the Church through this spirit of division; for he sets no limit to his indignation in dealing with it. And it was with a distinct apprehension of its exceeding sinfulness that he expressed the hope that they would cease to do this evil, and wished their "perfect restoration to order."

5. The violation of Christian morality. In chap. xii. 20, 21 there is obvious reference to those two classes of moral offence from which, in chap. vii. 1, they had been exhorted to cleanse themselves. (1) The sins of the spirit are summed up in the completest of those catalogues for which St. Paul's Epistles are remarkable. (2) The sins of the flesh are lamentable. Many were no less infamous in their secret sensuality than in their open turbulence. And this condition was the necessary result of the other elements of disorder.

II. FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF ALL THE COMPLETENESS WHICH MAY BELONG TO A CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Note the wonderful fact that a Church encompassed by such corruptions should be prayed for as capable of immediate and perfect amendment as the result of energetic co-operation with Divine grace. Paul knew that the enemies of order and purity were only a minority, and it may be that his Master gave him a secret assurance of success. And this is an abundant encouragement to us in our day. There need be no more than a step between great disorder and a sound amendment.

1. The bond of ecclesiastical perfectness is, in Paul's view, a compact organisation vivified and kept in living unity of the Holy Spirit. It was this for which he prayed. The Greek term expresses the apostle's ardent wish that the community might be "perfectly joined together" under one discipline: all factions suppressed, and the separate congregations of the city united in one corporate body for common worship, communion and work. And it expresses the Holy Spirit's will concerning us that division and discord should cease. Lawlessness within a church itself and bitterness towards other churches are both alike inconsistent with its corporate perfection.

2. The Church's order of worship may even on earth attain a certain standard of perfection; and this must be included in the present prayer. Happy the Christian congregations who seek to attain in the Spirit's own method the ideal which the Spirit proposes; avoiding the two extremes, of a ceremonial that stifles the simplicity of devotion, and of a bareness and poverty which dishonour the holy name of Him who is in the midst. That there is such a perfection of praise and prayer attainable as shall make the place where the disciples meet the antechamber of heaven, and the Christian communion the earnest of an eternal fellowship, let us never doubt.

3. Paul's ideal of corporate perfection included a noble theory of mutual help. These epistles are a complete depository of the social principles of Christianity. Their teaching is that every member of the body must in his vocation and stewardship render back to Christianity all that in Christianity he receives, and give to the community the fullest advantage of whatever talent he as an individual may possess. This ideal is most fully realised when charity has the disposal of the Church's wealth; where employment is given in various ways to the diversified talents of its members; where mutual exhortation and encouragement are secured by periodical meetings; where, in short, every joint, according to its deferred function in the common organisation, supplieth the measure of its effectual working to the edifying of the body in love.

4. The apostle's ideal embraces a high standard of Christian morality. The purity of the Church must be guarded by a rigid discipline. But this discipline is of two kinds. (1) It is ecclesiastical. Where that is relaxed the Church is already on its way to dissolution, or worse. (2) But the more effectual discipline is the maintenance of a high standard of morality in the common sentiment of the people through the instruction of the Christian ministry. It is not, however, because the world expects it or because consistency demands it, that the "approved" Church aims at a lofty ethical standard. It is because Christ is in it (ver. 5), and prompts by His Spirit to every good word and work. Where vice reigns, or even moral laxity, the Church is in the way to declare itself "reprobate." Its perfection, however, as

prayed for by St. Paul, is its aim at a perfect holiness. 5. The end of perfection is charity. Note the apostle's extraordinary anxiety for the due and cheerful exercise of benevolence towards the poor Christians at Jerusalem. And we may regard this as only one illustration of that boundless compassion towards the miserable inhabitants of this sin-stricken world which every Christian community is bound by its allegiance to Christ to exhibit. No other excellence, and no combination of excellences, will compensate for the lack of this. Conclusion: Scarcely any reference has been made to the individual believer, because the peculiar word demands an ecclesiastical application. Still, every application of scriptural truth finds its way to the individual. Let every one, then, who hears this "wish" bethink himself of his own soul, and ask what there is in himself of disorder and imperfectness, and seek to bring his own heart into the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," so making sure that his own part is contributed to the Church's perfect harmony. (*W. B. Pope, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.**—*The impotence of revolt against the truth*:—I. THE FUTILITY OF REVOLT AGAINST THE TRUTH. 1. There are two great truths against which the world has been in perpetual revolt. (1) The moral truth of God's government. This means that there is a living and a righteous God; that He will reward righteousness and punish evil. That is the sublime belief uttered in every page of the Bible. By that belief the noblest nations have lived, and the noblest periods of history been shaped. Denying that truth, the world becomes a fathomless and maddening problem. It becomes what Carlyle said the materialists made it, "A mill without a miller," whose wheels turn endlessly in the tide of the ages, but without purpose or result. Such revolt is the madness of an empty pride, and is as futile as it is wicked. (2) The spiritual truth of God's government by Jesus Christ. Christ stands before men as the embodied holiness of God, and His law of life is the law by which human holiness is attained. Against that Divine Presence the world has been in perpetual revolt. The past sign of that revolt is Calvary; its present sign is the selfishness and un-Christliness of human life. But long since, on the steep stairs of sacrifice, Christ has ascended into universal supremacy. The Pharisees had hated Him living, and they feared Him dead. And so they came to Pilate, who said, "Ye have a watch"—set it; seal the tomb; "make it as sure as ye can." How sure was that? Was it prophecy or irony which animated Pilate's speech? The revolt against Him was futile then, and it is futile now. He being "lifted up," is drawing all men unto Him. There are those who resist that infinite attraction. Some of you have done it. But again the voice of Paul speaks, and eighteen centuries have only added victorious confirmation to his words, "We can do nothing against the truth." 2. But it may be said, where is the proof? One proof of truth, at least, is found in the eternity of its life. Error carries the seeds of its own death with it. It is error that changes; truth abides. The history of civilisation is a history of the slow but certain conquests of truth. There have been periods when the world has seemed to have fallen asleep. But at length from that vast slumbering host one man has seen a new light kindling in the far firmament. He has risen and announced his great discovery, and called on men to believe in it. Such men have always been disbelieved, persecuted. But time has tried them and the truth has proved itself truth by living and triumphing. Astrology and alchemy have perished, but astronomy and chemistry survive. The scientific heresies of one age have become the commonplaces of the next. Time has threshed out the wheat from the chaff, annihilating the false and keeping the eternal truths. (1) One proof of the moral government of God is, that the centuries assert it. Think how many great monarchies have arisen and covered the world with empire, and where are they now? Did ever empire seem more likely to endure than the Roman? What does the philosophic historian say about France? "France slit her own veins and let her own life-blood out on the day of St. Bartholomew, and has been perishing of exhaustion ever since." On all nations which have become corrupt, the same fate has fallen sooner or later. And what does all this mean, but that there is an avenging holiness in the world? (2) And how is it that the spiritual empire of Jesus Christ has survived? The world has been leagued against it from the beginning. The key-note of revolt and hatred struck on Calvary has echoed through the ages. Yet the kingdom survives, and the fiery waves have fallen back quenched and impotent, and the wrath of man has passed like a waft of smoke. The Christ survives, and is the moral Emperor of the universe to-day. What does it all mean? It means that

the kingdom of God in Christ is a fact, and cannot be destroyed. The whole rebellion of man against God is one wild spasm of despair: "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." 3. You can, of course, deny the truth and defy it. So, too, you may deny the law of gravitation, but if you defy it and leap from yonder steeple, there is one sure result—the law triumphs and the man is slain. You can deny the penalties of vice, but if you defy them the slow poison will eat the heart out notwithstanding. There are certain things which have long since been lifted out of the realm of speculation into certitude. Why is it no one doubts? It is because we have discovered certain laws of the universe which are subject to no caprice, open to no revisal. And so in the spiritual universe. When we see the same cause producing the same effect through the long course of various centuries, we know we have found a truth. And when we see through all the faded past of human history, Christ's love inspiring love, and Christ's light bestowing light, and Christ's life imparting life, we know that we are dealing with an unchangeable force, and can forecast the spiritual future of the world with unerring accuracy. II. THE TRUTH EVEN PROSPERS ON OPPOSITION. "But for the truth." 1. It has always been so in the day of persecution. The hurricane has carried the seed of truth afar; the fire has purged the hearts of men; the storm has destroyed the old building, only that it shall be replaced by a nobler and more stable structure. It is the very irony of victory! God indeed holds His enemies in derision when their best-planned revolt crowns His arms with new glory, and the very ingenuity of their hatred helps on His sovereign purpose. 2. But impotent as we are to assail the truth, we are all able to assist it. You cannot revoke the laws of science; they are the same to-day as when the dawn of the world broke: but they lurk in silence, and wait the approach of the intellect of man, and the demand of his noble curiosity. You can destroy none of these forces; but how much you can do for them! It is even so with the kingdom of Jesus Christ. 3. Let our hearts rejoice, then: Christ's kingdom cannot be shaken. Think of the continuity of faith which has run through all the ages, of Christian saints in every century, and then ask: Is it possible that all these believed in vain? To-morrow the sceptic will propose his question; you propose yours. Is it probable that all the ages have been wrong, that at last Herbert Spencer and his little following should be right? I prefer to believe that vast anthem of certitude which rolls upward from the saintliest and noblest hearts of all the world's great past: "I know whom I have believed," &c. Conclusion: The text is a call—1. To loyal submission and noble service. Cease from a revolt which is impotent, enter into that allegiance with God from which shall issue peace and victory. 2. To increased faith in the victory of the kingdom of Christ. It has triumphed over greater odds than any now arrayed against it. Picture the young convert of Paul's day as he enters some great Pagan city. On every side he sees the pomp of martial power, the luxury of sensuous life. Vast temples rise, and there philosophers dispute. But to him, poor youth, all this seems strange, sad, hateful. Is it possible all this can be changed? But he turns aside into some lowly street, and amid the humblest people begins to preach that strange gospel of Jesus Christ. And in three centuries not a heathen temple is left in Rome. 3. To new and nobler enthusiasm for this kingdom. Enthusiasm is the true fire of manhood, and when that leaves a man, a church, a nation, its true glory is departed. We want the enthusiasm of that young minister who refused a hard and poor station, but that same night heard Bishop Simpson preach, and at last sprang to his feet and cried, "Bishop, I will go anywhere for Christ now!" We want the enthusiasm which shames men of their niggard gifts, and counts no box of frankincense too precious for that Head which bowed in death for us. 4. To new and nobler effort for this kingdom. Enthusiasm is much, but action is more. Fix it in your minds; you can help the truth. You, bright youth, with all the unused powers of heart and intellect; you, poor widow, with the few coppers in your worn purse; you, rich man, with your social position and wealth. If you have ever gazed upon the Matterhorn, you will have thought that if ever there was a type of majestic strength it is standing there. But ask science how the Matterhorn was made, and it will tell you how, ages upon ages since, there were drifting mica-flakes floating in an abysmal sea, and one by one they came together, and were beaten into hardness and consistence, and grew in bulk and steadfastness, until at last the waters rolled back, and there was uncovered that vast Alpine tower. And even so Christ's kingdom is built up. Little by little, life by life, the kingdom grows. It is built up inch by inch, until at last it rises mighty, impregnable, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Shall our lives be added, as living stones, to this growing

grandeur? Shall they be fretted out in blind rebellion against this rock against which men are broken, and which when it falls crushes men to powder? For, or against? But before we answer, the decree is fixed: "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." (*W. J. Dawson.*) *The impotence of man in antagonism to the truth*:—Truth is reality—that which is; falsehood is non-entity—that which may seem to be but is not. We may illustrate Paul's maxim in reference to—

I. HUMAN SCIENCE. 1. In the region of the material, that which has been established is true, has being. To fight against it, to be frightened at it, is not rational, is not reverent. Unless you can disprove it, it is as much a part of the truth as anything else that God has done or spoken. (1) There are those who cannot accept this. Investigation is viewed with suspicion. At the exact point where knowledge stood when they were in the cradle, there it must remain at least till they are in the grave. (2) What calmness, what dignity, would it give to the Christian if he were to say, truth and the truth can never really be at variance. The God of the Bible is the God also of nature, and the one cannot contradict the other. Therefore I wait, rest, and trust. (3) It is otherwise with human theories. They are not yet, and may never be parts of the truth. It is by no means true that men can do nothing against them, for they have been disproved and displaced all along the ages. But facts, once proved, are a part of the truth, and we can do nothing against that. 2. What can we do for it? We may help the onward march of truth by an attitude towards it of respect, interest, and gratitude. We can assure the toilers in the field of science that, so far from dreading and disparaging the results of their labour, we recognise in them fellow-workers in the cause of God and man. And of them the Christian asks for the truth's sake—(1) That science will worship while she explores. (2) That she will exercise towards workers in other fields that forbearance and respectfulness which they manifest towards her; that she will never allow herself to speak as though there were no vast region within which telescope and microscope give no vision. Science is a fighter against the truth when she arrogates to herself the whole of it.

II. LIFE AND CONDUCT. There are such things as reality and unreality, truth and falsehood, in the realm of action. We speak, *e.g.*, of a true man and a false man. Good itself is truth, in contrast with evil, which is always hollow and evanescent. 1. There are men who have thought, in this sense, to do something against the truth. Men have defied morality and hoped by the force of position, or genius, to put down virtue herself. Have they succeeded? Has not the judgment of the next generation, nay, even of their own, gone against them? In nothing has the application of the word "truth" to morals been more powerfully attested, than in the failure of these champions of a new licence, to move from its firm base by one hair's breadth the impregnable rock of the human instinct as to the virtuous and the vile. But for one man who attempts this audacious enterprise, tens of thousands have hoped to do something on a smaller scale. Then the appeal lies to all of us. And it is this—Did you find by sinning that you were able, practically, to do anything against the truth? Was it happiness while the sin reigned in you? No man grown to man's estate will feel the slightest disposition to gainsay the old utterance, There is no doubt on which side God is in the great world-wide and age-long war between vice and virtue. 2. We can do nothing against virtue. Can we do something for it? I address the young. It is comparatively little to see an old man, or a family man, or a clergyman, virtuous. It is expected of him. But who shall speak of the "power for the truth" which is yours? Just in proportion as the life is young, and the snares many, is the admiration if you stand steadfast. Then can you plead for truth against the lie, and be listened to. Then can you influence one or two of your nearest and dearest to walk with you in the way of purity and peace.

III. THE GOSPEL, which Paul had in his mind. 1. Many think or thought that they could do something against the gospel. Outspoken infidels and false brethren have tried to bring the faith of Christ into disrepute. Now and then they have even seemed, in some corner of the field, to have gained a victory. But look again, is the truth overborne? Is the gospel weaker to-day than it was five, ten, fifteen centuries ago? Were there ever more diligent students of the Bible, more earnest men of prayer, more holy lives, more Christian deaths than is this age? Are the impugnors of the faith satisfied? Do you hear no laments over their own departed days of believing and worshipping—no envious lookings upon men that have hope and can give reason for it? We do not deny that it is in the power of any man to be an antagonist of the gospel. Any fool can parody verses of the Bible; can say smart things against creeds. And some of these things will stay by us, and make it harder

to be good than it need have been. It is quite possible to make a believer into an infidel and have the misery of hearing, late on in life, that an associate of yours has lived without God and died without hope. Thus far can we go, and no further. But against the gospel you have no power. 2. Can we do nothing for it? The gospel seeks not yours but you. It does not want your help—it wants your happiness. Not till you have embraced it will it accept anything of you. But when this is done we can add one little chapter to its evidences and show, by our example, that its whole tendency is good. So, when the last day of life comes, your last breath shall be drawn, not in the disconsolate cry, "O Galilean, Thou hast conquered!" but in the confiding utterance, "I know whom I have believed; Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Christ's truth uninjurable*:—The text may be taken

—1. As expressing the strong disposition of a truth loving man. 2. As a statement of a universal fact. The religion of Christ—I. IS TRUTH. 1. Religion is not to be understood either as theology, ecclesiasticism, or ritualities, but as those eternal principles that are hungered after and agree with the reason, intuitions, and wants of humanity. 2. The great cardinal principles of all the religions of the world are more or less identical with those of Christ. They all involve—(1) Absolute dependence upon the Supreme Being. (2) The obligation of the highest love and devotion to Him. (3) The duty of exercising justice and beneficence towards men. (4) The existence of a future state of retribution. (5) The idea of mediation. 3. These principles are therefore the truth, the reality. Christ brought them out in His life and teaching in a form more perfect and powerful than they were ever brought forth before. He is their exponent, their incarnation, Hence Paul speaks of the truth that is "in Jesus Christ." He says Himself, "I am the truth." II. IS INDESTRUCTIBLE. 1. Man can do much against the theology or theory of truth. 2. Man can do much against conventional manifestations of the truth. Christendom calls Christ Master and Lord, but many deny Him in their daily life. 3. Man can do much against its ecclesiastical representation. 4. But whilst man can do much against all these things he can do nothing against the truth. The truth that Christ taught and incarnated is independent of these. Conclusion: Whilst you can do nothing against the truth, remember that in opposing the truth you may do much against yourselves. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: . . . even your perfection.—*Christian perfection*.—I. THE OBJECT DESIRED. Perfection. 1. As individual believers. No such thing as aggregate holiness can exist, without the sanctification of its units. A church cannot be perfect except as its members are so, any more than the body can be healthy unless its organs are sound. In what he considered this to consist we may gather from his writings:—"In understanding be men," literally "perfect"; "that I might perfect that which is lacking in your faith"; "perfect and complete in all the will of God"; "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work"; "perfect in Christ Jesus." He would have Christians—(1) Of vigorous understanding, not feeble minded, not intellectual dwarfs, not liable to be carried about with every wind of doctrine in consequence of their slight comprehension or grasp of the truth. (2) Of strong faith, not sceptical, doubting, hesitating, but, like Abraham, strong in faith, giving glory to God; living by it, walking by it, taking it as their principle and guide; and by it giving the future ascendancy over the present, the spiritual over the material. (3) Perfect in all God's will; not correct in creed and defective in practice; not strong in faith and deficient in love, but showing faith by works; being all that Christianity requires and Christ was. (4) "Careful to maintain good works"; active, diligent, zealous, devout. (5) And all this "in Christ Jesus"; not from a spirit of legality, self-righteousness, or self dependence, but by grace derived from Christ, by the indwelling spirit of Christ, actuated by the love of Christ, and doing all to His glory. This is an object at which we may all aim. The highest kind of excellence is presented to the view of each. You cannot perhaps be great, you may be good—wealth may be denied you, worth is not. And this is what we want. If each one will consecrate themselves by a more personal surrender to Christ, and will resolve in God's strength to be more what the Word of God requires, a new era will dawn upon this fellowship. 2. As a Church. (1) And here we are at once reminded that there is much which a Christian Church may possess which does not constitute Christian perfection. Like the capital to which the city gave its name and which is the composite of many other forms of beauty, the Corinthian Church had great excellence, but it was not perfect. It had wealth,

gifts, numbers probably—yet it was not perfect. The perfection of a Christian Church does not consist in outward things. Not that they are to be despised. They may be valuable adjuncts. But we are in danger of putting, *e.g.*, beautiful architecture in the place of a spiritual house; melodious music in the place of harmonious feeling; of mistaking eloquence for gracious words; of idolising intellect instead of yielding to truth; but in proportion as we do this we content ourselves with the shell instead of the kernel, we grasp a shadow, but we miss the substance. “The kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” (2) In thinking of what constitutes Church perfection, I place too in a very subordinate position mere outward organisation. Not that I despise it; but I regard it as a means. (3) If I am asked what then constitutes the perfection of a Church, I point you to the Pentecostal Church (Acts ii.). (4) As we would obtain this perfection, let us try and avoid whatever would impair or destroy it. In this letter the apostle had animadverted on many points of reprehension. There was party-spirit, forbearance of needful discipline, undue conformity to the world, defects in the mode of conducting worship and in dispensing ordinances, an undue regard to ostentatious display of gifts, a lack of such liberality as was exhibited by other and poorer churches, unkind depreciation of him as their teacher and apostle. These and similar evils led him to say (chap. xii. 20), “I fear, lest when I come I shall not find you such as I would,” and no wonder that he so earnestly desired greater perfection. II. THE WISH EXPRESSED. Here observe—1. The lofty aim of the Christian ministry. (1) Look at it in itself, and how spiritual, vast, important—the fullest development of individual and collective character. And then recollect this was desired in order to something beyond—the world’s salvation and the glory of God. The Christian ministry seeks the Church’s perfection, and this in order to higher aims still. (2) I go a step farther: it not only seeks it but it is greatly instrumental in promoting it. God has many means by which He works, as He can dispense with all; but of all the means He has blessed to this end, none have been more hopeful than an earnest, evangelical ministry. This we wish as ministers—your perfection. 2. The deep emotions by which earnest minds are characterised. The term wish but faintly intimates the apostle’s obvious feeling. We might illustrate it by some other of his expressions:—“My little children of whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed within you.” “God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.” Be in earnest, and let the earnest emotion of others on your behalf urge you to concern for yourself. 3. The conscious dependence of the apostle upon an agency superior to his own to secure the object desired. We wish! but some one else must grant. Perfection will never be secured by mere wishing. This indeed will never secure anything. (1) There must be effort. What a man sows that shall he also reap. If he sows only wishes, wishes light as thistle down will be his only harvest. If he sows real effort, diligent persevering exertion, a daily advance to perfection will be his glorious reward. Are we putting forth this? Say not it is discouraging to be constantly failing. Remember the effort braces the moral nature, and is thus its own reward. Let conscious failure only quicken to further exertion. (2) Likewise pray—so did the apostle; well did he know that only the Perfect One could give perfection. (*J. Vinay.*) *Christian perfection*:—I. THE NATURE OF THE APOSTLE’S WISH. 1. It was very serious and solemn, and of the nature of a fervent and affectionate prayer (Rom. x. 1). 2. It was benevolent. The apostle had reason to be offended with the Corinthians, yet he manifested towards them the greatest kindness, and was at all times their advocate at the throne of grace. 3. It was seasonable and suitable. It implies that some things had taken place amongst the Corinthians which he lamented, and desired to see removed. 4. It was full and comprehensive, including both their present and eternal welfare. The greatest thing that is said of glorified saints above is, that they are made perfect. The greatest thing that can be said of God Himself is, that He is perfect. 5. It was highly apostolic, being in unison with his character and office. II. ITS OBJECT “PERFECTION.” This is what he laboured himself to attain (Phil. iii. 12). For the Corinthians he entertained the same holy desire (ver. 7). Corrupt principles and evil habits had crept in among them, and he wished to see these corrected and laid aside. Not content with negative purity he adds: “This also we wish, even your perfection.” 1. Christian perfection is—(1) Legal. In the eye of the lawgiver, all the saints are complete in Christ, who is their head and representative (Col. ii. 10, 11). (2) Moral, which is either full, or partial. Man was originally free from moral defect, being created in righteousness and true holiness. Christ was also holy and sinless. Both were perfect, being in every

respect what righteousness could require. The only perfection to be found amongst fallen creatures is partial; a perfection begun but not consummated; entire in all the integral parts, but not in degrees, as a child is perfect in possessing all that is requisite to constitute a complete and entire human being, though not grown up to the fulness of the stature of a man. So where patience has its perfect work, in connection with all the other graces, the believer is said to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James i. 4). (3) Comparative (1 Cor. ii. 6). (4) Synonymous with sincerity and uprightness (Gen. vi. 9, xvii. 1; Job i. 8; Psa. xxxvii. 37, ci. 2; John i. 47). 2. The perfection which Paul desired on behalf of the Corinthians would include (1) A maturity of understanding in the great mysteries of the gospel. The entrance of God's Word giveth light (Col. i. 13); but all true religion is progressive. (2) A pure heart and an unspotted conversation. (3) A high degree of spirituality. (4) Tenderness of conscience. (5) An aptitude for spiritual and edifying conversation. (6) Joining in Christian fellowship, and attending on gospel ordinances. Conclusion: 1. The sincere Christian, though he has not attained perfection, earnestly breathes after it, and cannot be satisfied without it. 2. What the apostle wished for others, let us anxiously seek for ourselves. 3. As the most eminent and perfect part of the Christian character consists in making Christ all and in all, so let this be the life and substance of our religion. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *Christian perfection*.—The objection to this is probably the loudest of all objections ever urged against Christianity. It is said to be clear fanaticism, false in fact, and ridiculous in appearance. And yet it is likely that a very slight examination will show that the common creed of all men has not a more clear or prominent feature or section in it than this very doctrine. And here we inquire, is it a new and strange doctrine peculiar to Christianity? Ask the orator how high he has fixed his standard of perfection in the powers of oratory, beyond which point he does not aim? His young manhood makes war upon all who have preceded him. His pride disdains the achievements of mortals; and he would, if he could, hold his audience nerveless and breathless—subject only to the flash of his eye and the move of his finger. His motto is perfection. Ask the painter—if he would not, were he able, make the canvas whisper! The sculptor, if he could, would chisel the marble, that you could see the very life blood coursing in its veins! To excel is the desire of every man who is not a drone or a sluggard. What means achievement? Is it a word without a meaning? "Go on to perfection" is the only motto worthy a God-created, heaven-aspiring mind. It is the first thing the child learns, and the last thing the sage grasps after. And would you deny this heavenly doctrine to the Christian? Must he, and he alone, be deprived of its cheering influence? May not his heart, too, be fired with its vital flames? Must he, and he alone, be fettered and chained down to the mere experience of the common herd? Or may he not rise above the earth likewise, and go on to perfection too? Let him go! Let him rise! Let him fix his aspiring gaze higher, yea upon the very spot where the Saviour sits at the right hand of God. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 11-14. Finally, brethren, farewell.—*Farewell*.—Note—**I. THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION.** 1. The state to be attained: "Be perfect," which conveys the idea of repairing, or putting in order. It is used, *e.g.*, of the disciples mending their nets, and also in Gal. vi. 1, the idea there being that of a dislocated limb; and just as a surgeon will reduce that limb and restore it to its proper place in the body, so Christians were to restore a fallen brother to the position which he had lost. So it is for you to inquire whether there may have been in time past anything wrong. It was a complaint of Him who searches the heart, "I have not found thy works perfect before God; remember, and repent." At the same time the exhortation is rather for our future guidance. Every believer has his proper place in the Church, and has his proper duties to perform, and it is for us to ask of God to teach us what it is, and then give us grace to do it. 2. The happiness to be enjoyed: "Be of good comfort." Comfort is needed, for we are in a world of sorrow. Comfort is needed even by the believer, for he is called sometimes to suffer under the chastisement of a Father's hand, and "no chastisement is for the present joyous, but rather grievous." But amidst all the dispensations of providence with which God deals with him, he may still be of good comfort. For remember the foundation on which the gospel bases this comfort. "Be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee." Comfort is supplied by—(1) The assurances of the gospel: "God is faithful who hath called you to the knowledge of His dear Son"; "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: the Lord knoweth them that are His";

“I know My sheep, and am known of Mine”; “I know their sorrows and will deliver them”; “I will never leave them nor forsake them.” (2) The promises of the gospel. Whatever there be that we want, there is some promise or other of which we may plead the fulfilment at the throne of grace; and our Lord has said, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, believing, ye shall receive.” (3) The hopes of the gospel. (a) They extend to the very verge of life. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” (b) They cast a light even upon the dark “valley of the shadow of death.” (c) They give us the assurance of heaven. 3. The unity to be sought: “Be of one mind.” Now this has reference to the state in which the apostle found the Corinthian Church. They formed parties and factions. One of them liked one minister better than another. But the apostle asks, “Who is Paul and who is Cephas, but ministers by whom ye believed?” They are mere instruments after all. He teaches the Corinthians to honour Christ alone. Look, then, off from the preacher. Determine to honour Christ only, then there will be no fear, but you will “be of one mind.” And then, in order to do that, let His Word only be your authority. Then unite in His work. 4. The spirit to be manifested: “Live in peace.” (1) With God. (2) With one another. Seek to promote peace in your families, in the social circle, in the church. II. THE APOSTOLIC ASSURANCE. “The God of love and peace shall be with you.” Notice the ground on which this assurance is given. It is not as a condition, but rather as an encouragement. “The God of love and peace shall be with you” to encourage you in the discharge of duty. 1. We have to do with the God of love—(1) In every comfort and blessing which His bounteous providence bestows upon us. (2) In every trial which we are called to bear. 2. And He is also the God of peace. He devised peace, arranged the plan by which it might be restored; He proclaims peace in and through the gospel; He delights in peace; He will ever pour upon His people the blessing of peace. 3. Then notice the comprehensive blessing to be realised: “The God of love and peace shall be with you”; in duty to strengthen you, in difficulty to guide you, in trial to support you, in loneliness to befriend you and cheer you, in death to be the strength of your heart, in judgment to be your Father and Saviour. (*W. Cadman, M.A.*) **Be perfect: be of good comfort.**—*Perfection and comfort*:—1. “Farewell” means rejoice. Just as the parting wish with us is that friends may fare well, so it was with the Greeks. 2. “Be of good comfort” conveys the same idea, but with reference to difficulties to be overcome. The apostle returns in this expression to the keynote which he had struck in chap. i. The epistle, indeed, is a ministering of comfort united with a call to perfection, and the gist of it is therefore given in this verse. 3. Effort after perfection, however, seems a very different thing from joy on the one side and comfort on the other. These two are smiling and bright, like fertile plains watered by placid silver streams, but the other is a steep rock with its summit lost in the clouds. And yet if we look close we shall find a meaning in the collocation beyond that of mere contrast. Consider—I. THE PURSUIT OF PERFECTION. 1. The injunction may seem a strange one in the light of man's condition and history. And yet he has been ever repeating it. In the Far East it is repeated by Confucius. The Brahmin and the Buddhist dream and speculate regarding it. The subtle Greek defined and analysed it. It seems as if man could nowhere escape from it. The very thought of a good suggests that of a better and a best. Every beautiful thing speaks of it. Even the desire to finish a piece of work thoroughly is a hint of it. It is because man has an ideal which rebukes him that he is smitten with penitence; because he has an ideal which gleams before him that he marches on with courage and enthusiasm. The child who tries to write, or draw, or learn a lesson perfectly, opens for himself a chink into the infinite. The idea of the perfect, the thirst after it, is thus one of the greatest powers in the common unideal everyday world. What benefactors the men have been who said, “I cannot and will not rest till I know the principle that underlies these facts”; “I must give perfect expression to that idea at whatever cost of time and labour”; or “I must bring out all the power that lies in this material”; “I must utter the beauty I see in things.” Those whose inspiration was the thought of perfection have been the most practical of men. There are many things that never would have been attempted or dreamt of but for this, and the whole fabric of work and thought is sustained and vivified by it. 2. And yet this perfection is everywhere unattainable. The horizon recedes before man to whichever side he turns. It is the same in the moral and spiritual world. Reason approves it, imagination dreams it, conscience demands it, love of God and man

never cease to enforce it. The tender majestic glory of Jesus clothes it with unspeakable attraction. And yet ever far above the highest and best of men it towers—the unapproachable. But the pursuit of it is none the less imperative. We dare aim at nothing less. 3. Is this a contradiction? Is it unreasonable that the painter should seek a perfection which no earthly colours can supply, and no mortal hand can achieve? Would not his whole work descend to a poor daub without this ideal? And so without the thought of perfection the depth would depart from duty, effort would grow languid, and every walk of life would feel the blight. When we feel that we are sinking down from the conception we must chide and rebuke ourselves. If we keep the desire for perfection bright, the belief in eternal existence will be a necessity to us, and the entire spiritual realm and atmosphere will spread around us in living power. II. THE APPARENT INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE TWO INJUNCTIONS. 1. The command to rejoice and be of good comfort is as truly a Divine command as the other. We conceive of joy as something which we may either take or not as we think fit. We forget that the joy inculcated in the Bible is no superficial thing, but a plant having its roots in great truths and blossoming into rich flower and fruit. In one sense joy is an easy thing, in another it is one of the most difficult achievements. We are to be glad in the Lord—how simple and direct this is—how different from the task of forcing joy on the soil of self; but, still, what a clear and steady vision it implies, and what a projection of our thoughts away beyond the sphere of self. To rejoice is natural and inevitable if one only keeps in the proper attitude and element—here lies both the easiness and the difficulty. 2. But the great difficulty to many minds is that of making both comfort and perfection objects of earnest pursuit. The idea is deeply rooted that one or other must be surrendered. And it cannot be doubted that the thirst for perfection often destroys comfort. The thirst for perfection in anything is apt to become absorbing, devouring, isolating. The current of life is drawn away in one direction, and the man becomes unsocial. He is lost in his aim. Religion has often taken this form. Men fascinated with the glory of perfection have often been deeply melancholy with only brief periods of heated joy. Many who are far enough from being thus engrossed in the pursuit, experience a measure of the like sorrow. They are so often disappointed. 3. How, then, can any man attend to both these injunctions? (1) Emphasise the indispensableness of joy. Joy is a necessary and great part of perfection. As well speak of a perfect day without sunshine as a perfect man without joy. (2) Never make perfection a solitary aim. The command to be perfect is only one of many commands. No doubt it includes all others; but it will never be so regarded, unless these also are made to stand out in distinctness and importance. Should not communion with God be placed even higher than our own perfection? And constant fellowship with God means rest and solace and joy. Should not looking to Jesus be the spirit of our life? and can we look to Jesus without getting peace and gladness? Should we not seek to live for others? and does not this self-forgetfulness bring strength and calm? Fellowship with God, faith in Jesus, and life for others, have rest and joy in them. And they are, at the same time, the things most indispensable to progress—they are the main elements in perfection. (*R. H. Story, D.D.*) *Perfection*:—To most persons this is discouraging language. But the idea is, not that we should grasp perfection as an immediate result, but make it our aim; and this, so far from discouraging, only inspires. How many are satisfied to be as good as others, to reach the current medium of reputable character! But what is this perfection? First, it includes all the virtues. It suffers us not to rely on some good qualities to the neglect of others, or to hope that we can, by a partial innocence, compound with God for the commission of any sin. In the scales of His justice generosity will not atone for intemperance, irritability, or dishonesty. Again, perfection requires that each quality should be free from taint, like the Jew's unblemished offering, and without debasing alloy. Lastly, perfection requires that all the graces be expanded to an unlimited degree. But, immeasurable as perfection is, shall it not be our aim? See how every thing great and good on this earth has grown out of the aim at perfection. Its fruits, if not in religion, are everywhere else around us. Why do we live in such comfortable dwellings? Because men were not satisfied with a cave in the ground or a rude fabric above it; but aimed at perfection. Why that proudest monument of architectural skill careering swiftly between continents, through the waste of waters? Because men were not satisfied with the creaking raft. There, again, is a man who has toiled in loneliness and secrecy upon the strings of a

musical instrument till he has concentrated all the sweet sounds of nature into that little space, and can draw forth liquid melodies and mingling harmonies, the voice of birds, and the flow of streams; now the sounds of laughter, and anon the sobs of prayer, to the astonishment of assembled thousands. And shall Christians debate whether it is a possible or reasonable thing to make a perfect piety to God and charity to man their standard? No: there is no other aim worthy of your immortal natures. There is no perfection so glorious as that of moral and religious goodness. Satisfy yourselves no longer with moderate attainments. (*C. A. Bartol.*)

Perfection:—I. THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE PERFECTION IN THIS LIFE. By absolute perfection I mean a state without sin, and by this life I mean the present dispensation. I do not wholly deny that a creature may be without sin, yea, I must needs grant it, for God created our first parents without sin, and angels and men in heaven are freed from it. But I speak now of our present state and condition after the fall, when all mankind are corrupted. The testimonies which occur in Holy Scripture prove this sufficiently. Those infallible writings expressly deny a sinless perfection (1 Kings viii. 46; Prov. xx. 9; Eccles. vii. 20). Besides, Scripture attesteth this truth by the various instances and examples it presents us with. I might instance also in societies and communities of persons, for the Scripture testifieth the very same of these. The best Churches have sinned. In the next place I am to make this good by reason as well as Scripture and examples. First, if you consider the depraved nature of the best persons, you will conclude that it cannot be otherwise. Secondly, this might be made good from the consideration of the nature of the covenant of grace. A complete exact conformity to the law is not the condition of this gracious covenant made with mankind after the fall of Adam. Thirdly, this doctrine will appear most reasonable if you consider the end and design of God's constituting repentance under the gospel. This great evangelical grace is useless, according to the notion of absolute perfection, for repentance supposeth guilt, but where there is absolute perfection there is no guilt.

II. IS THIS: THAT THERE IS A PERFECTION TO BE ATTAINED IN THIS LIFE. 1. The perfection which holy men attain to in this life is comparative, *i.e.*, though they cannot arrive to an absolute and sinless perfection, yet they may be said, and expressly are said in Scripture, to be perfect, as they are compared either with others or with themselves at different times. First, I say, if they be compared with others, *viz.*—(1) Those that are no Christians. (2) Those that are profane and wicked, of what religion soever they are. (3) The holy, but weaker, Christians. 2. Believers and holy men have an imputative perfection. This is the true evangelical perfection, namely, the being perfect by another. 3. The perfection of believers in this life, as it is imputative, so it is likewise personal and inherent. As they are righteous by another's righteousness, so it is as true that they are righteous by their own righteousness, and accordingly they have a perfection of their own. (1) The evangelical and personal perfection of the saints is a perfection of sincerity. (2) The personal perfection of Christians is a perfection of impartial obedience. (3) This perfection consists in our acquiring a habit of virtue and godliness. (4) To climb to the most heroic acts and achievements of Christianity is perfection. Consequently self-denial, taking up the Cross, profound humility, patience, heavenly-mindedness, great mercifulness, and extensive charity, denominate a person perfect (James i. 4). And there is also the perfection of love as it hath God for its object. And so for that eminent grace of faith, that likewise when it is complete is said to be perfect (James ii. 22). Conjunction with it, it hath its utmost perfection. Lastly, to be very eminent and exact in any one duty of our religion, to excel in any one grace, especially if it be very difficult, is in Scripture language perfection. (5) To acknowledge our failings and to be thoroughly sensible of our imperfections is the true gospel-perfection. (6) To desire and endeavour after the absolute and consummate perfection, to strive to come as near to it as may be, and as this state is capable of, this is gospel-perfection. He that aims at a star shall shoot higher than he that takes a shrub for his mark. Covet earnestly the best things, aspire to the highest pitch of holiness.

III. Proposition, which is this: THAT EVERY CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO MAKE IT HIS BUSINESS TO ATTAIN THIS PERFECTION. Be careful that this perfection be made up of all its dimensions. Thus labour to be complete and entire in your religion; do every thing without reserves, ingenuously, freely, nobly. In brief, follow that advice which Socrates used to commend exceedingly to his scholars, *viz.*, to act to your utmost. To which I must add two rules more, the first of which is this, repent of what you leave undone or what you do amiss. The second is, after all your omissions and

commissions rely on Christ's merits, who hath performed perfect obedience for you. Thus you will be perfect, *i.e.*, you will arrive to the perfectest state that this life is capable of. And if you would know by what methods you may most successfully pursue and at last obtain this gospel perfection, I can only tell you that the means and directions in order to it are the same with those that I commended to you for your growing in grace. Evangelical perfection is not to be sought by any enthusiastic flights, and by affecting extraordinary discoveries and helps, but you must tread in the usual and appointed path of God's ordinances, you must take the way and course that is prescribed you by the Word of God, namely, self-examination, meditation, communion of saints, ardent prayer, reading the Holy Scriptures, hearing the Word. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*)

Perfection in Christ:—I. THE TEXT SEEMS A VERY CONTRADICTIONARY ONE. 1. "Be perfect." We do not like that. Somebody says, "I do not believe in perfection." What you believe is very little matter. When God speaks it is of very little use to say, "I do not believe in perfection." I want you to say, "My God, what this perfection is Thou knowest, and I want Thee to give it to me." However, these words seem contradictory. "Be perfect." That seems as if the text took me up some slippery height and said, "That is where you have to get, and it is very few people who can get up there, only very clever mountaineers; and many who have got up have not been able to stay up there. They have come falling down again, and have talked about it all the days of their life." "Be perfect." Ah! most of us look up and sigh: "Yes, I very much wish I could be a better man than I am, but I cannot climb." When I went to see the Matterhorn, I said to the guide, "I suppose there are some people who climb that?" "Yes," said he, "a few." I looked at him and said, "When do you think I shall climb it?" and he looked at me and smiled. I said, "Well, I will tell you. When I can fly." That is how most people think about being perfect; they look at the top of that slippery height and say, "Yes, when I can fly." When we have done with earth, then there will be some hope for us. 2. "Be of good comfort." That seems to say, "Take it easy! If you are not as good as some people, never mind; you are not as bad as some are." II. WHAT WE WANT IS TO PUT THESE TWO THINGS TOGETHER. Let your ideal in Christ be as lofty and sublime as God's ideal is, and yet do not worry. The glory of Christ's religion is that it joins these two. There is many a heathen religion that has its ideal "Be perfect," but it is by torture. Here are the two hands of our God; the right hand of His righteousness that saith, "Be perfect," the left hand of His love that saith, "Be of good comfort." III. MANY PEOPLE LOSE BOTH BECAUSE THEY PUT THEM IN THE WRONG ORDER. It is a very common and mischievous religion, in which the whole aim is first of all "Be of good comfort"—a religion in which, when a man is converted, he is accustomed to say he is made happy. This religion is true enough until you push it to an extreme. There are thousands of young people in our churches who come home on a Sunday night and say, "Well, I think I'm saved, I feel so happy to-night," and on a Monday morning they get up and say, "I do not think I feel much happier than I did on Saturday," and they think they are lost again. 1. Now, is the idea of our religion, first of all, to make us feel happy? If so—(1) I can find a loftier idea of life outside religion. Come with me into Westminster Abbey. Here are buried heroes, travellers, explorers who defied death in a thousand shapes, and went through all sorts of perils and agonies. What cared they for feeling? They flung feeling to the winds, and said, "There, that is where I have got to get, and that is where I will go," and, nothing daunted, went and reached it. And here you get a very highly respectable tombstone, gilt, magnificent. Will you read the inscription? "Here lies a man who felt happy." Think of that as an aim in life. (2) It is a failure. Religion must, in order to make me perfectly happy, either change my nature, so that all circumstances shall minister to my happiness, or else so change my circumstances as that my nature shall find in them always that which makes me happy. Does it? I get the toothache; I find it pains me as much after conversion as before. (3) You would not deal with your children after that fashion. I have got a boy at home. I do not think he ever told me a lie; but think if, one day, he came all red-eyed and sobbing, and confessed to me, "Father, I have told a lie!" Now, should I say, "Well, my boy, I do not want you to feel like this. Run away; fetch out your marbles; I want you to feel happy"? Not a bit of it. I should want that boy to feel very miserable indeed. If Christ has only come to say to me, "Don't you trouble about sin, it is all right, I have settled that; now you go off. I want you to feel happy,"—I say I should be a better man, if by all

the anguish of the ages, there should be just wrought through and through me a great, deep abhorrence of the thing that is evil. You have not learned the first lesson of the Cross, if you have not seen brought right out and nailed up in the sight of heaven what God thinks about sin, how He hates it, and must sweep it right away. 2. What is the purpose of the true religion of Jesus Christ? It is to help us to think more of Jesus and to be more like Him. How do you pray? "O Lord, clothe me, feed me, take care of me, prosper me in business, make me more happy, and bring me home to heaven when I die, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen." Well, your religion is simply a fattener of your selfishness. "But," you say, "does not it say, 'Give us this day our daily bread?'" Ay! but you have left something out. "Our Father, who art in heaven," &c.—all that first. That is what you are here for, that is why God gives us the crust of bread. That His name may be hallowed, that His kingdom may come, that His will may be done, "Give me this day my crust of bread." Thou must not ask for thy bread till thou hast put God in His right place. First, set Christ upon His throne; think "now I have got to glorify Him." What would that not do for the world? How quickly should the Church overtake the world when every man made the end of his religion not his own little self, not his own escape to heaven; but when the whole purpose of himself in everything and everywhere should be to make the whole world think well of Christ. IV. A GREAT MANY LOSE BOTH PERFECTION AND HAPPINESS BECAUSE THEY LEAVE OUT THE LORD'S PART ALTOGETHER. 1. Some great impulse seizes you, and you say, "Yes, that is what I have got to be, and that is what I will be." Take care. How long will it last? Ah, how soon we have said—for I have been one of them—"Well, it is no good; I cannot." We could not keep up the strain. If we cannot find something better to begin with than "I," let us give up. The moment I fetch in "I," I fetch in failure. There are some who do succeed. I have met with people who have made themselves perfect—the most dreadful people I ever knew, for they have narrowed and concentrated their whole thought upon themselves. They have begun to chip themselves and cut off their corners, and have made a hundred corners in cutting off one. They have sandpapered themselves, and sulphuric-acided themselves, and at last, after two, three, four, five years of that concentrated agony, and effort, and self-consciousness, they have brought out, what? Why, what else could you expect? from five to six feet of polished "I"—it is all "I, I, I." I cannot believe very much in perfection when I look at human nature; I believe in it less still when I look at myself; but when I look at Jesus I cannot help believing in perfection then. 2. "Be of good comfort," because it is not my straining and sacrificing and putting myself in the fire and melting myself and running myself out into a mould in the image and likeness of Christ; it is the getting away from myself, forgetting myself, bringing in a new consciousness. It is not my climbing the slippery height; it is Christ coming right down from that height to me, and saying, "Soul, this work is Mine, not thine; and I want thee to let Me come in and do it for you." "Be perfect"—yes, with such a Saviour. "Be of good comfort"—yes, because it is His work, not mine. It is saying, "My Lord! Thou shalt do it all." "Comfort"—what does it mean? "Co.," that means "company"; "fort," that means "strength"—strengthening by company. You can only spell holiness in five letters—J E S U S. Perfection is but letting Jesus have His own way with us in everything—Jesus, a perfect Saviour. My Master would not make an imperfect grass-blade, an imperfect daisy, an imperfect spider, and do you think He is going to let His perfect Son show all these things and that redemption shall show nothing of it? No. And now somebody will say to me, "Must not I do anything? For instance, if I am tempted to sin, must not I resist?" Well, I would advise thee not. "Well, but does not it say, 'Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist?'" I thought it did once, but I looked again, and I found before Peter says a word about that, he says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." Get right in under God's mighty hand, then turn round and say, "Now, devil, I am not afraid of thee a bit." The first thing you have to do before you resist is to run away to Jesus. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*) **Be of one mind, live in peace.**—*Christian unity*:—ITS NATURE, here recommended, appears to be sufficiently expressed by the word concord, or unanimity. 1. So necessary is this agreement that bad men cannot execute their schemes without a temporary concord, founded, for want of better principles, either upon the mutual interest of all parties, or a fantastical kind of honour, which answers its purpose if it keep them together, till the deed

of darkness be done and the prey divided. If Satan's kingdom were divided against itself, it must presently fall. 2. If we take a view of discord at its introduction into the world, we shall find that it was threefold. (1) Between God and man, occasioned by man's transgression, which estranged him from his Maker, whom from thenceforth he feared. (2) Between man and himself, caused by the accusations of conscience thereupon. (3) Between man and man, owing to unruly desires and passions, continually interfering, and never to be satisfied. 3. In opposition to this threefold discord, introduced into the world by the evil spirit, the concord effected in the Church by the good Spirit of God is likewise threefold. Man is reconciled to God by the righteousness of Christ, through faith; to himself by the answer of a conscience thus purged from sin; and to his brethren by Christian charity shed abroad in his heart. 4. All these operations worketh one and the same Spirit; whence the unity, of which we are now speaking, is styled "the unity of the Spirit," which is represented as encircling all things in heaven and earth with a bond of peace. And is not the Spirit to the Church, or body of Christ, what the breath is to the body natural? II. TO INDUCE BRETHREN TO "DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY," GOD SEEMETH TO HAVE EMPLOYED EVERY KIND OF ARGUMENT. He hath erected both worlds upon the basis of concord, and made harmony to be, as it were, the life and soul of the universe. 1. In contemplating the scenes of nature, where indeed there is neither voice nor language, yet it is impossible not to observe how the elements conspire to serve God, and to bless mankind. 2. From a survey of nature, proceed we to inspect the make and constitution of man himself, who subsisteth by a union of two very different parts, a soul and a body, between which there is a kind of marriage not to be dissolved "till death them do part." Nor less observable is the union which obtains between the members of which the body is composed, and by whose mutual good offices it is supported and preserved. 3. It is not more necessary that the members should be joined together in the body, than that mankind should be united in civil society. Man comes into the world helpless. And therefore it is that an all-wise Providence has implanted in our nature that affection which is found to prevail between parents and children, brethren and sisters, those of the same family, kindred, house, city, nation, age, or vocation. Such are the means used to invite and almost force men to live in peace and concord. 4. Let us now see how the case stands in that spiritual world. (1) And here, if we look up and behold by faith the glory of the eternal Trinity, we must presently fall down, like the elders, before the throne, and in the power of the Divine majesty worship the unity. And as they are one, so all the angels and blessed spirits in the courts of heaven make their sound to be heard as one in blessing them for ever and ever. Not a discordant note is heard in all that celestial choir. (2) From heaven we descend again to earth with Him who did so, for us men, and for our salvation, to the end that as body and soul are one man, so God and man might be one Christ, who was to live and to die for us, to suffer and to save; as man to suffer and as God to save. (3) By the union of God and man in the person of Christ, another union was effected between Christ and the Church. For is the vine united to the branches that spring from it?—"I am the vine, ye are the branches." Is the head joined to the body?—"God hath made Him head over all things, to the Church, which is His body." Is there a strict union between man and wife?—"This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (4) One more consequence should follow from this, viz., a union among Christians. Joined to one common head, they should be joined likewise to each other. "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." By concord in the Church, the kingdom of Christ is established on earth, as it is in heaven, where there is no rebellion or opposition to the will of God, but all are unanimous in doing it. By the gospel, enmity was abolished, and never should have been heard of more. II. HOW SHALL WE BEST PERFORM THIS DUTY. 1. "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace"; be at peace with Him and thine own conscience, and then thou shalt be at peace with all around thee. 2. Endeavour, by the grace of Christ, to moderate desires of earthly things. "Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, which war in your members?" (*Bp. Horne.*) *Unity, peace, and blessedness*:—I. "BE OF ONE MIND." Let there be no division among us in regard to Bible doctrine, Christian experience, or religious duty. 1. Doctrines are the glory of revelation. 2. Again, unity in regard to views of Christian experience is of the utmost consequence to the Church. 3. "Be ye of one mind" in view of Christian duty; be unanimous in advancing the kingdom of our

Lord Jesus. II. "LIVE IN PEACE." This is the second injunction of the text. Living in peace is a true correlative of being of one mind. Spiritual congeniality of feeling sweetly accompanies agreement in sentiment. Religion is "first pure, then peaceable." I. The nature of the peace recommended includes love to our brethren in Christ, and good will toward all men. 2. The obligations to peace are manifest and manifold. (1) Peace is the fruit of the Spirit. "We have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (2) The good of the Church is another of the obligations to live in peace. (3) The happiness of the individual is an obligation to live peaceably. (4) A regard for the salvation of others is an obligation to live a life of peace. (5) The heavenly state shows the obligations to a life of peace. No angel in glory disturbs the harmony of the heavenly abode. 3. The manifestations of peace in our lives may be briefly illustrated in reference to our own Church, and in its relation to other churches. (1) In our own Church, the manifestations of peace consist, in part, in a kind and conciliatory treatment of all sectional questions. (2) Another mode in which peace may be exhibited, consists in avoiding the dangers arising from parties formed in admiration of men. (3) A life of peace may be further manifested in the Church in our personal intercourse with our brethren. Let us all "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." III. First unity; then peace; then BLESSEDNESS. "The God of love and peace shall be with you." What a hopeful indication of the blessings that follow unity and peace is found in the very names here claimed by God! "And the God of love and peace shall be with you." 1. He will bless His Church with the indwelling of His Holy Spirit." 2. Again, "the God of love and peace will be with you," to enlarge the prosperity of the Church in His providence. 3. The God of love and peace will be with His loving disciples, to crown them with salvation in His glory. "The meek will He beautify with salvation." (*C. V. Rensselaer, D.D.*) *The city of peace*.—I. ITS WALLS—unity—concord. II. THE GATES—1. Innocence; 2. Patience; 3. Beneficence; 4. Recompense or satisfaction; 5. Humility—the little postern. III. ITS ENEMIES—1. Hostility without; 2. Mutiny within. IV. THE GOVERNOR—God, who possesses supreme authority. V. THE LAW—the law of Christ. VI. THE PALACE—the temple where God is worshipped. VII. THE RIVER—prosperity. VIII. THE LIFE OF THE CITIZENS—love. IX. THE CITY'S GENERAL STATE—universal felicity. X. THE INHERITANCE—eternal glory. (*T. Adams.*) **And the God of love and peace shall be with you.**—*The highest character and the highest companion*.—I. THE HIGHEST CHARACTER OF GOD. "Love and peace." 1. Love is the highest attribute of any character. Higher than—(1) Power. Mere animals have power, but not love. (2) Wisdom. 2. "Peace." Wherever there is real love, there is peace. The stronger the love, the more essentially pacific the soul. Peace implies—(1) Freedom from remorse. Wherever there is a sense of guilt, there can be no true peace. (2) Freedom from fear. Fear causes the soul to quiver as an aspen-leaf in the wind. (3) Freedom from selfishness. A selfish heart can never be at rest; it is as the tide in the ocean. Jealousy, anger, pride, revenge, all of which are the offspring of selfishness, are antagonistic to peace. He is absolutely free from all these: hence He is a God of peace. II. THE HIGHEST COMPANION FOR MAN. "The God of love and peace be with you." No companion—1. So tender. In all our affliction He is afflicted. 2. So wise. He knows all about us: What we have been; what we shall be. He can solve our problems, clear all our perplexities, baffle the machinations of all our enemies. 3. So constant. Human companions are constantly leaving us, either by change or death. But He will never. 4. So enduring. The greatest sorrow of earth arises from the loss of endeared companions. But no bereavement can tear Him away from us. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.**—*The benediction of the Church*.—1. If a man has been to visit his friend, and you see him leaving the gate, it is pleasant to notice in his hand a basket of fruit or a bunch of flowers. It would be very embarrassing, however, if the proof of friendship were always an outward gift. If a friend visits us, we place ourselves at his disposal; and if we visit a friend, we are delighted to receive the overflow of his life into our own. Now suppose under the old law a man had offered a lamb in sacrifice to God, and had found that his flocks did not increase according to his hope, and had then said, "I will offer Him no more lambs." Might we not next suppose a wise friend saying to him, "God has done this to try your love. If you loved God, you would offer Him even the last lamb, feeling that it is better to have the heavenly Friend than to have only

His property." God invites us to His presence, and desires that we should have great pleasure in coming to see Him; and it is very certain that if we have come in the true friendly temper, we shall go away, taking something in our hearts, though nothing in our hands. No man that rejoices in God's grace complains much of God's providence. 2. Now, when we come to church God entertains us and sends us away with a benediction. It is the benediction of the Church also; *i.e.*, the Church desires that God may grant its members His blessing, and expresses its faith that He will. We will render the text, "May your faith, hope, and love be replenished." We come in different states. (1) There are persons who come in quest of truth. Suppose, then, in the sacred service something is said which the heart feels is sure. The heart cries out to itself gladly, "Whatever is doubtful, that is true." Then the man has received a gift. (2) There are others that believe, and yet are confounded. Well, suppose a person very tired in body and soul, almost hopeless, and something is said that excites hope. In the springtime the effect of the shower is perceived within a few minutes of its fall; and there is that in the soul athirst for God that causes the season of drought to be indeed a springtime when once the shower descends. Hope enters this weary breast, and is not hope a gift? (3) Then there are persons, not without belief or hope, that still yearn for sympathy. Now if the spirit of truth breathe itself forth as love, and the heart is comforted by love, then, too, it has received a gift. (4) Faith, hope, love! Need we so distinguish them? No. You can never believe a little more, without beginning to hope too, and without feeling the glow of affection. When either of these three become prominent the two others are seen beside it as in shadow; and sometimes they take sisterly hands, and with a common brightness appear as equals. These three states of our spirit are an equivalent expression for the blessing uttered in the words of our text. Let me show this. I. "THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST." 1. Recollect instances in which our Lord showed grace. When He had been speaking amongst His own townspeople "they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth"; such sincere and kind words no one had ever heard before. A leper said to Him, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Jesus touched him; what nature loathes grace can love. On another occasion the only son of his mother was being carried forth to the grave. Jesus laid His hand upon the bier. Was this presumptuous handling? No; this was the hand of grace. The young man arose, and his mother received him by the hand of God's grace. We remember how our Saviour said, "Sin no more," and yet pronounced no word of doom for the sin that had been committed. His life abounded with gracious words, cures, and pardons, that showed the tender, compassionate favour with which He regarded us all in our weakness, sorrow, and sins. This is grace. Through such grace love makes us believe in it. 2. Now we might say, why not place the love of God first? Which is first, the door or the house? If God has a great mansion of love, He must provide a door to it, or we shall never get in. Grace is the door into love. Love is greater than any one of its own acts. There is more in a mother's love than there is in her gentle touch. There is more in the father's love than there is in his gift to his child on its birthday. In like manner, the love of God is more than any of His acts, more even than His grace—its own chief and most expressive instance; and why are we introduced through the grace into the love, but that we may trust that love and trust it always. So we may apply the Baptist's words, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me." Grace wins our faith, and then through its trust we have a love of our own which responds to the great general love of God. That which "comes after" our faith, then, is love, which, though coming after it, is "preferred before it," for "it was before it." II. THE LOVE OF GOD. Assume, now, that we have faith; what is our state? I have seen a little child perplexed at losing on Hampstead Heath—not a very great and terrible wilderness—her sister, and crying because sister was a few paces off concealed by a bush. So it may be with our feeble heart; for in our times of loneliness we are all children, and we cry out for God, "Where is He?" Now, "the grace of God" is His answer to our cry. God says to the lost world, "Here I am." When we have found Christ, then we have found God; we have found our Father; we now rest in our faith. But what have we found our Father for? If the child has found its sister or its mother, they will go away together home, and there will be many a happy work of affection then. If a man has found God as his Father through Jesus Christ, then that man is introduced into all the length and breadth of human participation in Divine benefits. The love of God will be bountifully manifested in all that he learns and

all that he does. Out of this faith, then, will spring a hope. He cannot be received into union with God without continuing united in such a sense that he will constantly look onward with hope, feeling that all is right, that here and hereafter all necessary instructions and blessings will be given. III. "THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY GHOST." If God's grace in Christ is trusted, and God's love, so broadly revealed in Christ, is hoped in, then we receive into ourselves a life which leads us on by progression towards all the fulness that is in God. God, through Christ, breathes into us His Spirit; this we receive, not alone, but conjointly one with another. God, through Christ, begins by imparting to our heart faith in His grace, and hope through His grace in all His goodness; and knowing and hoping in that, we abide in His love. Christ gives us His gracious Spirit, and all the onward motions of the leading Spirit are in harmony with the "grace of God." The communion of the Holy Ghost is, in other words, the sharing of a common life of sacred love by which we feel brotherhood with one another, and by which we progress onward led by our purified inward motives, and traversing according to our ability the length and breadth of that kingdom of affairs which God has given to exercise and to enrich us. Such is the communion of the Holy Ghost; the fellowship of love, in a hope reposed on God, through faith created and nourished by His grace. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *The triune blessing* :—Consider the particular blessing from each person of the Holy Trinity. St. Paul desires for the Corinthians. I. "THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST." By the "grace" of the Lord Jesus Christ seems meant His goodwill, His gracious favour in practical and perpetual exercise. When St. Paul desired and prayed that the Corinthians might be blessed with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, he meant just this: May all the blessings of Christ's incarnation, redemption, and intercession ever be with you Corinthians. The blessing of Divine pardon, of spiritual cleansing, of reconciliation with God; the blessing of union with Christ and thereby union and communion with God; the blessing of progressive sanctification, &c. When the grace of Christ is with a man, it means that all heaven is with that man; that every blessing which is possible and good for a man is granted to him, according to his capacity to receive it. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned first, because all heaven's blessings to man begin with Christ's grace, favour, or goodwill towards man. Christ is man's starting-point in all his relations with God, He being the Mediator between God and man. Unless our Mediator be first graciously disposed towards us, how is it possible to receive any of those blessings from God which are the result of His mediation? "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Is it not true that by Christ we have access into every grace of God? II. "THE LOVE OF GOD." The love of God is the fountain source of the threefold blessing mentioned in the text. All heavenly blessings proceed from the love of God, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. By the love of God in the text is meant, not simply the love of benevolence which God has for all His creatures in common, but what theologians call the love of complacency, which God has for those only who are the living members of the Son of God, who are the brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ, through spiritual union with Him. It is this love of God, the love of the Divine Father for His adopted children, who are the members of His dear Son, that St. Paul desires and prays may be the blessing of the Corinthians. The love of God truly comprehends all blessings. St. Paul might have said, The power of God, the protection of God, the guidance of God, the peace of God, be with you Corinthians; but instead of that he said what comprehends all, The love of God be with you. If the love of God be with us, all is with us that it is possible for man to have from God. III. "THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY GHOST." By this is meant the fellowship, the partnership, the companionship of the Holy Ghost, or, in other words, the indwelling and inworking of the Holy Ghost. It is by means of the communion or indwelling and inworking of the Holy Ghost that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is conveyed to us. The Holy Ghost is the Divine Agent or Vicegerent by whom God the Father and God the Son carry on and carry out their work in man. When St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you," it is as though he said, "I pray that you Corinthians may always have the Holy Ghost within you as your Divine Guest and Companion, to enlighten you, to strengthen you, to comfort you, to guide you; to fill you with God's love, and joy, and peace; to form in you a holy character like unto the character of Christ; to fit you for your admission to the heavenly glory of Christ." Such, then, is the triune

blessing of the Triune God. Were there not a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, this apostolic blessing would be utterly unintelligible, and its language utterly misleading. Behold in this blessing the blessing of all blessings, in comparison of which all other blessings are absolutely worthless. Let the words of this apostolic blessing be regarded as a reality. When they are being pronounced, let all believe that the blessing they set forth is verily conveyed to all who devoutly receive it. Let them not be listened to in a formal spirit. (*H. G. Youard.*) *The Divine Trinity*:—The Christian doctrine of the Trinity teaches us how the Infinite God has made Himself known to men. God, as He is in Himself, no man can comprehend. I. MEN HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN SOME POWER HIGHER AND GREATER THAN THEMSELVES. In old times they peopled the unseen world with innumerable deities, who presided over human affairs. But above all others one deity was supreme—Jupiter, the father of gods and men. Like children who have lost their way from home, they wrestled and prayed and sought to discover a God and Father, to whom they could yield filial obedience. In these later days we have been told that all such efforts are useless. Law, force, order—these are the ultimate discoveries of research; these are the gods of our modern Pantheon. But no such doctrine can ever satisfy the soul that has once begun to long for God. I am sure that my personality cannot be the result of blind law and force. The first cause from whom I come must be, like myself, a person, only infinitely greater. Thus there is nothing mysterious in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, as it relates to the everlasting Father. Rather does it clear up mysteries, by telling us that the laws and forces at work in the world and in ourselves are the operations of that Divine and gracious Father to whom it is our most blessed privilege to yield filial obedience. II. But we need not only a Divine Father, but a DIVINE SON. We require the revelation not only of a perfect law and a supreme will, but also the revelation of a perfect and Divine obedience. We know the perfect fatherhood of God; what we want is a perfect sonship to bridge the gulf between us and God, a sonship in which the will of God and the obedience of man shall be blended into one beautiful and blessed life. We want, not only the love of the Father, but the “grace” of a perfect Son. Must there not be somewhere a perfect Ideal of what man ought to be; and where can this Ideal be found but in the mind of God? But mark how the Christian doctrine of the Trinity comes down to the utmost needs of fallen man. To redeem us from sin the Divine Sonship was clothed in flesh; passed through all the changes of mortal life, from the cradle to the grave. Here, then, towering above the ruins of our race, is the perfect manhood of Jesus Christ. Ever living to make intercession for us is this Divine Son, who has conquered sin and death and hell by patient submission and by filial obedience to the Father’s will. III. If, then, we are thus brought nigh to the Father through the Son, IT MUST BE OUR HIGHEST PRIVILEGE TO HOLD CONSTANT COMMUNION WITH THE EVER PRESENT SPIRIT OF GOD. (*F. W. Walters.*) *Communion human and Divine*:—The great benediction of the Christian Church never grows old and never becomes monotonous. It is like the sunshine, which rises on us every day of our lives with a fresh beauty; or like our truest friendships, which are for ever new. There is no blessing more continually needed than “the communion of the Holy Ghost.” We go, then, first to the perpetual and universal facts of human life, for Christianity always uses them and is in harmony with them. And one of the deepest of these facts is MAN’S PERPETUAL NEED OF INTERCOURSE AND FELLOWSHIP. A life of solitude is never satisfactory to a truly healthy man. He needs some fellowship. And for his whole satisfaction he needs various fellowships: with those above him, on whom he depends; with those beside him, who are his equals; and with those below him, whom he helps. All three of these relationships furnish the life of a completely furnished man. And the essence of all these fellowships is something internal; it is not external. It is in spirit and sympathy, not in outward occupations. It is communion and not merely contact. This goes so far that, where communion is perfect, where men are in real sympathy with one another, contact or outward intercourse may sometimes be absent. What a man really needs, then, is a true understanding of other men; community of intelligence producing community of sentiment, interest in the same things producing the same feelings. This is communion. And then the second fact is THAT THE COMMUNIONS OR FELLOWSHIP OF MEN ARE SELDOM DIRECT, BUT COME ABOUT THROUGH A MEDIUM. They are not the mere liking of men for each other for qualities directly apprehended, but they are the result of a common interest in something which brings the men together and is the occasion by which their sympathy is excited, the atmosphere or element in

which their communion lives. Is not this so? Two children in the same family grow up in cordial love for each other; but their love is a love of and in the family. They did not deliberately choose each other for friends, but their hearts were drawn out in the same direction, towards the same father, the same mother, the same home life, and so they met and came to know each other. So two scholars find their element of communion in their common study. Two business men reach each other and become friends through their common business. And two reformers enter into each other's life in the indignation or enthusiasm of a common cause. In every case you see the union of men is made through a third term, an element into which both enter, and in which they find each other as they could not without it. This is the way in which men come to be gathered in those groups which make the variety and picturesqueness of human life. Now it is in the application of this same idea that there lies, I think, the key to this phrase, "the communion of the Holy Ghost." Once more there is an element, an atmosphere, in which men are brought close together—brought together as they come under no other auspices, in no other way. That element is God. Men meet each other, when they meet in Him, with peculiar confidence, dearness, frankness, and truth. Just as there is a certain character which belongs to the intercourse of men who are met as the pursuers of a common business, and so are met in the communion of that business; and as there is another character which belongs to the intercourse of men who are met as the disciples of a certain study, and so are met in the communion of that study, so there is yet another deeper and completer character which belongs to the fellowship of men who come to have something to do with one another as the servants of God, and so whose communion is the communion of God. And now take one step farther. Who is the Holy Ghost? He is the effectively present Deity. He is God continually in the midst of men and touching their daily lives. He is the God of continual contact with mankind. The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is a continual protest against every constantly recurring tendency to separate God from the current world. Wherever the fellowship and intercourse of men has a peculiar character because it is born of the presence of God among men; wherever men's dealings with each other, or men's value of each other, is coloured with the influence of the truth that we live in a world full of God; wherever our communion with each other takes place through Him, the sacredness and usefulness of what we are to each other resulting from what He is to all of us, then our communion is a communion of the Holy Ghost. I doubt not there is a deeper philosophy in this than we can understand. The Bible truth is that the Holy Ghost is "the Lord and Giver of Life." The power of life is the power of unity everywhere. It is the presence of life in these bodies of ours that keeps them from falling to pieces. The moment that life departs dissolution comes. And so life, which is the gift of the Holy Ghost—nay, which is the presence of the Holy Ghost in society or in the soul—is the power of unity in society or in the soul. The society in which there is no presence of a living God drops into anarchy and falls to pieces. The soul in which there is no presence of a living God loses harmony with itself, becomes distracted. Again, our idea finds its illustration in the different characters of different households. Lift the curtain, if you will, from two homes, both of them happy and harmonious, neither of them stained with vice nor disturbed with quarrels. One of them is a household of this world altogether. The domestic relationships are strong and warm. The loves of husband and wife, of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, are all there. They prove themselves in all kind offices. Each helps the other, and there are no jealousies, no strifes. There is the best picture of the communion of the family affection. Now look into the other home. All is the same, but with this difference: that here there is an ever-live, strong, vivid, loving sense of God. As real as father or mother, as real as brother or sister, God is here. No act is ever done out of His presence. He is felt in the education of the children. The children are His gifts. The love of each member of the household for the rest is coloured all through with gratitude to Him. All of that love is deepened because each desires for each sacred and spiritual mercies. All these loves which were there before move on still, but they are all surrounded by and taken up into one great comprehending love; and he who enters in at the door of that converted house hears them all in deepened, richened music, the same strains still, only full of the power of the new atmosphere in which they are played. And so it is with friendship. Two men who have known each other for years become together the servants of Christ. His Spirit comes to them. They begin the new life of which He is the centre and the soul. How their old friendship

changes! How it is all the same, and yet how different it is! It opens depths and heights they never dreamed of. Where they used to do so little for each other, now they can do so much. Where they used to touch only on the outside, now their whole natures blend. One of the most valuable changes which come to a human friendship when it is thus deepened into a communion of the Holy Ghost is the assurance of permanence which it acquires. There is always a lurking distrust and suspicion of instability in friendship which has not the deepest basis. No present certainty answers for the future. This must be so to some degree with an affection where each is held to each only by the continuance of personal liking. But when friendship enters into God, and men are bound together through their communion with Him, all the strength of that higher union authenticates and assures the faithfulness and perseverance of the love that is bound up with it. The souls that meet in God may well believe that they shall hold each other as eternally as He holds each and each holds Him. And the same power which insures the perpetuity of friendship must also secure a wider range of sympathy and fellow-feeling among men. The more the associations of men come to consist in what is essential, and not in what is merely formal, the larger becomes the circle of a man's fellow-creatures with whom he may have relations of cordial interest. So much of our communion with men is a communion, not of spirit, but of form. We associate with men because we happen to be thrown in with them in the mere circumstances of our lives; because we live in the same circle of society, and so our habits are the same; because we are seeking the same ends of life in the same kind of actions. And very often our sympathies are bounded by the same narrow lines which limit our associations. But the communion of the Spirit, the communion of the Holy Ghost is something deeper, and therefore something wider, than that. Wherever any human soul is loving the God whom we love, feeling His presence, trying to do His will, though it be in forms and ways totally different from ours, the communion of the Holy Ghost brings us into sympathy with Him. There is no influence of the Christian life more ennobling, more delightful than this. It takes you out of the low valley of formal life. It sets you upon the open summit of spiritual sympathy, close to the sun. Thence you look out into unguessed regions of noble thought and living, with which you never dreamed that you had anything to do. But meanwhile is it not a very lofty and inspiring ambition to offer to a man, that the more he knows and loves God the more he shall see the noble and the good in all his brethren? We should like to believe in men so much more than we do! We are almost ready to give up in despair; the meanness, the foulness, the cruelty of humanity crowd on us so. "If you will earnestly try by obedience and love to enter into communion with God, these brethren of yours, who are like sealed books with stained covers, shall open to you, and you shall see goodness, nobleness, truth, devotion, all through them." Here is the difference between religious and secular philanthropy. Secular philanthropy loves and helps men directly, for themselves. Religious philanthropy loves and helps men in God. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *The apostolic benediction*:—I. THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. This is mentioned first, not that it stands first in the order of these great blessings; but it is most obvious, most immediate, to the view of a Christian: Jesus Christ naturally came foremost before the apostle's mind, as the procurer of all Divine blessings. And "grace" is mentioned as the peculiar property of Jesus Christ. Grace denotes free and sovereign favour. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The grace of Jesus Christ includes—1. All that He has done and suffered for the Church. His grace drew Him down from above into our world and nature: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. All that He endured during His sojourn among men, and especially in Gethsemane and on the Cross, proceeded from His grace; all the peace, hope, confidence, and strength of His people are so many streams that flow from this fountain. 2. All that He still does for His Church. He sits above as its High Priest and Intercessor. He has all power given to Him for the interests of His people, and they receive all that they need out of His fulness. We shall never know, on this side of eternity, the full amount of our obligations to Christ; the manner and extent in which He guards, directs, sanctifies, and comforts His people. II. THE LOVE OF GOD. As the grace of Christ is the meritorious, so the love of the Father is the original cause of all spiritual blessings. The Father is represented in Scripture as originating the salvation of man, as giving and sending His Son. Love is the principle from which all redemption proceeds, and the apostle prays that his brethren might feel themselves the objects of this love. This is dignity, this is felicity, and there is none

beside; to be embraced in the arms of the Divine Father as His beloved children! St. John stands astonished at this love, and exclaims, "Behold, what manner of love," &c. But let it be remembered that, if we would enjoy the love of God, we must keep His commandments. None of the consolations of Divine love are to be found in union with disobedience. III. THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. As the Father originates, and the Son executes, it is the part of the Spirit so to communicate Himself as to change and form His subjects. As Christ purchased all Divine blessings, so the Spirit dispenses the things of Christ. As Christ glorifies the Father, so the Spirit glorifies Christ. He is the Vicegerent and Deputy of Christ, as Christ of the Father. Let it be remembered that a suitable walk is required of those who would enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit. We must be careful not, by resistance, to grieve Him; if we sadden this Comforter, where shall we hope to find comfort? Conclusion: 1. In the text we have a distinct mention of three Divine persons. None will deny that the Father and the Son are Persons; it is reasonable to conclude that the Spirit is also such. Here the "grace of Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit," could never have been placed in such a close juxtaposition with the "love of God," if, as some have supposed, there were an infinite distance between them. 2. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a mere speculative mystery. Each of the Divine Persons has His office in the economy of redemption; and this gives us an idea of the grandeur and dignity of that redemption, in the economy of which there is such a co-operation; the Father devising it, the Son executing, the Spirit applying. How solemn and august the work of preparing a soul for glory, when each person of the Godhead has His own peculiar part in that work to execute. What manner of persons, then, ought we to be? (*R. Hole, M.A.*) *The threefold benediction*:—It is remarkable that this, which is one of the two most explicit recognitions of the Holy Trinity, should be in the form of a benediction. The fact is in itself a sermon. It tells us, above all, that the doctrine is not an object of speculation, but a living truth. It recalls us from metaphysics to life. God reveals Himself to us as a trinity of persons: the eternal Father, of whom we are the children; the eternal Son, who brings back to us our lost sonship; the eternal Spirit, by whom we and all things live. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. It is a trinity of benedictions. The love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Spirit, come each of them round us, and enfold us in the wings of blessing. And yet they are not three benedictions, but one. The love and the grace and the fellowship are not different and apart; but one and the same. I. The apostle begins with THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, because that seems to be nearer to us; it is, as it were, the doorway through which we pass to the sense of the love of God. Grace means "gift." It was the word which seemed best to sum up that which Jesus Christ did for us, and includes at once redemption, the knowledge of God, and the hope of eternal life. The world had been seeking for redemption, light, and hope; it had struggled with its pain, with its sorrow, with the problem of its disappointment and its failure, and it could not always beat the air in a fruitless battle; and there was coming over man, as the slow mist creeps over the fair landscape in an autumn afternoon, the sense of a supreme despair. And to men came grace, a sure and certain faith that God was in the world, and had not left us to be the struggling but inevitable prey to passion, and darkness, and death. II. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was also, and was thereby THE LOVE OF GOD. There are many Christian men who lose the conception of fatherhood. They tend to speak of the Almighty, or of Providence, as though He were not a person, but an abstraction. Many think of Him as the Supreme Judge and Ruler, and forget the infinite depths of love. He reveals Himself to us as a Father. He loves us in infinitely greater degree, but in some way like the way in which we love our children. He forgives us when we go back to Him. He helps us on our way when we tend to stumble, He gives us a Father's arm upon which to lean and a Father's hand to guide. The love of the Father is like the sun which shines in heaven, it shines upon one field and another; but upon one there is a crop of grain, upon another there is a crop of baleful weeds, the difference lies not in the sunshine but in the preparation of the ground. So it is with human souls. The love of the Father comes to us all, but the blessing of the love comes to us in proportion as we till the soil of our soul. It is dependent so far upon our effort; it comes not to supersede our work but to call it forth and to bless it. III. And so the love of God becomes THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The eternal Father has not placed His love in some infinitely distant space, to blaze and burn

like Sirius in some field of the universe which we can only see in the distance, which touches us with no warmth, which enlightens us with no knowledge, and which only reveals to us the unimaginable vastness of His power. He does not mock us with a panorama of sunlight, and the luxuriant growths that come of sunlight, passing as it were like a vast moving spectacle before our eyes. He comes close to us; He holds communion with us; He touches us with warmth; He enlightens us with His light. Conclusion: 1. The sense of a gift of a Divine Sonship, of the love of a Divine Father, of a Divine communion, are the prismatic colours of one perfect light. If you ask me to translate the text into the language of philosophy; if you tell me that no ray of that Divine light can reach my soul until I have told you of what chemical elements it is composed, I answer, Nay. The sun was shining in the heavens, revealing to the world the infinite beauty of form and colour for untold ages before its rays were analysed by the prism. It was bringing forth verdure by its warmth for untold ages before it was found out that oceans of hydrogen served upon his surface, and that heat like light is a mode of motion. What you and I want, and have, is not the bare truth that there is a sun, but the sense of his warmth. What you and I want, and have, is not an analysis of the idea of God, but the sense that there is a Father who loves us, the sense that there is a God who holds communion with us. 2. I will ask you thus to think of the Trinity to-day. Let the thought of God, as He is revealed to us, be with you not as a dogma, but as an ever present benediction. Let each pray for himself the prayer which the apostle prayed for himself and all the world. It is not a selfish prayer. The benediction of God is like the sunlight which must radiate back again for all upon whom it shines. The love of the Father cannot be in our hearts without shining. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be hid. The fellowship of the Divine Spirit is a sharing in His Divine activity in an unresting and untiring life, always moving because motion and not rest is the essence of His nature. (*E. Hatch, D.D.*) *The Trinity in unity*:—I. TO LAY BEFORE YOU WHAT THE SCRIPTURE TEACHES US RESPECTING THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IN UNITY. 1. That there is but one God. 2. That this one God subsists under three relations or, as we commonly say, in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. 3. That these three Persons, though in a manner inconceivable by us, are distinct from each other. 4. It is to be observed, in the fourth place, that the Scriptures teach us that each of these three Persons is truly and perfectly Divine. II. TO DEDUCE FROM IT SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES. We infer from this subject—1. How great is the happiness, how exalted the dignity, and how elevated the hopes of the real Christian. 2. How vain is the religion of those who refuse to admit this essential truth of Christianity. 3. How vain the religion and how fearful the state of those who, while they speculatively admit the doctrine of which we have been speaking, yet practically deny it, and live in the indulgence of worldly and sinful tempers and habits. 4. What abundant ground is there for the consolation of the real penitent! 5. Much of the nature of the Christian's duty. Has God revealed Himself as subsisting in three distinct Persons? The Christian is bound to offer his thanksgivings to each of these Persons for the share taken by Him in the economy of redemption. 6. How highly we ought to value those Holy Scriptures, which alone contain a discovery of this inexplicably mysterious yet unspeakably important doctrine! (*J. Natt, B.D.*) *The Trinity*:—The inner nature of the Deity is an impenetrable secret, which the human mind cannot explore; and the Trinity is, in one aspect of it, a name for this unfathomable mystery. We therefore freely concede at the outset the difficulties of the subject. To these difficulties those who reject the doctrine urgently appeal. On the basis of them they declare it to be inconceivable and irrational. In regard to this claim I would say that the intellectual difficulties which beset a truth are not necessarily a bar to belief in it. Nor is the credible always limited to the conceivable. The primary question respecting the Trinity is whether there are adequate grounds for belief in it. The essence of the doctrine of the Trinity is, that God exists in a threefold mode of being, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of these is, in the strict sense, Divine, that is, partakes of the nature of Deity. All three of them together constitute the one only God. There is a unity of nature or substance in God, and there is, at the same time, a threefoldness or trinity which represents eternal distinctions in the Divine essence. God is one and God is three, but not, of course, in the same sense. He is one in substance or essence; but there exists within this one essence three persons or subsistences, which are revealed to us under the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are many notions of God's nature which stand in contrast to the Trinitarian idea. One of these is the Uni-

tarian doctrine. On this view God is one and solitary; He is in no sense three. There is no room, according to this conception, for interrelations or intercommunion within the nature of the Divine Being. Another contrasted view is the pantheistic. On this view God is at once the One and the All. The universe itself is taken up and lost in God; or, stating the idea from its other side, God is identified with the universe and lost in it. This mode of thought almost necessarily surrenders the personality of God. Still another view is the polytheistic, which admits the existence of many gods, and assigns to them various limitations of nature and function. The great fact which occasioned the development of the doctrine was the incarnation. The claims which Christ made for Himself, and the claims which the New Testament writers make for Him, compel the admission of His eternal pre-existence and His Divine nature (John xvii. 5, viii. 58, i. 1; Phil. ii. 6). If Christ is Divine, and yet, at the same time, can speak of the Father in distinction from Himself, these two facts, taken together, give us both the idea of the unity and that of the distinction between Him and God. But a further fact meets us. Christ speaks of the Holy Spirit as distinct both from the Father and from Himself, and yet ascribes to Him Divine prerogatives and powers. He is "another Advocate," distinct from Christ (John xiv. 16). He bears witness of Christ (John xv. 26); and His coming to the disciples is conditioned upon the Saviour's departure (John xvi. 7). Personal pronouns are used in referring to the Spirit, and personal activities are constantly ascribed to Him. The doctrines of the deity of Christ, and of the Trinity, cannot be denied except upon grounds which involve the surrender of the historicity and truthfulness of the New Testament. Some persons who have acknowledged that the teaching of Jesus and of the apostles involved the doctrine of the equal Divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have avoided the acceptance of the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity by holding that these three terms designate three phases or modes of the Divine self-manifestation, and not essential and eternal distinctions in the nature of God. This is the so-called Sabellian doctrine. It holds to a Trinity of revelation only, a moral as opposed to an immanent Trinity. It is, however, an unsatisfactory explanation of the facts with which it seeks to deal. It does not accord with the New Testament teaching respecting the eternal pre-existence of the Son of God in a form of being distinct from the Father. Moreover, if God is revealed as a Trinity, it is reasonable to suppose that He exists as such. He is revealed as He is. I have already alluded to the objection so often made to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it is inconceivable, and therefore irrational. It is necessary to weigh this objection more carefully. If, when it is said that the Trinity is inconceivable, it is meant that the mind can form no mental picture of it, the statement is quite true. The truth of the Trinity transcends the reach and power of the imagination. But so also do thousands of truths for which the evidence is commonly deemed to be overwhelming, and which are therefore generally accepted among men. We cannot imagine, that is, form any definite mental concept, of the human soul. We cannot picture to ourselves the various faculties or powers of our own mysterious personalities. Our powerlessness to conceive of these things does not overbear the testimony in their behalf. We also accept many inconceivable facts for which the evidence is found outside our own mental life. Such are many of the truths of science. The nature and action of natural forces, and especially the marvellous phenomena of psychical action—such as the influence of mind over body, and of one mind upon another—are utterly beyond the power of the imagination to construe. The truth is, that when we come to reflect upon the matter, we find that the province of the imagination is very restricted. It can never be made, in any sphere of knowledge, the measure of our convictions, or the final test of truth. That we cannot conceive of the Trinity is, therefore, no real evidence against its truth. But when it is said that the Trinity is inconceivable, it is sometimes meant that it is contrary to reason. If the doctrine of the Trinity were that God is one and three in the same sense, it would be absurd, and belief in it would be stultifying. But this is not the doctrine. The truth of the Trinity is not contrary to reason although it is above and beyond reason. What mental law forbids us to believe that there is an external trinity in the one absolute Being? With the acceptance or rejection of the doctrine the evangelical system of theology has commonly stood or fallen. The doctrine of the Deity of Christ, and the significance of His saving work, are involved in the truth of the triune nature of God. The denial of the Trinity on account of its mysteriousness has usually carried with it the denial of some of the most characteristic doctrines of Christianity on account of their mysteriousness. If men are too impatient of mystery to accept the

Trinity, they will probably be too much so to believe in the incarnation, the atonement, and related truths. We have always carefully to distinguish between the acceptance of a truth upon adequate evidence, and the satisfactory explanation of that truth in itself. If the doctrine of the Trinity is approached directly, and is taken up as a problem for solution, the mind will probably be baffled and repelled. The true method of approach is along the line of those facts of Divine revelation which lead us at length to the heights of this mystery, where we can no longer define and describe, and where thought must acknowledge its bounds and find its resting-place. If it is urged, as it sometimes is, that the doctrine is not taught in the Bible, the answer is, that, while it is not explicitly and formally taught, the elements of truth which compose it, such as the Deity of Christ and the Personality of the Spirit, and the facts which require it, such as the incarnation and atonement, are fundamental factors in all biblical revelation and teaching. It may fairly be said, in the first place, that it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Absolute exists in a mode of being to which finite nature furnishes no adequate analogy. The Deity does not belong to any class of beings whose attributes can be made determining for the conception which we are to entertain of His nature. He stands alone and unique. It cannot be urged that because nature and human life furnish no examples of such a Trinity in Unity as we believe to exist in God, the belief is contrary to reason and experience. It is above and beyond all experience; it may be, in important respects, above and beyond reason, but it is not on that account contrary to it. There are, moreover, some suggestive facts which present themselves to our view in contemplating the universe, with which the idea of the Trinity in God does strikingly accord. We find, for example, that as we ascend the scale of being, life becomes diversified and complex. Not only do we observe this general fact in the world of matter, but in the world of mind as well. The mental life of the lower orders of creation appears very simple. Their souls act in but a few directions and in but a very limited sphere. The mental organisation of man, on the contrary, is very complex and diversified. I lay no stress on the threefoldness of this well-nigh universal analysis of man's mental constitution, nor do I urge the complexity of mental life in the highest form of being which we immediately know as, in any strict sense, an argument for the doctrine of the Trinity. I do, however, claim that it would be according to analogy to expect that in the Supreme Being there should be a manifoldness and complexity of life surpassing those which we find to exist in the highest forms of finite being. Considerations like this which I have presented are not strictly a part of the evidence for the truth of the Trinity; but they do fall into line with that evidence, and serve to confirm it from the side of reason and observation. I turn now to a brief consideration of the argument for the doctrine of the Trinity which is derived from the nature of God as love. We must suppose that there was once a time when this finite world did not exist. If God alone is uncreated and self-existent, then the entire universe, including all men and angels, must have begun to be. Let our thought now travel back to the time when God alone existed. Shall we think of Him as absolutely single and solitary, dwelling in eternal silence and self-contemplation, or as having within Himself the conditions of a social life? Which conception best befits the notion of His inherent perfection? If God is truly the absolute Being, as theists commonly suppose; if He is not dependent upon the world in respect to His own existence and perfection, but has freely created the same—then must His nature be perfect in itself, and in this nature all the conditions of blessedness must be realised. It seems to me that the Trinitarian doctrine of God, which affirms distinctions and relations as eternally existing in His essence, best answers to the idea of His inherent perfection, because it supposes the Divine life to be, by its very nature, social and self-communicating. If this seem an abstract method of presenting the subject, let us approach it by saying that there is an eternal Fatherhood in God. He is not merely the Father of men and of all higher orders of created beings. He did at some point begin to be a Father. The relations of Fatherhood and Sonship which concretely express to us what we count most dear in the nature of God, are eternal and constituent in His very being. It is commonly agreed among Christians that the most perfect description which can be given of the Divine nature is that which is contained in the Scriptural statement—"God is love." If this means, not merely that God, as a matter of fact, does love, not merely that He may be or that He has love, but that love is an eternal quality of His moral nature which is absolutely fundamental and constitutive in His being—then it would seem that there must be within His nature itself occasion and scope for the exercise of love, apart from His relations to finite existence. Love is a social

attribute, and the conditions and relations which love implies must exist in the very essence of God. In the Trinitarian view of God these conditions have for ever existed in the eternal personal distinctions and reciprocal relations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God did not begin to love when He created, nor is His love a mere potentiality which in the silent depths of eternity looks forward to creation for its satisfaction. Love is the very core and essence of God's moral nature, and as such is ceaselessly active within the internal relations of Deity. Love is eternally in full exercise, since God is love, and love ever found in God's own perfect being the full fruition and blessedness of its exercise in self-communication and fellowship. We thus see that, despite the difficulties which the Trinitarian doctrine presents to the imagination, it has the great advantage of according with the highest conception which revelation yields us of the moral nature of God. It enables us to maintain that God eternally is what He is revealed to be. The Trinity is a practical truth. High as it is above reason, baffling as it is to the imagination and to thought, it accords with the demands and deliverances of the Christian consciousness. It conserves the truth of Christ's essential Divinity and that of the reality and power of the work of the Spirit, which He described as the sequel and completion of His own work. It accords with belief in the incarnation, and makes the redemptive work of Christ a Divine work. All this the Christian consciousness craves and requires. We want to know, not merely that God has sent us a message, not merely that in Jesus He has raised up an exceptionally pure and holy member of the human race, but that in Him God has come to us, and that His work of revelation and redemption is a work of God. Our sense of sin is met and answered only by the knowledge of a Divine Redeemer. Mystery as the Trinity is, it is a mystery which is full of heavenly light. The doctrine of the Trinity conserves the idea of the richness and fulness of the Divine life and love, and of the amplitude of their manifestation. According to its terms, God is revealed to us as our Father, and His eternal nature is shown to be fatherly; Jesus Christ is presented to us as a true incarnation of God in humanity, a Redeemer whose Divine person and work are a veritable revelation of God; and the Holy Spirit is conceived of as an actual Divine agent who dwells and works in human life, influencing and moulding it into the Divine likeness. According to the Trinitarian doctrine, we have to do, in Christianity, with Divine realities. Our religion is not a subjective play of fine ideas, memories, or aspirations. Our religion is intensely supernatural. It is fitted to quicken and foster in our hearts a living sense of God. The forces that provide and complete our salvation are truly Divine. It is God that has wrought for us and in us; our life is ensphered in Deity, and filled with the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. (*George B. Stevens, D.D.*) *The Trinity a practical truth*:—1. The distinction between doctrinal and practical exists rather in popular impressions than in reality. Doctrine simply means what is taught: practice what is done. Christian charity, as delivered in 1 Cor. xiii., is a doctrine; as it enlarges souls and sweetens life it is a practice. In general, Christian practice is simply Christian doctrine gone into the life of mankind. 2. The Trinity is the meeting-point of the doctrinal with the practical elements of our faith. For, on the one hand, it represents facts lying far above us, in the inscrutable Being of God; but it also lays the foundation for the personal faith which brings peace to the heart and for the duties which give use and honour to life. The Trinity has just the mysteriousness which belongs to, say, the connection of your mind with your hand, or the growth of a tree from a seed. Much about these things you may well understand; but much more, which you cheerfully accept because it is familiar, is just as completely inexplicable to reason as the Trinity. Yet you may traverse every field and you will find no form of goodness that has not its origin in this Trinity of God—in the parental providence of the Father, the renewing grace of the Son, the sanctifying communion of the Spirit. For the proof, we may look to three different regions of revelation in order: I. THE INSPIRED SCRIPTURES. 1. There is no Divine quality which is not ascribed to each of these Persons. Each is separately declared to be eternal, almighty, perfect in holiness, knowing all things, and worthy to be worshipped. Yet with equal emphasis they are not only, as in the text, associated together, with no suggestion of degrees of rank, but they are explicitly declared to be one in substance, power, and glory. 2. These three are so set before us that the entire Christian system could not be complete or even consistent without them all. Each refers to the others as co-equal Persons—the Father to the Son and the Spirit, the Son to the Spirit and the Father, the Spirit to the Father and the Son. 3. Taking up the Scriptures in their historic order—(1) The

Holy Ghost appears with the Father from first to last. Amidst the miracles of creation He broods upon the face of the waters; holy men "spoke as they were moved by" Him; it is by His power that the Messiah is miraculously conceived, and that His mission is attested at His baptism. The Spirit's more manifest coming forth is at length made ready as the Saviour departs, till, after Pentecost, all the preaching of the apostles, and all the upbuilding of the Church, and all the conversion of the world, are effected by the same Spirit. (2) With corresponding measure moves the revelation of the Son of Man. In the beginning He was with God, and was God. Not without Him too, says the apostle, the worlds were made. In Eden we foresee Him "born of a woman," bruising the serpent's head, and atoning for the Fall; known to Job as the Redeemer that shall stand upon the earth; blessing all mankind in Abraham's seed; the Shiloh that should come of the family of Judah; wrestling with Jacob; worshipped as the Jehovah-angel; leading Israel in the burning column; foretold as the everlasting High Priest in the Psalms of David; the Emmanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor and Mighty God, of Isaiah's prediction; "The Lord our Righteousness" named by Jeremiah; the glorious appearance of a Man on the sapphire throne, before whom Ezekiel fell in adoration; Daniel's "Messiah who should be cut off, but not for Himself"; Haggai's "Desire of all Nations"; Malachi's "Sun of Righteousness." He is the theme of the whole Bible, the Bond of living unity between Old Testament and New. II. THE MORAL CONSTITUTION AND HISTORY OF MAN. Outside the Bible there are three different regions for the manifestation of God to man. 1. Nature. In it the one God has a peculiar work, creating. But as we commonly apply the term "creating" to the originating of things, that process by which He preserves and so ever re-creates nature is named Providence. God is a Creator, and creatorship is the first work of personality in His threefold Being. 2. Christ. (1) Nature was not enough for man's spiritual education and salvation. He needs a supernatural mediation for the unfolding and ripening of his religious powers, and for rescue when the choice has been wrong and the forces of sin have brought him down. As a conscious soul man has thoughts that the whole natural world cannot interpret, desires that the natural world cannot fill, aspirations that the natural world and even natural religion cannot meet. Nay, it is just when the world does its bravest for us that our supersensual life is most oppressed with the feeling of its insufficiency, and the homesick heart feels out into infinitude for the light that never was on sea or land. (2) Man is lost till the Son of Man comes forth from the Father. The palace of nature is empty till the King enters. (a) If it is moral excellence that the world is seeking for, the Second Person of the Trinity not only carries up all ideas of character to their loftiest pitch, by saying, "Be ye therefore perfect," but He matches the precept by an actual embodiment. (b) Is it some vision of self-sacrifice that the higher thought of humanity is feeling for? Then in the same Person God sets up the Cross, planting its foot in the very core of the world's heart, and binding about it the reverent affections of all ages. (c) Is the world yearning for reconciliation with God? None less than He, no daysman of baser rank, can make the necessary atonement, at once magnifying the law, and yet the justifier of the sinner. It must be both God and man, the God-man, who redeems. Nature is fair and orderly, for it is the workmanship of God. But can it atone for this lost soul that has gone down under the powers of sin, and is now in the terror and the punishment of a separation from its God? It says, "Obey and live. Hast thou, O foolish child, disobeyed? Then be wrecked against our iron necessity; perish amidst our pitiless magnificence!" Man sees no cross in nature till the Saviour rears it at Calvary. 3. By the very conditions of the visible Incarnation, however, it must be limited and temporary. For here the Eternal comes into history, and thus is made subject to limitations of time and place. Jesus, the Son of Mary, wears a human body, which must pass from the world. It is expedient for us that He should go away. Hence the third development of the Trinity-mystery. There is a third realm where the one God is also to be revealed—the inner world of the believer's heart. (1) Christ saw the deep necessity for that, and made careful preparation for it in the promise of the Holy Ghost. Like the Eternal Word, that Paraclete has been from the beginning, and was with God, and was God. But now, in the heavenly order, the Spirit shall appear; He shall proceed both from the Father and the Son, for Christ expressly says both, "I will send Him," "Whom My Father will send." The symbol is shown when Christ breathes on the apostles before His ascension. The august reality is seen when the day of Pentecost is fully come. (2) Henceforth—(a) When the weary and heavy-laden

heart comes home repenting to the Father's house, through faith in the Son, it is known to be the Holy Spirit that quickens it. (b) When the secret mercy of peace tranquillises the sorrow of troubled breasts, it is the same Spirit that is the Comforter. (c) When a hidden inspiration bears on advancing Christians from one degree of sanctity to another, it is by the same "Spirit of the Lord," the Sanctifier of the faithful. (d) When new tides of consecrated feeling rouse the Church to her aggressive work, it is the coming, again and again, of the same blessed Paraclete. III. THE GOSPEL KINGDOM OR CHURCH OF CHRIST. 1. Just on the eve of Christ's departure His accredited apostles are gathered about Him. Now the ambassadors shall be told what is of supreme importance in the work they are to do, and the message they are to bear. He speaks: "Go ye, and preach the gospel to every creature," "teach all nations, baptizing them." But teach them what? Baptize them into whom? This is the last and highest question to be answered. The doctrine ye are to proclaim, the threefold cord with which ye are to "bind," the covenant names into which ye are to baptize—hear these: the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. The three names send out their light over Christendom with co-equal, co-eternal, and blended beams. They are one. By the power hid in that truth the world was to be saved: by no other. 2. See then how, in the very terms of the office assigned to His Church, there is an exact correspondence with this fundamental doctrine of the faith. (1) There is action—"Go ye." This answers, on earth and in men, to the creative work of the Godhead. The natural power must work; natural means must be employed. (2) There is the continued presentation of the fact of redemption, under its due sign and sacrament, coupled with the preaching of the gospel. As the Second Person was the embodying of the Word and redeemed the world, as that Word was made flesh, so the living Word must still go forth, beginning at Jerusalem, to all the earth. The new covenant, superseding that of the elder Testament, is to pledge the blessings of propitiation, gather and bind in one the Catholic family of Christendom, and, by the sanctifying of water to the mystical washing away of sin, bring back clean blood into the disordered heart of the race. (3) But, finally, that this Christian system should take effect, create a real regeneration, and yield the Lord a bride without spot or wrinkle, the energy of the Spirit must attend it. The Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, must accompany the preaching. God's flock must be fed by men whom the Holy Ghost hath made overseers. Conclusion: What is remaining but that in the simplicity of a searching and earnest faith we should put the question to ourselves and to one another: Has this wonderful and blessed doctrine entered in, to bear its gracious fruit in our own lives? (*Bp. Huntington.*) **And the communion of the Holy Ghost.**—*The communion of the Holy Spirit*:—I fear that our familiarity with these words serves in a great measure to veil their meaning. They become more associated with the closing up of the service than anything else, as is the case with one of the grandest choruses in the *Messiah*, the "Amen Chorus." It is the last in the whole Oratorio, and every one takes it as a signal to begin to depart. Paul is here pouring out his heart's love in the very best wish that he can think of. What do we understand by the communion of the Holy Ghost? What is the meaning of the word "communion"? I do not know any better way to explain the meaning of that word than is given in the following verses of the Bible (Gal. ii. 9): "When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship." That is, they took Paul into their communion as a sharer in the concern; they gave him the right hand; he became partner with them in the work. That is the meaning of the word "communion." In Luke v. 10, we read that James and John "were partners with Simon." You see that it would mean part-ownership in that boat; they would no longer speak of that boat as my boat, but our boat. So, I think, that the best meaning of the word "communion" is "partnership." Thus the text will read: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the partnership of the Holy Ghost be with you all." I. PARTNERSHIP WITH A GLORIOUS PERSON. First of all we must realise the personality of the partner; we must grasp the personality of the Holy Ghost by practical experience. Do we know much about this? Hundreds of you could say, "I know what the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is." But do you know what is partnership with the Holy Ghost? Partnership implies a partner, and we cannot be long in partnership without knowing the partner. The Holy Ghost is a living personality as much as the Father, whose love we receive; a living personality as much as Jesus, whose grace we delight in, and whose name we adore. It is not an

"it" we have to do with. All the attributes of a Person are His. He has understanding, will, grief and love; for when Paul writes to the Romans, he says (Rom. xv. 30). How necessary it is we should know His attributes, since we are living in His dispensation. The Old Testament records belong to the dispensation of the Father, and tell of one coming, the Gospels are the record of the dispensation of the Son, and Christ still points on and says, "It is expedient that I go away, but I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." The Lord Jesus Christ has ascended to the Father, He has gone up to Heaven, and is sitting at His Father's right hand, and it is just because He is there that the Spirit is here. The Spirit came only when Jesus was glorified. God is thus on earth to-day in the Person of the Holy Ghost, and He receives no better treatment now than the Lord Jesus did when He was on earth. He has come to take the same place as Jesus took, and to be as real to you as Jesus was to His disciples. The reason we have so many dull faces in our churches to-day is because the Holy Ghost is not thought of as present, and is not welcomed as a personal, helpful Friend. But the ministry of the Spirit is only a time ministry; this dispensation is not going on for ever. Jesus fulfilled His mission and then He ascended, and I believe that the Holy Spirit will have His ascension, and then Jesus will come to reign. There is a further beautiful meaning in the word "communion," namely, a common interest. Thus, you love Christ: so does the Holy Ghost. You love prayer: the Holy Ghost maketh intercession for us. In Rom. viii. 16, we read, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit." What beautiful partnership is that! You want to be holy; the Spirit wants you to be holy. If you want Jesus to come, so does the Holy Spirit. You see you have common interests all the way through. II. PARTNERSHIP IN HIS GLORIOUS WORK. All that Jesus did, He did in the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, like a dove, had sought, for four thousand years, a heart that would be His resting place, and sought in vain, until He rested on Jesus by the Jordan's brink. Then Jesus went forth to His work filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. He cast out demons, He healed the sick, He raised the dead, and, indeed, all that He did, He did in the power of the Holy Spirit. Look at our churches—north, east, south and west? They are trying to carry on their work without the partnership of the Holy Ghost. But it is so difficult, you say, to realise what we cannot see. You have never seen the wind, yet you feel and believe it is there. You have never seen electricity, but put your hands on the handles of the battery, and you start with the shock. And if I am going into partnership with the Holy Ghost, I must believe He is here, though He is not seen by mortal eyes. His Sovereignty I must know as well, and fully yield myself to His direction and control. We read in the Acts that the Holy Ghost forbade the apostles going to Asia to preach the Word. There are diversities of His will, and we need to be entirely in His hands. If we have fellowship with Him, we must be willing to let Him work in us. At times the Holy Spirit has to uproot a man, strip him of all his possessions, of health, wealth, and position before He is made willing and obedient. We must be willing to be just what He wants us to be in this great partnership. (*A. G. Brown.*)



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