



BS491

.E956

60

copy 1



SAVING
C. 1000 1001
P. 1000 1001
E. 1000 1001

THE
BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

OR

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

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

FIRST PETER



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

Publishers of Evangelical Literature



INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

THE TITLE "GENERAL."—It may be well to say a word as to the meaning of the epithet General or Catholic, which, since the fourth century, has been given to this Epistle, as well as to 2 Peter, James, 1, 2, 3 John, and Jude. This is not a question of vital importance (for the appellation has no claim to Divine authority), and it is well it is so, for there seems no means of determining it with anything like certainty. The term appears originally to have meant an Epistle directed not to one Church, but to all, or at any rate to many Churches—a description which belongs to five of the seven Epistles so distinguished; the other two being addressed to individuals. In the time of Eusebius, with this sense seems to have been connected the somewhat cognate one of epistles publicly read in many or all the Churches, on account of the excellence and usefulness of their contents; and, till the writings of the New Testament were collected into one volume, it appears to have been the technical name by which this collection of Epistles was distinguished from the Pauline Epistles. (*J. Brown, D.D.*)

AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE.—The earliest testimony in its favour is the Second Epistle of Peter, which, whether genuine or not, is generally admitted to be a document of a very early date. In that Epistle the author designates his writing as his "Second Epistle" (2 Pet. iii. 1). Eusebius informs us that Polycarp (A.D. 110) in his Epistle to the Philippians made use of certain testimonies from the First Epistle of Peter (H. E., iv. 4); and we have only to glance at the Epistle of Polycarp to see that those references are numerous. Thus in the eighth chapter he writes, "Let us continually persevere in our hope and in the earnest of our righteousness, which is Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree (chap. ii. 24), and who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (chap. ii. 22). Eusebius also informs us that Papias (A.D. 116) made use of testimonies from the First Epistle of John and likewise from that of Peter (H. E., iii. 39). Irenaeus (A.D. 178) is the first who expressly ascribes this Epistle to Peter. "And Peter says, 'Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, not seeing Him, now ye believe; ye will rejoice with joy unspeakable'" (Adv. Haer., iv. 9, 2). And again, "On this account Peter says that we have not liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but for the proof and manifestation of the faith" (Idem., iv. 16, 8). Clemens Alexandrinus (A.D. 180) frequently quotes from this Epistle. "For, as Peter says, the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" (Paedeg., iii. 12). And again, "Our aim and our end as regards perfection being demonstrated to belong to the man and the woman, Peter, in his Epistle says, 'Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations'" (Strom., iv. 20). Tertullian (A.D. 200) writes, "Peter says to the Christians of Pontus, 'How great indeed is the glory, if ye suffer patiently without being punished as evildoers. For this is acceptable, for even hereunto were ye called, since Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps'" (Scorpice, 12). In like manner Origen (A.D. 230) frequently refers to this Epistle. "And concerning the journey in spirit to prison in Peter's Catholic Epistle, being put to death in the flesh, he says, but quickened in the spirit" (Opp., vol. iv. p. 135). Eusebius always speaks of this Epistle as undisputed: "Peter upon whom the Church of Christ is built, has left one Epistle

undisputed" (H. E., vi. 25). We have only further to remark that this Epistle is found in the Peshito, the Old Italic, and all the most ancient versions. And while the Epistle is thus strongly supported by external evidence, it is not defective in that which is internal. It bears upon it the impress of Peter's character, being such an Epistle as one would expect that apostle to have written. The sanguine character of the Epistle, the reference to the hopes of futurity, the consolation imparted to its readers, the exhortations given them to prepare for trial and suffering, the love of Christ prominently brought forward, the example of Christ continually held up to their imitation, all remind us of the eager nature of the apostle, of his intense love for the Saviour, and of the command of the Lord, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." So also there are in it many personal recollections of the author's intercourse with Christ. Christ had named him a rock; and Peter speaks of believers as living stones, built up into a spiritual temple unto the Lord. Peter had denied Christ, and in his Epistle he is especially eager to exhort believers to steadfastness. Peter had been a witness of the sufferings of Christ; and these are continually referred to in this Epistle. Peter had made a noble profession of his love to Christ; and on this he dwells with special affection. And further, there are undesigned coincidences between this Epistle and the speeches of Peter as recorded in the Acts. In both he speaks of himself as a witness of the sufferings and resurrection of Christ (Acts ii. 32; 1 Pet. v. 1). The connection of the old prophets with the sufferings of Christ is alluded to in both (Acts iii. 18; 1 Pet. i. 10). In his speech before the Sanhedrim Peter refers to Christ as the stone set at nought of the builders, which has become the head of the corner (Acts iv. 11), and the same reference is contained in his Epistle (chap. ii. 7, 8). The remarkable phrase descriptive of the crucifixion of Christ, "being hanged on a tree," is found alike in Peter's address and in Peter's Epistle (Acts v. 30; 1 Pet. ii. 24). And the phrase, "the judge of quick and dead," which Peter used in his address to Cornelius (Acts x. 42), is also employed in this Epistle (chap. iv. 5). (*Ibid.*)

READERS OF THE EPISTLE.—The Epistle bears the following inscription: "To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." These words, taken by themselves and without reference to the contents of the Epistle, would lead to the conclusion that this Epistle, like the Epistle of James, was addressed to Jewish Christians—to the Jews of the diaspora. But this opinion cannot well be maintained. The Churches in these countries, especially in Galatia and Asia, were founded by Paul, and, as we learn from the Acts and the Epistles, were mostly composed of Gentile Christians, or at least were mixed congregations formed of Jews and Gentiles. Michaelis, Neudecker and Benson try to remove this difficulty by supposing that they were composed of Jewish proselytes; but this is a supposition which is not borne out by Scripture. Besides, there are numerous references in the Epistle which are in favour of the predominant Gentile element in these Churches; as, for example, chap. iv. 3; referring evidently to the former heathen life of his readers. The terms of the inscription, then, "strangers scattered throughout," or "sojourners of the dispersion," must be taken in a somewhat figurative sense, and must allude to believers as being strangers or sojourners on this earth; and in this capacity Peter addresses his readers (chap. ii. 11). This opinion, that the Epistle is addressed not to Jewish Christians, but to Christians in general, is maintained by the vast majority of modern commentators. The circle of Churches addressed are enumerated as Christians residing in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. No reason can be assigned why the Epistle was restricted to Christians resident in these countries; we are ignorant of the relations of Peter to them. The first country named is Pontus. We do not know how the gospel penetrated into that distant land. Jews from Pontus are mentioned among the number of those present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 9); and Aquila, one of Paul's fellow-labourers, was a native of that country (Acts xviii. 2). Galatia received the gospel by the direct preaching of Paul, and to the Christian inhabitants of that country he wrote his celebrated Epistle. Cappadocia probably received the gospel from Jews, dwellers in Cappadocia, who were converted at the Feast of Pentecost by the preaching of Peter (Acts ii. 9). Asia is the celebrated province of Proconsular Asia, and contains, along with Ephesus, its capital, some of the most notable cities mentioned in the Acts where Paul preached the gospel. The Apocalypse is addressed to seven Churches in Proconsular Asia. The last country mentioned is Bithynia. We are informed that Paul and his companions assayed to

go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not (Acts xvi. 7). When and by whom the gospel was diffused in this country we know not; but from Pliny's celebrated letter we know that a few years after Peter wrote his Epistle Christianity had taken such a firm hold on its inhabitants that the temples of the gods were deserted and the sacrifices discontinued. As regards the condition of Christians in these countries, it is manifest that they were threatened with persecution. We meet in the Epistle with continued references to trial. The time was come when judgment must begin at the house of God; they were liable to be dragged before the heathen tribunals; they were reproached for the name of Christ, and were made partakers with Him in His sufferings; the fact of their being Christians was regarded as a crime. At its very commencement Christianity aroused the hostility of the world, and as time elapsed this hostility increased; and therefore it is not to be wondered that Christians in these countries were exposed to persecution. Still, however, it is not necessary to suppose that any special persecution against the Church had as yet arisen, or that the allusion is to the persecution under Nero, far less, with Schwegler, to assert that the persecution under Trajan is adverted to. The expressions are general, and would rather imply that persecution was threatened than that it had actually broken out. Believers had to be warned of the trials that awaited them, and to be encouraged and confirmed in the faith. (*Ibid.*)

DATE AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION.—Various dates have been assigned to this Epistle. Weiss ranks it among the earliest writings of the New Testament. Hug, Neander, and Mayerhoff, adopting the opinion that the apostle alludes to the persecution under Nero, suppose that it was written toward the close of the year 64, when that persecution was raging. Alford supposes it was written about the year 63, before the persecution related by Tacitus broke out. In the Epistle itself there are few personal notices, and these have no value in fixing the date. An argument has been drawn from the presence of Mark (chap. v. 13). It is generally supposed that this is the same as John, whose surname was Mark, who accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. Now, Mark was with Paul when he wrote the Epistle to the Colossians, during his first Roman imprisonment (Col. iv. 10); but he was absent from Rome during Paul's second Roman imprisonment, for, writing to Timothy, he says, "Take Mark and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Tim. iv. 11). Hence it is supposed that in the interval Mark may have been with Peter in Babylon, and if so the Epistle was written between the years 64 and 67. But no inference can be drawn from this, for it might as reasonably be argued that Mark was with Peter before Paul wrote the Epistle to the Colossians. Another argument is drawn from the probability that Peter would not have written to Paul's converts in Galatia and Proconsular Asia during the apostle's lifetime, or, at least, before his imprisonment, and whilst he was at liberty to take a personal superintendence of those Churches which he had founded. But not much can be made of that probability; the apostles must have been free to write to whom they pleased. With regard to the place of composition, this has been the occasion of much disputation. In the Epistle this place is denominated Babylon: "The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you." The generality of commentators suppose that Babylon is here used figuratively for Rome. This opinion has not its origin from the peculiar views of the Romish Church; but was adopted by the Fathers. It was held by Clemens Alexandrinus, Eusebius, and Jerome. Thus Eusebius says, "Peter makes mention of Mark in the first Epistle, which he is also said to have composed at the same city of Rome, and he shows this fact by calling the city by an unusual name, Babylon" (H. E., ii. 15). The same opinion is held by Grotius, Whitby, Macknight, Wiesinger, Hitzig, Sciffert, Thiersch, Schott, Hofmann, Ewald, Cook, and Farrar. The arguments on which they found it are the strong testimony in favour of Peter's presence at Rome, the extreme improbability of his journey to Babylon, and the fact that Babylon was then a current designation of Rome. The great objection to this view is that in writing an epistle Peter would not add an allegorical designation in his salutation. Accordingly, others suppose that not Rome, but the city of Babylon on the Euphrates is meant. This is the view adopted by Calvin, Neander, De Wette, Brückner, Wieseler, Weiss, Bleek, Fronmüller, Huther, and Alford. If this were the case, and if, as is generally supposed, Peter wrote his Epistle in the later apostolic age, it is difficult to find a period for his residence in Rome. Though nothing definite can be asserted, yet upon the whole the reasons preponderate in favour of Rome. It is to be observed that in the salutation, "The Church that is at Babylon, elected

together with you, saluteth you," the word "church" is not in the original, and hence the Revised Version more correctly renders the passage, "She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you." In all probability it is not the Church at Babylon, but some Christian lady resident at Babylon or at Rome, who is alluded to, like the elect lady of John's Second Epistle; more especially as an individual, Marcus, immediately follows. It is the opinion of Neander, Bengel, Mayerhoff, Rauch, and Alford that the lady alluded to by ἡ συνελκτική was the apostle's wife; an opinion which we consider somewhat fanciful. A still more fanciful opinion is to suppose that the person called "Marcus my son" was not the spiritual but the real son of the apostle. (*Ibid.*)

CHARACTER AND CONTENTS OF THE EPISTLE.—The natural warmth of the author's disposition gives to the style a character of energy approaching to vehemence; and there is to be found just such a familiarity with the Old Testament, manifesting itself not only in direct quotations, but in numerous natural allusions, which have all the appearance of having been unconscious, as might be expected in the composition of a pious though, when compared with Paul, an uneducated Jew. This Epistle is distinguished for great tenderness of manner, and for bringing forward prominently the most consolatory parts of the gospel. The apostle wrote to those who were in affliction. He was himself an old man. He expected soon to be with the Saviour. He had nearly done with the conflicts and toils of life. It was natural that he should direct his eye onward and upward, and dwell on those things in the gospel which were adapted to support and comfort the soul. There is therefore scarcely any part of the New Testament where the ripe and mellow Christian will find more that is adapted to his matured feelings, or to which he will more naturally turn. There is great compactness of thought and terseness of expression in this Epistle. It seems to be composed of a succession of texts, each one fitted to constitute the subject of a discourse. There is more that a pastor would like to preach on in a course of expository lectures, and less that he would be disposed to pass over as not so well adapted to the purposes of religious instruction, than in almost any other book of the New Testament. There is almost nothing that is of merely local or temporary interest. There are plain traces in the Epistle of an intimate acquaintance with the modes of thought and expression characteristic of the writings of Paul, which, even without the reference in the Second Epistle (chap. iii. 14, 15), would have led to the conclusion that the writer had read that apostle's Epistles. Peter's mode of writing is much less than Paul's that of a scholar; but he has much of the same natural ease of diction, tendency to digression, and use of figurative language. This Epistle holds an intermediate place between those of the great apostle of the Gentiles and that of James, the apostle of the Circumcision. It resembles both in a greater degree than they resemble each other. (*ibid.*)

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

I. PETER.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1, 2. Peter.—*The several names of St. Peter*:—1. Simeon or Simon: that he had at his circumcision. 2. Cephas, a stone: given him by Christ at his calling, to signify that He meant to make him a stout defender of the faith. 3. Peter: the Greek equivalent of the Syriac Cephas. Learn—1. Christ's kindness to Peter in giving him a name to assure him of some grace which He would bestow on him. Though we cannot do this, yet it behoves us to give our children such names as may put them in mind of some good thing; either to imitate some good man or woman whose name they bear, or else to follow some good that the name puts them in mind of. 2. In that he puts his name to his Epistle, he shows his godliness. A man bold for truth may be blamed, but cannot be shamed. This condemns the vile practice of the wicked, who hide themselves in the dark. We must do nothing but that we dare put our hands to it, and our names. (*John Rogers.*) *Christ's selection of Peter*:—When you have been down on the shore in the summer-time you have found on the beach a dull-hued pebble, rounded and beaten, with all the colour washed out of it. But you have brought it home and broken it open, and lo! the whole interior was full of purple amethysts and sparkling crystals, of which the rough exterior gave no sign. So does Christ see in many a dull and unattractive life the jewels that shall sparkle for ever. In Nathaniel He found an Israelite without guile, in Mary of Magdala a noble woman, and in Peter a foundation rock. (*W. P. Faunce.*) *The introductory greeting*:—I. THE GREETER. 1. His name—Peter. The giving of that name leads us to recollect—(1) What is recalled to him of his former life. (2) What it tells of Christ's knowledge of his capacities and promise. (3) What it indicates of his ideal. 2. His vocation—"an apostle." (1) His dignity—authoritative messenger. (2) His brotherhood—"an." No claim of supremacy. (3) His Lord—"Jesus Christ." Sent by Him, to speak of Him, and to serve Him. II. THOSE GREETED. 1. Who? Sojourners of the dispersion. Homeless through persecution. 2. Where? Scattered from under the shadows of the mountains of Galilee down to the shores of the Black Sea. 3. What? "Elect." Divinely chosen to perfection of character. (1) To be made holy. (2) To be made holy by the Spirit. (3) To be made holy by the Spirit through obedience. III. THE GREETING—"Grace and peace." 1. The highest conception of Greek and of Hebrew blessedness. Greek—grace; Hebrew—peace. Both combined. (1) Grace, the attitude of Christ, the gift of Christ, the issue of the work of Christ. (2) Peace—with God, with men, with conscience. 2. This multiplied indefinitely, not to say infinitely. They cannot have too much to exceed the apostle's desires for them. (*U. R. Thomas.*) **An apostle of Jesus Christ.**—*Commissioned by Christ*:—It makes a great difference whether we are going out, in a kind of social knight errantry, to live for humanity of our own motion, or whether we have met with Jesus Christ in secret, and go forth with His commission and promise at our back, and with His love and inspiration in our souls. (*James Stalker, D.D.*) *Sent by God*:—Giro-lamo Savonarola was walking to Florence to become prior of a convent. When a few miles from the town he began to feel faint from want of food and rest, and sank wearily upon the ground. Then an unknown man appeared to the tired traveller, and walked with him. Savonarola believed it was a heavenly messenger, and took to his heart the stranger's parting words, "Remember that thou dost that for which

thou hast been sent by God," and entered Florence ready to live in the midst of her unruly people, and work among them till his death. (*"Three Great Lives," Frances E. Cooke.*)

To the strangers scattered.—*Persecution*:—1. Sundry of the Jews received our Saviour, and believed in Him, though the body of them did not. Those made a good progress in the cause of Christianity who were contented to undergo such dangers as might befall them in a strange land, only that they might keep faith and a good conscience. 2. The estate of the Church of God here on earth is under persecution. The world having power and wealth, is full of malice against the poor Church, so that were it not that God Almighty defends it, it could not endure. It is as a sheep among wolves, or a ship among the waves. Though God will exercise it to keep it from errors and corruptions, which it is subject to through much prosperity and peace; though it have need of some peace to gather itself, yet if it be long in peace it gathers mud as standing waters, rust as the ploughshare in the hedge, yea, settles itself on the lees, therefore God pours it out from vessel to vessel. The Church never shines so gloriously as either in or after persecution; then life, zeal, sincerity, heavenly-mindedness, and such like graces, appear in their true lustre. It follows—(1) That as we are not to conclude for a company, because they have so much peace, that therefore they are beloved of God; so must not we against any because they be few in number and outwardly despised. (2) That we are to prepare ourselves for persecution. (3) That it is lawful to fly in time of persecution. (*John Rogers.*)

God's people scattered:—1. That God's children may be driven from their native dwelling, God doth not always build them a house in their own land. 2. That the Church of God is not tied to any one place, neither to Rome nor to Jerusalem. 3. That the godly are thin set. It is rare to find true godly men, they dwell here and there. 4. That the Church hath not always an external glory to commend it. 5. That there may be a great inward beauty under a despised condition. These dispersed ones are glorious creatures, sanctified in their spirits, and shall have an immortal inheritance. 6. That there may be excellent order in appearing confusion. One might think the husbandmen spoiled their corn when they scatter it abroad on the ground; and yet we know it is better so than when it is in the barn all on a heap. So is it with the godly. (*N. Byfield.*)

Genuine disciples of Christ:—I. THEY ARE STRANGERS IN THE WORLD. II. THEY ARE CHOSEN OF HEAVEN. 1. To the sanctification of the Spirit. 2. To obedience. 3. To a consecration to Christ. III. THEY ARE PRAYED FOR BY THE BRETHREN. 1. For the favour of God. 2. For peace of soul. (*Homilist.*)

Elect.—*How may we know the election of others?*—Not with the judgment of certainty, because the heart of man is known to none but God, and a man may go far who yet may fall away; but with the judgment of charity, which hath degrees according to the fruits we see in them: if they only profess religion and be in the Church, we may hope, but it is a weak hope, where we see no fruits. Now when we see the fruits of faith, sanctification, and godliness in men, and that they show them not by fits, but constantly; not in some things, but in all; not in prosperity only, but in adversity, we may very boldly judge of them as the elect of God; and so does the apostle here, as appears by the next words, "Through sanctification of the Spirit." (*John Rogers.*)

The elect:—St. Peter here tells you what you are—for what purpose you are such, and to how great privilege you may reach. "Elect," he says, "according to the foreknowledge of God." I. WHAT DOES ELECT MEAN? The word is taken from the Old Testament, where it is applied not to one or two individuals, but to the Jewish nation. They were highly favoured, they were gathered from other nations; they had the law and the prophets and means which others had not. To the Christian Church it is now said, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." Again, the very title of this Epistle shows for whom it was meant. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God." For what is the title? The general—in Greek, the catholic—Epistle of St. Peter. Now what does this mean but that it is not for a small number of Christians, nor yet for the Church of a particular district, like some of St. Paul's Epistles; but for the Church universal, all the members of which he calls "elect"? Again, observe the first verse: "To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus," &c. As to the greater part of the persons whom he addresses, St. Peter could have known nothing of their character or habits any more than we can tell how individuals are living in private in France or Ireland. How, then, could he pronounce upon their eternal salvation? But he means nothing of the sort. He knew that life was before them; that they had light, and knowledge, and grace, and opportunities not given to others; he knew that they had been gathered into the Christian

fold, which was not the case with others. Upon all these grounds he calls them elect, and predestined to this before the foundation of the world. That which is true of the Church as a whole is true of its parts. Accordingly, St. Paul, addressing different parts of the Christian body, at different times, calls them in turn elect, chosen, called, saints, sanctified. He does not mean to say that all he calls saints were so in their practice, any more than those whom we call Christians are really such. But he means that they were designed by God to be truly saints upon earth and triumphant souls in heaven. Why, I would ask, do you send missions to the heathen if you have not something to enrich them with which they possess not? You are in the light: you are a chosen people. I say not as to the use of privileges, but as to their possession. A man may shut his eyes though the sun be beaming; a man may turn back from the brink of heaven. Nevertheless, the possession of such privileges proves you to be high in God's favour—His chosen people, for an exalted purpose.

II. And now WHAT DOES GOD, ACCORDING TO ST. PETER, TO HIS ELECT PEOPLE? How does He assure them of their election, and enable them to make their calling and election sure? He gives them His Spirit in their hearts: "through sanctification," it is said, "of the Spirit." It is affirmed in the following words, "that God hath elected you unto obedience." Surely to bear the fruits of the Spirit a man must have the Spirit. Therefore St. Paul writes, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father," &c. Let me mention two reasons why it is necessary to believe that Christians are sanctified, or receive the Spirit in their childhood.

1. The first is that our children are all expected to serve God, to renounce the devil, keep the Commandments, and believe the faith. But they are not able to do it without the Spirit.
2. When God takes away any of your children from you in their early years you have a confident belief that they are saved.

3. And this conducts me very naturally to the third point: supposing people to grow up, and to have passed the unconscious time of childhood, what is the immediate object of their sanctification? The text informs us, "Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The apostle is thought to allude here to the covenant God made with Israel, which was confirmed by the sprinkling of blood. Another meaning is, that the Spirit hath been given to us in order that we might obey and so be pardoned; in either case the result is the same, that without obeying Christ none shall be saved. Let me address those who think they shall be saved without obedience. It cannot be denied that this is a fearfully large number. Every man who puts off repentance thinks he can be saved without obedience; for if he keep putting it off, when does he hope to obey? Again, are there not persons who arrive at the same deceit in another way? who are not careful to inquire whether they keep the commandments of Christ, but only whether they feel in a particular manner? (*J. M. Chanter, M.A.*)

The plan of salvation:—I. ELECTION IN ITS SOURCE. 1. Election as an eternal act of the Divine mind is inaccessible to us; it is only in its effects that it comes within our mental cognisance. 2. This election is "according to the foreknowledge of God." God is the only and whole cause of every man's salvation. 3. The Supreme Being not only drew the plan, but continually emits a stream of energy to impel men into acquiescence with it. This energy is not physical but mental and spiritual, making man a willing co-worker with God in his own salvation.

II. ELECTION IN ITS MEANS. 1. Election first shows itself in a man's separation from the world which lieth in wickedness. 2. Election is indissolubly connected with holiness as the sphere in which it moves, the atmosphere in which it breathes. 3. The holiness of the believer is not a created finite thing, like that of the angel, but an active participation in the uncreated, infinite holiness of God in virtue of the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

III. ELECTION IN ITS END. 1. Election has for its object our obedience. (1) The obedience of which faith is the substance, the obedience we render God when we believingly receive the truths of the gospel. (2) The obedience which faith produces. 2. But notwithstanding all our efforts, aided even by Divine grace, bitter experience reminds us that we often stumble, and sometimes fall. Is there any provision for our manifold imperfections? Yes, there is the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"—to secure forgiveness for the sins we daily commit despite our aspirations after holiness, and to wash away the pollution cleaving to us, notwithstanding our endeavours after a higher Christian life. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

How a man may know his election:—If any man would know whether the sun shineth or not, let him go no further, but look upon the ground and the objects around him, to see the reflection of the sunbeams from thence, and not upon the body of the sun, which will but the more dazzle his sight. The pattern is known by the picture, the cause by the effect; let no man, then, soar

aloft to know whether he be elected or not, but let him gather the knowledge of his election from the effectualness of his calling and sanctification of his life spent in obedience to the revealed will of Heaven. (*J. Spencer.*) **According to the foreknowledge of God.**—*Lessons from the foreknowledge of God:*—1. To fear God and forsake sin, and not to dally with disobedience (Heb. iv. 13). 2. To trust upon God in all estates, seeing there is nothing but He knows and hath considered of it long since. 3. It should inflame us to piety, seeing no good can be done; but He will know it, though it be done never so secretly (Psa. cxxxix. 17; 1 Thess. v. 8, 9). 4. It should quicken us to the meditation and care of our assurance of our eternal salvation. God hath delighted Himself to foresee it from eternity, and shall not we foremeditate of our own glory? 5. Paul useth this as a reason why we should help and encourage Christians, and do all the good we can for them. For their names are in the book of life (Phil. iv. 3, &c.). 6. When we are to choose men for any calling we should learn of God to know before, and those we see to be wicked we should never elect: custom, riches, friends, intreaty, kindred, &c., should never prevail with us. 7. It shows us how we should love one another. No time should wear out our affection; God is not wearied with love, though He set His affections upon us before the beginning of the world. 8. This doctrine of God's eternal knowledge is terrible for wicked men. (*N. Byfield.*) **Through sanctification of the Spirit.**—*Sanctification, and by whom wrought:*—Sanctification begins in regeneration and is carried on in two ways—by vivification and by mortification; that is, by giving life to that which is good, and by sending death to that which is evil in the man. Now this work, though we commonly speak of it as being the work of the Spirit, is quite as much the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctification is a work in us, not a work for us. It is a work in us, and there are two agents: one is the worker who works this sanctification effectually—that is the Spirit; and the other agent, the efficacious means by which the Spirit works this sanctification, is Jesus Christ and His most precious blood. Suppose, to put it as plainly as we can, there is a garment which needs to be washed. Here is a person to wash it, and there is a bath in which it is to be washed—the person is the Holy Spirit, but the bath is the precious blood of Christ. It is strictly correct to speak of the person cleansing as being the sanctifier; it is quite as accurate to speak of that which is in the bath and which makes it clean as being the sanctifier too. To repeat my illustration: here is a garment which is black: a fuller, in order to make it white, uses nitre and soap, both the fuller and the soap are cleansers; so both the Holy Spirit and the atonement of Christ are sanctifiers. While the Spirit of God is said in Scripture to be the author of sanctification, yet there is a visible agent which must not be forgotten. "Sanctify them," said Christ, "through Thy truth. Thy word is truth." The Spirit of God brings to our minds the commands and precepts and doctrines of truth, and applies them with power. We only progress in sound living as we progress in sound understanding. Do not say of such-an-such an error, "Oh, it is a mere matter of opinion." If it be a mere matter of opinion to-day it will be a matter of practice to-morrow. As every grain of truth is a grain of diamond dust, prize it all. The agent, then, is the Spirit of God working through the truth. There is no being sanctified by the law; the Spirit does not use legal precepts to sanctify us; there is no purification by mere dictates of morality, the Spirit of God does not use them. The Spirit of God finds us lepers, and to make us clean He dips the hyssop of faith in the precious blood, and sprinkles it upon us and we are clean. There is a mysterious efficacy in the blood of Christ, not merely to make satisfaction for sin but to work the death of sin. Just as the Spirit only works through the truth, so the blood of Christ only works through faith. Our faith lays hold on the precious atonement of Christ. It sees Jesus suffering on the tree, and it says, "I vow revenge against the sins which nailed Him there"; and thus His precious blood works in us a detestation of all, and the Spirit through the truth, working by faith, applies the precious blood of sprinkling, and we are made clean, and are accepted in the Beloved. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Justification and sanctification:**—Justification was never intended as a substitute for sanctification. (*J. H. Evans.*) **Sanctification necessary:**—Suppose you had a son—you forbid him to enter a place of contagion on pain of losing all you could leave him. He goes, and is seized with the infection. He is guilty, for he has transgressed your command; but he is also diseased. Do you not perceive that your forgiving him does not heal him? He wants not only the father's pardon but the physician's aid. In vain is he freed from the forfeiture of his estate, if he be left under the force of the disorder. (*W. Jay.*) **The Spirit purifying the heart:**—Germs of disease may be constantly

breeding in an infected house; but, so long as the disinfecting fluid is well sprinkled on the floors and pendent sheets, they are killed off as soon as they are formed. So sin, though present in the heart, may be choked off, so as to be almost unperceived, because the Holy Ghost is ever at work acting as a disinfectant; but, so soon as His grace is withdrawn, sin regains its old deadly sway, and breathes forth its pestilential poison. It is of the utmost importance, then, to keep in with the Holy Ghost. (*F. B. Meyer.*) *The Spirit counteracting the evil tendency in man*:—If you take a heavy book and hold it at arm's length, the pull of the law of gravitation will soon draw it downwards; but if some friend will pour down that arm a constant stream of electricity the flow of the electric current will set you free from the effect of the downward pull. It will still be there, though you will have become almost unconscious of it. Thus it will be when we are filled by the Spirit of God; the downward tendency may be in us yet, but it will be more than counteracted by the habit of that new life, in which the power of the living Saviour is ever at work, through the grace of the Holy Ghost. (*Ibid.*) **Unto obedience.**—*Obedience*:—When obedience to God is expressed by the simple absolute name of obedience, it teacheth us that to Him alone belongs unlimited obedience, all obedience by all creatures. It is the shame and misery of man that he hath departed from this obedience; but grace, renewing the hearts of believers, changeth their natures and so their names, and makes them “children of obedience.” This obedience consists in receiving Christ as our Redeemer, Lord, and King. There is an entire rendering up of the whole man to his obedience. “By obedience” sanctification is here intimated. It signifies then both habitual and active obedience, renovation of heart, and conformity to the Divine will. This obedience, though imperfect, is universal in three ways—in the subject, in the object, in the duration, the whole man is subjected to the whole law, and that constantly and perseveringly. The first universality is the cause of the other. Because it is not in the tongue alone or in the hand, but has its roots in the heart, therefore it doth not wither as the grass or flower lying on the surface of the earth, but it flourishes because rooted. And it embraces the whole law, because it arises from a reverence it has for the Lawgiver Himself; reverence, I say, but tempered with love. Hence it accounts no law nor command little or of small value which is from God, because He is great, and highly esteemed by the pious heart; no command hard, though contrary to the flesh, because all things are easy to love. That this threefold perfection of obedience is not a picture drawn by fancy is evident in David (*Psa. cxix.*), where he subjects himself to the whole law; his feet (*ver. 105*), his mouth (*ver. 13*), his heart (*ver. 11*), the whole tenour of his life (*ver. 24*). He subjects himself to the whole law (*ver. 6*), and he professes his constancy therein (*vers. 16 and 33*). (*Abp. Leighton.*) **Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.**—*The sprinkled blood of Christ*:—1. There was blood in Christ; He took the true nature of His brethren that He might serve and satisfy God in the same nature that had offended. 2. This blood was shed. If you ask, who shed it? I answer, Judas by selling it; the priests by advising it; the people by consenting to it; Pilate by decreeing it; the soldiers by effecting it; Christ Himself by permitting it, and after presenting it to God (*Heb. ix. 14*), our sins, that chiefly caused it. 3. It is not enough that the blood of Christ be shed unless it be applied also, which the word “sprinkling” notes. 4. This effusion of blood was solemnly pre-figured or foretold by the sacrifices of the law. For this word “sprinkled” is a metaphor borrowed from the legal sprinkling, which shows us two things. (1) The great account that God and good men make of it in that it was so solemnly and anciently typed out. (2) That the ceremonies of that Law are now abolished, seeing we have the true sprinkling of the blood. 5. That our estate in Christ is better now than our estate in Adam was. That Christ's righteousness imputed to us is better than that righteousness was, inherent in Adam. Now for the world to come; heaven is better than paradise. 6. We can never discern our comfort in the blood of Christ till we be sanctified in spirit, and set upon the reducing of our lives unto the obedience of Christ. Justification and sanctification are inseparable. (*N. Byfield.*) **Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.**—*A loving salutation*:—I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE ADDRESSED. 1. They are sojourners. 2. They have one common sympathy. Scattered in dwelling, but one in heart. II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE REDEEMED. 1. Elected by the Father. 2. Salvation by Christ. 3. Sanctification by the Spirit. III. THE AFFECTIONATE DESIRE. He does not seek their restoration, nor their temporal welfare, nor their immunity from suffering or persecution, but grace and peace. 1. Grace is help. It is easy to bear trials and pains if strength is given. 2. Peace is tranquillity. It overshadows all our difficulties, and sheds a halo of

light upon our course. (*J. J. S. Bird, B.A.*) *Multiplied grace and peace*:—What should we do that grace and peace might be multiplied? 1. Be sure it is true grace, else it will never increase. 2. Thou must increase in meekness and humility (James iv. 8; Psa. xxxvi. 6, 11). 3. If thou wouldst have thy grace and peace increase, thou must be constant in the use of all the ordinances of God. As thou measureth to God in the means, so will God measure to thee in the success: thou must be much in hearing. 4. Thou must not perplex thy heart with the cares of this life, but in all things go to God by prayer, and cast all thy care upon Him (Phil. iv. 6, 7). 5. Thou must be resolved upon it to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously and religiously and soberly in this present world, else thou canst never meet with true peace. This likewise may be comfortable to a poor Christian, and that two ways. 1. First, If he consider that grace is not given all at once but by degrees, and therefore he must not be discouraged, though he have many wants. 2. Secondly, If he consider the bountifulness of God to all that seek grace and peace, it may be had in abundance. (*N. Byfield.*) *Grace and peace, their true order*:—While this beautiful introductory salutation, "Grace unto you, and peace," is a formula common to all the apostles, it is also an exact theological definition, rightly dividing the word of truth. The right thing is put foremost here. The living root lies in the ground below, and the fruit-bearing branches tower above it. It is grace first, and peace following it. When God and man meet it is pardon first, and then a mutual confidence. When He in the Mediator dispenses freely His favour, you in the Mediator draw near without dread. He manifests Himself a forgiving Father, and that very thing infuses into your heart the spirit of a trusting child. "May grace and peace be multiplied." In the Old Testament (Isa. xlvi. 18) there is a promise that His people's peace "shall be like a river"—gaining affluents from either side as it flows, and at the last opening out into "a righteousness like the waves of the sea." (*W. Arnot.*) *The beauty of grace*:—1. The connection, grace and peace. The way to have peace is to have grace; grace is the breeder of peace. 2. The order; first grace, then peace. Grace is the elder sister. I. WHAT IS MEANT BY GRACE? The infusion of a new and holy principle into the heart, whereby it is changed from what it was, and is made after God's own heart. II. THE AUTHOR OR EFFICIENT OF GRACE; namely, the Spirit of God, who is therefore called the Spirit of grace. The Spirit is the fountain from whence crystal streams of grace flow. 1. Universally; "the God of peace sanctify you wholly." The Spirit of God infuseth grace into all the faculties of the soul; though grace be wrought but in part, yet in every part; in the understanding light, in the conscience tenderness, in the will consent, in the affections harmony; therefore grace is compared to leaven, because it swells itself in the whole soul, and makes the conversation to rise as high as heaven. 2. The Spirit of God works grace progressively, He carries it on from one degree to another. III. WHY IS THE WORK OF HOLINESS IN THE HEART CALLED GRACE? 1. Because it has a super-eminency above nature. It is of Divine extraction (James iii. 17). By reason we live the life of men, by grace we live the life of God. 2. It is called grace because it is a work of free grace; every link in the golden chain of our salvation is wrought and enamelled with free grace. IV. THE COGENCY AND NECESSITY OF GRACE. It is most needful, because it fits us for communion with God. Alexander being presented with a rich cabinet of king Darius, he reserved it to put Homer's works in, as being of great value. The heart is a spiritual cabinet into which the jewel of grace should be put. 1. Grace hath a soul-quickening excellency in it: "the just shall live by faith." Men void of grace are dead. 2. Grace hath a soul-enriching excellency: "ye are enriched in all knowledge." As the sun enricheth the world with its golden beams, so doth knowledge enrich the mind. 3. Grace hath a soul-adorning excellency (chap. iii. 4, 5). A soul decked with grace is as the dove covered with silver wings and golden feathers. 4. Grace hath a soul-cleansing excellency. Grace lays the soul a-whitening, it takes out the leopard spots, and turns the cypress into an azure beauty. Grace is of a celestial nature; though it doth not wholly remove sin, it doth subdue it; though it doth not keep sin out, it keeps it under; though sin in a gracious soul doth not die perfectly, yet it dies daily. Grace makes the heart a spiritual temple, which hath this inscription upon it, "Holiness to the Lord." 5. Grace hath a soul-strengthening excellency, it enables a man to do that which exceeds the power of nature. Grace teacheth to mortify our sins, to love our enemies, to prefer the glory of Christ before our own lives. 6. Grace hath a soul-raising excellency; it is a Divine sparkle that ascends; when the heart is Divinely touched with the loadstone of the Spirit, it is drawn up

to God. Grace raiseth a man above others ; he lives in the altitudes, while others creep on the earth and are almost buried in it ; a Christian by the wings of grace flies aloft ; the saints " mount up as eagles." A believer is a citizen of heaven. 7. Grace hath a perfuming excellency ; it makes us a sweet odour to God. Hence grace is compared to those spices which are most fragrant (Cant. iv. 13). 8. Grace hath a soul-enobbling excellency ; grace makes us vessels of honour, it sets us above princes and nobles. The saints are called kings and priests for their dignity, and jewels for their value. 9. Grace hath a soul-securing excellency, it brings safety along with it. Xerxes, the Persian, when he destroyed all the temples in Greece, caused the temple of Diana to be preserved for its beautiful structure ; that soul which hath the beauty of holiness shining in it shall be preserved for the glory of the structure ; God will not suffer His own temple to be destroyed. 10. Grace hath a heart-establishing excellency ; " it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." Before the infusion of grace, the heart is like a ship without a ballast ; it wavers and tosseth, being ready to overturn. A gracious heart cleaves to God, and let whatever changes come, the soul is settled as a ship at anchor. 11. Grace hath a preparatory excellency in it ; it prepares and fits for glory. First you cleanse the vessel, and then pour in wine. God doth first cleanse us by His grace, and then pour in the wine of glory ; the silver link of grace draws the golden link of glory after it : indeed, grace differs little from glory ; grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the flower. In short, glory is nothing else but grace commencing and taking its degrees. 12. Grace hath an abiding excellency ; temporal things are for a season, but grace hath eternity stamped upon it. Other riches take wings and fly from us ; grace takes wings and flies with us to heaven. Let us try whether our grace be true ; there is something looks like grace which is not. Chrysostom saith the devil hath a counterfeit chain to all the graces, and he would deceive us with it. Lapidaries have ways to try their precious stones ; let us try our grace by a Scripture touchstone : the painted Christian shall have a painted paradise. 1. The truth of grace is seen by a displacency and antipathy against sin : " I hate every false way." 2. Grace is known by the growth of it, growth evidenceth life. 3. True grace will make us willing to suffer for Christ. Grace is like gold, it will abide the " fiery trial." Lessons : 1. If we would be enriched with this jewel of grace, let us take pains for it ; we are bid to make a hue and cry after knowledge, and to search for it as a man that searcheth for a vein of gold. Our salvation cost Christ blood, it will cost us sweat. 2. Let us go to God for grace ; He is called " the God of all grace." We could lose grace of ourselves, but we cannot find it of ourselves. 3. If you would have grace, engage the prayers of others in your behalf. He is like to be rich who hath several stocks going ; he is in the way of spiritual thriving who hath several stocks of prayer going for him. (*T. Watson.*) *The beginnings of grace small* :—Trace back any river to its source, and you will find its beginnings small. A little moisture oozing through the sand or dripping out of some unknown rock, a gentle gush from some far-away mountain's foot, are the beginning of many a broad river, in whose waters tall merchantmen may anchor and gallant fleets may ride. For it widens and gets deeper till it mingles with the ocean. So is the beginning of a Christian's or a nation's grace. It is first a tiny stream, then it swells into a river, then a sea. There is life and progression towards an ultimate perfection when God finds the beginning of grace in any man. (*J. J. Wray.*) *Grace continually from God* :—As grace is at first from God, so it is continually from Him, and is maintained by Him, as much as light in the atmosphere is all day long from the sun, as well as at first dawning, or at sunrise. (*J. Edwards.*) *Multiplied grace* :—I have in my garden a tree that I have very carefully cultivated. It is not difficult for me to conceive that that tree may be perfect—that there is not a root nor a branch wanting ; its foliage and fruitage are perfect ; it is yielding fruit ; but next summer I expect a little more than it has borne this year. The fruit may be no better than it was last year ; it was perfect then, and is perfect now, but there is more of it, because, in the meantime, the tree has grown. So with your Christian experience. (*Bp. Bowman.*) *Of peace* :—I. WHAT ARE THE SEVERAL SPECIES OR KINDS OF PEACE ? 1. There is an external peace, and that is—(1) Economical, peace in a family. (2) Political, peace in the State. (3) Ecclesiastical, peace in the Church. A spiritual peace, which is twofold—peace above us, or peace with God, and peace within us, or peace with conscience. This is superlative ; other peace may be lasting, but this is everlasting. II. WHENCE COMES THIS PEACE ? This peace hath the whole Trinity for its author. 1. God the Father is the " God of peace " (Phil. iv. 9). 2. God the Son is the purchaser of peace (Col. i. 20). Christ pur-

chased our peace upon hard terms. 3. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit clears up the work of grace in the heart, from whence ariseth peace. III. WHETHER MAY SUCH AS ARE DESTITUTE OF GRACE HAVE PEACE? No. Peace flows from sanctification, but they being unregenerate, have nothing to do with peace: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." They may have a truce, but no peace. IV. WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A FALSE PEACE? 1. A false peace hath much confidence in it, but this confidence is conceit. 2. False peace separates those things which God hath joined together: God joins holiness and peace, but he who hath a false peace separates these two. He lays claim to peace, but banisheth holiness. 3. False peace is not willing to be tried; a sign they are bad wares which will not endure the light; a sign a man hath stolen goods, when he will not have his house searched. A false peace cannot endure to be tried by the Word. The Word speaks of a humbling and refining work upon the soul before peace; false peace cannot endure to hear of this; the least trouble will shake this peace, it will end in despair. V. HOW SHALL WE KNOW THAT OURS IS A TRUE PEACE? 1. True peace flows from union with Christ. We must first be ingrafted into Christ, before we can receive peace from Him. 2. True peace flows from subjection to Christ; where Christ gives peace, there He sets up His government in the heart. 3. True peace is after trouble. Many say they have peace, but is this peace before a storm, or after it? True peace is after trouble. VI. WHETHER HAVE ALL SANCTIFIED PERSONS THIS PEACE? They have a title to it; they have the ground of it; grace is the seed of peace, and it will in time turn to peace, as the blossoms of a tree to fruit, milk to cream. VII. BUT WHY HAVE NOT ALL BELIEVERS THE FULL ENJOYMENT AND POSSESSION OF PEACE? WHY IS NOT THIS FLOWER OF PEACE FULLY RIPE AND BLOWN? 1. Through the fury of temptation. 2. Through mistake and misapprehension about sin. 3. Through remissness in duty. VIII. WHAT SHALL WE DO TO ATTAIN THIS BLESSED PEACE? 1. Ask it of God. 2. Make war with sin. 3. Go to Christ's blood for peace. 4. Walk closely with God. Walk very holily: God's Spirit is first a refiner before a comforter. (T. Watson.)

Vers. 3-5. **Blessed be the God and Father.**—*Man blessing God*:—I. MAN BLESSETH GOD THREE WAYS. 1. In his heart, when, refreshed with God's favour and inflamed with the joys of His presence, he doth lift up his heart with affection, striving to laud God and acknowledge His mercy. 2. In his tongue, when he taketh to him words, and openeth his lips to confess and praise God either in secret or openly. 3. In his works, and that—(1) When he sets up memorials of God's great works or deliverances. (2) When he receives the sacrament, setting himself apart to celebrate the memory of Christ's death. (3) By the obedience of his life, striving to glorify God in a holy conversation. (4) And lastly, by showing mercy, and thereby causing others to bless God. II. GREAT REASON HATH MAN TO BLESS GOD. 1. For God is blessedness itself, and whither should the water run but into the sea, from whence it is originally taken. 2. Besides, the Lord hath required our praise, as the chief means of glorifying Him. 3. And He hath blessed us, and therefore we have great reason to bless Him. He hath blessed us in the creatures, in His Son, by His angels, by His ministers; blessed us in the blessings of the gospel, blessed us in His house, and in our own houses, in our sabbaths, sacraments, the Word, prayer, &c., blessed us in our souls, bodies, states, names, &c. (N. Byfield.) *An ascription of praise*:—I. THE SPIRIT OF DEVOTIONAL THANKFULNESS. "Blessed be the God and Father of Jesus Christ." A living Christian cannot receive Divine mercies like a dumb animal, but rejoices in the sunshine of thanksgiving. 1. It should be the ruling principle of our lives. How much happiness is lost by forgetting the privileges we enjoy! Thankfulness in our lives would enable us to appreciate what we already possess. 2. It should be the keynote of our prayers. It is discouraging to bestow favour on a hard and unthankful recipient. 3. It should permeate all our religion. There is something in praise that softens the heart and ennobles the mind. II. THE GREAT REASON WHICH DEMANDS THIS SPIRIT. It is the regeneration which is in Christ Jesus. This regeneration is represented as introducing us to three grand privileges, which may well excite our praise. 1. A prospect of eternal life—"To a lively hope." 2. A prospect of unchanging possession—"To an inheritance incorruptible," &c. 3. A possession of perfect protection—"Who are guarded" by the power of God. 4. A prospect of perfect victory—"Unto salvation." (J. J. S. Bird, B.A.) *The apostolic benediction*:—The Epistle at this point where it begins to flow is like one of those infant rivers which burst full-bodied at their birth from a great inland sea in which their waters have been gathered. Unlike the waters of

Ezekiel's vision, that gathered volume as they flowed, this is a river to swim in the moment that it breaks away from the fountain-head. 1. Who is this of whom the prophet speaks?—God. 2. In what aspect does the Supreme present Himself?—As the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. What has He done?—Begotten us again; made us new creatures. 4. From what motive has He acted?—According to His abundant mercy. 5. By what means has He accomplished this great change?—By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 6. To what end in the experience of His people does He thus work?—To a living hope burning in their hearts here, and an inheritance incorruptible beyond the grave. (*W. Arnot.*) *An outburst of praise*:—I. PRAISE TO GOD. 1. Reverent. 2. Loving. 3. Intelligent. 4. Grateful. II. Praise to God, FOR A BRIGHT HOPE OF A GLORIOUS FUTURE. 1. It is praise to God for a hope. (1) Expectant desire. (2) Living hope. In contrast with dead hopes; lying hopes; weak hopes. 2. It is praise to God for a future. (1) In contrast with the present lot. (2) A completion of what inheritance in Palestine might have been. III. Praise to God, FOR HIS WONDERFUL METHODS OF ENSURING THE FUTURE AND INSPIRING THAT HOPE. 1. The future is ensured. (1) God has reserved it in safe keeping. (2) God will, in due time, let it be revealed. (3) God has ensured it as an inheritance. 2. How is the hope of the future inspired and preserved? (1) It is a hope that is born with man's new birth. (2) It is a hope that is continued by God in connection with man's character. "Guarded by the power of God through faith." (*U. R. Thomas.*) *A sevenfold hymn of praise*:—1. "Abundant mercy." Everything must start from that. Our first cry must be, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." God's mercy is abundant wherever you see it. You see mercy in nature and in providence, but in Christ it seems to overflow its banks. 2. The new birth. If we are to enjoy heaven we must be born again, have new tastes. 3. A living hope. This irradiates all the future. Earthly hopes are dying hopes. The most that the worldly man can say is, "while I breathe I hope." But the Christian's hope is not crushed by death; it is a living hope in that He gives me life. See yonder swimmer tossed about by the waves; he is sinking, but at last they see him; a boat puts off; the cry is raised from the pier-head; the rescuers are on their way; he lifts himself once more, he sees the boat sweeping towards him; he has a living hope; he struggles a little longer, until the rescuers are able to pull him into the boat. So it is with our hope; living hope inspires us with courage. 4. Then he comes to the blessing, which is like the central shaft of the candlestick—the blessing upon which all the rest depends—the risen Christ. "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." We worship no dead hero, but a living, loving Lord. 5. "An incorruptible inheritance." I once received a letter asking me to preach a sermon about heaven. I cannot preach about heaven. St. Peter could not. He could only tell us what it was not. 6. The guaranteed preservation. "Kept by the power of God." 7. "Salvation to be revealed." (*E. A. Stuart, M.A.*) *Benedictus Deus*:—The sum of this text, and the name of it too, is set down in the very first word of it. A *Benedictus* it is from us to God, for something coming from God to or for us. Something? Nay, many. And many they are; we reduce them to three: Our regeneration which is past, our hope which is present, and our inheritance which is to come. 1. Regenerating, or begetting, is of itself a benefit; we get life by it if nothing else. 2. But to beget to an inheritance is more than simply to beget. 3. And yet more than that, to beget to such an inheritance as this, of which so many things are here spoken. For the order we will put the words in no other, for we can put them in no better than they stand. 1. God first, and the true God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Then His mercy, the cause moving. 3. Then Christ's resurrection, the means working. 4. Then our regeneration, the act producing. Producing hope of the inheritance, then after the inheritance we hope for. Of which two points there are: How it is qualified, uncorrupt, undefiled, not fading. Then, how seated, even in heaven there it is, there kept it is. Now then for these. For His mercy first: for our regenerating by His mercy; for the hope of this inheritance, but more for the inheritance itself, specially such a one so conditioned as here is set down; for keeping it for us in heaven; for keeping us for it on earth. For these all, but above all for the means of all, the rising of Christ, the gate of this hope, the pledge of this inheritance; for these owe we this *Benedictus* to God. To God the Father and to Christ our Lord, by whom and by whose rising, lose this life when we will, we have hope of a better; betide our inheritance on earth what shall, we have another kept for us in heaven. Thus every one naturally ariseth out of other. Blessed be God. Yea, blessed and thanked and

praised; but here blessed suits best, that the most proper return for a blessing that we inherit is the blessing (chap. iii. 9). The hope is a blessed hope (Titus ii. 13). But the inheritance is the state of blessedness itself. Therefore Benedictus is said well. But thereby hangs a scruple; for what are we that we should take upon us to bless God? Yes, He us, and we Him too, as if they were reciprocal, one the echo, the reflection of the other. Equal they are not. It were fond to imagine the Father gives the child no other blessing but the child can give him as good again. What then? He that wisheth heartily would do more than wish if his power were according. What say we, then, when we say Benedictus? It is a word compound; take it in sunder, and *dicere* is, to say somewhat, to speak; and that we can; and *bene* is (speaking), to speak well; and that we ought. To speak, is confession; to speak well, is praise; and praise becometh Him, and us to give it Him. And what good can we wish Him that He hath not? Say we it, say we it not, He is blessed alike. True to Him we cannot wish; not to His person; but to His name we can, and to His Word we can; we can wish it more devoutly heard. God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the style of the New Testament, ye read it not in the Old. The sun was yet under the horizon, but now up, and of a good height. (1) Blessed be God; say that, and no more, and never a Jew, Turk, or Pagan but will say as much. We would not bestow our Benedictus upon any but the true God, so settle our Benedictus upon the right God. (2) For this cause, but not for this alone, when we bless Him I daresay we would bless Him with His best title. So hath it ever been. You shall observe in titles ever upon the coming of a greater, the less is laid down. For if this be to be God, to be bounteous, beneficial. In nothing was God ever so beneficial as in sending His only begotten Son into the world. This shall be His title for ever. For ever to have a chief place in our Benedictus. And yet there is another on Christ's behalf, our Lord; even to bring Him in too. For, seeing all that which follows comes not but by the rising of Christ, we cannot leave Him out. All the good that comes to us, as it comes to us from God, so it comes to us by Christ. This is most plain; first, that did generate Christ; before that did regenerate us. If He not generate, we not regenerate; then no children, then no inheritance. For in Him this text, and all other texts, are yea and amen. By this time we see why this addition, it is His title of severance, it is the highest title of His honour; it takes in Christ, who would not be left out in our Benedictus. From the party whom we pass to the cause, why. For we say not this Benedictus, as we say many a one here, without any cause; Benedictus for nothing; nay, for God is ever aforehand with us. For generation is the proper act of a Father. But before we come to it let us not stride over that which stands before it. God did this, did all that follows, but upon what motive? According to His mercy. And mercy accords well with a Father; no compassion like His. But the benefits ensuing are too great to run in the common current of mercy. "Great," therefore according to His great mercy. Mercy, the thing; great, the measure; a word of number rather than magnitude. The meaning is, no single mercy would do it; no, though great, there must be many. For many the defects to be removed, many the sins to be forgiven, many the perfections to be attained, therefore, according to His manifold mercy. "According" is well said. For that indeed is the chord, to which this and all our Benedictuses are to be tuned. Yea, many times blessed for His manifold mercies. Mercy, then, first; regeneration second, the act of this mercy. Verily, even for our natural generation, we owe Him a Benedictus. No man by his first birth, be it never so high or noble, is a whit the nearer this inheritance. Now "re" hath in it two powers. "Re" is "again" the second time. For two there be, that old creation, and the new creature in Christ. But "re" is not only again, but "again" upon a loss. Not a second only, but a second upon the failing of the first. So doth re-demption, a buying again, upon a former aliening. Re-conciliation, upon a former falling out. Re-stitution, upon a former attainer. Re-surrection, upon a fall taken formerly. Re-generation, upon a former degenerating, from our first estate. Our first would not serve; it was corrupt, it was defiled, it did degenerate. There was more then need of a new, a second, a re-generation, to make us children of grace again, and so of life. This act of regenerating is determined doubly, *Etc* is twice repeated. To hope first, then to the inheritance; ye may put them together, to the hope of an inheritance. But because an inheritance is no present matter; it is to come, and to be coming to. From begetting, we step not straight to entering upon our inheritance. There needs no great Benedictus for hope. For what is hope? What, but a waking man's dream? And such hopes there be many in the world. But this is none such. To

show it is none such it is severed by two terms: *regeneravit* and *vivam*. They are worth the marking both. (a) *Regeneravit*, first; that it is *spes generata*. So this a substantial hope, called therefore by St. Paul the "helmet of hope" (1 Thess. v.), the "anchor of hope" (Heb. vi.), things of substance, that will hold, that have metal in them. (b) Then mark *vivam*. And *vivam* follows well of *regeneravit*. For they that are begotten are so to live, to have life. *Vivam* also imports there is a dead or a dying hope, but this is not such but a living. Nay, *viva* is more than *vivens*, lively, then living. Where *viva* is said of ought the meaning is they sprig, they grow, they have life in themselves. And, indeed, *regeneravit* is a good verb to join with hope. There is in hope a kind of regenerating power; it begets men anew. And *viva* is a good epithet for it. When one droops give him hope, his spirits will come to him afresh, it will make him alive again. And for such a hope blessed be God. And whence hath it this life? The next word shows it, *vivam, per resurrectionem*. The vigour it hath from Christ rising, and by His rising opening to us the gate of life at large. Life by the resurrection, the true life indeed. Not to live here still, but to rise again and live as Christ did. We for the most part put it wrong, for we put it in them that must die, and then must our hope die with them, and so prove a dying hope. But put it in one that dies not, that shall never die, and then it will be *spes viva* indeed. No reed, no cobweb-hope then; but helmet-, anchor-hope—hope that will never confound you. And who is that, or where is He, that we might hope in Him? That is Jesus Christ, our hope; so calls Him St. Paul (1 Tim. i. 1). Yet not Christ every way considered; not as yesterday, in the grave, nor as the day before, giving up the ghost upon the Cross, dead, and buried, yields but dead hope. But in Jesus Christ rising again. We pass now to the inheritance. But as we pass will ye observe the situation first? It is well worth your observing that the resurrection is placed in the midst, between our hope and our inheritance. To hope before it, before the resurrection, hope; but after to the inheritance itself, to the full possession and fruition of it. An "inheritance" accords well with "according to His mercy." We have it not of ourselves or by our merits, but of Him and by His mercies. Else were it a purchase and no inheritance. It comes to us freely, as the inheritance to children. Well with mercy, and well with *regeneravit*. For the inheritance is of children. Nor shall we need to doubt any prejudice to God, from whom it comes, by our coming to this inheritance. Here the inheritance comes not but by the death of the party in possession, but there no prejudice to the ancestor; he dies not for the heir to succeed. Nor no prejudice to the heir neither; to us by Him, not to Him by us. It is not as here, one carries it from all, and all the rest go without; or if they come in his part is the less. So say we again now, one thing to be born to an inheritance, another to such an inheritance as this here. For in inheritances there is great odds, one much better than another even here with us. St. Peter writes to the dispersed Jews, and by in *cælo*, he gives them an item, this inheritance is no new Canaan here on earth, nor Christ any earthly Messias to settle them in a new land of promise. "In heaven," then. There it is first, and there it is kept; the being there one, the keeping another. For that there it is kept is happy for us. Earth would not keep it, here it would be in hazard. It would go the same way Paradise went. Since it would be lost in earth it is kept in heaven. And a Benedictus for that too, as for the regenerating us to it here on earth, so for the keeping, the preserving of it there in heaven. Kept, and for us kept, else all were nothing, that makes up all that it is not only preserved, but reserved for us there. But reserved yet under the veil. But time shall come when the veil shall be taken off, and of that which is now within it there shall be a revealing. Only it stayeth till the work of regeneration be accomplished. For these come we now to our Benedictus. For if God, according to His manifold mercy, have done all this for us, we also, according to our duty, are to do somewhat again. First, then, *dictus*, somewhat would be said by way of recognition; this hath God done for us, and more also. But to say Benedictus anyway is not to content us, but to say it solemnly. How is that? Benedictus in our mouth and the holy Eucharist in our hands. And yet this is not all; we are not to stay here, but to aspire farther, even to strive to be like to God, and be like God we shall not unless our *dicere* be *facere* as His is, unless somewhat be done without. In very deed there is no blessing, but with the hand stretched out. (*Bp. Andrewes.*)

According to His abundant mercy.—*God's abundant mercy*:—A little mercy, such as is in man, or some reasonable store, as in angels, would not serve the turn. 1. Was it a small matter that moved God to choose thee to salvation, rather than thousands of others, or was it a small mercy to give us His only Son, to deliver

us by suffering all the wrath due to us? 2. Is it a small measure of mercy to call us to the hope of salvation from our wretched estate when we went on in sin, and minded no good, nay, all evil? 3. They that have had their part in this abundant mercy must be stirred up to abundant thanksgiving (Psa. cxvi. 12-14). We must testify our love in zealous obedience all the days of our life, showing forth the virtues of Him that hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. 4. It teaches us also to show mercy to one another: in giving, forgiving, and the like. 5. It shows also the miserableness of our estate, that without abundant mercy we can never be saved. (*John Rogers.*) *A string of pearls*:—I might almost entitle these three verses a New Testament psalm. They are stanzas of a majestic song. You have here a delightful hymn; it scarce needs to be turned into verse; it is in itself essential poetry. To lead the mind to praise God is one of the surest ways of uplifting it from depression. The wild beasts of anxiety and discontent which surround our bivouac in the wilderness will be driven away by the fire of our gratitude and the song of our praise. In these three verses we have a string of pearls, a necklace of diamonds, a cabinet of jewels. I. I see in the text, as the source of all the rest, ABUNDANT MERCY. No other attribute could have helped us had "mercy" refused. As we are by nature, justice condemns us, holiness frowns upon us, power crushes us, truth confirms the threatening of the law, and wrath fulfils it. It is from the mercy of God that all our hopes begin. Mercy is needed for the miserable, and yet more for the sinful. Misery and sin are fully united in the human race, and mercy here performs her noblest deeds. God has vouchsafed His mercy to us, and we must thankfully acknowledge that in our case His mercy has been "abundant" mercy. Where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded. Contemplate the abundant mercy of our blessed God. A river deep and broad is before you. Track it to its fountain-head; see it welling up in the covenant of grace, in the eternal purposes of infinite wisdom. The secret source is no small spring, no mere bubbling fount, it is a very Geyser, leaping aloft in fulness of power; the springs of the sea are not comparable therewith. Not even an angel could fathom the springs of eternal love or measure the depths of infinite grace. Follow now the stream; mark it in all its course. See how it widens and deepens, how at the Cross it expands into a measureless river! Mark how the filthy come and wash; see how each polluted one comes up milk-white from the washing! 1. It is God's great mercy that is spoken of herein. You must measure His Godhead before you shall compute His mercy. 2. But note again, it is the mercy of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." When I see Jesus descending from heaven to earth, paying all the debts of His people, I can well understand that the mercy of God in Christ must be abundant mercy. 3. Note carefully another word, it is the mercy of "the Father." The Father of Him who is the perfect and the ever blessed is also your Father, and all His mercy belongs to you. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name." II. The next great blessing in the text is that of INCORRUPTIBLE LIFE. Mark that, O believer. One of the first displays of Divine mercy which we experience is being begotten again. Our first birth gave us the image of the first Adam—"earthly"; our second birth, and that alone, gives us the image of the second Adam, which is "heavenly." 1. The new life of a Christian is Divine in its origin—God hath begotten us. The new life cometh not from man, it is wrought by the operation of the Holy Ghost. As certainly as God spake, and it was done, in the creation of the world, so He speaks in the heart of man, and it is done, and the new creature is born. 2. The new life in us, as it has a Divine origin, has also a Divine nature. Ye are made partakers of the Divine nature. The Holy Spirit Himself enters the believer and abides in him, and makes him a living man. What a great mystery is this, but at the same time what a blessing! Observe, to be begotten again is a very marvellous thing. Suppose a man born into this world with a predisposition to some sad hereditary disease. There he is, filled with disease, and medicine cannot eject the unwelcome tenant from his body. Suppose that man's body could be altogether new born, and he could receive a new body pure from all taint, it would be a great mercy. But it does not approach to regeneration, because our supposition only deals with the body, while the new birth renews the soul, and even implants a higher nature. Regeneration overcomes not a mere material disease, not an infirmity in the flesh, but the natural depravity of the heart, the deadly disorder of the soul. III. A third blessing, strictly connected with this new life, is a LIVELY HOPE. "He hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." Could a man live without hope? Men

manage to survive the worst condition of distress when they are encouraged by a hope, but is not suicide the natural result of the death of hope? Yes, we must have a hope, and the Christian is not left without one. 1. He has "a lively hope," that is to say, first, he has a hope within him, real, true, and operative. A Christian's hope purifies him, excites him to diligence, makes him seek after that which he expects to obtain. 2. It is a "lively hope" in another sense, namely, that it cheers and enlivens. 3. It is also called a "living hope," because it is imperishable. Other hopes fade like withering flowers. The only imperishable hope is that which climbs above the stars, and fixes itself upon the throne of God and the person of Jesus Christ. 4. The hope which God has given to His truly quickened people is a lively hope, however, mainly because it deals with life. Charles Borromeo, the famous bishop of Milan, ordered a painter who was about to draw a skeleton with a scythe over a sepulchre to substitute for it the golden key of Paradise. Truly this is a most fitting emblem for a believer's tomb, for what is death but the key of heaven to the Christian? We notice frequently over cemetery gates, as an emblematic device, a torch turned over ready to be quenched. Ah, it is not so, the torch of our life burns the better, and blazes the brighter for the change of death. IV. We notice another delightful possession which ought effectually to chasten away from all of us the glooms of this life, and that is a RISEN SAVIOUR. Jesus Christ died, not in appearance, but in reality; in proof whereof His heart was pierced by the soldier's spear. He was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, truly a corpse. He really and literally rose from the dead,—the selfsame Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and afterwards ascended into heaven. Now, note ye well the comfort which arises out of this fact, since it proves that we possess a living advocate, mediator, and high priest, who has passed into the heavens. Moreover, since all believers, being partakers of the incorruptible life of God, are one with Jesus Christ, that which happens to Him virtually happens to them. They died in His death, they live in His life, they reign in His glory. V. The fifth is AN INCORRUPTIBLE INHERITANCE. A heavenly nature requires a heavenly inheritance, heaven-born children must have a heavenly portion. 1. First, as to its substance—it is "incorruptible. 2. Next, for purity—it is "undefiled." 3. And then it is added for its beauty,—“it fadeth not away.” 4. And then for possession, it is secure—“reserved in heaven for you. VI. The sixth blessing is INVIOLEABLE SECURITY. The inheritance is kept for you, and you are kept for the inheritance. The word is a military one, it signifies a city garrisoned and defended. Each believer is kept by that same power which “bears the earth's huge pillars up,” and sustains the arches of heaven. VII. Out of the seven treasures of the Christian the last comprehends all, is better than all—it is a blessed God. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is joy to have heaven, it is joy to possess a new life to fit me for heaven, but the greatest of all is to have my God, my own Saviour's God, my Father, my own Saviour's Father, to be all my own. God Himself has said, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The anthem of the redeemed*:—Gratitude is happiness, and happiness speaks in poetry, and delights in song. Music is the language of a jubilant heart. I. WE HAVE HERE THE “ABUNDANT MERCY” OF GOD IN PRODUCING A LIVING HOPE IN THE BREST OF REBELS AGAINST HIS AUTHORITY. This expression implies three things: 1. That humanity once had a living hope. The brest of man, in the short but bright period of innocence, was indeed inspired with a living hope. 2. That mankind have somehow or other lost this living hope. We know how they lost it. It was sin that quenched this glorious lamp. 3. That the reproduction of this living hope is a wonderful display of Divine mercy. Justice overwhelms the sinner with terror and midnight despair. II. WE HAVE HERE THE “ABUNDANT MERCY” OF GOD, IN THE TRANSCENDENT VALUE OF THE OBJECT ON WHICH THIS LIVING HOPE IS FASTENED. “An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, &c. Hope always implies an object. The value of the hope depends upon the nature of the object. III. WE HAVE HERE THE “ABUNDANT MERCY” OF GOD, IN THE WONDERFUL INSTRUMENTALITY BY WHICH THIS LIVING HOPE IS REPRODUCED. It is “begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.” How does the resurrection of Christ appear necessary for the reproduction in man of this living hope? 1. Christ taught the existence both of the desirable and the obtainable in connection with the future state. In the nature of the case hope implies both of these things. This something Christ presented in His teaching. He revealed to men heaven in all its glories, and He revealed too the manner in

which that heaven could be obtained. Hence His teaching was in every way adapted to generate this living hope in the minds of men. 2. His resurrection from the dead was an incontrovertible proof of the truth of what He taught. IV. WE HAVE HERE THE "ABUNDANT MERCY" OF GOD, IN THE ALMIGHTY AGENCY HE EMPLOYS, TO SECURE THE ULTIMATE REALISATION OF THIS LIVING HOPE. 1. The implied necessity of God's preserving agency "Who are kept." No power but that of God can keep us. 2. The expressed method of God's preserving agency. "Through faith." He always works by means. 3. The glorious designs of God's preserving agency. "Unto eternal salvation." And in this constant agency what "abundant mercy"! "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever." (*Homilist.*) *God's mercy manifold*:—As John Bunyan says, all the flowers in God's garden are double; there is no single mercy; nay, they are not only double flowers, but they are manifold flowers. There are many flowers upon one stalk, and many flowers in one flower. You shall think you have but one mercy, but you shall find it to be a whole flock of mercies. Manifold mercies! Like the drops of a lustre, which reflect a rainbow of colours when the sun is glittering upon them, and each one, when turned in different ways from its prismatic form, shows all the varieties of colour, so the mercy of God is one and yet many, the same, yet ever changing, a combination of all the beauties of love blended harmoniously together. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Begotten us again unto a lively hope.**—*The Christian's living hope and incorruptible inheritance*.—If I had to say in a word what the Christian's hope is, I should say it is the hope of an unfading inheritance, the hope of being made meet for it, the hope of what is condensed into that all-comprehensive word "salvation!" And can you make mention of any other hope that does not pale when placed beside this? I. IT IS A LIVING HOPE. 1. The living hope of a living man. A man spiritually dead cannot possess this hope. It is not a phantasy. It is not an effeminate wish, or a masculine wish for that matter; it is not a mere sentiment or a fond desire. It is a living hope! It is an indivisible, inalienable part of his new life, and it cannot exist in any other heart than that of the spiritually-transformed man—the man who is "begotten again." 2. It is a living hope because it centres in a living Christ. Begotten to it, how? "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The life of Christ, so full of goodness, and love, and purity, and self-sacrifice, and His death, so awful, the culminating sacrifice of all, were not enough. He must come back into life, or no sinner can be forgiven. Blessed be God! He did come back! 3. The Christian's hope is a living one as contrasted with and opposed to hopes that perish. God hath pledged its realisation under the seal of His own oath. II. GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS HOPE. He hath begotten us again to it. It is all of His abundant mercy. Therefore let us bless Him for it. And let us show our gratitude to Him by letting the light of our hope shine on others. III. THE INHERITANCE TO WHICH THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE POINTS. (*E. D. Solomon.*) *Shadows of the future*:—To the Christian the future life is not merely a subject of anticipation, but of confident and well-grounded assurance. Our Saviour seemed specially anxious to impress this fact on the minds of His disciples. He said to them, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Well, now we know that Christ lives. The existence of the Church of Christ to-day is an unmistakable evidence of the existence and continued activity of Christ. And if Christ lives, then we shall live also. What ought to be the influence of these anticipations on our life as Christian men and women here? I. THESE ANTICIPATIONS OUGHT TO HAVE A PLACE IN OUR THOUGHTS, IN OUR CONVERSATIONS, IN OUR PRAYERS, IN OUR AFFECTIONS, AND IN THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR LIVES. It is the fashion of some preachers to decry this "other world religion," as they call it. They say, "We have nothing whatever to do with the other world; the present life demands all our care," and they would severely repress all interest in the future life. The human heart rebels against all such unnatural restriction. You may just as well say to the mariner, "Because there are rocks and quicksands in the course which you have to take you must never lift up your eyes to the stars, but keep them steadily fixed on the waters you have to cross." "Why," he would say, "I guide my way across the waters of this world by the light of other worlds." And so the Christian mariner can say, "I guide my course through this world by the light and the hope and the influence of the other world." II. OUR THOUGHTS OF THE FUTURE LIFE SHOULD BE CHARACTERISED BY MODERATION, REVERENCE, AND SPIRITUALITY. Let us be content with the beautiful simplicity and lofty spirituality of the New Testament representations as a life of glorious spiritual progress, of freedom from sin, holy love, honourable service, delightful fellowship, and a growing likeness to Christ: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." We shall

be with Him, and we shall do Him service. (*F. Binns.*) *Great expectations*:—I. CHRISTIAN HOPE IN THE EXCELLENCY OF ITS NATURE. Life's pathway strewn with withered hopes. Gold, pleasure, fame, &c., disappoint. II. CHRISTIAN HOPE IN THE DIVINITY OF ITS SOURCE. III. CHRISTIAN HOPE IN THE MEDIUM OF ITS PRODUCTION. Jesus, by His resurrection, the proof, pledge, and pattern of our future heavenly happiness. IV. CHRISTIAN HOPE IN THE GLORY OF ITS OBJECT. 1. Vast "inheritance." 2. Righteous—gotten rightly and enjoyed rightly. 3. Everlasting. V. CHRISTIAN HOPE IN THE CERTAINTY OF ITS REALISATION. (*B. D. Johns.*) *The lively hope*:—I. THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. 1. It is lively in the sense of living. It is not delusive. It is no self-excited sentiment—the fruit of ignorance and presumption. It has a real, a well-defined, and well-ascertained existence in the heart. 2. It is a lively hope in the sense of activity. It produces courage, patience, holiness. II. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. "An inheritance," &c. III. THE METHOD OF ATTAINING THIS HOPE. 1. Its author is God. It is a Divine creation in the heart. 2. This gift of God is prompted by His abundant mercy. 3. Yet the mercy which restores hope to man is not indiscriminate—it is the mercy of righteousness. 4. The medium through which this blessing reaches us—"the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This was pre-eminently the Divine attestation of the truth of the Saviour's Messianic mission. IV. THE SECURITY OF THE POSSESSORS OF THIS HOPE. (*Thos. Brookes.*) *The Christian salvation described and acknowledged*:—I. THE BLESSINGS ACKNOWLEDGED. 1. Divine sonship. We become the children of God—both in reference to state and character, to condition and disposition—through the belief of the truth; and this belief of the truth is produced and maintained by the influence of the Holy Spirit. 2. The inheritance provided for them. 3. The living hope of the inheritance, through the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead. This hope rests entirely on God's free sovereign kindness, manifested in harmony with His righteousness; but it is only in the belief of the truth that this sovereign kindness can be apprehended as a ground of hope. II. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THESE BLESSINGS. 1. God is the author of these blessings. 2. It is as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that God bestows these blessings. In the riches of His sovereign mercy He determined to save an innumerable multitude of sinful men, and in the depth of His wisdom He formed a plan for realising the determination of His mercy, not merely in consistency with, but in glorious illustration of, His holiness and justice. 3. These blessings originate in the "abundant mercy" of God. (1) Think on the character of Him who bestows these blessings—the absolute, independent Jehovah, perfectly, infinitely, unchangeably, happy in Himself. (2) Think on the nature of the blessings,—the very highest that can be conferred on creatures, and in their measure limited by nothing but the capacity of the recipient. (3) Think on the character of those on whom they are bestowed—sinners, guilty, depraved, condemned; deserving everlasting destruction. (4) Think of the number of those on whom these blessings are bestowed (*Rev. xxi. 24; vii. 9*). (5) Think of the means through which the blessings are communicated—the Incarnation, the sacrifice of God's own son (*1 John iv. 10; John iii. 16*). 4. These blessings are of vast magnitude and incalculable value. They include deliverance from guilt, depravity, degradation, death, everlasting misery; the enjoyment of the favour of God, tranquillity of conscience, ever-growing conformity to the Divine image, and happiness throughout eternity. 5. The proper method of acknowledging these benefits is "to bless" their munificent giver. This is one of the purposes for which we are begotten again (*Isa. xliii. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 9*). Our whole life should be a hymn of praise to the God of our salvation (*Psa. ciii. 1-4; lxxxvi. 12, 13; Rom. xii. 1; Heb. xiii. 15, 16; Rev. v. 13*). (*J. Brown, D.D.*) *Begotten unto a living hope*:—We are not surprised that Peter attached special importance to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The most significant fact about the crucifixion was that it culminated in the resurrection. If Christ had not risen from the dead, there would have been no adequate message for the world. Now, though the story of the resurrection was to all the apostles specially inspiring, it was that which brought hope to Peter above all others. After his threefold denial of Christ, he had gone out, weeping bitterly. Hence the special emphasis with which our Lord mentioned Peter in His message to His disciples: "Tell My disciples, and Peter, that I am risen from the dead," &c. Thus the resurrection of Jesus Christ was everything to Peter. It was that which brought with it hope to the man who, of all the apostles—excepting Judas—had lost most hope. I. PETER'S HIGH CONCEPTION HERE OF GOD'S MERCY. Peter does not undertake to measure or to describe it. It is a mercy that has filled him with wonder-

ment and with boundless gratitude. Peter speaks these words out of the exuberance of his own joy. That word "us" has a "me" at the heart of it. The powerful preacher is the man who preaches out of his own experience; and thus the greatest sinner forgiven must always be the greatest witness, if he is only true to his privilege. No other disciple had experienced the intense grief which Peter had felt. Hence the special significance of these words upon his lips. This word "again" further emphasises the testimony. All hope had practically died out of Peter. He thought everything had ended in darkness; hence the thanks he gives to Him who had begotten him and his brethren unto a lively hope. II. PETER'S HIGH CONCEPTION OF THE HOPE UNTO WHICH HE AND OTHERS HAD BEEN BEGOTTEN. It was a hope full of life. Peter had no patience with anything that did not abound with life. He himself was all alive, whether he confessed or denied his Lord. His was an intense nature. And when hope was rekindled in him, it was a living hope. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, had that living hope. Then he spoke in the face of the mightiest opposition, spoke only as a man with a flaming heart and a fiery tongue could have spoken. He attributed all this hope to God's mercy. "It was the gift of another," said Peter, practically; "I never could work myself up into this enthusiasm. All my energy was gone, and my enthusiasm had died out of me; but He who gave His Son has given me again this lively hope." III. PETER'S HIGH CONCEPTION OF THE INHERITANCE IN STORE FOR US—"AN INHERITANCE INCORRUPTIBLE AND UNDEFILED," &c. This assurance, if you possess it, ought to make a difference to all your life. Here is a man who believes that this life of fifty, sixty, or seventy years, as the case may be, embraces everything: that there is nothing beyond it for him. What noble heroism can you expect of that man? But here is another man who feels that, after all, this life is but the preparatory period, the time of schooling for an inheritance in which life shall show its full meaning, and every capacity of our being shall be ennobled and find full exercise. I will tell you what such a man ought to be. I do not say what those who profess to believe this often are, but what each of them ought to be. (*D. Davies.*) *A right to hope*:—My father said once, "Harriet, I have been reviewing my evidences. I have been putting the question to myself, just as I would press it on a sinner, or a person newly converted; and I have come to the conclusion that I have a right to hope." That kind of mechanical or conventional test used to prevail in churches as now; and here was this old saint, that had been for fifty or sixty years working almost beyond human strength in the midst of the world, as sweet as honey in the honeycomb in his disposition, putting himself on the rack of self-examination, and coming, with great hesitation and modesty, at last, to the conclusion that he had a right to hope! Hope! When a man has any conception of Jesus Christ, how can he have anything else? Hope! When the heart of Christ is pouring forth salvation, and is made manifest, as the shining of the sun, and has enough and to spare, how can one do otherwise than hope? And yet there are a great many persons who cannot do it. There are a great many who do not realise the blessing which is vouchsafed to them, sometimes from their bodily condition, and sometimes from their mental training; sometimes from one reason, and sometimes from another. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The Christian's hope*:—Dr. Arnold's whole countenance would be lit up at his favourite verse in the *Te Deum*: "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." (*Stanley's Life of Arnold.*) *Christian hope well founded*:—God would never show us a thing He did not mean to give us. This is the way one boy teases another. (*Geo. MacDonald.*) *The death-test*:—A few hours before Bishop Jones's death (Methodist Episcopal Church), his son-in-law, anxious for some dying testimony, bent over him and asked, "Bishop, say something to us, some parting words." The brief, emphatic reply was, "I am not disappointed." *Christianity provides a future*:—A converted Japanese artist said recently to a missionary, "I suppose the reason why English artists put so much perspective into their drawings is because Christianity has given them a future; and the reason why Oriental artists fail to do so, is because Buddha and Confucius do not raise their eyes above the present." **By the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**—*Easter hopes*:—I. To say that we cannot get on without hope is a truism. Hope is not the salt, it is the sinew of man's moral life. His capacity for excellence is exactly proportioned to his power of throwing himself onward into a future, which is as yet beyond his reach, and which may even be always beyond it. This truth holds good whether we look at man as an individual or as a member of society. The great object of a wise educator is to set before the boy whom he

is teaching some future to which he may aspire, and which may fire his best enthusiasms; some future which may supply him with a strong motive for making the most of his present opportunities; some future upon which, during the drudgery and toil of his earlier tasks, his eye may rest, as upon the prize which will reward him, the object of his hope. And does not the same rule hold in later life? The boy becomes a man, the father of a family, and he transfers to his children some of the hope which he cherished for himself. He thinks less of what they are than of what it is probable that they will be a few years hence. So strong and penetrating is his sympathy, that in them he lives his own boyhood over again, only with the larger experience and wider horizon of his manhood. Nor is this less true of a professional work in life: hope is ever the motive principle of the exertions which command success. Minds of a lower type look forward to the reputation which will be won by success; minds of a higher order look forward to the happiness of doing work for God by rendering some real service to their generation or to posterity. And it is this hope which sustains them under all discouragements. Nor is hope less essential to associations of men than to man in his individual capacity. An army is never thoroughly demoralised until the hope of victory is gone. A nation is not ruined until it has reached a point at which it remarks that it can make out for itself no prospect of expansion in coming years. And as hope is thus necessary to the temporary well-being of societies of men, and of individual men, so is it essential to the highest well-being of man as man. The hope upon which states, institutions, artists, painters, military men, politicians rest, is directed to objects within the sphere of sense and time. But man, as man, must look beyond sense and time. The man who has no clear belief in a future life may undoubtedly have, within some very restricted limits, a strong sense of duty. He may even persuade himself that this sense of duty is all the better and purer from not being bribed by the prospect of a future reward, or stimulated, as he would say, unhealthily, by the dread of future punishment. But, for all that, his moral life is fatally impoverished. It is not merely that he has fewer and feebler motives to right action; it is that he has a false estimate of his real place in the universe. He has forfeited, in the legitimate sense of the term, his true title to self-respect. He has divested himself of the bearing, the instincts, the sense of noble birth and high destiny which properly belong to him.

II. Man then needs a hope, RESTING ON SOMETHING BEYOND THIS SCENE OF SENSE AND TIME. And God has given him one, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our Lord indeed taught, in the plainest language, the reality of a future life (John xiv. 2; Matt. xxv. 46; vi. 20; Luke xx. 38). He contributed to the establishment of this truth in the deepest convictions of men, not merely many lessons taught in words, but a fact, palpable to the senses. His resurrection converted hopes, surmises, speculations, trains of inference, into strong certainties. Not that the fact of Christ's resurrection could force itself upon reluctant minds, or rather upon reluctant wills. In the earliest ages, as now, there were expedients for evading its force. The evangelical narrative, the convictions of the earliest Church, the moral strength of the Church, advancing through blood and suffering to the heights of a world-wide empire, resist these expedients, as inconsistent with fact, inconsistent with reason. There are at least three forms of interest which might be accorded to such a fact as the resurrection. The first, the interest of curiosity in a wonder, altogether at variance with the observed course of nature. This interest may exist in a high degree; observing and registering the fact, yet never for one moment getting beyond it. The second, the interest of active reason, which is satisfied that such a fact must have consequences and is anxious to trace them. This interest may lead a man to see that the resurrection does prove the truth of Christianity, even though he may know nothing of the power of Christ's blood and of Christ's life as a matter of experience. A third kind of interest is practical and moral. It is an effort to answer the question, What does the resurrection of Christ say to me, mean for me? If it is true, if Christianity is true, what ought to be the effect on my thoughts, my feelings, my life? Now St. Peter answers that all should be invigorated by a living hope. But then this absorbing moral interest does not come of ordinary powers of observation and reason, like the two earlier forms of interest. We are, says St. Peter, "begotten" unto it. Of this birth, the Father of souls is the Author, and His Eternal Spirit the instrument, and union with Christ the essence or effect. It does much else for us; but it does this among other things, and not least among them: it endows us with a living hope.

III. St. Peter calls THIS "HOPE" A LIVELY, OR LIVING, ONE. What does he mean by this? There are within many a soul

traces of powers, ideas, feelings, which once lived, but which have died away. We investigate them from time to time, like the buried ruins of Pompeii or Herculaneum. But a Christian's hope endures. Earthly disappointments do but force us to make more of it. The lapse of time does but bring us nearer to its object. Surely we can ask ourselves few questions so important as "Have I this hope?" Not to have this hope is to be living at random; it is to be drifting on towards eternity without a chart in hand, or a harbour in view. And if we humbly trust that we have this hope, what are the tests of our possessing it? 1. A first test is that earthly things sit easily upon us. We are not uninterested in them: far from it. We know how much depends on our way of dealing with them. But, also, we are not enslaved by them. To have caught a real glimpse of the eternal is to have lost heart and relish for the things of time. 2. A second test of our having this hope is a willingness to make sacrifices for it. "What difference do my hopes of another world make in my daily life? What am I doing, what do I leave undone, that I should not leave undone or do, if I believed that all really ended at death? What changes would be made in my habits, occupations, daily modes of thought and feeling, if—to put a horrible supposition—I could awake to-morrow morning and find that Christ's conquest of the eternal world for me was a fable?" 3. A third test is progressive efforts to prepare for the future life (1 John iii. 3). (*Canon Liddon.*)

The risen Lord the Christian's hope:—I. THE GROUND OF THIS HOPE. II. THE POWER OF THIS HOPE. III. THE DESTINY OF THIS HOPE. (*J. E. H. Meier.*)

The right view of Christ's resurrection:—I. THE DIFFERENT EFFECTS PRODUCED UPON THE MINDS OF MANY, WHO HAVE ONLY AN OUTWARD BELIEF OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE GRAVE. Of all the wonderful events which marked the Saviour's abode upon earth, there does not appear one for which so much was done to make it clearly proved by its evidence as His resurrection. It was proved by the angels, by the confession of the Roman soldiers who guarded the sepulchre. It was proved by the single testimony of some of the apostles. It was proved by the testimony of the eye, the ear, and the hand (1 John i. 1). The consequence has been, that all who profess to believe Christianity believe the fact of Christ's resurrection. But with many it goes no further than to convince their reason. It brings no personal conviction of the deep interest which the soul now has, and the soul and body hereafter shall have, in this great truth. Then, again, many believe the resurrection of Christ, not only as an established fact, but as a certain pledge of the general resurrection in the last day. But here they also stop. The belief of their own resurrection has no effect upon their will. They cannot look forward with the certain hope of holy Job (xix. 25–27). How different a view does St. Paul give us of what the belief of the resurrection of Christ, as the pledge of our own, ought to produce upon the soul (Rom. vi. 4). St. Paul shows that there must be a conformity of the soul to Christ while it is in the fleshly body, if we would be partakers of the glorified body "at the resurrection of the just" (Col. iii. 1). I will name one other class of persons, who, in a certain way, believe in the resurrection of Christ. Many believe it because it stands as an article in the creed. But here they also stop. The fact of the resurrection of our Lord produces no soul-stirring feelings of wonder, gratitude, and love towards this triumphant Conqueror of Satan, sin, and death; neither does it beget in them any holy desires to be conformed to His image in the converting power of the Holy Ghost. Beware of this deadening view of any of the great doctrines of the gospel of our salvation. II. THE ONLY RIGHT VIEW OF THIS GREAT AND MOST IMPORTANT FACT OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FROM THE GRAVE. The text shows us what effect true faith in this great fact had produced upon the first Christians: by it they were "begotten again unto a lively hope." It was in them a practical truth—it touched their hearts. Through the power of it, in the presence and influence of the Holy Ghost, they were anew created, new born unto God. It was a hope which was embodied in their whole character, gave strength and substance to all they did, and was to them that "hope which" was "laid up for them in heaven" (Col. i. 5). Hence we see that a real and justifying belief of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ acts immediately upon the will and the affections. (*II. Marriott.*)

A lively hope generated by Christ's resurrection:—By speaking of our being "begotten again to a lively hope," the apostle would simply indicate something of a universal change having passed, through Christ's resurrection, over this earth and its inhabitants. And such a change did actually pass. There was substituted a living hope for a dead throughout every department of this creation, amongst its irrational as well as its rational tenants. It was not that heretofore there had been no hope

whatsoever ; for man is so constructed that he cannot live without hope ; he must follow a meteor where there is no star on the firmament. There was hope amongst men, even when truth had almost departed, and ignorance of God pressed heavily on all countries and classes. There was hope that Deity might be propitiated ; that in some better world the disorders of the present might be rectified. Reason did something, in the midst of ponderous night, to keep men from quite parting with the expectation of immortality ; and, combining the teachings of conscience with the lingerings of tradition, it caused a spectre of hope to flit to and fro amid the cloud and the darkness. Yes, a spectre of hope!—a dead thing, though, at times, it appeared amongst the living, and wore something of the hues which had belonged to the fresh and beautiful visitant that had gladdened the earth, whilst yet untainted by sin. A living hope ! a hope that is not merely performing some of the actions, but possessing all the energies, of life—that should not merely beckon onward, but waited to be examined and handled—this never sprang from the reveries of philosophers, but eluded the searchings of those who laboured most gravely at the opening a path to happiness hereafter. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

To an inheritance incorruptible.—*The heavenly inheritance* :—The greatness of God's mercy is to be seen—**I. IN THE GREAT NUMBER OF THE SAVED.** **II. IN THE GREATNESS OF THE CHANGE** which takes place in this great multitude. The very life of God is transmitted to the soul of the believer in regeneration. **III. IN THE GREATNESS OF THE INHERITANCE.** 1. "Incorruptible." Heaven has in it the power of endless rejuvenation. 2. "Undeified." Its worth is intrinsic ; it does not sometimes go up and sometimes come down ; its value is the same the centuries through ; it was worth the blood of Christ two thousand years ago, and it is worth the blood to-day again. 3. "That fadeth not away"—amaranthine, evergreen, always fruitful, always beautiful. No autumn winds strip the trees of their foliage, no winter blasts rob the fields of their verdure. A pamphlet was being lately circulated in this country to persuade Englishmen to emigrate to Texas, and one reason adduced was that the soil being so rich and the climate so equably soft, two harvests could be gathered in one year. A very cogent reason, doubtless, if true. But my text speaks of a better country than Texas—a country which will yield not two crops, but twelve crops in the twelve months (*Rev. xxii. 2*). **IV. IN THE GREATNESS OF THE EXPENSE** to which He went to be able to confer this great inheritance. **V. IN THE GREATNESS OF THE POWER** that is pledged to bring the great multitude to the possession of the inheritance. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

The inheritance of moral manhood :—**I. THE INHERITANCE OF THE GOOD IS DISTINGUISHED BY EVERY SPECIES OF EXCELLENCE.** 1. "Incorruptible." The principle of decay is not in it. The pyramid crumbles at the touch of time, and the long-during mountains shake under the footstep of ages ; but eternal cycles roll over the plains of heaven without impairing the beauty or paling the brilliance of the "incorruptible" inheritance. 2. "Undeified." Inherently and essentially pure. 3. "Fadeth not away." **II. THE INHERITANCE OF THE GOOD IS IN SAFE KEEPING—"RESERVED IN HEAVEN."** This "inheritance" could not be on earth. Its vitality would perish. Its purity would be sullied. Its brightness would be dimmed. It is necessary that it should be "reserved" or kept back for a season. You may have seen a parent reach down from an eminence some valuable article and show it to the child ; the child has lifted his tiny hands to grasp the prize, but the parent has interposed, saying, "No, my son, this is for you when you are a man." Precisely so with us : wait until you are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light." In what does this meetness consist ? Undoubtedly in moral manhood. The soul is to "become of age" by growth in moral purity and moral power. 1. A recognition of God in everything. In battle, and storm, and plague, the clear eye of moral man looks up, knowing that Omnipotence guides that storm, and guards the child's "inheritance." 2. Power over every combination of circumstances. The man is perfectly calm in positions which alarm the child. The "heir" knows that even if circumstances should press so heavily upon him that his "earthly house of this tabernacle should be dissolved," he has "a building of God—a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (*2 Cor. v. 5*). 3. An intelligent decisiveness of character. Is your conviction strong and intelligent ? Is your purpose high and determined ? Never was fixedness of moral view more essential to progress than in the present day. Every breeze seems laden with refined error and mystic heresy. Know well your doctrines ; fix your eye earnestly on the beacon-lights of immutable truth ! **III. THE INHERITANCE IS THE PORTION OF A SPECIAL CLASS.** "Kept." 1. By the supreme love of their omnipotent Saviour (*John x. 28, 29*). The Lord Jesus not only redeemed His people, He is at

this hour interceding for them; and His intercession keeps the saints. Peter was kept (Luke xxii. 31) by the Saviour's mediation. 2. By the ministry of angels. This reflection is illustrative not only of the goodness of the Lord, but also of the dignity of the saved. No guardian-band keeps watch over the sun in his glorious palace, no eyes glitter upon the stars as upon an appointed charge; but spirits, pure and strong, hover around the humble child of God. They constitute the military guard of the minor heir, and when he attains his majority they cease to be his protectors only that they may become his companions. 3. By the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. IV. THE INHERITANCE OF THE GOOD CAN BE ENTERED UPON ONLY IN GOD'S OWN TIME. "Ready to be revealed in the last time." The Bible does not hold out heaven as an inducement to cease from earth-work, nor as a prize to be seized unconditionally. Is it your highest wish to enter heaven yourself, and leave your fellow-creatures to do the best they can for themselves? Is there no moral work to be done before you enter on your promised rest? Is there no prodigal to reclaim, no aching heart to comfort? We must add labour to hope, and patience to faith. It is in this fashion that we prove the practical value of Christianity. Lessons: 1. Seek to be assured of your heirship. 2. Remember that you are under age. 3. Rise superior to your troubles. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Begotten to the heavenly inheritance:—These two terms, "begotten again" and the "incurruptible inheritance," are made for each other, like the two halves of a sea-shell. They shut accurately upon each other, but upon nothing else. Our inheritance by the first birth is neither undefiled nor unfading. To escape the curse of the first birthright we must have another birth. The new creature in Christ is joint heir with Him—heir of all things. The inheritance is—(1) Incurruptible. It is not liable to complete dissolution, like a dead body that returns to dust. It is—(2) Undefiled. It is not liable to have all its beauty dimmed by some unclean spot falling on its form. Often an earthly inheritance, while its substance abides the same, loses all its attraction for the owner. The eldest son, perhaps, for whom it was fondly cherished, has thrown away his good name. Henceforth the father cannot look with complacency on his green fields and waving woods. A glance at the landscape makes him shudder. His inheritance is defiled. Not so the heritage to which the children of God have, in the regeneration, been served heirs. The inheritance is—(3) Unfading; its bloom will never wither. The Lamb is the light thereof, and there shall be no night there. The silence of Scripture, especially in contrast with the coarseness of earth-born systems, is sometimes as emphatic a testimony to its Divine origin as its positive revelations. Lights on the shore flash far over the ocean, and conduct the voyager to the land; but they do not reveal to him while at sea the particular features of the landscape; it is thus that the Bible exhibits lights sufficient to guide inquirers safe to heaven, but not sufficient to reveal its interior beauties. Those who reach the better land will discover its glories after they arrive. (*W. Arnot*)

The security of the inheritance:—Some are born to a great inheritance, and yet miss it. In our days thrones are frequently shaken, and their occupants cast off. Princes who were born to a royal heritage wander as exiles in a foreign land. But there are no revolutions in the kingdom of heaven. Every one gets his own there. The laws of nature give a token of the certainty that prevails in the region where the Lord reigns. Although a globule of air were imprisoned for a thousand years within a shell at the bottom of the ocean, the moment its prison-house decayed it would rise sheer through the water, though it were miles in depth, and never halt till it emerged with a bound into its native element, the sky. Behold a specimen of His power, who has promised "none of them shall be lost." (*Ibid.*)

Who are kept by the power of God.—*Divine power and human faith*:—It is not Divine power alone, which would make man a mere passive creature; not human faith alone, which were to risk salvation on human strength. Were heaven "reserved" for man, and man left to himself to fight his way there, even with all the grand revelation of the Gospel, who would ever enter there? The Divine power is the efficient cause, faith the instrumental cause, in salvation. All worlds that revolve in space are upheld by Omnipotence: but the God of All-might upholds them by means of the grand law of gravitation. A flower is the work of Divine wisdom and beneficence, the forthputting of the Divine power of life; but it is by means of root and soil, and moisture and warmth, and light, that the flower shoots and blossoms into beauty. Such, however, are illustrations of means in the lower sphere of nature. We are sustained in life by the will and power of God. But He has given us instinct and reason, so that in the use of food, air, exercise, sleep, our bodily powers are maintained. There are two

questions: heaven for us, us for heaven. How does God guard His own? A large question, which admits of two main answers, the second of which will bring us to speak of the grace of faith. God guards His people by outward defence and by inward help. By outward defence, that is, by providence. No man ever can know in this life how much he owes to the restraining and overruling providence of God. He may be able to mark some things, but who can fully trace the all-guiding hand of God? Two ways there are in war to relieve a beleaguered city. One is by force from without to compel the enemy to raise the siege and abandon the attack; the other, to throw in succours—troops, provisions. We may know that God by His power can do either. For wise reasons He does not drive off the assaulting hosts. He throws into the city of Mansoul, succours. This is grace. Supplies of grace make the Christian strong. And he rejoices in not only the incoming of new life, but in the mortifying of inbred sin. Observe God's method. He saves no man against his will or without his will. Salvation is of God. How then? God deals with man as a reasonable being. Faith is really the movement of the whole soul. There is in all this no force, no compulsion, no violation of the laws of mind. All is natural, while supernatural. (*D. S. Brunton.*)

Of perseverance.—I. BY WHAT MEANS DO CHRISTIANS COME TO PERSEVERE? 1. By the help of ordinances; prayer, word, sacraments. 2. By the sacred influence and concurrence of the Spirit. 3. By Christ's daily intercession. II. BY WHAT ARGUMENTS MAY WE PROVE THE SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE? 1. "From the truth of God." God hath both asserted and promised it (1 John ii. 9, 27; John x. 28; Jer. xxxii. 40; Heb. ii. 19; Mal. ii. 16). 2. From the power of God. 3. From God's electing love. 4. From believers' union with Christ. 5. From the nature of a purchase. Would Christ, think ye, have shed His blood that we might believe in Him for a while, and then fall away? 6. From a believer's "victory over the world." III. WHAT MOTIVES AND INCENTIVES ARE THERE TO MAKE CHRISTIANS PERSEVERE? 1. It is the crown and glory of a Christian to persevere. The excellency of a building is not in having the first stone laid, but when it is finished. The excellency of a Christian is, when he hath finished the work of faith. 2. You are within a few days' march of heaven. 3. How sad not to persevere in holiness! You expose yourselves to the reproaches of men and the rebukes of God. 4. The promises of mercy are annexed only to perseverance (Rev. iii. 5; Luke xxii. 28). IV. WHAT EXPEDIENTS OR MEANS MAY BE USED FOR A CHRISTIAN'S PERSEVERANCE? 1. Take heed of those things which will make you fall away. (1) Presumption. (2) Hypocrisy. (3) An evil heart of unbelief. 2. If you would persevere in sanctity—(1) Look that you enter into religion upon a right ground; be well grounded in the distinct knowledge of God; you must know the love of the Father, the merit of the Son, and the efficacy of the Holy Ghost. (2) Get a real work of grace in your heart. Nothing will hold out but grace; paint will fall off. (3) Be very sincere. (4) Be humble. (5) Cherish the grace of faith. (6) Seek God's power to help. (7) Set before your eyes the noble examples of those who have persevered in religion.

(*T. Watson.*) *By, through, for.*—We have in this verse and the preceding one a grand picture of the double operation of the Divine power on the two sides of the veil. God works amidst the unseen realities, preserving the inheritance for us; and God works here, keeping us for the inheritance. It were vain to prepare the house unless He prepared its occupants. It were vain to nourish in human hearts desires and fitnesses for that supernal bliss, unless He were preparing the fruition of our desires. These two processes go on side by side, and at last the results of the two shall fit together like the two halves of a tally, and neither shall the saints be wanting for the inheritance, nor the inheritance for the saints. I. What are we kept BY? The Divine strength is as a fortress, protecting our weakness, and we lie safe in the hollow of that great sphere like some weaponless creature in its shell. We are imbedded, surrounded, over-arched above, and under-propped, and guarded on either side, and therefore we lie secure. The weakest of us can get behind that great shelter of the power of God. The fortress defends us, if we abide in it, from sin that would wreck our souls, but it does not shelter us, though we abide in it, from sorrows and all the ills and wearinesses and toils that flesh has to encounter, not because it is flesh, but because God is good. We are kept from the evil that is in the evil. The very exposure to the one often becomes the defence from the other. Then let us remember, too, that this power in which we are kept is a power which keeps us by itself being in us. So Paul speaks about being strengthened within with "a Divine might." We are kept in God when God is kept in us. II. What are we kept THROUGH? Faith is the condition, but it is no more than the condition. "The

name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it," and is safe. And so one of the Hebrew words which expresses "trust" or "faith," literally rendered, means to flee to a refuge. That figure sets forth picturesquely the nature and effects of faith. We are in the shelter of the enclosing walls, when by faith we enter into them. When we "trust in the Lord" we "have a strong city," and "salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Faith is conscious need. Faith is humble dependence. Faith is brave confidence. And if we go into our daily conflicts with the world and the flesh and the devil, wanting either of these three things, we want an indispensable link between our weakness and God's strength, and therefore want a necessary condition for the influx of His power which brings the victory. III. What are we kept for? It is salvation in its rudimentary state here, it is salvation in its loftiest development yonder. All the crystals of one mineral have precisely the same angles and the same facets and planes, whether they be so small that it takes a strong microscope to see them, or large as basalt pillars of a Giant's Causeway. The little salvation here and the giant salvation of the heavens are one and the same thing, and the difference is wholly one of degree. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The security of the faithful*:—Two persons may be in a lifeboat, and both being in the boat are therefore equally safe; yet one may be full of fear, because he understands neither the qualities of the boat nor the principles upon which it is constructed: he sees the waves rolling, and he fears he shall be drowned; while the other man, well acquainted with the principles of construction, and knowing also those laws by which it is governed, has peace because he is confident. So it is with regard to the character of the Lord Jesus. If you have been taught by the Spirit of God to know what Christ is—to know the preciousness of His blood—to know its saving power—to know its superiority even to Satan, then you may sit under His shadow with great delight, and perfect confidence and comfort. But, at the same time, if you are really trusting in Christ, although your faith be feeble, you are not less secure. The timid man is as safe in the boat as the courageous man, because they depend, not upon their frames and feelings, but their safety consists in the fact of their being in the boat. So all that are really trusting in the Lord Jesus are equally secure, although there may be great differences in the power of faith. (*J. W. Reeve, M.A.*) *Kept*:—I. WE ARE KEPT SAFE. 1. God hides His people (*Psa. xxvii. 5; Col. iii. 3*). 2. God guards His people. II. WE ARE KEPT UP. A corpse might be kept safe, but it would only be preserved corruption. Let us remember that He who keeps our spiritual life secure from outward attack, also keeps it from internal decay. With perpetual preservation there is continual renovation. III. WE ARE KEPT BACK. He who knows anything of the tendencies of his heart praises God as much for restraining as sustaining grace. IV. WE ARE KEPT ON. If ye are found still running with patience give glory to Him unto whom alone it belongs. V. WE ARE KEPT THROUGH. There is as much need for us to be taught how to bear with equanimity, as how to serve with unceasing zeal. We are kept through faith's trial as well as in faith's service. VI. WE ARE KEPT CLEAN. We who are kept safe in our title are kept meet in our persons for the coming glory. VII. WE ARE KEPT IN ORDER. The grace that saves places us in Christ's school-house for instruction. VIII. WE ARE KEPT ALWAYS. The keeping of the text extends unto "the last time." We are kept "unto the end." What is there before us? Well, there is sickness for sure. But the promise is, "He," that is the Lord, "will make his bed in his sickness." Beyond sickness stands grim death, but that has lost all power to sting. Beyond death there yawns an open grave. But here the Lord's keeping shines forth most magnificently. Yes, kept for the resurrection morning. Kept by invincible might for re-union with the glorified spirit. Nothing short of eternal keeping becomes the ever-living God, or meets the requirements of our immortal souls. IX. WE ARE KEPT FOR A PUBLIC EXHIBITION (*Eph. ii. 7*). (*A. G. Brown.*) *The Divine keeping*:—When God promises that we shall be "kept by the power of God," He does not mean that we shall be kept from temptation, struggle, and trial. You know that in times of war a commander would throw his strong garrisons into those towns which would be attacked. We have not many soldiers in Islington, but at seaport towns like Dover and Portsmouth you will find large numbers, because they are towns more likely to be attacked. And so when I read in God's Word that the Christian is "garrisoned by the power of God," I learn that the Christian must expect to be attacked, must expect temptation, must expect to be in the midst of the battlefield. But it also implies this, that the commander considers that a most important point, and He throws a garrison into it. And not only because He expects

it to be attacked, but because He means to keep it. (*E. A. Stuart, M.A.*) *How God keeps His saints* :—Those who wish to see the Scottish regalia, kept in Edinburgh, have to climb the hill to the castle, then pass guard after guard, and through room after room, until they come to a narrow, steep, winding stair. Ascending it they enter a room, and there before their eyes are the Scottish crown jewels. They are openly displayed, in full view; but while they are where every eye can see them, they are where no hand can touch them. Strong iron guards cover them, so close that, while they do not interfere with sight, no hand could go through. That is how God keeps His precious ones, His crown jewels, so that every eye can see them, but without His permission no hand can touch them. God fences them round so that no one may approach them to do them evil. *God's protecting agencies* :—The traveller on the Highland railway can hardly fail to be struck, as he journeys north, with the unusual sight of a picturesque and well-kept flower garden blooming in the angle of ground formed at the junction of two railway lines. The helpless flowers thrive there in spite of the terrible forces that come so near them on every side. If you were to put an untaught savage inside the garden hedge, and let him hear the screaming engines, and see the files of carriages, or the trucks laden with coal, timber, and iron, converging toward this fairy oasis, he would be ready to say, "These beautiful things will be torn to shreds in a moment." But behind the garden fences there are lines of strong, faithful steel, keeping each engine and carriage and truck in its appointed place; and though the air vibrates with destructive forces, the pansy, primrose, and geranium live in a world of tremors, not a silken filament is snapped, and not a petal falls untimely to the earth. In the very angle of these forces the frailest life is unharmed. To all these possibilities of destruction the steel puts its bound. So with the fine spiritual husbandries that foster faith in the souls around us. That faith sometimes seems a thing of hair-spun filaments, a bundle of frailties, a fairy fabric of soft-hued gossamers trembling at every breath. The avalanche of nineteenth century atheism is poised over it. The air hurtles with fiery hostilities. The mechanisms of diabolic temptation encroach on every side upon our work. Public-house, gaming club, ill-ordered home, threaten disasters, of which we do not like to think. The air quivers with the anger of demons. Yet the work is God's, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In the very angle of these demoniac forces the work shall thrive, for the hidden lines of His protecting power are round about it. (*T. G. Selby.*) **Salvation ready to be revealed.**—*Salvation ready* :—I. A DELIGHTFUL THEME. II. AN INTERESTING FACT. "Ready to be revealed." What is implied here? 1. Concealment partial or entire for the present. 2. Preparation. 3. Completeness. III. AN IMPORTANT CRISIS. "The last time." (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Salvation ready for revelation* :—The complete future salvation is both negative and positive. There is a grand indefiniteness which means comprehensiveness in the word. In its narrowest literal sense it means being made whole; in its wider signification it means being delivered from threatening perils, discomforts, and the like. On the positive side the word implies the bestowal of all true good. So what is ready to be revealed is, on the one hand, absolute emancipation from everything, be it sorrow, be it sin, be it ignorance, which is of the nature of darkness, and is to any part of the human sensibility a pain or evil. And on the other side, what waits to be revealed in us is the absolute fulness of all good of every sort which fits any part of a man's nature, and makes it feel blessed and at rest. For heart, and mind, and will, and taste, and intellect, and imagination, and the desire for society, and the desire for love, and the desire for progress, and the desire for change, and the desire for enterprise, and the desire for service, and all else that makes up human nature, the full salvation of the heavens has a corresponding gift. And, says Peter, it is all lying just on the other side of the curtain there. A curtain is a very thin thing, very easy to push aside; a finger's touch and it goes. And, as at some great civic pageant the preparations for to-morrow's show are carried on behind some interposing thin veil of canvas or the like, where we can hear the hammers at work, and catch a light now and then that tells of preparing glories, so, on the other side of the thin partition, through which there come furtive gleams and sounds that tell what is going on, the inheritance is being prepared for the great unveiling. It is ready to be revealed, but the universe is not ready for the revelation. That unseen order of things has present existence. All that is "future" about it is its manifestation. Unseen, it lies around this little visible life. A touch, a crumb of bread in your windpipe, a clot of blood as big as a pin's head on your brain, and the future, as we call it foolishly, proves itself the present,

the all-encircling. There is but a thin veil between us and it. It is ready to be revealed when He puts out His hand and draws back the curtain for us one by one, as He will at the last for a universe. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The end of salvation ready to be revealed*:—But is salvation not already revealed? No; the way of salvation is revealed, but the salvation itself is hid out of sight. If the road that leads to the city of God fills us with such wonderment and praise, what ecstasies will possess us once we find our feet on the golden pavements! Imagine not that you will have to spend eternity in mental indolence. No; when you shall have exhausted the revelation of the way, the revelation of the end will still remain; when you shall have gone through this Bible which teaches us how to attain salvation there will be another Bible, the Bible of eternity, to disclose to your wondering gaze the contents of that salvation. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) *The last revelation of salvation*:—The finished work of Christ, the prepared home in heaven and the peace of God within a believer's heart—these are both alike hidden, secret things. But these things are although they are not seen. They are all ready underneath the covering veil, and when that veil is removed every eye shall see them. When the Lord shall come again His coming will be like the morning. As the daylight reveals the green herbs and growing flowers which the veil of night had concealed, the coming of the Lord will expose to view a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The flowers and forests, the hills and streams, were all there in the night though they were not seen. They needed not to be made in the morning. They were ready to be revealed. Suppose a creature with the intelligence of a man, but with the term of life allotted to some of the insects—a day. Suppose that creature's life begins after sunset. At midnight and in the early morning watches he looks around, but sees nothing. He reasons, and loses himself in dark speculation. A voice from the abyss above reaches his ear, and tells him that a beautiful furnished world is ready to be revealed, and will be revealed in the morning. He believes and waits; the promise is fulfilled. The glory of the world when the sun is up surpasses all his expectation. Such a creature is redeemed man. All is ready. The inheritance needs only to be unveiled. The unveiling only remains for the last time. Now is the time for seeking and obtaining it; then it only remains that it should be fully displayed. (*W. Arnot.*) **In the last time.**—*The last time*:—I. GOD'S LAST WORKS ARE HIS BEST WORKS, which should teach us to imitate God, and never fear the forbearance of God; time cannot change Him, He will be never the worse for delay. II. If we mark what days these last days are we may also note THAT GOD DOETH HIS BEST WORKS WHEN MEN DO THEIR WORST. For of these last days it is that the apostle speaks, that they should be wicked and perilous days, and this we should learn of God also, to let our piety and patience then shine most. III. THERE IS A TIME WHEN GOD WILL AT ONCE FULLY DELIVER AND SAVE HIS SERVANTS, and judge for them, and therefore we should not be weary of well-doing. IV. GOD'S SERVANTS MUST NOT THINK TO BE FULLY DELIVERED TILL THESE LAST TIMES, and therefore they must walk circumspectly, and always stand upon their guard. V. IT IS THE WILL OF GOD THAT THE DAY OF JUDGMENT SHOULD NOT BE KNOWN TO ANY MAN OR ANGEL FOR THE MOMENT OF IT, and therefore it is here described by ages, not by days and hours, which may confute curiosity, and teach us to watch at all times. VI. THE WORLD SHALL HAVE AN END, THERE IS A LAST TIME, and therefore woe is to them that so greedily mind transitory things, and that place all their happiness in the things of this life. (*N. Byfield.*)

Vers. 6-9. **Wherein ye greatly rejoice.**—*Joy and trial in the Christian's life*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY. 1. It is present joy. God's service is gladsome even now (chap. i. 8; Phil. iv. 4). Nor is this joy for advanced believers only, but for all true-hearted seekers after God (Psa. cv. 3). 2. It is great joy (Psa. lxxviii. 3). 3. There are many sources of the Christian's great joy, but the particular one here mentioned is the present happiness afforded by a believing expectation of the joys laid up for him in eternity. 4. There are important reasons why we all ought to be joyful Christians. (1) It is our privilege as Christians. When we may be so much happier than we are, what folly not to exercise our right! (2) Our influence for good over others depends greatly upon the apparent result which religion produces in our own case. (3) Very much of our own stability as Christians depends upon our joyfulness (Neh. viii. 10). II. THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIAL. There is nothing whatever unchequered here below—no joy without sorrow, no sunshine without shadow, no harmony unmixed with discord. Life is like an April day. 1. "Ye

are in heaviness"—pressed down, forced to the earth, as if under some cruel load. The Christian's joy is from heaven, his grief from earth. These two are ever at war with one another. 2. "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Persecutions abounded. The devil aimed his fiery darts at them. The world spread its allurements for them. 3. Yet this state of trial has its alleviations. (1) It is only "for a season," whereas the Christian's joy endures for ever (Psa. xxx. 5; 2 Cor. iv. 17). (2) It is only "if need be"—if there is a necessity, if some good can be effected by it. III. THE UNION OF JOY AND TRIAL IN THE CHRISTIAN'S EARTHLY LOT. Does the text teach that times of trial are destroyers of the Christian's joy, even for a season? On the contrary, St. Peter speaks of the "heaviness" only to give us a more exalted idea of the mighty power of the "joy." "Ye greatly rejoice, though ye are in heaviness"; your hearts remain glad in spite of your trials. Clouds come, but the sun breaks through them and goes on shining still. Obstacles arise, but the bright river of the Christian's peace flows past and over them, deep and glad as before. The one great peculiarity of the Christian's joy is its comparative independence of outward circumstances—nay, its triumph over them. Worldly men can rejoice when all is prosperous. If, therefore, the Christian's joy vanished at the approach of sorrow, men might well ask wherein the Christian differed from others? (*J. Henry Burn, B.D.*) *The Christian's joy and the Christian's sufferings*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY. 1. Its greatness. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice." There are only three things really great in the universe—God and the soul and eternity, and as religion has to do with them all its dealings have something superior in them all. 2. Its ground. (1) The Christian's joy is not unfounded. (2) The Christian's joy is founded principally upon spiritual and eternal things. II. THE CHRISTIAN'S GRIEF. 1. The nature of the Christian's sufferings. 2. The number. 3. Their influence. 4. Their expediency. 5. Their duration. (*W. Jay.*) *The Christian's heaviness and rejoicing*:—I. HIS HEAVINESS. 1. If we were not in heaviness during our troubles we should not be like our Covenant Head—Christ Jesus. 2. If we did not suffer heaviness we would begin to grow too proud, and become too great in our own esteem. 3. In heaviness we often learn lessons that we never could attain elsewhere. "Ah!" said Luther, "affliction is the best book in my library," and let me add the best leaf in the book of affliction is that blackest of all the leaves, the leaf called heaviness, when the spirit sinks within us, and we cannot endure as we could wish. 4. This heaviness is of essential use to a Christian if he would do good to others. Who shall speak to those whose hearts are broken but those whose hearts have been broken also? II. HIS REJOICING. Mariners tell us that there are some parts of the sea where there is a strong current upon the surface going one way, but that down in the depths there is a strong current running the other way. Two seas do not meet and interfere with one another, but one stream of water on the surface is running in one direction, and another below in an opposite direction. Now the Christian is like that. On the surface there is a stream of heaviness rolling with dark waves, but down in the depths there is a strong under-current of great rejoicing that is always flowing there. The apostle is writing "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus." 1. The first thing that he says to them is, that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," "wherein we greatly rejoice." Ah! even when the Christian is most "in heaviness through manifold temptations," what a mercy it is that he can know that he is still elect of God! 2. The apostle says that we are "elect through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"—"wherein we greatly rejoice." Is the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ girt about my loins, to be my beauty; and is the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon me to take away all my guilt and all my sin, and shall I not in this greatly rejoice? 3. But the great and cheering comfort of the apostle is, that we are elect unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And here is the grand comfort of the Christian. 4. There is one more doctrine that will always cheer a Christian, this perhaps is the one chiefly intended here in the text. "Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." This will be one of the greatest cordials to a Christian in heaviness, that he is not kept by his own power, but by the power of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sweetest joys learned in trial*:—Very many of the sweetest joys of Christian hearts are songs which have been learned in the bitterness of trial. It is said of the canary bird that he will never learn to sing the song his master will have him sing while it is light in his cage. He learns a snatch of every song he hears, but will not learn a full separate melody of its own. And the

master covers the cage and makes it dark all about the bird, and then he listens and learns the one song that is taught to him until his heart is full of it. Then, ever after, he sings the song in the light. With many of us it is as with the bird. The Master has a song He wants to teach to us, but we learn only a strain of it, a note here and there, while we catch up snatches of the world's songs and sing them with it. Then He comes and makes it dark about us till we learn the sweet melody He would teach us. Many of the loveliest songs of peace and trust sung by God's children in this world they have been taught in the darkened chamber of sorrow.

Triumph of the soul over trial:—There are even many facts in our ordinary human experience that render quite conceivable this triumph of the soul over all surrounding tribulations and distresses. What cares the patient, toiling man of science for the incredulity and jeers of his neighbours, or the vexations of poverty, when first the obscurity and meanness of his lonely chamber are lighted up by the flash of some great discovery? How superior to threats and discouragements of every kind was the mighty heart of Columbus as he calmly forced his way through the veil of waters toward this unseen world! Nay, how often has the bitterness of death itself been overcome to the soldier on the battlefield and the patriot on the scaffold, by the silent anticipation of the freedom and glory which their agonies secured for the country they loved! And need we then wonder if the confessors of Jesus have gone singing to the stake, and their shout of victory has been stifled only by the flames into which they sank? (*J. Lillie, D.D.*)

Joy in heaviness:—They say that springs of sweet fresh water well up amid the brine of salt seas; that the fairest Alpine flowers bloom in the wildest, ruggedest mountain passes; that the noblest psalms were the outcome of the profoundest agony of soul. Be it so. And thus amid manifold trials souls which love God will find reasons for bounding, leaping joy. Have you learnt this lesson yet? Not simply to endure God's will, nor only to choose it, nor only to trust it, but to rejoice in it. Of such joy there are two sources: first, the understanding of the nature and meaning of trial; second, the soul's love and faith in its unseen Lord. There is enough in these two for unsullied and transcendent joy; in fact, we may question whether we ever truly drink of Christ's joy till all other sources of joy are eliminated by earthly sorrow, and we are driven to seek that joyous blessedness which no earthly sun can wither and no winter freeze (Hab. iii. 17, 18, 19). (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Christian joy:—Greek, ἀγαλλιάσθε, Ye dance for joy, ye dance a galliard, or as children do about a bonfire: ye cannot but express your inward joy in your countenance, voice, and gesture. (*J. Trapp.*)

Variableness of Christian moods:—The variableness of Christian moods is often a matter of great and unnecessary suffering; but Christian life does not follow the changes of feeling. Our feelings are but the torch; and our life is the man that carries it. The wind that flares the flame does not make the man waver. The flame may sway hither and thither, but he holds his course straight on. Thus oftentimes it is that our Christian hopes are carried, as one carries a lighted candle through the windy street, that seems never to be so nearly blown out as when we step through the open door, and, in a moment, we are safe within. Our wind-blown feelings rise and fall through all our life, and the draught of death threatens quite to extinguish them; but one moment more, and they shall rise and for ever shine serenely in the unstormed air of heaven. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

The needs be:—When our hearts grow a grain too light, God seeth it but needful to make us heavy through manifold temptations. (*J. Trapp.*)

The duality of Christian life:—As there are two men in every true Christian, a new man and an old one, so heaviness in manifold temptation and rejoicing may readily co-exist. (*J. P. Lange.*)

In heaviness through manifold temptations.—*Why the godly must undergo many troubles*:—1. To drive them to repentance (2 Sam. xii. 18; Gen. xlii. 21). They are as the shepherd's dog, to fetch us out of the corn, to bring us into compass again (Psa. xxxii. 4, 5; cxix. 67, 71). 2. To keep them from sin, being therefore compared to a hedge of thorns (Hos. ii. 6; Job xxxiii. 17; 2 Chron. xx. 37). 3. To humble them. We have a proud nature, and while in health we think our heads half touch the clouds; therefore God pulls us down by troubles. 4. To make them more holy, to scourge off the rust, purge out some of the remnant of the old man, and renew the inner man (Isa. iv. 4; Heb. xii. 10; Isa. xxvii. 9). 5. To wear them from the world, to which even the best are too much addicted, and to make them willing to die and to be gone hence, so setting them on work to look after and make sure of a better inheritance. 6. To prove the devil a liar (Job i. 9). 7. To keep them from hell and condemnation. 8. To bring them to heaven. (*John Rogers.*)

Heaven's discipline of the good:—I. The

disciplinary elements are VERY MANIFOLD. II. The disciplinary elements are VERY PAINFUL. "Ye are in heaviness." Or, as Dr. Davidson renders it, "made sorrowful." "Heaviness" is a relative term. What is heavy to one would be light to another. Paul gloried in tribulation. III. The disciplinary elements are ONLY TEMPORARY. "Now for a season." 1. The trials of life are short compared with the enjoyments of life. They are exceptional. 2. The trials of life are short compared with the blessedness of the future. IV. The disciplinary elements are VERY NECESSARY. "If need be." As storms in nature are necessary to purify the air, so trials are necessary to cleanse the atmosphere around the soul. V. The disciplinary elements are ALWAYS BENEFICENT. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth." Nothing is more important to man than that it should be genuine. (*Homilist.*) *The uses of grief*:—What! would you choose that you alone may fare better than all God's saints? that God should strew carpets for your nice feet only, to walk into your heaven, and make that way smooth for you which all patriarchs, prophets, evangelists, confessors, Christ Himself, have found rugged! Away with this self-love, and come down, you ambitious sons of Zebedee, and, ere you think of sitting near the throne, be content to be called unto the cross. Now is your trial. Let your Saviour see how much of His bitter portion you can pledge. Then shall you see how much of His glory He can afford you. As snow is of itself cold, yet warms and refreshes the earth, so afflictions, though in themselves grievous, yet keep the soul of the Christian warm and make it fruitful. Let the most afflicted know and remember that it is better to be preserved in brine than to rot in honey. After a forest fire has raged furiously, it has been found that many pine cones have had their seeds released by the heat, which ordinarily would have remained unsovn. The future forest sprang from the ashes of the former. Some Christian graces, such as humility, patience, sympathy, have been evolved from the sufferings of the saints. The furnace has been used to fructify. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Needful afflictions*:—Consider that all thy afflictions are needful, and work for thy good. Nothing is intolerable that is necessary. "If need be," whilst we have diseased bodies, physic is as needful as food; whilst we have diseased souls, misery is as needful as outward mercies. The winter is as necessary to bring on harvest as the spring; affliction is as necessary to bring on the harvest of glory as any condition. (*W. Swinnoek.*) *Trials and glory*:—Look upon a painted post or sign whose colour is laid in oil, how the rain beats upon it in stormy weather, that one would think all the colour would be washed off, yet how the water glides away and leaves it rather more beautiful than before. And thus it is with every child of God, being well garnished with graces of the Spirit, let the wind of persecution blow, and the floods of affliction lift up their voice, they shall never deface, but rather add unto their beauty; such is the condition of grace, that it shines the brighter for scouring, and is most glorious when it is most clouded. (*J. Spencer.*) *The use of trials*:—Suppose I made a very wonderful steam engine, and put it into a ship, to make it into a steam packet. It is all beautifully made, and complete, and I want to "try" whether it is all good; whether the machinery is right and works well. Where should I send it, into a smooth sea or a rough sea? I should send it "up the rapids"—up the river—against the stream, to see whether it would go up, I should. So God does with you. He furnishes you with everything you want—then puts you up "the rapids," sends you on the rough water, just to "try" you, to see what you are made of. **The trial of your faith.**—*The trial of faith*:—I. **THE CHRISTIAN'S TEMPTATIONS.** 1. They are manifold in their nature. What a world of change and sorrow we live in! 2. They are difficult to bear; for they cause heaviness or depression of mind (Heb. x. 32). If you are in heaviness bear it manfully, but do not show it openly. Speak of your troubles to your bosom friend, but do not talk of them to men of this world. Above all, tell them to Jesus. 3. They are temporary. The longest trials, and those which leave the deepest wounds, are but for a season. 4. They are necessary. "If need be." Oh, there is "a needs be" for every stroke, and though we do not now understand why this trial or the other falls upon us, yet we shall know hereafter. II. **THE END AND AIM** of these temptations must be carefully observed. "They are for the trial of our faith." 1. The value of faith cannot be overestimated. Gold perishes, but faith lives—lives in death, and far beyond it (1 Cor. xiii. 13). 2. But it must be tried, and sometimes in a very severe furnace. It is proved, tested, or verified by trial, and the faith which cannot stand the ordeal is of little or no value (Job xxiii. 10). There are many ways in which faith is tried. (1) It is tried by Divine commands. God gives His servants some difficult task to perform. True faith will

surmount all difficulties. (2) Faith is often tried by doubts. (3) And faith is tried by fire—the fire of discipline, of persecution, of protracted bodily affliction. 3. The ultimate design of the trial is that it may “be found,” nothing of it being lost, “unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” (*Thornley Smith.*) *The testing of religious faith* :—I. THE PROCESS OF TESTING A MAN'S FAITH INVOLVES MUCH PAIN. This we gather—1. From the use of the word that describes the process—“temptation.” 2. From the fact that those who are being tested are often possessed with “heaviness,” “grief.” 3. From the nature of the elements employed in the process. (1) No material element causes more pain than “fire.” (2) These elements are “manifold.” With those to whom Peter wrote it was Gentile scorn, slander, persecution, martyrdom. II. THE PROCESS OF TESTING A MAN'S FAITH IS OF SUCH SUPREME WORTH AS TO COMPENSATE FOR ALL SUCH PAIN. 1. The testing is only temporary. 2. The worth of the soul is tested. 3. The purpose of the process. (1) To try the genuineness of faith. (2) To remove alloy. (3) To train for highest uses. (4) To lead to highest destiny. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Afflictions a test of faith* :—1. To try whether we have any faith. 2. To try whether our faith be as much as we take it to be or more; this, affliction will discover. 3. To purge and purify that true faith which we have, and increase it. (*John Rogers.*) *The trial of our faith* :—The apostle here expresses his very cordial sympathy with his Christian brethren under the circumstances of trial to which they were exposed. “Ye greatly rejoice in that last time,” or, as the passage might be rendered, “Wherein ye shall greatly rejoice.” “Now for a season ye are in heaviness, but in the last time—the time of Christ's appearing—the time of your entering upon the inheritance that is incorruptible, ye shall greatly rejoice.” But still the prospect of the great rejoicing in the last time gives some measure of rejoicing in the present. It is impossible for us to hope with anything like assurance for something that will make us very joyful without feeling in a measure joyful now. We can in a somewhat cheerful spirit bear the most dismal wintry weather, as we have the assurance of the spring and summer that are to follow. But this joy is mingled with sorrow. “Now for a season ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” And this brings us to the subject of our text—namely, the trial of our faith. Now your faith is your confidence in God. Your faith is your confidence in God's being, and doing all that in His Word He is represented to be and to have done; your confidence in God as infinitely wise, and mighty, and righteous, and merciful; your confidence in Him as having provided a full and free redemption for mankind through the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ; your confidence in Him as certain to fulfil all the great promises that He has given to His people. That is your faith, your confidence in God. And concerning the trial of this the apostle here speaks. But, first, of this faith he says that it is more precious than gold. I think I can appeal to every Christian here, and say, “Now, you would be sorry to lose your property, no doubt?” Quite natural. But still, do not you as Christians feel that we would rather be beggared to-day than lose this precious faith of which the Apostle Peter speaks? Well, this faith, he tells us, is to be tried. That is to say, our faith is subjected to proof—put to the test. If we profess to be Christians, it is very important that the world and the Church and ourselves should have some proof of our Christianity that this profession of ours is a right, honest thing, and neither a piece of hypocrisy nor a piece of self-delusion. And so for our own sakes first of all, but also for the sake of the Church, which we have no right to deceive, and for the sake of the world, which also has a claim to know the genuineness of our religious profession—it is necessary that our faith should be proved. Now, unfortunately, we have in our religious phraseology nearly lost sight of this very common-sense meaning of the word “trial.” When you talk about the trial of a steamship or the trial of a hundred-ton gun, well, we understand that it is putting these things to a proof. But in our religious phraseology, a trial, forsooth, is simply a calamity—some terrible thing. And that is almost the only light in which we regard it, with scarcely any recognition of God's design, and of His design being the proof of character. But that is His design. Now here is an alleviation at once, and a very great alleviation of the trials that you and I may have to pass through. Here is a man who comes forward and professes to be a seaman. Well, it is a very reasonable thing that he should be required to prove his seamanship by having, sometimes at any rate, to navigate his vessel amid the perils of a storm. And here is another who professes to be a soldier. Well, no injustice is done, but very much the contrary, if this man be required to prove his courage and skill by being sent, occasionally at any rate, upon some exceedingly hazardous military duty. And here is one who

professes to be a servant of God, and do not let him be surprised if God, like any other master, shall subject him to proof, and ascertain, by practical experiment, what he is worth and what he can do, and whether he really be what by his profession he ought to be. So our faith is tried. A reasonable and perfectly right thing that tried it ought to be, as I said just now, for our own sake, if for the sake of nobody else. And, as the apostle reminds us here, the trial of our faith is conducted through manifold temptations. Let us take the word "trials," not "temptations," for God does not tempt any man in this evil sense of the word "temptation." We are tried through manifold trials. That is to say, our faith is subjected to more proofs than one; and so it ought to be. I suppose that when they try a ship they make her go through many manœuvres; and when they try a horse there is more than one sort of test to which the creature is put. And when a student goes in for examination, success in which is to be crowned with some distinguished honour, he is subjected to a considerable number of trials in order that the height and breadth and length and depth of the man's mind, if there be any height and length and depth and breadth in it, may be ascertained. And he is subjected to various manifold trials, because the very brilliant capacity in one direction may, unfortunately, be accompanied by miserably incapacity in another direction, and so the man is subjected to manifold trials. And faith, likewise, is subjected to more trials than one. We find that poverty tries our honesty. A sad reverse of circumstances, such as is very frequently witnessed, does certainly try the integrity of a man's principles as a man of business. And then I need not say that unkindness, injustice, is a great trial of our charity; and persecution would be a severe trial of our courage. Insolence is a trial of our meekness. And there are trials of a peculiar character, not very peculiar either, for they are not uncommon. I mean the trials of our faith that are often experienced by men who really find it difficult to retain their confidence in the revelation of God's will in His Word. And you must not at all suppose that because a man never knew what bad health is, and never knew anything of poverty, and never had the slightest reason to be anxious about a single secular concern, that that man's faith is going untried. It may be being tried a great deal more than yours in the midst of sickness and of poverty. There may be a terrible war going on within that man's mind and heart as he is endeavouring, with all earnestness, but often finds himself failing, endeavouring to retain his confidence in the great principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus our faith is tried, and severe is the trial sometimes, as the apostle indicates when he says, "Though it be tried with fire." It has been in the most terribly literal sense tried with fire, for, as you know, for a long time burning to death was the method commonly resorted to in the persecution of those who stood faithful to the truth as it is in Christ. And so the faith of men like John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and Bishop Latimer, and thousands upon thousands more in the noble army of martyrs, was in the most literal and severe sense tried with fire. But, of course, we can understand this expression "tried with fire," in a metaphorical sense, as indicative of any peculiarly severe trial to which faith may be exposed, such as a long and wearisome and painful illness. And now to notice some of the alleviations that we have graciously granted to us in these trials of our faith. Do not let us give way to a hopeless sorrow over the matter, for God has mingled very much comfort with all this distress. In the first place, as the apostle reminds us, it is only for a season, or, as we might render his words, "Now for a little while ye are in heaviness through manifold temptation"—for a little while. It will not be long. It cannot be long. And then, again, there is a necessity for it. "If need be," but not if need not be. Only "if need be," and only in proportion as the need really is. And we really must allow God to be the judge and the only judge of this need. We leave it, of course, to the goldsmith to determine how he is to deal with the gold that he is to make up into an article of use or adornment; and we leave it to the lapidary to decide how to cut and to polish the jewels which he intends to set in this fashion or in that. It would be an impertinent thing for persons not skilled in such work even to venture an opinion, and an impertinent thing to venture opinions about the manner in which God Almighty should deal with and make up the gold and the gems whereof He is preparing a glorious crown for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. No, "if need be," and only if need be. The sculptor, you know, would not on any account chip off a block of marble one atom more than in his judgment is necessary to the realisation of his idea in the statue. And no surgeon or physician of ordinary humanity will give his patient any more pain than is unavoidable in order to the healing of the wound or the curing of the disease. And we, as the children of God, are in very wise hands,

in very tender hands, in very safe hands. And then there is a great object secured by these trials, that this faith thus tried is found to be unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Unto whose praise and honour and glory? Not unto ours—at least, not unto ours in the first place, but unto our Lord's. As Archbishop Leighton says, "God delights to bring out His strongest champions, that they might fight great battles for Him." And although, certainly, it is sad to think of a good man being cast into prison, and sadder still to think of his being committed to the flame, yet I can imagine that God, not although He loves His people, but just because He loves them, rejoices over such a scene as that. I can imagine God rejoicing to see how His grace strengthens a poor, feeble, mortal man, and makes him firm and enduring unto the end. And at the last it will be found that this trial of their faith was ever unto the praise and honour and glory of their Lord, and to their own praise and honour and glory likewise. But, again, there is this alleviation in the trial of faith suggested in the words, "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing"—the love that we bear to our Lord Jesus Christ will greatly help us in the trial of our faith. You know that for a person whom you love you will do and suffer things that you would never think of doing or suffering for a person towards whom you felt no particular regard. How much a man will do, and how much he will suffer for his wife and for his children! And so, in proportion to the love we bear to Jesus Christ will be the lightness of the infliction involved in any trials to which our faith is subjected. Once more, there is this alleviation, that "believing in Christ we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." But some will say, "Have not we already received the salvation of our souls?" Now salvation is a great compound blessing, if I may so speak, and some of it we have received already, and some of it is in reserve. In fact, salvation is a blessing, of which a Christian is receiving something every day. I had so much salvation yesterday; I have got more to-day, and I shall have more to-morrow, if I am living the Christian life, that is to say. Now, in so far as salvation is the forgiveness of sins, salvation is ours now. (*H. S. Brown.*) *Trials*:—Trials are of many kinds. Some are very slight; but often a little thing is more severely felt than one that is greater. There are all the little annoyances which happen every hour; things go contrary to our wishes; we have to give up our wills; we are disappointed of our hopes. There are pains of body and sickness; there is the sickness of our dear friends. Now trial is natural to us: it belongs to us as children of Adam. But to Christians trials come in a somewhat different way. They belong to us as members of Christ. I. The first thing to be thought when we have any trial, is THAT IT COMES FROM GOD. It is not a proof of any special wickedness in the person to whom it is sent, nor of God's being specially angry with that person. Quite the contrary. God feels towards each of you the very same tender fatherly love that you feel to your dear boy; and so He corrects you as you correct that boy. And just as you take the trouble to prune and attend to the fruit-tree which bears well, in the hope that it will bear still better, so God sends trouble to them who are doing good, in the hope that they will do still better. In all troubles, then, look to God—receive them from Him as the best things which your loving Father can send you. II. Think, next, WHAT ARE THEY SENT FOR? They are punishments for sins, that is true; but see the wonderful goodness of God: these punishments His love turns into mercies and blessings. What does He send them for? 1. To remind us of our sins; to make us remember our sins, that through His mercy we may repent of them. 2. To draw our thoughts towards Himself. "In their affliction they will seek Me early." 3. They are called trials—that means things which try. What do they try? They try us, whether we can trust God when matters seem to be going wrong. 4. To make us patient. Patience is that great gift which most especially helps to make us perfect Christians. "Let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." When we quietly give up our way to others—when we are disappointed and do not fret—when we ourselves have sharp pains to bear and we do not repine—then we are learning to become more perfect Christians—then we are becoming holier—we are really growing into what God intends us to be. III. THEY LEAD US ON TO THE CROWN. To conclude. 1. Try to think in this way of all troubles whatsoever, of all the little vexations of life, as well as of the heavier afflictions which come more seldom. 2. Look on continually to the end—the end of all things—heaven and eternity! This will encourage you to bear what now seems so painful. The hope of what is coming will cheer you up. 3. And especially look continually to Jesus Christ, and the example He has set us. Look

to Him continually, "lest you be weary and faint in your minds." (*W. H. Ridley, M.A.*) *Trials*:—These words are spoken to Christians, to persons called by the apostle "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," and "begotten to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." How great a privilege to be chosen to eternal life! Well may the Christian be delighted with such thoughts, "wherein," says St. Peter, "ye rejoice." But before the enjoyment of these things there are many troubles to be encountered; we may be glad, yet may we perchance, when we look at intervening difficulties, "be in heaviness." It is well known that the most devout Christians are sometimes "in heaviness." Do not think it any strange thing for the Christian man to be "in heaviness," even as to his salvation. The Lord often lays the severest trial, that is, this feeling of desertion, on the most perfect, as you would place the boldest soldier in the front of the battle. Hence, then, assurance is not necessary; the spiritual atmosphere is variable. 1. Poverty is a great temptation—a temptation which throws many "into heaviness." 2. But again, the temptations of the rich lie in another direction. 3. The heaviness which sometimes arises from the oppression and power of sin. 4. And some persons are in heaviness—they themselves know not why. None are more to be sorrowed with. There seems to be no known cause—and yet they are in lowliness of spirits, and weary of the world. (*J. M. Chanter, M.A.*) *Trial as fire*:—Trial is here compared to fire; that subtle element which is capable of inflicting such exquisite torture on our seared flesh; which cannot endure the least taint or remnant of impurity, but wraps its arms around objects committed to it with eager intensity to set them free and make them pure; which is careless of agony, if only its passionate yearning may be satisfied; which lays hold of things more material than itself, loosening their texture, snapping their fetters, and bearing them upwards in its heaven-leaping energy. What better emblem could there be for God, and for those trials which He permits or sends, and in the heart of which He is to be found? 1. But this fire is a refiner's fire (Mal. iii. 3). (1) It is He who permits the trial. The evil thing may originate in the malignity of a Judas, but by the time it reaches us it has become the cup which our Father has given us to drink. The waster may purpose his own lawless and destructive work, but he cannot go an inch beyond the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The very devil must ask permission ere he touches a hair of the patriarch's head. The point up to which we may be tested is fixed by consummate wisdom. The weapon may hurt and the fire sting, but they are in the hands which redeemed us. (2) It is He who superintends the trial. No earthly friend may be near, but in every furnace there is One like the Son of Man. (3) It is He who watches the progress of the trial. No mother bending over her suffering child is more solicitous than He is. Suiting the trial to your strength. 2. Trial is only for a season. "Now for a season ye are in heaviness." The great Husbandman is not always threshing. The showers soon pass. Our light affliction is but for a moment. 3. Trial is for a purpose. "If needs be." There is utility in every trial. It is intended to reveal the secrets of our hearts, to humble and prove us, to winnow us as corn is shaken in a sieve, to detach us from the earthly and visible, to create in us an eager desire for the realities which can alone quench our cravings and endure for ever. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The theology of sufferings*:—I. TEMPTATIONS OR TRIALS REVEAL FAITH. 1. On the one hand, they show us the evil that is in us. More evil dwells in the heart than we have ever realised. "I never before could believe," exclaims the afflicted man, "that so many hard thoughts of God were nesting in my brain, and so many rebellious passions lodging in my heart." God sends trouble to bring out and make palpable that which is latent. 2. Not only so, but afflictions further serve to evoke our good, to lead forth into visibility the faith, the hope, and the charity God in His loving-kindness has infused into our souls. Certain things will not disclose what is in them save under pressure. Aromatic herbs will not diffuse their aroma till they are bruised. II. TEMPTATIONS OR TRIALS STRENGTHEN FAITH. 1. Bitters are the best tonic for the spiritual man as for the physical. All who are a little acquainted with gardening operations know how careful the gardener is to lop off all redundant growths which genial weather calls forth, growths which he significantly calls "suckers," because they drain away the sap which would otherwise go to form fruit. On just the same principle the Divine Husbandman treats the "Trees of Righteousness" growing in His vineyard—He mercilessly lops off the worldly "suckers" which steal away the juice, the fatness, of your religion, and thereby drives the whole energy of your spirit back upon your faith. 2. Sorrows further invigorate faith, because they call it into frequent, yea, constant exercise.

And it is an universally admitted truth that all our natural faculties and spiritual graces grow in exercise. To be a robust Christian you must battle with difficulties.

III. TEMPTATIONS OR TRIALS PURIFY FAITH. 1. They release it from the impurities which attach to it. Religion in this world lives among pots, and, as might be expected, it does not quite escape "the corruption that is in the world through lust." And God in His wisdom judges it expedient to cast it into the sea; but, as Leighton quaintly remarks, He does it "not to drown it, but to wash it." But this process of separation is not an easy one, pleasant to flesh and blood; rather it requires the penetrating action of the flame. 2. Adversity, moreover, throws faith more upon its own proper resources, making it draw its aliment and inspiration more directly from God as revealed in His Book. **IV. TEMPTATIONS OR TRIALS BEAUTIFY FAITH.** 1. Trials evolve the latent beauty of faith. Faith is intrinsically a beautiful grace, but to disclose its beauty it must often undergo the severe operations of chisel and hammer. 2. But it is also true that sorrows impart beauty to faith, a kind of weird-like fascination that makes it, in its struggle with obstacles, a "spectacle worthy of the gods." God throws the Christian into "many-coloured" afflictions that he may be thereby adorned and made meet to enter the society of heaven. He makes His Church a coat of many colours to show His love to her and appreciation of her. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) *The trial of faith:—*

I. THE VALUE OF FAITH. 1. Even considered intellectually, as a mere belief of revealed truth, faith is of the highest possible value, as the great instrument by which we obtain religious knowledge and wisdom. 2. But its value—as it is not merely an intellectual exercise, but an act of trust, and thus a work of the heart—is shown by this, that it connects us immediately and personally with the merits of the great Atonement. 3. The value of faith is seen in this, that it not only connects man, as guilty, with the meritorious atonement of the Saviour, but man, as weak and helpless, with the omnipotence of Divine grace. 4. Another proof of the value of faith is found in that wonderful property which the Apostle Paul assigns to it, and which, indeed, we find by actual experience that it possesses—the property of fixing its eye on invisible and eternal realities, and keeping the soul continually under their influence. **II. THE TRIAL OF FAITH.** 1. In its lower sense—merely considered as belief of truth—faith will be tried. This may occur in many circumstances, and especially from infidel sophistry. 2. But our faith will not only be tried by sophistry; it will be tried also by what may be termed practical unbelief. This is especially the case in all temptations to sin. 3. Faith, in that higher sense in which the word is used—as implying a simple trust in the atonement of the Saviour—will be tried by our proneness to self-dependence. 4. Faith is also tried by afflictions and sorrows. In sorrows our faith has to repose entirely on the great doctrine that all that concerns us is in the hands of God, that here there is no chance, no oversight, no delegation of the Divine power to the creature. **III. THE FINAL HONOURS OF FAITH.** It has, indeed, its honours now, far greater than any of which unbelief can boast. Is it not that which brings man to God for the blessings of reconciliation and adoption? Is it not that which brings with it the mighty influence of that Holy Spirit which works in man the death unto sin and the new life unto righteousness? Is it not that which is the source of our spiritual victories, which gives us strength to do and strength to suffer? Is it not that which enables us to resist the temptations with which the present world continually surrounds us? And is it not that which extracts the sting of death? Such are the honours of faith here on earth. Where shall we look for those of formality and unbelief? But the apostle refers to its future honours, to the praise and glory in which our faith shall issue at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then shall the faith which has received the mysteries of God be honoured. (*R. Watson.*) *The trial of faith:—***I. FAITH IS MUCH MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD.** 1. Gold is of an earthly, but faith of a heavenly origin. 2. Faith has its object, as well as its origin, in God; whereas gold, unless placed in the hands of him who has the new nature, tends to the place whence it came, and is often also in the child of God the means of dragging him too much to earth. 3. Faith always enriches the possessor, but gold often impoverishes. **II. THIS FAITH MUST BE TRIED, AND THAT WITH FIRE.** 1. The world is a great trial to faith. 2. Satan is always attempting to try and to overstep the faith of God's people. **III. WHAT IS THE GREAT END AND PURPOSE FOR WHICH FAITH IS SO TRIED?** It is that it may be proved to be faith, just as the gold is tried in the fire. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The trial of your faith:—***I. YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED SURELY.** 1. Faith, in the very nature of it, implies a degree of trial. God never gave us faith to play with. It is a sword, but it was

not made for presentation on a gala day, nor to be worn on state occasions only, nor to be exhibited on a parade ground. It is a sword, and he that has it girt about him may expect, between here and heaven, that he shall know what battle means. Faith is a sound sea-going vessel, and was not meant to lie in dock and perish of dry rot. To whom God has given faith, it is as though one gave a lantern to his friend because he expected it to be dark on his way home. The very gift of faith is a hint to you that you will want it, and that, at all points and in every place, you will really need it. 2. Trial is the very element of faith. Faith is a salamander that lives in the fire, a star which moves in a lofty sphere, a diamond which bores its way through the rock. Faith without trial is like a diamond uncut, the brilliance of which has never been seen. Untried faith is such little faith that some have thought it no faith at all. What a fish would be without water or a bird without air, that would be faith without trial. 3. It is the honour of faith to be tried. He that has tested God, and whom God has tested, is the man that shall have it said of him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." 4. The trial of your faith is sent to prove its sincerity. 5. It must also be tested to prove its strength. 6. The trial of our faith is necessary to remove its dross. "Why, a week ago," says one, "I used to sing, and think that I had the full assurance of faith; and now I can scarcely tell whether I am one of God's people or not." Now you know how much faith you really possess. You can now tell how much was solid and how much was sham; for had that which has failed you been real faith, it would not have been consumed by any trial through which it has passed. You have lost the froth from the top of the cup, but all that was really worth having is still there.

II. YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED VARIOUSLY. 1. There are some whose faith is tried each day in their communion with God. That is, God in Christ, who is our God, is a consuming fire; and when His people live in Him, the very presence of God consumes in them their love of sin and all their pretentious graces and fictitious attainments, so that the false disappears and only the true survives. The presence of perfect holiness is killing to empty boastings and hollow pretences. 2. God frequently tries us by the blessings which He sends us. (1) Riches. (2) Praise. 3. Another trial of faith is exceedingly common and perilous nowadays, and that is heretical doctrine and false teaching. 4. The trial of our faith usually comes in the form of affliction. I remember Mr. Rutherford, writing to a lady who had lost five children and her husband, says to her, "Oh, how Christ must love you! He would take every bit of your heart to Himself. He would not permit you to reserve any of your soul for any earthly thing." Can we stand that test? Can we let all go for His sake? Do you answer that you can? Time will show. III. YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED INDIVIDUALLY. It is an interesting subject, is it not, the trial of faith? It is not quite so pleasant to study alone the trial of *your* faith. It is stern work when it comes to be *your* trial, and the trial of *your* faith. Do not ask for trials. Children must not ask to be whipped, nor saints pray to be tested. The Lord Jesus Christ has been glorified by the trial of His people's faith. He has to be glorified by the trial of *your* faith. IV. YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED SEARCHINGLY. The blows of the flail of tribulation are not given in sport, but in awful earnest. The Lord tries the very life of our faith—not its beauty and its strength alone, but its very existence. The iron enters into the soul; the man's real self is made to endure the trial. V. YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED FOR AN ABUNDANTLY USEFUL PURPOSE. 1. The trial of your faith will increase, develop, deepen, and strengthen it. We may wisely rejoice in tribulation, because it worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and by that way we are exceedingly enriched, and our faith grows strong. 2. The trial of our faith is useful, because it leads to a discovery of our faith to ourselves. I notice an old Puritan using this illustration. He says, you shall go into a wood when you please, but if you are very quiet, you will not know whether there is a partridge, or a pheasant, or a rabbit in it; but when you begin to move about or make a noise, you very soon see the living creatures. They rise or they run. So, when affliction comes into the soul, and makes a disturbance and breaks our peace, up rise our graces. Faith comes out of its hiding, and love leaps from its secret place. 3. Besides, when faith is tried, it brings God glory. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The trial of faith precious*:—It is not faith, but the trial of faith, that is here pronounced to be precious. Precisely because faith is the link by which the saved are bound to the Saviour, it is of unspeakable importance to have faith tested in time and proved to be true. Here the fire and the crucible are the most valuable of all things for the investor. These are his safeguards. In like manner, it is dangerous to venture our eternity on a

fair weather profession; an assay in some form is essential to determine whether there is life or only a name that you live. The trial of faith by affliction is compared to the testing and purifying of gold by fire. The greatest results will be seen within the veil. When Christ comes the second time to reign, the effect of these trials will appear to his praise. (*W. Arnot.*) *The trial of faith*:—This trial is made upon faith principally, rather than any other grace, because the trial of that is, in effect, the trial of all that is good in us. (*M. Henry.*) *Trials are tests*:—The surest way to know our gold is to look upon it and examine it in God's furnace, where He tries it for that end, that we may see what it is. If we have a mind to know whether a building stands strong or no, we must look upon it when the wind blows. If we would know whether that which appears in the form of wheat has the real substance of wheat or he only chaff, we must observe it when it is winnowed. If we would know whether a staff be strong or a rotten, broken reed, we must observe it when it is leaned on and weight is borne upon it. If we would weigh ourselves justly, we must weigh ourselves in God's scales that He makes use of to weigh us. (*Jonathan Edwards.*) *Burnt in*:—Yonder is a porcelain vase just fashioned; it is now in the decorator's hands, who paints on it various pretty and delicate figures—here and there he paints a passage of Scripture. Presently he passes it into the hands of another who glazes it, who in his turn passes it on to a third. But what is the third doing? Why, he is putting the vase into a hot oven. "Sir," we exclaim, "you will spoil your ware, and your labour will be in vain." Smiling at our alarm, he placidly replies, "Gentlemen, I will take care that the vase suffers no injury. I put it into the oven to enhance its value, for I mean thus to burn in what has been painted on it, which would otherwise wash off. There—it is finished now," he adds, "and you may wash that vase for twelve months without making any impression on the colours. They are burnt in, sirs, burnt in." Similarly God burns in verses of the Bible into our experience. Having infused His grace into us in regeneration, and made wholesome impressions on the mind through the ministry of the Word, He consigns us to the furnace of affliction that they may be burnt into the very core of our being, so burnt that nothing will ever again erase them. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) **Much more precious than gold that perisheth.**—*Tried faith more precious than gold*:—1. Gold comes out of the earth; faith from heaven, whence every good and perfect gift is. 2. Faith is more rare, termed therefore the faith of God's elect, whereas most, even of the wicked, are not without gold. 3. Faith cannot be purchased with all the gold in the world. 4. It is hardly gotten and hardly kept, and has many and strong enemies—our own nature, the world and the devil are all against faith, but not against getting of gold. 5. It apprehends salvation and life eternal, and so is the instrument of our happiness. So is not gold but the instrument of many a man's damnation; by unconscionable getting, and covetous keeping the same, many cast away their souls. 6. It will comfort a man with true comfort in his life, carry him strongly through troubles, and boldly through the gates of death. 7. Gold perisheth, here canker and rust consume it; we may be taken from it, as it from us; but faith endureth till Christ's appearing, to our full redemption, as the fruit thereof for ever. *Uses*: 1. To them that want gold, and yet have faith. Know that thou art richer than he that hath thousands of gold and hath not faith. 2. To the rich. Rejoice not that thou art rich, but that thou hast faith. Again, think all your pains to become you well, and well bestowed in getting this precious faith. 3. To those who have not faith. Poor souls, labour after it, that you may be made inwardly rich. 4. To rich men who have toiled for gold. Seek this that is so much better. (*John Rogers.*) *Genuine faith more precious than gold*:—I. Gold cannot SATISFY the soul. Genuine faith does. As a rule it will, perhaps, be found that he who has the most gold is the most discontented and restless in heart. Faith fills the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. II. Gold cannot STRENGTHEN the soul. Genuine faith does. In what does the strength of the soul consist? In force of sympathies generous and devout; force of determination to pursue the right; force to bear up with buoyant magnanimity under all the trials and sorrows of life. Gold cannot give this strength. How strong were the men mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews! III. Gold cannot ENNOBLE the soul. But genuine faith ennoble the soul, enthrones it above the tide of passion and the force of circumstances. (*Homilist.*) *Peter's list of valuables*:—Peter is very fond of this word "precious." He uses it more frequently than all the other New Testament writers, with the exception of John in the Revelation, where, however, it is only employed in reference to things of material

value, such as jewels and costly woods. Paul uses it only once, and in a similar connection, speaking about "gold, silver, and precious stones." James employs it once in regard of the fruits of the earth; and all the other instances of its use are in Peter's writings. Here are the cases in which he uses it. First, in my text, about the process by which Christian faith is tested; then about the blood of Jesus Christ; then, in a quotation from Isaiah, about Christ Himself as the corner-stone. These three are the instances in the first Epistle. In the second we find two, where he speaks of "like precious faith," and of "exceeding great and precious promises."

I. THAT OUR TRUE TREASURES ARE ALL CONTAINED IN, AND CLUSTERED ROUND, THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST. Now, in order to estimate the value of a thing, the first necessity is a correct standard. Now, if we are seeking for a standard of value, surely the following points are very plain. Our true treasure must be such as helps us towards the highest ends for which we are fitted by our make. It must be such as satisfies our deepest needs; it must be such as meets our whole nature; and it must be such as cannot be wrenched from us. I do not want to undervalue lower and relative good of any kind, or to preach an overstrained contempt of material, transient, and partial blessing. Competence and wealth, gold and what gold buys, and what it keeps away, are good. High above them we rank the treasures of a cultivated mind, of a refined taste, of eyes that see the beauty of God's fair creation. Above these we rank the priceless treasures of pure reciprocated human love. But none of them, nor all of them put together, meet our tests, simple and obvious as they are. They do not satisfy the whole, or the depths, of our natures. Only God can fill a soul. So Peter is right after all, when he points us in a wholly different direction for the true precious things. "Christ is precious." Now, the word that he employs there is slightly different from that which occurs in the other verses. The speaker in the original words of the prophet is God Himself. It is the preciousness in God's sight of the stone which He "lays in Zion" that is glanced at in the epithet. Let me suggest how the preciousness of His beloved Son, in the eyes of the Father who gave Him, enhances the preciousness of the gift to us. God obeys the law which He lays upon His servants; and He "will not give" to us "that which costs Him nothing." But Christ is precious to us. Yes, if we know ourselves and what we want; if we know Him and what He gives. Do you want wisdom? He is the wisdom of God. Do you seek power? He is the power of God. Do you long for joy? He will give you His own. Do you weary for peace? "My peace I leave with you." Do you hunger for righteousness? "He of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness." Do you need fulness and abundance? "In Him dwells all the fulness of God; and of His fulness have all we received." Whatever good any soul seeks, Christ is the highest good, and is all good. Let us turn our hearts away from false treasures and lay hold on Him who is the true riches. Further, Christ's blood is precious. Peter believed in Christ's atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and of each single soul therein. If you strike that element out of the work of our Lord, what remains, precious as it is, does not seem to me to so completely satisfy human necessities as to make Him the one all-sufficient and single treasure and riches of men's souls. And then there is the third precious thing, clustering round and flowing from Jesus Christ and His work—and that is, the "exceeding great and precious promises," which are given to us "that by them we may be partakers of a Divine nature." I presume that these promises referred to by the apostle are largely, if not exclusively, those which have reference to what we call the future state. And they are precious because they come straight to meet one of the deepest needs of humanity, often neglected, but always there—an ache, if not a conscious need. What about that dark, dim beyond? Is there any solid ground in it? Christ comes with the answer: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Then it is not mist; then I can fling my grappling-iron into it and it will hold, and I can hold on to it.

II. THAT WHICH PUTS US IN POSSESSION OF THE PRECIOUS THINGS IS ITSELF PRECIOUS. So the apostle speaks, in his second Epistle, about "like precious faith," using a compound word, which, however, is substantially identical with the simple expression in the other verses. The only preciousness of that faith which the New Testament magnifies so greatly is that it brings us into possession of the things that are intrinsically precious. Suppose a door, worth half a crown. Yes! but it is the door of a storehouse full of bullion. Here is a bit of lead pipe, worth twopence. Yes, but through it comes the water that keeps a besieged city alive. And so your faith, worth nothing in itself, is worth everything as the means by which you lay hold of the durable riches and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Therefore cherish it. A

cultivated mind is a treasure, because it is the key to many treasures. Refined tastes are treasures because they bring us into possession of lofty gifts. *Æsthetic* sensibilities are precious because they make our own a pure and ennobling pleasure. And, for precisely the same reason, high above the cultivated understanding, and refined tastes, and the artistic sense, ay, and even above the loving heart that twines its tendrils round another heart as loving, we rank the faith which joins us to Christ.

III. THE PROCESS WHICH STRENGTHENS THAT FAITH IS PRECIOUS. My nominal text speaks about "the trial of your faith" as being "much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire." Peter meant that the process by which faith was tested, and, being tested, is purified and perfected, is a precious treasure. If Christ and what pertains to Him are our real wealth, and if our faith is the means of our coming into possession of our property, then everything that tightens our grasp upon Him, and increases our capacity of receiving Him, is valuable. Let us lay that to heart, and it changes all our estimates of this world's mistaken ill and good. Let us lay that to heart, and it interprets much. We do not understand life until we have got rid of the prejudice that enjoyment, or any lower thing, is the object of it. Let us understand that the deepest meaning of all our experience here is discipline, and we have come within sight of the solution of most of our perplexities. Sorrow and joy, light and darkness, summer and winter, sunshine and storm, life and death, gain and loss, failures and successes—they all have the one end, that we may be partakers of the wealth of His holiness. Let us try to clear our minds of the delusions of this world, and to rectify our estimates of true good. A very perverted standard prevails, and we are too apt to fall in with it. Many of us are no wiser than savages that will exchange gold for trash, and barter away fertile lands for a stand of old muskets or a case of fiery rum. Listen to Jesus Christ counselling you to buy of Him gold tried in the fire. Turn away from the fairy gold, which by daylight will be seen to be but a heap of yellow fading leaves, and cling in faith, which is precious, to Him who is priceless, and in whom the poorest will find riches that cannot be corrupted nor lost for ever. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.—*Perfect salvation.*—These words have reminded me of a phrase which, twenty or thirty years ago, was constantly recurring in sermons of many of the younger and more ardent preachers of that time. They insisted that Christ had come to achieve for us what they described as a present salvation. There was a polemical element, too, in preaching of this kind, for the doctrine of a present salvation was asserted as though it were a part of the Christian gospel that had never been clearly apprehended; it was implied that most Christian people had thought of salvation as something future, something that could not be known on this side of death, while in fact we are to be saved, if saved at all, here and now. Those who preached a present salvation said in substance, "Many of you Christian people have missed the power and glory which Christ came to make yours in this life, because you are always thinking of heaven and the life to come; your religion is unpractical, you do not see that Christ came to make an infinite difference in the whole life of man in this world, as well as to make eternal blessedness our inheritance in the next." There is no need to preach like that now. None of us, I imagine, are too much occupied with thoughts of heaven and the life to come. Richard Baxter, as some of you remember, tells us that in the afternoon, when it began to be too dark to go on with his reading and writing, and before the candles were brought in, he used to sit quietly in the twilight meditating on the saints' everlasting rest. There are not many Christian people, I imagine, who spend much of their time in that way now. Whether we realise the present salvation more fully than our fathers did I cannot tell, but I imagine it is certain that we think very much less about any salvation that is still to come. There is a present salvation, there is also a salvation to be hoped for, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice." Christ, not the earthly Christ but the ascended Christ, is the head of the new race. His larger, diviner, human life is ours, and the life which we have received from Him, and into the full possession of which He entered at His resurrection and ascension, that life has in its essence the hope and assurance of passing into the same glory into which Christ has entered. Having this life we are born, therefore, to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This inheritance is not here; it is not ours in possession yet; it is no part of the present salvation; it is reserved for us in heaven. And lest we should come to harm before we reach it, we are kept safely for the salvation which is ready to be revealed at the last time. In this it is that we Christian people are to rejoice. The present salvation is an incomplete salvation; the perfect salvation is to come. The

future life of those who are to live for ever in God—the complete salvation—transcends all thought as well as all hope; we cannot see the inheritance for the golden haze that surrounds it; it is too intensely bright for mortal vision; it belongs to another order than this; it cannot be revealed to knowledge until it is revealed in experience. But some elements of the present salvation will in the future salvation be perfect. Our sins, through the infinite mercy of God, are already forgiven, and we may have the full assurance that they are forgiven. But not until we are capable of a fuller knowledge of God shall we know the infinite blessedness of the discovery that He has blotted out our sins as a thick cloud which varnishes and leaves no stain on the blue of heaven. That blessedness is to come. There are times when we see the manifestations of the love of God for us—manifestations given to us in secret and wonderful ways by the power of the Spirit of God, making the heart tremble with a blended reverence and joy. We have no strength to bear them for long. If they remained glory would break upon glory, and we should anticipate the blessedness we hope for. What we hope for is a life that appears so enlarged, and with so Divine an environment that these manifestations of the personal love of the Eternal for us, and manifestations still more wonderful, will be with us always; that we shall move freely among them as we move in the common air and in the light of the common sun; they will never become dim, never be interrupted, but that in their tenderness and in their power they will increase through age after age of increasing wonder and joy. There is something in this great hope to give us courage and to renew the strength which too often faints and the resolution which too often falters. The joy of the Christian life would be immeasurably augmented if we dwelt more constantly on its eternal consummation in the Divine Presence, and the joy would give strength. We have great memories to sustain us, and, above all, the memory of the supreme manifestation of the Divine love in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But when hope is confederate with memory, and both are confirmed by the present consciousness that we have found God, every power of our better life receives new animation, and we see that all things are possible to us. Further, apart from a clear vision of the perfect salvation, faith is subject to an unnecessary strain. Forget too how large and free and blessed a life men are destined for in Christ in the next world, and it will sometimes seem as if there were disproportion between the great discoveries of the Christian gospel and what the gospel actually accomplishes. It is as if you were to judge of the labour which has been spent on the fields by the appearance of early spring, when the dark ground is hardly relieved by the faint green of the wheat which has just begun to shoot—it is so frail, apparently of so little value. Is this all that is to come of cleaning the ground and ploughing it and enriching it with the seed? Ah! you must wait—wait till the spring has expanded into the bright days of summer, and the summer into early autumn, and then the corn ripened, perfected, rising and falling in golden billows under the glowing sun, will reveal the end for which the farmer laboured. And Christ's harvest home is not ended here, but in worlds unseen. Not until we know the perfect righteousness and the perfect blessedness of the saints in glory shall we see for what great ends the Son of God became man and rose again for our race. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*) **Whom having not seen, ye love.**—*Love to an unseen Saviour*:—To produce in us a love to Christ it is not necessary that we should see Him with our bodily eyes. Those who actually saw Jesus and loved Him are comparatively few to those who love Him unseen. I. **THE PROPERTIES OF THIS LOVE.** 1. It is sincere and hearty. We must not judge by one single act in life, but by the habitual frame and the general tenor in behaviour. A real concern of mind for offending a friend is a sign that we esteem him. 2. It has respect unto Christ in all His characters and titles. 3. This love is superlative. It exceeds the esteem which the soul has for all other things. Christ will accept of nothing less. 4. This love is constant and everlasting. It is not like the esteem which we have for our fellow-creatures, which frequently stops upon receiving an affront, and is often changed into resentment. II. **THE GROUNDS AND REASONS why the Christian loves an unseen Jesus.** 1. The Christian loves an unseen Jesus because of the excellencies which He possesses. Whatever excellency is in the creature may be found in the highest perfection in Jesus Christ, for He inherits all true perfection: creatures' glories are all imperfect. 2. The Christian loves an unseen Saviour because of the relation which He stands in to him. The ties of nature and relation are strong inducements to affection; a mother must turn monster if she does not love her babe. 3. The Christian is under the greatest obligations to Jesus for the wonders of His free and unmerited love: no wonder,

then, that he loves Him, though unseen. III. THE REASONABLENESS of the Christian's love to an unseen Saviour. 1. Let us view the infinite glory of His person. 2. The amazing greatness of His condescension for His people's advantage. 3. The blessings which He has conferred upon the Christian, 4. The endearing titles He has given him. 5. The care He continually takes of him, and the glory He has prepared and will secure for him. 6. The freeness of this love. (*S. Hayward.*) *Love to an unseen Saviour* :—I. BELIEVE, THOUGH WE NEVER SAW. We should not count this a hardship, since we every day believe in places and peoples whom we have not seen. Thus, you all believe that there is such a city as Rome, although few of you may have seen it. You believe also that a Pontiff rules there. But in these days of widespread scepticism men object to believe, in the first place, because the events to which we ask their credence happened so long ago. But if you believe that Julius Cæsar fell at Pompey's pillar pierced by traitorous wounds, surely it is not more difficult to believe that about the same period in our world's history the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross of Calvary for the sins of the world. It is objected, however, in the second place, that we ask faith in something supernatural concerning Jesus Christ, the like of which is not to be found in the history of Julius Cæsar—namely, that He was raised from the dead, and that He ascended into the heavens. Quite true; but our God affords evidence correspondingly strong. But the faith that pleases God is not a mere conviction that the sacred oracles are true—it should include also a hearty acceptance of Christ as a Saviour for our own sinful souls. It is one thing for you to believe that a certain individual is the richest man in the city, and quite an additional thing if he, hearing of your straits, should write you to go to the bank and draw on him to any amount. And suppose you had really never seen the rich man, but had only heard of his goodness, as you found all your wants supplied at that bank, you would resemble these primitive Christians who were thus addressed: "Though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." II. ALTHOUGH THESE CHRISTIANS HAD NEVER SEEN CHRIST, THEY, NEVERTHELESS, LOVED HIM. It is possible to love those whom we have never seen. The experience is felt every day. For example—1. Men love unseen benefactors, and it becomes us to love the unseen Saviour—the greatest Benefactor of all. When the emancipation of the West Indian slaves became an accomplished fact, the liberated negroes in their humble dwellings loved the men who had done so much for them, and suffered so much for them. They had never seen them, and yet they loved them. 2. But let us introduce another element into the claims of the ascended Christ, and consider that He is also a brother unseen. It sometimes happens that an unseen benefactor is also an unseen brother. I knew a family in this city, the elder brother in which had gone out to an Indian appointment before the younger members of it were born. Their father died before he could be called an old man, leaving a widow and large family without great resources. But this elder brother did a father's part. He sent home remittances quite regularly, which maintained, clothed, and educated the younger children, and, as the daughters grew up, and were, one after another, married, he sent them special presents for their marriage outfits. Oh, how they loved him, although they had never seen him! Does not my parable once more suit? Is not this Jesus whom we have never seen occupied in high heavenly administration? 3. Further, the believer loves Christ, though he has never seen Him, on account of His beauty. We sometimes fall in love with the character of men whom we have never seen. III. THOUGH BELIEVERS NEVER SAW CHRIST, THEY REJOICE IN HIM WITH JOY UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY. A doubtful faith, leaving a man uncertain as to whether he is saved or not, is not countenanced in the Word of God. Further, the New Testament does not discourage ecstasy in religious experience. It expects "joy unspeakable" in the heart of the Christian. And if we see men and women in tumultuous joy, making processions and waving banners in honour of Bruce and Wallace, Tell and Garibaldi, whom they never saw, have we not infinitely greater cause to rejoice in present salvation and the hope of future glory through an unseen Christ? When the foreman of the jury says "Not guilty," the prisoner leaps up in the dock with joy unspeakable. When the physician, feeling the pulse, says to the anxious patient: "Your symptoms are much improved to-day; in fact, you are out of danger, and will henceforth progress to complete recovery," his joy is unspeakable. Now, what is holiness but wholeness in health?—the great blessing which we receive at the Cross, the salvation of the soul, the pardon of sin and the accompanying indwelling and renewal of the Holy Ghost. But the best is coming

yet; the joy is also "full of glory." We are down in the valley; but the hilltops are already radiant with the rising orb of eternal day. Beyond these hills our Redeemer is preparing a place for us. In conclusion, let me speak first a word of caution, and then a word of encouragement. 1. The word of caution I address to those who may be ready to proclaim their love to Christ and their assurance of salvation while yet their lives are unholy. Not only must Christ have the throne of our affections, but also the government of our wills freely and habitually surrendered—wills married to His and sweetly lost in His. 2. Such is the word of caution; now for the word of encouragement. How many worthy people are there who, when we ask them whether they love the Lord, or not, are unable to answer in the affirmative. Restricted views of the extent of Divine grace keep some in darkness, while others are the victims of hypochondriacal spiritual or rather unspiritual melancholy. As to the first cause of fear I would simply say that there is no doubt of God's love to you, and therefore you should love Him in return. As to your morbid anxieties, I would exhort you to dismiss them all. Do not go about constantly feeling your own spiritual pulse. The best proof of your love to God is that you keep His commandments. (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *Love to Christ:—I.*

THE NATURE AND GROUNDS OF LOVE TO CHRIST. Love to Christ is not to be confounded with the raptures of a visionary enthusiasm. Its foundation must not be laid in those ideal representations of His person and character which a luxuriant fancy is apt to picture. It signifies simply that sincere esteem of His person and character which is founded on what is revealed respecting Him in the records of inspiration. 1. Love to the Redeemer is the first movement of the soul when illumined to discern the perfect excellencies of His Divine character. Is perfect holiness the proper object of delight and love? Are truth and faithfulness, combined with mercy and grace, the proper objects of moral approbation and delight? In Him "mercy and truth have met together." He is justly entitled to our supreme regard, whose nature is infinitely excellent, and whose perfections are boundless. 2. But the believer will not confine himself to the contemplation of his Lord in the attributes of His Divine character; he will consider Him in His human nature also, and, as such, the proper object of enlightened attachment. As a man He exhibited an example of perfect conformity to the whole will of God. 3. The mediatorial character of Jesus justly entitles Him to our especial affection. From what Christ hath done, we learn what He is; and the glories of His character shine with peculiar lustre through the veil of His mediation, suffering, and death. And can we contemplate so much love without feeling some corresponding emotion of love in return? **II. CHRIST, THOUGH UNSEEN, IS THE OBJECT OF A CHRISTIAN'S LOVE.**

1. Although Christ was never seen by us, yet we have been favoured with the most full and satisfactory information regarding Him. He is brought near to our view in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and in the varied writings of the New. 2. Jesus, though we never saw Him, is ascertained to be unquestionably our best friend and nearest relation. He is our instructor to point the way; our high priest to redeem and intercede for us; our Captain and King to bring many sons and daughters to glory. 3. He hath given us the most stupendous evidences of His disinterested love. 4. This kind friend hath sent us many kind messages of love, and hath actually left us a legacy to perpetuate His remembrance. 5. Though not personally present with us, He hath given us, as His representative, His Holy Spirit to abide with us for ever, to enlighten our understandings, to purify our hearts from the power of corruption, to raise our affections to things spiritual and heavenly, to check in us the power of sin, and to guide us amid the snares and temptations of our pilgrimage through the world. 6. Though we see not Christ now, we are assured that if we love Him truly we shall see Him afterwards. **III. THE MANNER IN WHICH LOVE TO CHRIST WILL PRACTICALLY EXPRESS ITSELF.** 1. Love to Christ will lead us to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with Him. 2. Love to Christ will lead us frequently to think and to speak of Him. 3. Love to Christ will lead us to seek intercourse with Him in all His ordinances. 4. If we love Christ, we will love His people and cause. 5. Finally, "If ye love Me," says Jesus, "keep My commandments." This is the most substantial test of the sincerity of our love. (*R. Burns, D.D.*) *Love to an unseen Saviour:—I. THE GENERAL*

NATURE OF LOVE TO CHRIST. There are four essential acts that form the perfect notion of love. First, there is esteem, which is as the groundwork of love. And on all accounts Christ deserves this in the highest degree. Again, there is inclination of goodwill to the party beloved. This is called a benevolential esteem, as the former is complacential. The former considers its object as fit to do us good or

give us pleasure. The latter regards its object as worthy to receive good, whether absolutely or from us or others. Esteem and benevolence, then, are the two leading branches of love, and both find room enough in Christ. The two remaining, desire, fitly enough called love in motion, and delight or complacency, called love at rest, rank themselves under each of the former respectively; for it is of the nature of true love to desire and delight in the happiness of the object as really as its own proceeding from it. II. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE—the Lord Jesus Christ—with the grounds that are found with Him, of our loving Him. And here we might first observe how the many names, titles, and characters which Christ bears in Scripture, that convey various ideas of beauty, use, and pleasure, do of themselves recommend Him to our highest love. The particular grounds of love to Christ which His various names import and lead to. 1. If the greatest personal excellencies and beauties imaginable. 2. If the most intimate relation to God and His manifestative glory, joined with the highest interest in His favour and respect. 3. If the most amazing love to us. 4. If the most arduous and excellent works performed for our service and advantage. 5. If the most numerous, valuable, benefits conferred on us or promised to us. III. THE PARTICULAR ACTS AND EXPRESSIONS OF A GENUINE LOVE TO CHRIST. 1. In the first place, wherever love to Christ is found, it will certainly show itself in frequent thoughts, attended ever and anon with discourse of Him. And what thoughts are they which love to Christ will inspire? They are thoughts of a noble elevation and of a comprehensive reach—thoughts which dignify our understandings. Further, the thoughts influenced by the love of Christ will be with regard to ourselves, and other things viewed in comparison with Christ, humbling and disdaining. Again, the thoughts about Christ which love to Him prompts are the most chosen and pleasing thoughts of any that can employ the mind. Finally, the thoughts that love to Christ inspires are affectionate thoughts and influential into the heart from whence they are united. 2. Love to Christ will express itself in desires towards Him accompanied with suitable endeavours, and these of two sorts, such as respect ourselves immediately, or Christ for ourselves, and such as respect Him for Himself. IV. THE PROPERTIES AND CHARACTERS OF GENUINE LOVE TO CHRIST. True love to Christ is sincere and unfeigned, love incorrupt. 2. True love to Christ is a judicious and rational affection. Though Christians love an unseen, they do not love an unknown Saviour. 3. Love to Christ is free, as being the effect of rational choice; and yet more free still, as being a supernatural habit influenced by Divine grace. 4. True love to Christ is of a very active and fruitful nature. There is a great deal of life, strength, and sprightliness in the affection of love. 5. True love to Christ is entire and universal. He must be loved in His whole character, or He is not loved at all. 6. It must be supreme. 7. It is constant. 8. This love to Christ is great, so as to become unspeakable and full of glory. V. HOW FAITH ACCOUNTS FOR THIS LOVE IN WANT OF SIGHT, so that this should not in reason be any obstruction to, while yet it is a commendation of it. 1. Let us see how faith contains a just reason for loving Christ, though never seen. Than which nothing will appear more manifest, if we only consider what faith is, in these two parts wherein the apostle sums it up (Heb. xi. 1). 2. Want of seeing Christ, though no reasonable bar against loving Him, must be allowed to import some greater commendation of love under this circumstance than in the case of personal sight. VI. IMPROVEMENT. 1. How much should we be concerned to observe the too obvious want of love to Christ in the Christian world, and withal to inquire whether it be not wanting in our own hearts also! 2. Suffer the word of exhortation, to give to Christ all the love we are capable of, suitable to His glorious dignity, and the obligations He has laid on us, heartily and bitterly lamenting withal our sin and folly in having withheld from Him so long and so much what has been His due. (*J. Hubbard.*) *The highest Christian experience*:—I. LOVE FOR THE UNSEEN. This is an axiom with all true affection. 1. It appears difficult theoretically. 2. It is common in experience. The absent, the dead are loved. 3. It is an element in the highest form of love. The non-sensuous. 4. It is a very blessed emotion. The band of love brings the distant near, makes the remote easily discerned. II. TRUST IN THE LOVED. Love Christ more, and you will trust Him more. You will believe what He says about—1. Salvation. 2. Duty. 3. Trial. 4. Sacrifice. III. JOY IN THE LOVED AND TRUSTED. 1. The joy of rest. 2. The joy of communion. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *The reign of Christ in Christendom*:—In the first place, think how wonderful a phenomenon the very existence of Christendom is. It is so in three particulars. In the first place, when we turn to the page of history, the

existence of Christendom is wonderful when we consider the opposition which it had to overcome. And then, above all, the establishment of Christendom is wonderful when we consider the character of the doctrine which determined it. The gospel flattered no pride, it gave quarter to no passion. Now I wish further to direct your attention to the present reign of Christ in this present Christendom. And here I observe, in the first place, that our blessed Lord reigns over the intellect of Christendom by His authority. Human thinkers do not really govern thought. There has been no one-man government in the realm of intellect since Aristotle was deposed in the middle ages. These apparent governors of human thought rule a party, or a school, or a clique. Even there they are not really taken at their own word. The thing is not believed to be true just because they say it is true. Now, our blessed Lord, beyond all question, does not propose for the acceptance of His people a self-evident doctrine. You must make an act of faith in it, and that act of faith is an inclusive act. You cannot parcel it off into two separate divisions or compartments, and say: "Here is the sentiment, supremely beautiful, and there is the dogma, of which we cannot say quite so much." We must believe the dogma of Christ's authority, or we do not fully receive Christ. But then it may be said to the Christian, "What is thy beloved, more than another beloved?" There are other teachers who receive the adoration of thousands of souls: the Buddha reigns over as many souls as Christ does, and possibly a good many more. Yes, but not over as many sorts of souls. Jesus reigns over varied races. At all events, all nations who renounce Him, lose, or begin to lose, their place amongst the nations of mankind; and the fact of their denial is written upon their bodily and material organisations. Now, I mention further that Christ reigns over the hearts of men by love. Consider for a moment man's relation after death to the affections of those who survive him. The place which any of us can keep in the affections of those who survive is a narrow one indeed. Forgetfulness, in a very short time, must grow over us like the grass. And now, with this, contrast Christ after His death as an object of human affection. This love is illimitable in extent as well as in time. Every minute some dying man or woman invokes that name with a light of love upon the dying face. "I am a judge of men, and I tell you that this Man with His power of awakening and perpetuating love was more than man." Jesus reigns as God by love in Christendom. Here is the strange fact of the spiritual world—this intense personal love towards One whom we have not seen. As St. Bernard says: "When I name Jesus I name a Man, strong, gentle, pure, holy, sympathising, who is also the true and the Eternal God." And the image of the beauty is the best proof to the heart of the reality of the object which it represents—something in the same way as when we are walking along in meditation by a clear river that runs into the sea, the reflection of the white sea bird in the stream, even when we are not able to look up, is a proof to us that the bird is really sailing overhead. There is no fear of disappointment in that love toward Christ. There was a wife once who was all in all to a husband who had been blind from very early childhood, and when the question came about an operation being performed, she was troubled. She confessed she was troubled lest when sight was restored to her husband, whom she had loved and tended, he should be disappointed in the features of which he had thought so tenderly. Yes! but as spiritual sight is given to us, as we start up in the light of the Resurrection morning, there will be no disappointment; when we wake up after His likeness we shall be satisfied with Him, with the likeness of Him, whom not having seen, we love. (*Ep. Alexander.*) *Love to the unseen Christ:*—We are apt to suppose that, had we lived in the days of Christ, our faith and love would have been very much nearer perfection than they ever can be now. Witnessing the expression of His countenance would have given so much fuller a comprehension of His character, that our strongest affections would necessarily have been moved towards Him. There are persons who need the perceptions of the senses to help out the operations of the understanding, before they can realise facts with sufficient distinctness for their feelings to be excited. But this is not true of most earnest minds—of some, it is the very reverse of the truth. It is the same with regard to both Christ's teaching and His moral qualities, as with regard to all other things in life—the mind comprehends only what it is prepared to receive. Things affect us, not only according to their nature, but according to our own. What we see depends, not only upon what there is to be seen, but also upon our capacity for seeing. Goodness and purity immeasurably above us will only affect us in that degree in which we are able to take them in. Hence, those Jewish disciples standing around our Saviour, gazing into His eyes,

would only be moved by His character, in proportion as their own goodness, purity, and inner spiritual beauty enabled them to enter into sympathy with Him. Then, too, there is another consideration greatly in our favour: the love which rests upon the idealisation of a character must, necessarily, be more refined and spiritual than that which is derived through the sensuous perceptions. For the senses lend influences of their own, which, mingling with the spiritual elements, prevent the pure and simple operation of the latter, and oftentimes distort their proper impressions. Hence, a man's character is frequently better understood by those unacquainted with his person than by those round about him. And, still more frequently, it is only when distance of space or time removes the sensuous presence that the spiritual qualities of a man become thoroughly understood. And, upon this principle, too, it is that a friend removed from us by death, soon loses, in our imagination, his distinctive physical characteristics, whilst his moral and spiritual qualities stand out more and more clearly defined. To this objection it may possibly be replied, why should our love for Christ be different from the love called forth by our living companions and friends? Why since He was in all points like unto us, should not the sensuous mingle with the spiritual? I answer, first, because it is unnatural; seeing He is removed from our sight, we can truly only follow the natural law of our minds and draw an ideal representation of Him. But, secondly, and most of all, because the whole spiritualising influence of the love depends upon its spiritual character. For the power of the love of Christ to elevate us depends upon two elements. First, although it is love for a son of man, it is a son of man who is not standing before us in hard forms of sense, but whose very humanity becomes to us as a spiritual essence, who eludes us when we attempt to grasp him, but who takes all the brightest lines our purified fancies project upon him. And this impalpableness of the sensuous image leads us, more and more, to enter into the second element upon which the power depends, namely, the spiritual and moral qualities of his nature. By dwelling almost exclusively upon these, the mind becomes, as it were, saturated with their influences, and is brought into closer and closer sympathy with them. The ideal it thus forms of the Christ is continually rising higher and higher; brighter and more candescent with Divine holiness, truth, goodness, spiritual beauty, the wondrous image glows—no wonder that the adoring, quickened soul enthusiastically exclaims, "Whom having not seen we love." And the qualities upon which this love for Christ rests, are the qualities upon which all true love ever rests. For love is the going forth of spirit to spirit, of soul to soul—the giving of one's own inward spiritual life to another. When the soul thus discerns Him, all its deepest life is awakened; admiration, delight, and ineffable joy harmonise as melodious chords of holy music within its inmost being; it yields itself in love to Him whom thus it knows. And it is worth our while to note the qualities which the soul thus discerns in Christ which so call forth its love. 1. First of all, there is the Divine truthfulness. I mean the inward harmony of the thought and feeling with God's law, with God's idea, with eternal and unchangeable facts. Stronger, by reason of this truthfulness, than the granite rock, more immovable than the mountains of Lebanon, He stands forth for God, and for God's law of right within Him. 2. But, then, this truthfulness led to purity; for purity is truth reduced to life; it is the embodying of what is right in one's own character. And you know how the Saviour did this. You know how He followed the right through evil and good report. There may, however, be all this, but in hard forms like the granite rock, glittering in the sun and standing out with its sharply-defined, hard lines against the sky, exciting our wonder and admiration, but touching no chord of love in the heart. 3. And therefore there must be love—the gentleness and tenderness of a loving nature added on to and rising out of these. Annihilating self, it seeks to lavish the resources of its own life and blessedness on the world around. And I need not dwell upon the manifold forms in which this gentle and tender love manifested itself in Him who did not cry nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets—who brake not the bruised reed nor quenched the smoking flax. But then, I take it, that it is neither the truthfulness, the purity, nor the love which in itself and alone calls forth our love. But these qualities constitute, when existing together in their proper proportions, that wonderful thing which we call spiritual beauty—a thing we all recognise, according to our culture, when we meet with it, but which is so subtle as to defy our definition. Whilst theologians have been constructing their theories and doctrines about the Divine nature, and rival sects have been fighting for their individual shibboleths, the simple, loving souls of all churches have, out of the brief narratives of the

Gospels, been idealising to themselves the Christ, and before the overpowering spiritual beauty which thus they have discerned in His character, have yielded their heart's strongest love and purest devotion. (*Jas. Cranbrook.*) *The believer's joyful love* :—There have been those who, by plausible arguments, have attempted to prove that love to an unseen Saviour is impossible. Sight is not of itself the foundation or cause of any affection to be dignified by the name of love. It was not by sight that you learned the character of your friend so as to esteem him for its excellence. And do we not know our blessed Saviour? From the delineations of the rapt Isaiah and the simple stories of the gospel, we know Him as He walked on earth, as far as men need know. And besides this blessed book, we have other sources of knowledge. The works of nature are ever telling of His wisdom, power, and goodness; are ever exciting to His love. The history of the Church, which is the body of Christ, is another continuous revelation of His character, more perfect now than in any former age. Just as you learn the temper of your friend by marking the methods which he uses in governing his household, you may read the heart of our Saviour by interpreting His dealings with the Church. But our most intimate and personal knowledge of the Redeemer is obtained by personal experience and by the revelation of the Holy Ghost to our hearts. But our text speaks of joy as well as love: "In whom though now you see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." They always exist together. Who ever thinks of a love which does not convey satisfaction and delight? And who ever imagines that genuine happiness can be enjoyed where the pure affections of the heart have no exercise? Wherever there exists true faith and love to Christ, there must be, to some extent, happiness and delight in Him. And this is just in proportion to the purity and simplicity of our confidence and affection. (*N. C. Locke, D.D.*) *Love of Christ* :—Affections are evoked, not created, educed from within, not implanted from without. The quality of the object determines indeed the kind and quality of the affection. Perfect love is perfect joy only where the loving and the loved are alike good, holy, and true. Love again may be evoked in one of two ways—by instinct and nature, or by reason and spirit. If a man loves his son simply because the boy happens to be his, or a woman her daughter simply because the girl chances to be hers, and for no other and higher reason, the love is only blind impulse; it has no regard to actual or possible spiritual qualities, or any high moral end. But love awakened through the reason and in the spirit is spiritual love. The qualities admired belong to the spirit, the eye that sees is the spirit's, and the admiration excited lives in the spirit. Instinctive affection is blind and arbitrary, but spiritual is not. Many a man would perceive and despise in another boy the moral qualities he scarcely observes in his own son. The first is due to a relation, natural or arbitrary, but the second to worth, personal, inherent, moral, real. Instinctive affection may be blind and impure, but spiritual must be altogether lovely and true. Perhaps it may now be superfluous to remark that the Christian's love to Christ must be of the latter kind. The sight is spiritual and the affection the same. The love may lack the passion and intensity of instinct, but it has the calmness and the power of spirit. The claims of Christ have not appealed to eye and ear, but to heart and mind. We love Him, not for His beautiful face, or fine voice, or winsome ways, but for His mercy, and grace, the righteousness and truth that blend so perfectly in His character. The moral excellencies of Jesus, and these alone, can be inexhaustible sources of spiritual love. This distinction may enable us to deal with a too common difficulty. Many a devout soul has said, "I cannot love my Saviour as I love my child. I do not, I cannot, love God more than I love my husband. There is an intensity in my affection for my family and friends entirely wanting in my affection for Divine things. I need to be reconverted. I must be altogether wrong." But the error lies in confounding things that differ. Man's affection for man must be more or less instinctive. Man's love for Christ must be altogether spiritual. Our love for Christ, then, while wanting the warmth of our love for man, has more depth and root in our being; while its form is less fervent, its essence is more real. The one seems to be, but the other in reality is the greater. Indeed, it cannot be rightly compared to our love for the living. It resembles much more closely our love for the dead. Death at once sanctifies and spiritualises our affection. It is, then, no hardship to have an invisible Saviour. We can love Him the better that He is unseen. Were God localised, He would seem to our thought much less awful and majestic than when He is conceived as everywhere, like the air we breathe, the element in which all beings live. It is, perhaps, not

too much to say that the disciples never loved Christ aright till He became invisible. Their love had much of the intensity of passion, co-existed with much self-seeking. But when Jesus ascended all this was changed. Their affections were enlarged and clarified. Note, now, how this invisibility enables the mind to glorify, to idealise Jesus, as the object of its love. The senses are very prosaic and tyrannical. They see but a little way into a man, and retain only what of him is superficial and transient. The image of Christ that haunted the disciples would be very unequal, one of blended power and weakness, glory and shame. He would rise in their memories now as a weary man, sitting on Jacob's well, or asleep in the hinder part of the ship, and again as a mighty God, feeding the hungry multitude, or stilling the tempest. Now, He would be seen amid the glories of the transfiguration. But in our case there is no such hindrance. We enjoy the privilege of never having seen Jesus. The Saviour, we know, is one whose griefs are past, whose glories have come, "whom having not seen we love." Imagination should often come to the help of love. Does not the loved, lost mother appear adorned with every grace, and the father apparelled in every virtue? Does not boyhood, too, gleam to the old man, when he recalls the meadows on which he played with a light such as the sun never threw from its burning face? And since imagination can lend a brilliance of hue, a splendour of colour to the objects of time, calling forth deeper and tenderer love, why not to the Object at once of sacred memory and eternal hope—the invisible Saviour? The love of the invisible Jesus may thus be developed in us like any other normal affection, and our growth in grace will be commensurate with this development. Here we may note God's wisdom and goodness in thus enlisting our natural capacities on the side of our own eternal interests. But can we define this love? What are its constituent elements? Love, like light, seems simple, but is in truth compound. In a simple beam of white light there are varied colours. Pass the beam through a prism and it breaks into those bright and dark hues that blend so beautifully in the rainbow. The beam is one, yet several, each constituent colour being necessary to its very existence. So love has its essential elements, each complementary to the other, and all combining to give it real and ample being—goodwill, approbation, delight, desire, and trust. Where any of these is not, love cannot be. O Thou Christ of the living God, teach us to love Thee, not simply as a short and easy method of deliverance, not as a convenient way of escaping the terrible pains of hell; but as our Brother, our Fellow, our Friend, our one Supreme Good, in whom alone everlasting happiness and peace can be found! And now, consider what a privilege, what an honour thou hast in being permitted to love the invisible Jesus. Pencil cannot delineate His perfection; colour cannot express His beauty. The human form must be transfigured and transformed into the Divine, ere it can tell the glory and the grace of the indwelling Christ. We would not then, O Christ, wish Thee to become visible—One we could see with our fleshly eyes, and handle with our fleshly hands. Remain Thou within the veil; there Thou art worthier to be loved; and while here we abide we shall enjoy the blessedness of those who, because they have not seen, have only the more believed and the better loved. (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*)

Seeing is not believing, but believing is seeing:—I. HOW COME WE INTO CONTACT WITH JESUS? The uppermost point of contact, the most apparent in the believer's life, is love. "Whom not having seen ye love." But the text tells of another point of contact, "In Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing." We are again reminded here that we do not see, but we are assured of the possibility of believing in Him without sight. Ah, have I not by faith made real to myself the Saviour on the Cross? In Christ you have believed, and you know that your sin is forgiven, that His righteousness is imputed to you, and that you stand accepted in the Beloved. This is not to you a matter of hope; it is a matter of firm conviction. You have not seen, but you have believed. As to His resurrection also. You did not see him when He rose early in the morning from the tomb and the watchmen in terror fled far away, but you have believed in Him as risen. I believe that because He lives I shall live also, and it is possible to believe this as firmly as though we saw it. Christ is in heaven pleading for us. We cannot see the ephod and the breastplate, but we believe that He intercedes successfully there for us. We choose Him to be our advocate in every case of sore distress, in every case of grievous sin; we believe that He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, and we leave our suit with Him in perfect confidence. Still the point is, that carnal people will imagine that if there could be something to touch or smell they should get on, but mere believing and loving are too hard for them.

Yet such thought is not reasonable. An illiterate man cannot see that mental work is work at all, but he who is capable of mental labour soon feels the reality of it. Just transfer that thought. Coming into contact with Christ by touch looks to most people to be most real, that is because their animal nature is uppermost; coming into contact with Jesus by the spirit seems to them to be unreal, only because they know nothing of spiritual things. Thoughtless persons think that mental pain is nothing. Mere animal men will often say, "I can understand the headache, I can understand the pain of having a leg cut off"; but the pain of injured affection, or of receiving ingratitude from a trusted friend, this by the rough mind is thought to be no pain at all. "Oh," says he, "I could put up with that." But I ask you who have minds, Is there any pain more real than mental pain? Just so the mental operation—for it is a mental operation—of coming into contact with Christ by loving Him and trusting Him is the most real thing in all the world, and no one will think it unreal who has once exercised it. II. WHAT VIRTUE IS THIS WHICH FLOWS FROM HIM? 1. The first result of trusting and loving Christ is joy, and joy of a most remarkable kind. It is far above all common joy. It is spoken of as "joy unspeakable." Now earth-born joys can be told to the full. But spirit-born joys cannot be told because we have not yet received a spiritual language. I have seen men's faces lit up with heaven's sunlight when the joy of the Lord has been shed abroad in their hearts. The very people who a day ago looked dull and heavy look as if they could dance for mirth because they have found the Saviour, and their soul is at peace through Him. The apostle adds that it is "full of glory." Many sensual joys are full of shame—a man with a conscience dares not tell them to his fellows. The joy of making money is not full of glory, nor is the joy of killing one's fellows in battle. There is no joy like that of the Christian, for he dares to speak of it everywhere, in every company. 2. The apostle mentions another blessing received by loving and trusting Christ. He says, "receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Every man who trusts and loves Christ is saved. When we trusted Jesus, though we used no forms and ceremonies, we received the salvation of our souls. III. WHAT FOLLOWS THEN FROM THE WHOLE OF THIS? 1. It follows, in the first place, that a state of joy and salvation is the fitting and expected condition of every believer in Christ. 2. There is another inference to be drawn from my subject, and that is for the seeking soul. If you want comfort go to Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Love a way to faith*:—You notice that in the apostle's words love comes before belief. This is certainly not what we should have expected. How can we love before we believe? Must we not first feel convinced of the reality of Christ and the genuineness of His claims? And yet, if we take the case of one who saw Christ, is it not clear that love to Him must have preceded faith? Would not love spring up at once in witnessing some act of Christ or listening to some of His words? And yet faith may have involved more difficulty. It was impossible not to love; but how was it possible to believe, in spite of all the difficulties lying in their expectations regarding the Messiah? Nay; do we not see the love of the disciples to their Master actually struggling to attain to faith in the face of their old beliefs? Love took no heed of these obstacles. For it, in view of Christ, there was no obstruction. It went straight to its object. But faith could not avoid the encounter. It had to grapple with its enemies. Is the case different with men now? Do not men in general learn to love Christ before they ever ask the question of His reality and the genuineness of His claims? And here the first thing that strikes us is the adaptation of the Gospels especially, and also, but not so markedly, of the Epistles to awaken love above all. The appeal is not made mainly and directly to the understanding and reason. Men are not argued with. There is no elaborate demonstration presented. There is no shutting up of men by inexorable logic. On the contrary, there is a picture presented of a great and marvellous life and a death of outward ignominy but transcendent moral glory. Observe how insinuating this appeal to love is. It works itself into your heart before you are aware. You are surprised into admiration and into love. The life of Jesus is so exquisitely human, so full of little touches that mean nothing to the bare intellect, but are mighty with the heart. The great qualities of Christ have the effect of rousing some answering feelings in the souls of men. Every truly elevated life has such an influence; but that of Christ in an altogether transcendent manner. Men, in this way, by a personal attachment to Christ, or admiration of Him, or enthusiasm for Him, according as their particular bent may be, grow into a love of all things noble and pure. And then another result appears. Keeping pace with this love of righteousness, penitence shows itself. A sense of sin,

and a bitter shame on account of it, grows on the man who earnestly admires Christ. What takes place when this stage is reached? The man is now in a position to appreciate the rich and tender things which Christ utters about forgiveness. And now he comes to understand that Christ is a Saviour. Whenever sin is felt to be a burden, a deeper insight is gained into Christ. And now faith in Christ has been reached. The needs of the soul, combining with love to Christ, have called out faith. They have made Christ real. When faith in Christ begins to work, then love becomes both wider and more earnest. Then love feels obligation. It feels that it has got a task to fulfil and a debt to discharge. Faith becomes henceforward the great feeder and tributary of love, bringing down supplies to it from all the mountains of truth and showers of grace. Let us notice one or two inferences from this line of thought. We see how love to an unseen Christ operates in keeping Him near to the soul in spite of the lapse of centuries. There are humble, earnest souls to-day in myriads that feel Christ more real and nearer than many who had seen Him in the flesh. How finely the natural and the spiritual blend in love to Christ! There are those who never seem to get beyond the natural. They love Christ as they love any great benefactor of the world. And who can tell just precisely when his love to Christ rose out of this sphere, and became spiritual; or when any such love becomes spiritual, aspiring, and active? Is not all true love to good and right at bottom and ultimately a love to God, if only it knew itself? Must we not speak of it as both an inspiration and an instrument of the Spirit of God who besets men everywhere and broods over them? Is not the manifestation of Christ the one grand means by which this latent love of goodness is kindled and lifted up, and recognises its centre and home? Is not the immense power that Christ has over the natural admiration of men one of His own greatest weapons and one of the things which the Spirit of God most uses? And is not this one of the main adaptations of the gospel to the whole world? And if a man attempts no tour round the world, but simply seeks what medicine he can apply to human hearts, what antidote he can find for sin and woe, how he can touch souls, and win them out of despondency and darkness, hardness and sloth and shame into light and love and joy; if he is only intent on sweetening and ennobling human life, he will find there is but one simple, ready, efficacious universal means, the story of that marvellous life and death—love to the unseen Christ (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) *Christ, though invisible, the object of devout affection*:—It is familiar to all experience and observation how much the action of our spiritual nature is dependent on the senses, especially how much the power of objects to interest the affections depends on their being objects of sight. The objects we can see give a more positive and direct impression of reality; there can be no dubious surmise whether they exist or not. The sense of their presence is more absolute. Again, the good or evil, pleasure or grievance, which the visible objects cause to us, are often immediate; they are now; without any anticipation I am pleased, benefited—or perhaps distressed. Whereas the objects of faith can be regarded as to have their effect upon us in futurity. Visible objects, when they have been seen, can be clearly kept in mind in absence—during long periods—at the greatest distance. But the great objects of faith having never been seen, the mind has no express type to revert to. With visible objects (speaking of intelligent beings) we can have a sensible and definite communication. Invisible beings do not afford us this perfect sense of communication. With visible beings (that is, with human beings) we have the sense of equality, of one kind; we are of the same nature and economy; in the same general condition of humanity and mortality. But as to the unseen existences we are altogether out of their order. With the visible beings, again, we can have a certain sense of appropriation; can obtain an interest in them which they will acknowledge. But the invisible beings! they have a high relationship of their own! They stand aloof, and far outside of the circle within which we could comprehend what we can call ours. Such are some of the advantages of converse with objects that are seen over that with the invisible. And, in view of this, taken exclusively, it was a high privilege that was enjoyed by those who saw and conversed with our Lord on earth. But this is only one side of the subject. Look a moment at the other. And we need not fear to assert—that, on the whole, it is a high advantage not to have seen Jesus Christ; an advantage in favour of the affections claimed to be devoted to Him. We need not dwell on the possibility of feeling a great interest in objects we have never beheld. Recollect what a measure of sentiment, of affection in its various modes, has been given to the illustrious heroes, deliverers of their country, avengers of oppression, and men

of transcendent intellectual power. But there is a nobler manifestation of this possibility. Think of all the affection of human hearts that has been given to the Saviour of the world since He withdrew His visible presence from it! And we still assert that it is to the advantage of the affection of His disciples toward Him that they see Him not. "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." But, more than this; revert in thought to the personal manifestation of our Lord on earth, and consider how it would act on the believing spectator's mind. Sublime greatness would, must, by an inevitable law of human feeling, be reduced, shaded, diminished, as to its impression on the mind, by being shrouded and presented in a mere human form. Consider also that, in beholding a glorious and Divine nature in such a manifestation, the affection of those devoted to him would fix very much, often chiefly, on the mere human quality of the being before them, and therefore would be familiarised, shall we say vulgarised, down to that proportion; it might be most warm and cordial, but not elevated and awful. Consider besides that, under the full direct impression of sight, there would be a great restriction on faith, acting in the way of imagination. The mind does not know how to expand into splendid ideal conception upon an object presented close and plain and familiar to sight. Should not such considerations make it evident that to see the Messiah in His personal manifestation was a mode of contemplating Him very inferior, for the excitement of the sublimer kind of affection, to that which we have to exercise by faith? The text may suggest to us an additional idea, which it could not do to those to whom the apostle wrote. We not only have not seen Him, but we live very long after the time in which He could be seen; we, therefore, in endeavouring to form a sublime conception of Him, can add, and accumulate upon the idea, all the glory that has arisen to Him from the progress of His cause in the world ever since. (*J. Foster.*)

Gratitude to Christ.—I. GRATITUDE NATURALLY BEGETS AN AFFECTIONATE ATTACHMENT TO ITS OBJECT. We ought not only to guard against an error too prevalent in our own times, namely, the excluding the affections altogether from religion, and imputing the signs of them in others to the impulse of a heated imagination, but we ought to cherish their influence as a becoming expression of our love to Jesus Christ, and a pleasing symptom of our sincerity, when we make a public profession of it. II. IT IS A NATURAL EFFECT OF GRATITUDE TO KEEP THE OBJECT OF IT MUCH IN OUR THOUGHTS. Do the privileges and benefits of the gospel interest our affections. Do our hearts burn within us when we contemplate His doctrine, His character, His astonishing humility and benevolence? III. ANOTHER EFFECT OF GRATITUDE IS TO PROCEED TO OUTWARD EXPRESSIONS OF THOSE THANKFUL SENTIMENTS WHICH INSPIRE OUR HEARTS. When we either love or hate, or grieve or rejoice in an intense degree we are sensibly gratified by the verbal expression of these affections. Words not only flow from the affections, but react upon them, and add to their vivacity and strength. IV. GRATITUDE NATURALLY DISPOSES US TO DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER AGREEABLE TO OUR BENEFACITOR, OR THAT TENDS TO PROMOTE HIS INTEREST. To pretend to love Jesus Christ while we love our sins and hold them fast is not less absurd than it would be for a man to avow allegiance to his prince while leagued with those rebellious subjects who have conspired against his person and government. When overtaken in a fault are we affected with sorrow, not only from the fear of danger, but from the consciousness of ingratitude? V. GRATITUDE NATURALLY LEADS US TO GLORY IN OUR CONNECTION WITH OUR BENEFACATORS. Jesus, a man of sorrows while He tabernacled on earth, is now exalted to the right hand of the throne of God. Our gratitude cannot add to His glory, nor can our ingratitude detract from it. But His Church, or kingdom on earth, like the kingdoms of this world, is not exempted from the vicissitudes of prosperous and adverse fates. How many alarming symptoms of the declining credit and influence of the Christian religion are exhibited in the age and country in which we live! (*T. Somerville, D.D.*) In whom . . . believing, ye rejoice.—*The duty and discipline of Christian joy*.—I. THE GRAND POSSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIAN JOY—UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY. It is quite possible to be beset all about with cares and troubles and yet to feel a pure fountain of celestial gladness welling up in our inmost hearts, sweet amidst bitter waters. There may be life beneath the snow. There may be fire burning, like the old Greek fire, below the water. A man has this power if he have two objects of contemplation, to one or other of which he may turn his mind—he can choose which of the two he will turn to. Like a railway signalman, you may either flash the light through the pure white glass or the darkly coloured one. You may either choose to look at everything through the medium of the sorrows that belong to time, or through the medium of the joys that flow from eternity. The

question is, which of the two do we choose shall be uppermost in our hearts and give the colour to our experience. And then the text reminds us that the gladness which thus belongs to the Christian life is silent and a transfigured "joy unspeakable and glorified," as the word might be rendered. "He is a poor man who can count his flock," said the old Latin proverb. Those joys are on the surface that can be spoken. The deep river goes silently, with equable flow, to the great ocean; it is the little shallow brook that chatters amongst the pebbles. The true Christian joy is glorified, says Peter. The glory of heaven shines upon it and transfigures it. It is suffused and filled with the glory for which the Christian hopes, like Stephen when "God's glory smote him on the face" and made it shine as an angel's. II. THE ONE GREAT ACT BY WHICH THIS POSSIBILITY OF GLADNESS IS TURNED INTO A REALITY. "In Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice." The act of faith is the condition of joy. Joy springs from the contemplation or experience of something calculated to excite it, and the more real, permanent, and all-sufficient that object the fuller and surer the joy. But where can we find such an object as Him with Whom we are brought into union by our faith? Jesus Christ is all-sufficient, full of pity, full of beauty and righteousness, all that we can desire—and all this for ever. But mark, the language of our text shows that our gladness will be accurately contemporaneous with our trust. As long as we are exercising faith, so long shall we experience joy—not one instant longer. It is like a piano, whose note ceases the moment you lift your finger from the key—not like an organ, in which the sound persists for a time after. III. THE GIFT WHICH ENHANCES JOY. The exercise of faith is itself joy, apart from what faith secures. We stretch out our hands to Christ, and the act is blessedness. Faith is the condition of joy, and the salvation of our souls, which we receive as its end, is the great reason for joy. Salvation is past, present, and future. Here it is clearly regarded as present. That present salvation will be a source of pure and noble joy. If my heart is humbly and even tremulously resting upon Him, I have got, in the measure of my faith, the real germ of all salvation. What are the elements of which salvation consists? The fact and the sense of forgiveness to begin with. Well, I have that, have I not, if I trust Christ? A growing possession of pure desires, heaven-wrought tastes, of all that is called in the Bible "the new man"—well! I have that, surely, if I trust Him. Such progressive salvation is given to me if I am trusting in Him, "Whom, having not seen, I love." All these will tend to joy. The present salvation points onwards to its own completion, and in that way becomes further a source of joy. In its depths we see reflected a blue heaven with many a star. The salvation here touches the soul alone, but salvation in its perfect form touches the body, soul, and spirit, and transforms all the outward nature to correspond to these and makes a worthy dwelling for perfected men. That prospect brings joy beyond the reach of aught else to afford. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Christian joy*:—I. ITS SOURCE. 1. Belief in the unseen Christ is present joy because it creates harmony in the soul. 2. Because it fills the heart with the deepest love. II. ITS NATURE. 1. It is inexpressible from the depth of its emotion. 2. It is the earnest of the future heaven. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *Believers rejoicing*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S REJOICING. Joy belongs to them, and it belongs to them only in this lower world. Joy is their duty, their privilege; joy is commanded, promised, insured: their joy is begun. II. THE SOURCE OF THIS JOY. There is enough in Christ to relieve every want, to fulfil every hope, to surpass every wish. III. THE MEDIUM OF THIS JOY. 1. Faith is the only medium of an acquaintance with Him. 2. Faith is the medium of all our intercourse with Him. IV. THE INEXPRESSIBILITY OF THIS JOY. Who can describe its sweetness, its efficiency? V. THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS JOY. (*W. Jay.*) *Rejoicing indicates strength*:—Oh, that we might have such joy as that which inspired the men at the battle of Leuthen! They were singing a Christian song as they went into battle. A general said to the king, "Shall I stop those people singing?" "No," said the king. "Men that can sing like that can fight." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Joy unspeakable*:—It were a poor thing if he that hath it could tell it all out. (*T. Leighton.*) *Deep joys*:—It is with joys as they say of cares and griefs, the deepest waters run stillest. (*Ibid.*) *Heart joys*:—True joy is a solid, grave thing, dwells more in the heart than in the face; whereas base and false joys are but superficial, skin deep (as we say); they are all in the face. (*Ibid.*) *Glorified joys*:—Glorified already—a piece of God's kingdom and heaven's happiness beforehand. (*J. Trapp.*) *Glorious enjoyment*:—When Mr. Simeon, of Cambridge, was dying, a friend sitting by his bedside asked of what he was particularly thinking. "I don't think now," he replied, with great animation. "I am enjoying." (*Tin-*

ling's Illustrations.) **Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul.**—*The godly, by faith, do even here enjoy salvation* :—The servants of God, by faith, do even here enjoy salvation and eternal life, even presently we have glory, though not in its fulness. 1. Because we are as sure of it as if we had it, as having God's hand for it, even His word, His seal, His sacrament. 2. Because even here we have the earnest of it, which is His Spirit. When earnest is given between honest men there is no going back, and shall God say and not do it? 3. Because by faith we are already entered into the first degree of it; being knit to Christ, and so perfectly justified, we are come to the suburbs of our glory, and are, as it were, at the gate, lacking nothing but to be let in by death. (*John Rogers.*) *Your personal salvation* (Psa. cxix. 41):—I shall aim at commending the salvation of God to those of you who possess it, that you may be the more grateful for your choice inheritance; and still more shall I labour to commend it to those who possess it not, that having some idea of the greatness of its value they may be stirred up to seek it for themselves. I. I shall try to COMMEND THE SALVATION OF GOD by opening up what Peter has said in the verses before us. 1. Let me urge you to give earnest heed to the salvation of God, because it is a salvation of grace (ver. 10). The Lord proposes to save you because you are miserable and He is merciful; because you are necessitous and He is bountiful. 2. Again, your closest attention may well be asked to the salvation of God when you are told in the text that it is by faith. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." "All that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that believeth in Him is not condemned." "He that believeth on Him hath everlasting life." 3. The gospel of salvation ought to be regarded by you, for it has engrossed the thoughts of prophets. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." If men that had the Holy Ghost, and were called "seers," nevertheless searched into the meaning of the Word which they themselves spoke, what ought such poor things as we are to do in order to understand the gospel? It should be our delight to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the doctrines of grace. Furthermore, when prophecy had ceased, the Holy Spirit came upon another set of men of whom our text speaks. Peter says of these things, that they "are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." 4. The apostles followed the prophets in testifying to this salvation, and with the apostles there was an honourable fellowship of earnest evangelists and preachers. These noble bearers of glad tidings continued to report this salvation till they had finished their missions and their lives, and therefore I feel that for us in these times to trifle with God's Word, and give a deaf ear to the invitations of the gospel, is an insult to their honoured memories. You martyr them a second time by contemptuously neglecting what they died to hand to you. From the dead they bear witness against you, and when they rise again they will sit with their Lord to judge you. 5. Nor have we merely prophets and apostles looking on with wonder, but our text says, "Which things the angels desire to look into." They take such an interest in us, their fellow creatures, that they have an intense wish to know all the mysteries of our salvation. We have already gone a long way with this text, rising step by step. We now behold another wonder: we rise to the angels' Master. 6. Christ is the substance of this salvation. For what saith the text? The prophets spake "beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Ah, there is the point. To save men Jesus suffered. One other step remains. It cannot be higher; it is on the same level. It is this. 7. The Holy Ghost is the witness to all this. It was the Holy Ghost that spake in the prophets; it was the Holy Ghost who was with those who reported the gospel at the first; it is the same Holy Spirit who every day bears witness to Christ. II. So far have I commended my Lord's salvation, and now I would desire you, with all this in your own minds, to turn to the prayer in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm: "Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Thy salvation according to Thy word." Use the prayer with this intent: Lord, I have been hearing what prophets and apostles and angels think of Thy salvation, what Thy Son and what Thy Spirit think of it; now let me humbly say what I think of it: Oh, that it were mine! Oh, that it would come to me! II. Thus, then, I would RECOMMEND THE PRAYER OF THE PSALMIST. 1. I will say about it, that it is in itself a very gracious prayer, for it is offered on right grounds. (1) There is no mention of merit or desert.

His entreaty is for mercy only. (2) It is a gracious prayer, because it asks for the right thing: "even Thy salvation," not a salvation of my own invention. God's salvation is one in which His Divine sovereignty is revealed, and that sovereignty must be accepted and adored. (3) You see that the prayer is put in the right form, for it is added, "Even Thy salvation according to Thy Word." He wishes to be saved in the manner which the Lord has appointed. Lord, if Thy Word says I must repent, give me Thy salvation, and cause me to repent; if Thy Word says that I must confess my sin, give me Thy salvation in the confession of sin; if Thou sayest I must trust to Christ, Lord, help me now to trust Him; only grant me Thy salvation according to Thy Word. (4) Observe that the whole prayer is conceived and uttered in a humble spirit. It is, "Let Thy salvation come also unto me." He owns his helplessness. He cannot get at the mercy, he wants it to come to him. He is so wounded and so sick that he cannot put on the plaister nor reach the medicine, and therefore he asks the Lord to bring it to him. 2. In the second place this prayer may be supported by gracious arguments. I will suppose some poor heart painfully longing to use this prayer. Here are arguments for you. Pray like this. Say, "Lord, let Thy mercy come to me, for I need mercy." Next plead this; "Lord, Thou knowest, and Thou hast made me to know somewhat of what will become of me if Thy mercy does not come to me: I must perish, I must perish miserably." Then plead, "If Thy mercy shall come to me it will be a great wonder, Lord. I have not the confidence to do more than faintly hope it may come; but, oh, if Thou dost ever blot out my sin I will tell the world of it; through eternity I will sing Thy praises, and claim to be of all the saved ones the most remarkable instance of what Thy sovereign grace can do." Then you can put this to the good Saviour. Tell Him if He will give you His salvation, He will not be impoverished by the gift. "Lord, I am a thirsty soul; but Thou art such a river that if I drink from Thee there will be no fear of my exhausting Thy boundless supply." There is another plea implied in the prayer, and a very sweet argument it is—"Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord." It means: "It has come to so many before, therefore let it come also unto me. Lord, if I were the only one, and Thou hadst never saved a sinner before, yet would I venture upon Thy word and promise. Especially I would come and trust the blood of Jesus: but, Lord, I am not the first by many millions. I beseech Thee, then, of Thy great love, let Thy salvation come unto me." 3. I will close by assuring you that this blessedly gracious prayer, which I have helped to back up with arguments, will be answered by our gracious God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Salvation the end of faith*:—I. CONSIDER THE ARTICLE SAVED—the soul, the deathless spirit by which we are distinguished from the beasts that perish. 1. Its origin. "The Lord God breathed into man the breath of life." The body was composed of what existed before; but the soul that animated it came immediately from God. 2. Its immortality. Earthly possessions are estimated according to their duration. These bodies of ours must soon go to the dust; but the soul shall exist through endless duration. What, then, can be of so much importance as the salvation of the soul? II. WHAT DOES THIS SALVATION INCLUDE? 1. Redemption from the curse of the law. This is the first step in the way to heaven. 2. This salvation includes personal meetness. We must be renewed in the spirit of our minds. III. OBSERVE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH AND SALVATION. When the Christian dies he receives the end of his faith. How is this to be understood? In the verse before the text the apostle mentions "believing" as the cause of joy. The whole end and object of faith is the salvation of the soul. The Scriptures place this principle in a most prominent position (John iii. 18-36). (*American National Preacher.*) *Salvation—its subjective elements*:—I. FAITH. "In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing." 1. Faith is the first Christian grace. Without it you are no Christian at all. 2. This faith is a personal trust in a personal Saviour. It is more than intellectual assent, even heart-reliance. 3. This faith was, moreover, a faith in an invisible Saviour. "In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing." II. LOVE. "Whom, having not seen, ye love." 1. Love is one essential element of the Christian religion. This it is indeed which distinguishes the Christian religion from the other religions of the world. 2. Our supreme love. His place in our affection is unique—He enjoys a love deeper, profounder, more lasting, than that of father or mother, of brother or sister. 3. These strangers of the Dispersion evinced their supreme love of the Saviour by suffering themselves to be despoiled of all their possessions rather than deny Him. Their love was sorely tested. III. JOY. "Ye rejoice," &c. 1. Joy is an essential

element in the religion of Jesus Christ; not joy to the exclusion of sorrow, but joy in the midst thereof. 2. This joy not only defies philosophy to explain it, but language to express it—"joy unspeakable," that cannot be told out. (1) The innermost joy of the Christian's heart is too Divine a thing, of too delicate a texture, to be exposed to the curious, unhallowed view of worldlings. And we all know of experiences too sacred, too precious and sweet, to be exposed to every gazer's eyes. (2) The joy which wells up in the Christian's heart cannot be conveyed in language, being too subtle and volatile a thing, evaporating in the very attempt to pour it from the heart into the bottles of grammatical construction. 3. This joy is "full of glory," or already glorified. (1) The inner centre of this joy is already white and glowing. (2) This joy has the evidence in itself of its ultimate glorification in the world to come. The process has been begun here, it will be perfected yonder. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

Soul salvation:—I. THE GREAT WORTH OF SOUL SALVATION. This is seen from—1. The illustrious beings interested in it. (1) Prophets. (2) Angels. (3) Apostles. (4) The Spirit of Christ in them all. 2. The Saviour Himself by whom salvation comes. (1) His sufferings. (2) His following glories. II. THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE REVELATION FOR SOUL SALVATION. 1. Predicted by the prophets. (1) Gradually and partially. (2) Unconsciously. (3) By Divine illumination. 2. Fully declared, announced, and reported. III. THE SIMPLE MEANS OF ATTAINING SOUL SALVATION. 1. Salvation is—(1) The thing for which we believe. (2) The end to which belief leads. 2. This faith is—(1) Assent of the mind. (2) Consent of the heart. (3) Response of the will. (*U. R. Thomas.*)

Salvation as it is now received:—I. WHAT OF SALVATION IS RECEIVED HERE? 1. The whole of it by the grip of faith and the grace of hope. 2. The absolute and final pardon of sin is ours at this moment. 3. Deliverance from slavish bondage, and from a sense of awful distance from God is a present relief. Peace, reconciliation, contentment, fellowship with God, and delight in God, we enjoy at this hour. 4. Rescue from the condemning power of sin is now complete. 5. Release from its dominion is ours. It can no longer command us at its will, nor lull us to sleep by its soothing strains. 6. Conquest over evil is given to us in great measure at once. Sins are conquerable. Holy living is possible. Some have reached a high degree of it. 7. Joy may become permanent in the midst of sorrow. II. HOW IS IT RECEIVED? 1. Entirely from Jesus, as a gift of Divine grace. 2. By faith, not by sight or feeling. 3. By fervent love to God. This excites to revenge against sin, and so gives present purification. This also nerves us for consecrated living, and thus produces holiness. 4. By joy in the Lord. This causes us to receive peace unspeakable, not to be exaggerated, nor even uttered. III. HAVE YOU RECEIVED IT, AND HOW MUCH? 1. You have heard of salvation, but hearing will not do. 2. You profess to know it, but mere profession will not do. 3. Have you received pardon? Are you sure of it? 4. Have you been made holy? Are you daily cleansed in your walk? 5. Have you obtained rest by faith and hope and love? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The greatness of salvation:—A German writer illustrates the greatness of our salvation after this manner. A gentleman, after the most exemplary life, died. The gate of heaven was opened, and he was welcomed as an heir of glory. One of the glorious ones was commissioned to be his conductor and teacher. First he took him to a point where he could see the most fearful representation of sin in its fruits of misery. The objects of horror made him shudder. Then his guide bade him look farther and farther down in the dismal vault, and he saw the most hideous and terrible of beings, the fruit of sin. "That," said his guide, "is what in ages of eternity you would have been had you gone on in sin." His guide next took him to a point from which could be seen the glories of the redeemed. He saw rank after rank of angels, seraphim, and cherubim, dwelling in ineffable glory. He bade him look beyond these; and in the far distance he beheld a being transcendently more radiant and glorious, around whom floated the soft music of unspeakable sweetness and joy. "That," said the guide, "is yourself many ages hence. Behold the glory and bliss to which the salvation of Jesus will bring you."

Vers. 10-12. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently.—*Salvation—the central subject of study*:—I. The prophets as examples to us in the study of salvation. 1. The intensity of their study. The word here translated "searched" is used by classic authors to describe hounds scouring the country to discover their prey. We read the Bible more from idle frivolous curiosity than from a sincere deep-rooted wish to catch a view of the blessed Messiah moving

in Divine stateliness through its histories and doctrines. Another striking similitude is suggested—that of anxious miners excavating for gold. Two young men catch the gold fever; despite the tearful entreaties of parents, they resolve to emigrate to Australia. The first morning after their arrival they rise earlier and with less difficulty than they ever did at home, shoulder their tools, and start eagerly for the much-coveted quarries. They dig, loosen a portion of the rock, pick up the stones. Observe how carefully they examine them to see if there be perceptible a slight golden tinge, just enough to feed hope; and if they discover a grain or two of gold, how the discovery cheers their hearts, nerves their arms, and transfigures their countenances! Similarly the holy men of the Jewish Church dug into the fields of Divine revelation, scanned verse after verse, dissected the sacrifices and analysed the prophecies, in order to possess a few grains of truth, a little refined gold.

2. The subject of their study—salvation. Not “after which salvation,” but “of which, concerning which.” This is one difference between heathen philosophers and Jewish prophets: the former inquired after salvation without finding it, whereas the latter possessed salvation to start with, and possessing it they had no need to search after it, but concerning it and into it. And our first concern should be to possess salvation, to be in a state of personal safety through faith in the Redeemer. Then we may at our leisure institute investigations concerning it and into it.

3. The noble spirit of resignation they evinced in presence of intellectual difficulties which they were not able to surmount. They inquired diligently; but they understood but little.

II. The apostles as examples to us in the PROCLAMATION of the gospel.

1. The subject-matter of their ministry. “The things now reported unto you”—what things? “The sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow.” These are the only things worthy of a Christian pulpit.

2. The manner of their preaching. “The things reported.” The things invented, devised, imagined? Oh no; the apostles were not inventors, but reporters; not poets, but historians; not philosophers, but witnesses. They were simply reporters, narrating, each one in his own way, the memorable events of that wonderful biography. And do they not furnish us with a much-needed example? 3. The power which accompanied their preaching—“with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” Just as much electricity exists latent in the air on a serene, tranquil day as on a day of tempest when thunders roar and lightnings flash. What, then, is the difference? Not in the amount of electricity, but in the fact that in certain conditions of the atmosphere the electricity flashes into visibility, the latent fire bursts forth into flame. Similarly the Holy Spirit is as truly present in the Church to-day as in seasons of remarkable revivals, now as in the days of Whitfield, Wesley, and Rowlands. What is wanted is—for the Spirit to make His presence felt, for the Divine electricity to flash forth into lightnings. Pray for His manifestation; and then the weakest preacher among the tribes will be as the house of David, and the house of David as the angel of God.

III. The angels an example to us in the WONDER AND ADORATION that should fill our minds in the contemplation of this salvation.

1. What are the things here referred to? The answer is obvious—the same things which the prophets predicted and the apostles proclaimed. The burden of the study as of the song of these celestial beings is—“the Lamb that was slain.” And if redemption in its various phases receives the attention and homage of angels, is it not deserving of our devout and worshipful meditation? 2. Into these things the angels desire to look. The word, it is said, might be rendered a little differently—“into which things the angels desire to look,” to look askance, to look one side as it were over the shoulder. What, then, is the idea? That salvation fronts not the angels, who consequently have to stretch the neck and look aside, as it were round the corners, to catch a glimpse of its glory. But so enraptured are they with the beauty they behold that they strive to see more and more, crowding into the churches to learn what they may of the “manifold”—many-coloured—“wisdom of God.” No; salvation does not front the angels, but it fairly and fully fronts the children of men. Shall we front it? What is our attitude towards it to-day? Have we our backs or our faces towards this salvation? His face is towards us; are our faces towards Him? (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

The gospel meridian:—St. Peter here exalts the nature of that glorious reward which is to be the end of tried and purified faith—the salvation of the soul.

I. UNFULFILLED DESIRES. This is a world of desire. We all crave for something we have not got. We crave for possessions and we crave for knowledge.

1. Noblest desires are often unattained. It is not every one who seeks for selfish pleasure. What could have been a more noble aspiration than that of the prophets of old to realise the salvation of which they prophesied? They pro-

claimed a blessedness which, after diligent search, they discovered was not for themselves to enjoy. How often does God put a limit even to our highest aspirations! One has sought to gain a high knowledge of gospel truth; but his health has broken down. A missionary, in the full possession of manhood and strength, is murdered, and his work apparently crushed. It is the Lord's doing, but it seems strange in our eyes. 2. Legitimate curiosity, when exerted, affords scant satisfaction. It might be in accordance with human nature to inquire particularly into the plans and purposes of God; but the prophets of old expended their curiosity in vain. There is little purpose in investigating too closely the hidden purposes of God. God expects us to do His work, and not to inquire very minutely into the motives or ends of that work. II. UNENLIGHTENED INSTRUMENTALITIES. The prophets had to inquire respecting the salvation. We have here brought before us one of the mysteries connected with Divine work. 1. God's instrumentalities are not perfect. It is not necessary that they should be so. The world expects the ministers of the gospel to explain all God's purposes, all the Divine plans, and to lay bare the whole current of future events. But even the prophets of old were not altogether wise. 2. God's instrumentalities do not always possess that which they announce to others. III. UNAPPRECIATED ATTAINMENT. It is evident that the apostle introduces the desire of the prophets and the desire of the angels to realise the mysteries of revelation, not out of mere aimless illustration, but to remind his people of the little interest they felt, and at the same time to arouse in them a spirit of emulation. But how do we act with regard to them? Do we sell all that we have in order to make them ours? Do we sacrifice everything else to enjoy them? Alas! the characters, and energy, and desire, and love of those who only had a shadow of good things to come ought to cause us to lie low with shame, and to pray for the stirring influence of the Holy Spirit to prick our thankless and unappreciative souls. (*J. J. S. Bird.*) *The value of the Old Testament*.—1. Let me caution you against the ignorant frivolity which, professing to reverence the Scriptures of the New Testament, speaks slightly of those of the Old. As well may you sever the light of the meridian from its dawn; or, cutting a sunbeam in two, retain only the nearer portion. 2. Another popular conceit of our day is, that there is but little use in studying the prophetic Word of God, or, at least, beyond what lies on the surface. This, you perceive, was not the temper of the prophets: They "diligently inquired and searched." Into these things "angels long to gaze." 3. If such be the interest felt by all that is wisest and holiest in earth and heaven, in whatever concerns the redemption of man, alas for those to whom this great salvation itself is offered, and who yet choose to live and die in the neglect of it! 4. Let the afflicted children of God take comfort from the consideration of what was foretold, and has been fulfilled, in regard to God's own Well-Beloved, the Author and Finisher of their faith, to whose image it is God's purpose, and the dearest ambition of their hearts, that they shall be in all things conformed. (*J. Lillie, D.D.*) *The Bible as a grand moral painting*.—I. THE EXTRAORDINARY SUBJECT. What is the subject? "The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Open this Book, spread out its pages, and what have you? A wide-spread canvas, on which is displayed this one great subject in every hue and form. This picture is divided into two parts. At one end you have "the sufferings of Christ"; at the other end "the glory arising out of these sufferings." The side on which the sufferings are depicted is full of incident, yet in dark shade. There you see the Babe. In one part, you see Him lying in a manger; in another, in the temple undergoing the painful rite of circumcision; and in another, in the arms of His affrighted mother fleeing into Egypt. But on the other end of the picture you have a striking contrast. Here is "the glory that follows." Here you see Him rising from the grave as the conqueror of death, the Prince of Life, and ascending to heaven amidst the rapturous shouts of an exulting creation. What glory will rise out of these sufferings! What new manifestations of God! What new motives to virtue! What new thrills of joy! Amongst the lessons which this extraordinary picture suggests we may mention three:—1. The malignant animus of sin. What produced these sufferings of Christ that you see depicted here? Sin. 2. The benign tendency of the Divine government. Glory comes out of these sufferings; good is educed from evil. This is God's work. As out of sin comes suffering, out of suffering shall come glory. 3. The issue of suffering virtue. The sufferings of Christ were the sufferings of virtue; and they issued in glory. And so it will ever be. Goodness, however persecuted and afflicted, shall yet ascend the throne. II. THE DISTINGUISHED ARTISTS. Who are the men that drew this wonderful picture? The text speaks of two classes: The prophets who prophesied of the "glory that should

come unto you"; and the apostles who "reported." The prophets drew the dim and shadowy outline. The other class of artists are the apostles. "The things" concerning Christ which the prophets "did minister," the apostles "reported"; they "reported" them when they preached the gospel "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." The apostles, as artists, had an advantage over the prophets: they had those outlines of our Saviour's history which the old prophets had drawn. And they had in connection with this, the living subject, Christ. He had appeared amongst them, they had seen Him, and talked with Him. They therefore filled up the outlines of the picture which the old prophets had drawn.

III. THE INSPIRING GENIUS. All real art implies genius. Genius to conceive the true and to embody it—creative and executive genius. Who was the inspiring genius of this painting? Peter tells us that in the prophets' case it was "the Spirit of Christ that was in them"; and in the apostles' case, "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." This appears clear from the very nature of the work. Before a being can draw a correct picture of another he must have two things—a correct image of the subject in his own mind, and the proper skill correctly to transfer that image to the canvas.

1. The character of the subject. How did the prophets and apostles get a conception of Him whom they here depict?—a character so thoroughly unique, so entirely adverse to *a priori* impression and observation too! The highest virtue associated with the greatest suffering; the most despised man in personal connection with God. Things so contrary meeting in the same one life, render the idea of man creating such a history out of his own imagination all but absurd. The "Spirit of Christ," within them, gave them an image of some strange personage, but they knew not of whom.

2. The method of execution. A man may form a correct image of a person, and yet lack the artistic skill to transfer it to the canvas. The execution of the subject is, indeed, as unique as the conception. All mere human art is labour; effort is seen in every touch. But these men, in a few simple words about what they saw and heard, present the hero life-like in every point. The "Spirit of Christ" that was in them, not only drew to their imagination the manifold aspect of His own being, but guided their pencil in every line, to portray the same. In human productions, both in literature and art, the author generally appears, and sometimes is offensively prominent. But not so here.

IV. THE ILLUSTRIOUS SPECTATORS. "Into which things the angels desire to look." But why should they be so interested in it?

1. Because it is suited to excite their intellectual natures. Anything extraordinary has a power to rouse the inquiring faculty.

2. Because it is suited to excite their religious natures. To a devout spirit nothing is more interesting or attractive than a manifestation of God.

3. Because it is suited to excite their benevolent natures.

V. THE GLORIOUS PURPOSE.

1. Look at the universality of the purpose. "Not for themselves," but "unto us they did minister these things."

2. Look at the blessedness of the purpose. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (D. Thomas, D.D.)

The study of salvation:—I. First, THAT THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE IS A SUBJECT ABLE TO FILL THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE DIVINEST AND WISEST MEN. The prophets have a subject able to fill them; yea, more than they are able to conceive of to the full, which may serve for two uses. First, for humiliation, that we should be so barren-hearted and able to conceive so little of so Divine a subject. Secondly, for singular consolation to the godly. For by this it appeareth that they have an admirable portion in that such worthy men so much admire it.

II. Secondly, THAT AS ANY HAVE MORE GRACE, SO THEY ARE MORE HEARTILY AFFECTED WITH THE ESTIMATION AND DESIRE AFTER THE SALVATION OF GOD'S ELECT. Certainly, so long as we can admire anything more than the grace of God to His people, our hearts are void of grace.

III. Thirdly, THAT WHEN WE GO ABOUT ANYTHING THAT CONCERNS SALVATION, ESPECIALLY OUR OWN SALVATION, WE SHOULD HERE LEARN OF THE PROPHETS TO DO IT WITH ALL DILIGENCE. There are three sorts of men Satan doth in the Church bewitch.

1. The first are they that will take no pains at all, nor trouble themselves to study about their religion and what belongs to their souls.

2. The second are they that, though they will study diligently, yet it is in by-studies, as matters of controversy, or the general knowledge of religion, or matter that may fit them for discourse, or the like.

3. Now a third sort there are that will not be drawn aside from the needfullest studies, as repentance, assurance, order of life, &c., but their fault is that they study not these diligently. For they soon give over and finish not their works either of mortification, or sanctification, or illumination, or preparation for salvation. (N. Byfield.)

Salvation explored:—I. THE PARTY OF EXPLORERS.

1. Who they were—"the prophets."

2. Divinely commissioned. "The Lord of Hosts hath spoken it." 3. Divinely guided. "What manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify." II. THE GROUND EXPLORED. "Salvation." (1) The limits of the field. "So great salvation." "Eternal salvation." 2. The nature and object of their labours. "Who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE EXPLORATION WAS CONDUCTED. 1. A longing to discover salvation. 2. Mental activity. "Searched," &c. 3. The work was continuous. "Diligently." 4. Scrutiny. "Searching what, and what manner of time," &c. IV. THE MERITORIOUS CENTRE OF THIS EXPLORED SALVATION. "The sufferings of Christ." 1. It centres itself in a person. 2. In a Divine person. 3. In a suffering person. V. THEIR EXPLORATIONS CARRIED THE PROPHETS TO THE GRAND REWARD OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS. "And the glory that should follow." (*John Edwards.*) *The Scriptures sufficient for salvation*:—A worthy sufferer of the name of Hawkes was under examination before one of Bonner's chaplains, of whom he ventured to inquire, "Is not the Scripture sufficient for my salvation?" "Yes," replied the chaplain; "it is sufficient for our salvation, but not for our instruction." "Well, then," rejoined the honest but quaint martyr, "God send me salvation, and take you the instruction." **Searching what . . . the Spirit of Christ . . . did signify**—*The Spirit of Christ and the prophets*:—The testimony of the Spirit in the prophets was—I. TO CHRIST JESUS. While the world sinned and slept, Infinite Love prepared its Saviour. II. TO THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. The theme of all Spirit-taught ministers. III. TO THE GLORY THAT SHOULD FOLLOW (R.V., glories). Christ's glories are—1. The well-earned reward of His griefs. 2. The majestic and fitting consummation of His mediatorial course; incomparable in its humiliation; peerless in its purity; and merging into the splendour of the final glory. 3. They mark the full approbation and delight in Him of the Eternal Father, sealing redemption with sublime approval. 4. They are the consolation of God, angels, and men. We never could have forgiven the Cross if the crown had not followed. 5. The Illuminated Gateway of the saints' eternity. "With Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." 6. A blessed counterpart to His sorrows. Sufferings balanced with glories. For "sin" and "curse," mediatorial holiness upon essential holiness. 7. They "followed" and for ever follow. When Calvary shall be seen far back like a distant ruddy star, the glory shall still spread around and onward, a measureless sea of brightness. (*W. B. Haynes.*) **Testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ**.—*The sufferings of Christ*:—I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. 1. The person that suffered was God, and also man. 2. The nature and extent of His sufferings. Corporeal and mental. 3. The persons for whom the sufferings of Christ were endured. 4. The design for which Christ suffered. That He might finish transgression, and make an end of sin. II. THE GLORY THAT SHOULD FOLLOW. (*The Congregational Pulpit.*) **The glory that should follow**.—*Three degrees of Christ's glory*:—1. His resurrection. 2. His ascension. 3. He shall one day come unto judgment, and bring all His servants to His glory. (*John Rogers.*) *Through afflictions believers come to glory*:—But how shall we come to glory? Even by the same way that our Head hath gone before us, by sufferings. It follows—1. That afflictions or persecutions are no ill sign, but rather of the way to heaven and glory; it should encourage us to suffer, seeing glory follows; and a great reward ensue thereupon. 2. That those who will suffer no affliction nor persecution for Christ and the gospel, but shifting themselves therefrom, aim at the glory of the world, are not in the way to glory, but shame hereafter will be their portion. (*Ibid.*) **Not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister**.—*Unselfish ministry*:—Such is the Divine interpretation of the prophet's work. Their ministry was not for themselves, but for a later age. They must bear the burden of perplexity and disappointment, of hope deferred and doubts unresolved, in the sure confidence that others would enter into their labours. And, indeed, such confidence brings all the light which we need for courageous endurance. The crown of service is to know that the service, barren, perhaps, for the moment, will bear fruit in after-time. Thus the words of the apostle are a voice of encouragement to all who catch a distant and interrupted vision of the later fulfilment of God's will. "Not unto themselves, but unto you"—this is the judgment which history addresses to us in recording the toils and aims of those to whom we owe our splendid inheritance in our national Church. They gave their best in thought and deed to the cause of God, and left the using to His wisdom. Now I wish to speak of our debt to the future. For, as we contemplate our gathered treasures, we cannot but ask to what use we shall put them, and so we pass on to the wider question of the office which

we are called to fulfil for our children. The progress of human life imposes the duty of large forethought on each such succeeding generation with ever-increasing force. Thought advances with accelerated motion. We may check or we may further the expression of the vital energy. We may, by wilful and impatient self-assertion, delay the end which even in our ignorance we desire; or we may by wise humility become in perfect devotion fellow-workers with God. Under this aspect the work of the Church is prophetic. Its ministers are set to provide that under every change of circumstances the Divine idea of life shall be presented in conformity with the circumstances under which it must be realised; to watch with dispassionate regard the currents of popular thought that they may prepare a natural welcome for fresh voices of the Spirit; to guard, to develop that which in the Divine order will be the ruling idea of the next generation. 1. There is, I say, already among us a final perception of the unity of creation which it will be the health of our children to realise—a unity in Christ. Many of us have watched from the beginning the progress of the physical conceptions of the conservation and transformation of energy. We have apprehended with increasing clearness that nothing in the universe is isolated, and that we ourselves enter into all of which we are conscious. 2. There is again among us a growing acknowledgment of the unity of society which it will be the strength of our children to realise—a unity in Christ. Every one speaks of the present tendency towards democracy. The idea of democracy is not, if we look below the surface, so much a form of government as a confession of human brotherhood. It is the confession of common duties, common aims, common responsibilities. 3. There is yet more among us a feeling after a unity of humanity, a vaster, fuller, enduring human life, which it will be the joy of our children to realise—a unity in Christ. Such thoughts as these of an unrealised unity felt to be attainable, felt to correspond with the idea of creation given back to us in redemption, answer to the spirit of the age. They are in the air. They foreshow, that is, the truths which in the fulfilment of the Divine order are offered to us by the Holy Spirit. It is for the Church in the fulfilment of its prophetic office, even with imperfect and troubled knowledge, to welcome them, to give them shape, and to transmit them to the next age for the guidance and inspiration of its work. The truths lie, as I have said, in the gospel of the Incarnation. The urgent problems, the very dangers which rise before us, disclose in the central fact of all life—the Word became flesh—new depths of wisdom and consolation. We do not yet know the end—we have no power to know it—but we know the way—even Christ, who is able to subdue all things unto Himself. In that Presence we confess that the world is not a factory, or a warehouse, or a paradise of delights, but a sanctuary in which God's glory can be recognised and His voice still heard. But in spite of every burden of toil, of ignorance, of weariness, of suffering laid on sinful man, it is a sanctuary, full of the glory of God, in which each believer offers the worship of life and the sacrifice of his whole being. This light, this larger significance of things, this heavenly splendour of earth, this sense of opportunity, is even now borne in upon us on many sides, and it is the prophetic office of the Church to discern the signs of the fresh dayspring from on high, and prepare her sons to use the lessons of the new order. (*Bp. Westcott.*)

Living for future generations:—Sometimes in worldly things this thought of living for a future generation comes with startling effect upon a worldly man. "What am I toiling and moiling for? I shall soon be dead and gone, and these houses, lands, estates, debentures, shares, what not, will be for others!" Even in this there may be some far off touch of the Divine; for such men sometimes live in this respect unselfish lives—not for them the enjoyment of those soft luxuries they are gathering about them, but for their children and children's children. Not to themselves they minister—and so far we say there may be some soul of good even in this; only let us all remember that the best heritage we can ever leave to our children is that of a wise, pious, charitable example. (*T. C. Finlayson.*)

Unselfish ministries self-remunerative:—The true preachers of the gospel, though their ministerial gifts are for the use of others, yet that salvation they preach they lay hold on and partake of themselves, as your boxes wherein perfumes are kept for garments and other uses, are themselves perfumed by keeping them! (*T. Leighton.*)

Which things the angels desire to look into.—*The doctrine of salvation, the study of angels*:—I. THE NATURE OF THE TRUTH AFFIRMED. 1. The object of inquiry is—salvation and its concomitants: a salvation which consists in deliverance from condemnation, from the love and power of sin, and in restoration to peace and happiness; a salvation revealed in the Scriptures; a salvation the subject of

prophecy; a salvation which, both in respect to its nature and the time of its accomplishment, engaged the most serious attention of the prophets; a salvation which rests, not on the merit or power of many, but on the grace of God; a salvation effected by the sufferings, death, and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The persons engaged in this inquiry. The angels do not partake of body, nor organic eye, nor ear, nor other sense, yet they have powers equivalent to these faculties, even increased and extended; for they are represented as knowing the interior as well as the surface of things. They are as powerful as they are wise. They have been corrupted by no apostasy from God. They are true, just, benevolent, devout, they glorify God, and thereby completely answer the ends of their creation. They are, at the same time, as happy as they are good; they feel no pain, know no want; their perceptions are all pleasant, thoughts all elevated, employments all dignified.

3. The manner in which they conduct this inquiry. They "desire to look into" them. Looking is a species or modification of seeing. It implies seeing, but it includes more. In seeing, the mind is often in a considerable degree passive; an object is brought before the eye, and it must be seen, although it may not be considered or attended to. In looking, the mind is not only active, but it puts forth all its powers with energy. The object is not brought to it, but it is sought for; and when it is found the eye is directed towards it, and kept fixed upon it, to the exclusion of other objects. When we speak of seeing, as applied to the mind, it means apprehension or discovery. Nothing is so laborious and fatiguing to the mind as fixed, intense thought; and very great must be the importance or charms of an object which can engage it. But such is the importance and such are the charms of the things of salvation to angels, that they not only bend their capacious minds to this subject, and prosecute it with fixed, intense, and eager thought, but they consider it as an object of pleasure; for they not only look, but they desire to look into the things which pertain to salvation.

II. THE CREDIBILITY OF THIS TRUTH. It naturally excites surprise when we are told that angels, who have no immediate connection with salvation, should leave their native employments to investigate it with so much earnestness and solicitude. This, however, upon reflection, will be found to be a fact as reasonable as it is true.

1. The things which pertain to salvation form an object the contemplation of which is peculiarly adapted to the capacities of angels. In the salvation of Christ there is a new revelation of God; a new display of Divine character and attributes; not to be discovered in any other thing or in any other way within the whole compass of the universe of God. An object so completely adapted to the talents and to the duties of angels imposes obligations upon them to inquire into its nature and properties, which without blame, they could not neglect.

2. The things which pertain to salvation form an object which is peculiarly calculated to attract the notice of angels. They, in visiting, age after age, the utmost bounds of the creation of God, must have seen mighty wonders unknown to man; yet, after all, there is something, if I may so express myself, in the nature and texture, in the magnitude and utility of salvation, which has not its equal in the whole universe of God. It is this, therefore, that justly attracts their notice, and leads them to bend their mighty minds to the investigation of a subject so singularly astonishing.

3. The things which pertain to salvation form an object the knowledge of which will be highly beneficial to angels. It reveals to them new attributes, and discovers new glories in the Divine character; it increases their piety and devotion; it will afford them new employments, and add to their usefulness; it will enable them to discharge better the duties of their high office of ministering to the heirs of salvation; and it will give them a sweeter voice and a loftier tone in performing the heavenly song, which ascribes blessing and power and dominion to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

4. The things which pertain unto salvation form an object in attending to which angels serve God. When angels trace in salvation evidences of wisdom, power, and glory, far superior to those which appear in the other works of God; when they admire the wonderful events of the incarnation, atonement, and redemption, these new things which have happened in the earth, their reverence and love towards the Divine Being are thereby increased; they render homage to the Son of God; and, in so doing, they obey the commandment which God hath given; for when He brought His First Begotten into the world, He said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him"; and thus they serve Him with increasing diligence and zeal.

III. THE UTILITY OF THIS TRUTH. 1. It is calculated to rescue the doctrine of salvation from unworthy treatment. Yes! angels are captivated by the doctrines of salvation which men

presume to neglect. 2. It should give the doctrine of salvation dignity in the eyes of men. 3. It indicates the manner in which the doctrine of salvation should be studied. 4. It should encourage perseverance in endeavouring to attain the knowledge of the doctrine of salvation. 5. The greatness of the privileges of those to whom the knowledge of salvation is offered. Jesus Christ is emphatically styled in the Scriptures the unspeakable gift of God; and surely to attain the knowledge of salvation through Him, must be the most important privilege that possibly can be enjoyed. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) *Redemption, a study to the angels*:—It cannot but be deemed remarkable that we should be so isolated from the rest of the universe. Here are millions of orbs brought within the range of our vision by the telescope. We cannot doubt that they are the abodes of rational creatures. Yet of the races that tenant these countless worlds we know absolutely nothing. One race only besides our own is introduced to us: and of that, the notices are quite too meagre to satisfy us. We see just enough of the angels to wish to see a great deal more. We “desire to look” into their affairs, as they into ours. We are on safe ground in ascribing to them superior intelligence and ample knowledge. But the knowledge of a creature, whatever his rank, must necessarily be progressive. The angels, like ourselves, must learn things by the event—excepting when God may have been pleased to reveal His purposes to them. But, except through some special revelation, of which we have no hint, it was impossible they should foresee the extraordinary transactions which were to distinguish this orb from all the others scattered through the wide fields of space. From the very first, however, the Divine procedure on this planet would arrest their attention. How would it astonish them to witness the temptation. They had seen Satan and his fellow-apostates cast down to hell: and yet he is now permitted to come to this new-born world, and to appropriate one of the lower animals to the atrocious purpose of seducing the happy pair from their allegiance. Is it fanciful to imagine that this event would fill the angels with amazement? that they would say one to another, “How can these things be?” But something no less inexplicable would now inflame their curiosity. They had heard the threatening, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” It came from lips which could not lie. And yet Adam and Eve do not “die,”—*i.e.*, they do not, on their transgression, “return to the dust,” nor are they banished into outer darkness. Whether this was intelligible to them we do not know. The fall occurred before the birth of Cain. We are not certain that the angels had ever seen an infant. Among their own race we may with confidence affirm they had not. The difference between our race and their own, in this particular, could not fail to interest them. They were all created in the full maturity of their powers. In some way the seed of this woman is to bruise the serpent’s head. Obscure as this intimation must have been, as well to the angels as to the guilty pair, it would unveil to them a new attribute of the Godhead. Up to this period, it would seem, they had known nothing of the Divine mercy. Its absence could be no defect in their eyes, for the idea of mercy was not yet born into the universe of creatures. What a discovery was this which now broke upon them! Truth, justice, goodness, holiness—with these attributes they were familiar. But of mercy they had never heard. Enfolded in the depths of His own infinitude, she had been from eternity awaiting the appointed day of her epiphany, her glorious manifestation to heaven and earth. Yet even now that the period has come, she does not rise full-orbed upon the world, but mild and gentle, like the dawn, as befits the quality of mercy. But this shall suffice for angelic eyes. Though mercy never spake before, she needs no interpreter. These occurrences could not fail to stimulate the curiosity of the angels. They would watch with deep solicitude the course of the Divine administration towards our world. They would treasure every fresh intimation of the future deliverance to be effected by the seed of the woman. The presumption is, that during those forty centuries it was a perpetual study to them; and that as the beneficent scheme was gradually developed, it only increased their desire to look into its unfathomable mysteries. 1. The first and chief of these is, to quote St. Peter’s own words, “the sufferings of Christ”: by which we may understand His entire work of humiliation from Bethlehem to Calvary. We must believe that the angels knew, long before the advent, that the Second Person of the Trinity was to be the Redeemer of the world. But it is not certain that they had any distinct conception of the Incarnation. “Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.” How could they have penetrated this mystery beforehand? There was neither precedent nor analogy to aid them in resolving it. Accustomed as they were to render co-equal honours to the Trinity, and especially to adore the Son in

"the possession of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was," how could they think of Him as stooping to be "born of a woman," as coming into this revolted world as an infant, blending His Divinity and our humanity in an indissoluble unity? Imagine what a season of suspense those thirty years must have been to them which Jesus passed at Nazareth. How often would they visit the favoured village. In what vast encampments would they spread around it. As He emerged from His seclusion to enter upon His public ministry, their interest would become deeper and deeper still, until it found its culmination in the Cross. 2. Not only would the angels desire to look into the "sufferings of Christ," but into the application of redemption also. They were familiar with two types of character, perfect holiness and unmitigated depravity; and with two conditions of being, unalloyed happiness and absolute misery. Neither their own history nor, so far as we are informed, the annals of any other sphere supplied them with any example of a character in which these elements were commingled, or afforded any hint of a possible transition from one state to the other. They knew nothing of forgiveness, nothing of renewal. The sacrifice on Calvary now opens to them a new world, on earth as well as in heaven. They had, indeed, seen something of this before, for the efficacy of the great expiation reached backward to the fall. But its triumph was reserved for the new dispensation. And here they see His miracles of mercy—not less marvellous in their effects upon the souls of men than had been those of the Messiah upon their bodies. There must be much in the history of individual believers to awaken their sympathies, but still more in the general welfare of the Church. We may be sure that things have not always gone as they expected: that events have constantly occurred which were well-nigh as inexplicable to them as to us. Must it not be a marvel to them that the Church, the purchase of Christ's blood, should have made its way so slowly and so painfully in the world? that at one time it should be poisoned with error; at another, frozen with formalism; at a third, debauched with secularity; at a fourth, fissured and rent with internal strife? 3. Here, in fact, is another of the themes which stimulate the curiosity of the angels, "the glories which should follow." They have seen the "sufferings of Christ": they would fain see His glory. They have seen—they see now—the sufferings of His Church: they would see its glory. They can, no doubt, frame a better conception of them than we can. And this very circumstance must increase their solicitude to witness the final result. They saw the first faint lineament of the august plan in Eden. They see also the preparation for it which is going on in heaven. No wonder that they long for its sublime consummation. If we inquire whence this curiosity on their part, we may easily conjecture some of the motives which prompt it. (1) Without dwelling upon that simple craving after knowledge which pertains to every created intelligence, we may refer to the aid which the angels derive from redemption in their study of the character and government of God. To any creature the knowledge of the Creator is the most important of all knowledge. To holy beings, no study can be so attractive. The angels, as already observed, have signal advantages for this study. But there is no volume open to them which yields so much information concerning God as redemption. Heaven cannot lack for evidences of the Divine wisdom; but if it would see this attribute in its glory, it must come down to earth. Its grand achievement is redemption. And what we affirm of His wisdom we claim also for His other moral attributes. Here "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." Nowhere else has the Deity made so full, so august, so grateful, a revelation of Himself. (2) A second reason is to be found in their personal concern in the results of redemption. It is an opinion sanctioned by many eminent names in theology, that the good angels owe their confirmation in holiness in some way to the mediation of Christ. We read, *e.g.*, of "the elect angels." We are told that God "gathers together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him." And that "all power is given Him in heaven and in earth." There is another respect in which they are interested in this work. In the revolt of their associates, they become no less their enemies than the enemies of God. In all the plots and counterplots, the assaults and repulses, the victories and defeats, of this war of centuries, they have taken a conspicuous part. Their immediate personal concern in it, then, is a cogent reason why they should desire to look into the mystery which infolds it. (3) And this imports that their own happiness is involved in the issue. Merely to glance at this point, the benevolence of the angels must attract them to the study of redemption. They know what the happiness of heaven is. Here is a race whose destiny is undecided,

the only race which is in this anomalous condition. Whatever the issue, it must be irreversible. The fate of millions of souls hangs upon the trembling balance. Is it for an angel to look upon such a scene with indifference? Reflections—1. Let us borrow from this scripture a single ray of light to set forth the quality of that scepticism which men of cultivated minds sometimes cherish respecting Christianity. Now, as of old, the gospel is “to the Jew a stumbling-block and to the Greek foolishness.” You stigmatise it as not only oppressive in its demands, but even irrational in its principles. Go to the angels for a lesson of humility. 2. There is a keen rebuke in this scripture for those who are living in the neglect of the gospel. (*H. A. Boardman, D.D.*) *Salvation—mysterious and glorious*:—I. MYSTERIOUS, and therefore a subject of angelic study. 1. From its novelty. 2. From the moral character of the race to be redeemed. 3. From the manner of its accomplishment. 4. From the mode of its promulgation. 5. From the manner in which the tidings of this salvation, even when preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, are received by the children of men. II. INFINITELY GLORIOUS. 1. In its exhibition of the Divine character. 2. In its transforming efficacy. 3. In its diffusive nature. 4. In the freeness with which its blessings are offered. (1) To all indiscriminately. (2) In perfect sincerity. (3) On terms easy, and within the reach of every individual. 5. In the perpetuity and fullness of its blessings. (*James Floy, M.A.*) *The angels' attitude towards the redemptive plan*:—I. CLOSE ATTENTION. II. DEEP AMAZEMENT. III. WARM ADMIRATION. IV. HIGH DELIGHT. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *Redemption the subject of admiration to the angels*:—I. FIRST, WE ARE TO MENTION THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION WHICH ARE PROBABLY THE SUBJECT OF ADORING INQUIRY, OR PERHAPS HOLY ASTONISHMENT, TO THE ANGELS OF GOD. 1. The first thing I shall mention is the Incarnation of the Son of God; the union of the Divine and human nature, by the Word's being made flesh. It is probable that this discovery was made to the angels gradually, as it was to men. There is one circumstance in the Incarnation itself, which is certainly as astonishing as any, That He was not only made flesh, but sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” What so opposite to the nature of God as sin? And what so surprising, as that the Son of God, though without sin, yet should in all respects outwardly be like to sinners? that He should be taken for a sinner, treated as a sinner, and at last crucified as a more than ordinary sinner? 2. Another circumstance which must afford matter for adoring inquiry to the celestial spirits, is the substitution of an innocent person in the room of the guilty, and His suffering from the hand of God. The angels had always hitherto seen innocence and holiness attended with peace and felicity, and they had seen the apostate spirits laid under an irreversible sentence of condemnation. What astonishment, then, must it have given them, what new views of the boundless sovereignty and unsearchable wisdom of the Most High must it have opened to them, when they heard Him saying, “Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom!” How often must they have been put to a stand, what to think of the severity and persecution, the contempt and opposition which Christ met with from those very sinners whom He came to save! But above all, how must they have been at a loss to comprehend His being exposed, not only to the contempt of man, but to the wrath of God! For “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief.” 3. Another circumstance in the plan of redemption through Christ, which will afford matter of wonder to the celestial spirits, is the free justification of sinners, and their acceptance with God, through the imputed righteousness of Christ. Must not this appear a new and extraordinary plan to the angels, who, by personal and perfect obedience, retain the favour of their Creator, and who had been hitherto strangers to the influence and intercession of a mediator? who had seen no such thing take place when their brethren sinned (*Heb. ii. 16*). The holy angels will rather say, “Let us step aside and see this great sight.” They will then see that there is no way more proper for maintaining the dignity of the Divine Government; nay, that it is the only way by which those who have been sinners can be received into favour. They will see and confess that there is no circumstance whatever that tends more to level the pride of the sinner's heart, and bring him to universal submission, and absolute subjection to the sovereignty of God. 4. Another circumstance in the mystery of the gospel which will be matter of wonder to the angels, is the application of redemption, or the manner and means of translating sinners “from darkness to light,” and “from the power of Satan unto God.” II. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. 1. What you have heard will contribute, I hope, to show the guilt of those who despise the gospel, and serve to remove the offence of the Cross. 2. You may learn from what has been said the encouragement

that is given to sinners to return to God through Christ. 3. From what hath been said upon this subject, you may examine your title to partake of the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper; or, in other words, your right to the favour of God and to eternal life. No disposition more suitable, none more necessary at a communion-table than a grateful and admiring sense of redeeming love. 4. From what has been said, learn what is your most proper employment at the Lord's table. Adore and contemplate the riches of redeeming grace, that great theme which "the angels desire to look into." (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *Angels, students in the mysteries of redemption*:—

I. WHAT THOSE THINGS ARE WHICH THE ANGELS LOOK INTO. They must of necessity be the things which the apostle had been speaking of, especially in the three preceding verses: the things of Christ. 1. The Incarnation of Christ, or His coming into this world (1 Tim. iii. 16.) 2. The life of Christ. That perfect pattern of all that was excellent is often before their eyes. 3. The death of Christ.

The love of it, in His dying for sinful man, must be to them subject of perpetual wonder and praise. 4. The doctrines of Christ. His admirable lessons of piety and virtue; His wise precepts and instructions; His wonderful revelations of the Divine will must be highly entertaining to them (Rev. xiv. 6.) 5. The promises of Christ. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ANGELS LOOK INTO THESE THINGS. 1. With wonder. 2. With the closest attention. 3. With reverence. 4. With delight. 5. With praise. III. THE PROOF OR REASON OF THEIR DOING SO. 1. The angels being employed so much about these things, seems to show that they desire to look into them. 2. These things concern angels as well as men. God is their Father as well as ours, and the portion of both. 3. God is glorified in and by these things. Their work is to glorify Him (Rev. vii. 11; Psa. cxlviii. 2.) 4. They are for the highest good of man, and therefore the angels desire to look into them. They have a generous concern for our welfare. 5. The subject matter of these things is such, as that the angels must needs desire to look into them. Never were greater things than those which Christ has revealed to us. Application: 1. Since the angels look into these things, do you look more into them? 2. Since the angels look into these things, do you put a higher value upon them? 3. Since the angels look into these things, see that you have a saving interest in them, otherwise the angels that look into them will witness against you. (*T. Hannam.*)

The angelic study of redemption:—In order to ascertain what Peter means by the phrase "which things," we must look back to the antecedent context. It is plain, therefore, that the matters of angelic solicitude here referred to, are just the same as those of prophetic study; that is to say, the salvation of the gospel; or, as it is more minutely described in the eleventh verse, "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The text farther declares in what manner the angels study these subjects. In the holy of holies, the most secret shrine of the Jewish temple, stood the ark of the covenant, an apparatus in whose interior was deposited the canon of the Mosaic law, the blessings and the curses, the promises and the threatenings, of God's most holy word. Over the top of this ark was laid a covering or lid of massive gold, which was denominated the Mercy-Seat. It was a symbol of our Saviour's propitiation. Now, above the mercy-seat were figures of cherubim, whose expanded wings overshadowed its circumferences, and whose many faces were all bent down in silent gaze upon the emblems underneath. They looked down, in the attitude of eager gladness and adoring wonder, upon the interposing medium which annihilated the presence and the power of the law. These cherubim, as the prophecies clearly show, represent the heavenly angels; and therefore we have here found, in the typical emblems of the Jewish economy, a literal picture of the doctrine of the apostle, that the pure spirits of the upper world bend down, in the attitude of learners, to explore "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

But once more our text indicates not merely the posture but the spirit with which the angels engage in this contemplation. They desire to look into it. They are anxious, warm, eager, ardent in the matter. Their hearts, as well as their eyes, are bent on it; and, with intent, assiduous, and persevering zeal, they devote themselves to scrutinise it in all its depth, though it is unfathomable, and in all its extent, though it is limitless. I. We remark that the angels desire to look into "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that shall follow," NOT BY ANY MEANS IN CONSEQUENCE OF IGNORANCE IN REFERENCE TO THE GRAND FACTS OF THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION. When Adam was expelled from Paradise, and an angel stationed at its gate to deter the guilty rebel from ever approaching the place whose sanctity he had profaned, we may imagine that that angel was aware of the hopes and consolations sealed up in the great promise, and knew man was not accused for ever.

Angels visited in his tent the Father of the faithful, and knew that unto his offspring God had promised eternal blessings. Choirs of angels welcomed the incarnation of the Lord with strains of heavenly music. Doubtless, these blessed spirits knew the subject of which they sang so sweetly. Heaven's heralds knew they were greeting the human nature of Heaven's eternal King. However, it is proper to take notice of a text, which, at first sight, will rather appear to demonstrate that the angels are not deeply versed in the matters of fact connected with the redemption of Christ (Eph. iii. 9-10). But this passage by no means implies that it is the Church alone which enlightens the heavenly host in the glorious dispensation of the Gospel of Christ. The assertion of the passage is not that the heavenly host were in ignorance of that subject till the Church instructed them, but that they never learned the subject through the Church till the Church received, and professed, and obeyed the truth. The angels knew the mystery of redemption before the apostles went forth on the theatre of the world to preach salvation to every creature. But it was not till, from their lofty dwelling-place in heaven, they saw the Gentile and the Jew alike being gathered into one fold of the one great Shepherd, that they knew, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. II. We remark that the angels desire to look into the sufferings and glory of Christ, BECAUSE THERE THEY OBTAIN THE BRIGHTEST DISPLAY OF THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS. III. The angels desire to look into "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow," BECAUSE THE ETERNAL INTERESTS OF MANKIND DEPEND ON THESE THINGS, AND BECAUSE THESE ETERNAL INTERESTS ARE AT STAKE. When we analyse the motive which impels the angels to look into the mystery of redemption, it resolves itself not only into a reverential desire of studying the Divine perfections, but also into an anxious concern for the salvation of sinners. This concern is itself twofold, depending partly on the desire of the angels to see Christ glorified in the salvation of sinners, and partly on the benevolent affection of the angels to these sinners, whom they see in such imminent danger of everlasting destruction. IV. The angels desire to look into "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," in other words, INTO THE PROGRESS OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION, BECAUSE THE ISSUE OF THAT WORK WILL BE THE ELEVATION OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT OVER THE ANGELIC RACE, IN DIGNITY, GLORY, AND POWER. What strange and striking thoughts it must suggest to an angelic being to look upon a human creature, depraved, condemned, absorbed in the pleasures of sin, and at last falling a prey to death, who yet, in virtue of a previous union to Christ by faith, shall rise above the fetters of mortality, shall be elevated to the holiness and happiness of heaven. (*Alex. Nisbet.*) *The angels' desire to look into salvation:*—It is thought to be a sign of weakness to bow down before the Cross. The context teaches a different lesson. The prophets, who were men of great mental gifts, were deeply interested in this "salvation." The apostle goes a step beyond. He declares that the angels desired to look into these sublime truths. I. THE NATURE OF THESE ANGELS. The Scriptures have revealed but little about them. The Bible was not given us to reveal their nature, but to make known to us the plan of salvation. Yet there is something about the nature of angels which we may know by the study of ourselves. 1. We have memory. History has a meaning to us. Our memories, at best, are very imperfect, but there are some things we never forget. Now, the memory of any one thing implies the possibility of a memory that will never forget. Now, angels, no doubt, have memories far more tenacious than ours. How this will add to their knowledge. 2. Then we have the power of connecting cause and effect, and the power of pure reason; and we have that still more marvellous power, imagination. Whither cannot imagination go? How much better are angels fitted by powers far more perfect than these to gather knowledge. 3. Then, again, we are hindered by our bodies—one-third of our time is taken up in eating and sleeping. Angels are free from all this. 4. Then consider how much more we know than we did fifty years ago. Yet the angels witnessed the birth of the worlds and systems of worlds. All history lays open before them. They know of God's providence. How much then these angels must know of God; I had almost said what do they not know of Him? II. Consider, that notwithstanding all this knowledge THE ANGELS WERE NOT SATISFIED BECAUSE THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE PLAN OF SALVATION. They heard of this plan and were deeply interested. They "desire to look into it." With all their powers of investigation, with all their vast knowledge, here was a matter that they had not fathomed, and that they greatly desired to know. Yet scientists sometimes feel that they are so busy as to have no time to study this salvation. They are busy at studying the structures of crystals. Why angels know all about them. They saw

the particles taking their positions. These men are busy in investigating the strata of the rocks. Why, the angels saw the upheaval of the rocks which so diversified and distorted the strata. They were there at the formation of the earth and have witnessed all the changes. These things, which so deeply concern these scientists, are plain as A B C to these angels, who, nevertheless, so desire to see into the plan of salvation, that subject which the scientists deem of so little importance.

III. IT IS NOT REVEALED TO US HOW ANGELS SOUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THIS MATTER. The visions concerning it came to the prophets, doubtless, as pictures. They did not fully understand all they saw. Moses, when he desired to see God, was told that no one could see the face of God and live. Another prophet saw a different picture. He saw Christ as a lamb led to the slaughter. Others saw still different pictures. Now I imagine that the angels, as the prophets traced the pictures they saw, would look over their shoulders to study this marvellous salvation. That word which is translated in the text, "look into," is a wonderful word. It means to look down into. It implies eagerness to see the bottom. (*Bishop Simpson.*) *Angels studying redemption.*—

I. THE THINGS WHICH THE ANGELS CONTEMPLATE. 1. Salvation. 2. The grace of the gospel. 3. The sufferings of Christ. 4. The glory that should follow. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ANGELS CONTEMPLATE THESE THINGS. 1. Attentively. 2. Humbly and reverentially. 3. With eager and prevailing desire. III. THE INSTRUCTIONS AND ADMONITIONS WHICH THEIR CONTEMPLATION OF THESE THINGS AFFORDS TO US. The desire which angels manifest to look into these things, teaches—1. The dignity and the glory of the Son of God, who has furnished them with such subjects of contemplation. 2. The magnitude and importance of the work of redemption. 3. The means which we must use, in order to be influenced by them ourselves. We must "look" into them—we must make them the subject of devout and studious contemplation. 4. The propriety and the duty of making them known to all mankind. 5. The criminality of those persons who treat the same things with indifference and neglect. (*J. Alexander.*)

Vers. 13-16. **Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind.—Tighten the belt:**—"Wherefore," for this reason, that your salvation was so great an object of interest to prophets and to angels, it becomes you to maintain your faith, your courage, and expectation to the end. "Wherefore, girding up the loins of your mind." The allusion is to the long loose garments worn by the Asiatics. I. THE MEANING THEN, IS, BE THOROUGHLY COURAGEOUS, GENUINE, SINCERE. Make your life compact by the girdle of truth. Avoid loose, unsubstantial convictions regarding spiritual and eternal things. Remember, however little the word of revealed truth is to you, it is God's greatest and best thought: that it is the divine record concerning yourself and His dear Son ought to make it of infinite importance to you. Therefore, "gird up the loins of your mind." Tighten the belt. You can do better work, run a better race, or be better ready for fight. Then shall you be fitted for the best service the King demands. Settled convictions of divine truth are of great value; they give stability, contentment, and influence. The girdle compact, and everything is made available for comfort and usefulness, you are stable and helpful when others are weak and vacillating. II. THIS, ALSO, WILL INDUCE SOBRIETY, GRAVITY, THOUGHTFULNESS. And, impressed with the magnitude and sustained by the certainty of divine truth, you will "set your hope perfectly on the grace, or favour, that is to be brought unto you when Jesus shall come again," to give eternal honour to His people. Stop, then; think, tighten your belt. Many are not ready for the sudden revelation of Jesus Christ. Are you? O, the supreme importance of being ready now, and each moment! III. "TELL US HOW WE SHALL DO THIS GIRDING." Peter wrote these words in the shadow of the greatest truths: the Cross, and the possibility of your salvation. Think often of the Cross and its mystery of grace; it will fill your life with the mightiest motives. Think of the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul. Think; you are in possession of God's revelation, His best thought, the sunlight of your present joy and your future hope. Think; you are in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Do it by much prayer. (*J. Parker.*) *A seasonable exhortation.*—1. How full of their Lord were the minds of these holy writers! 2. How ardently these men expected the coming of the Lord! 3. It is equally noticeable that while apostolic men looked for the coming of Christ, they looked for it with no idea of dread, but, on the contrary, with the utmost joy. 4. Observe also, how constantly they were urging this as a motive! Peter never holds it out as a mere matter of speculation, nor exclusively as a ground of comfort; but as the grand motive for action, for holiness, for watchfulness. The teaching necessary

for to-day is this: "Gird up the loins of your mind," brace yourselves up; be firm, compact, consistent, determined. Do not be like quicksilver, which keeps on dissolving and running into fractions; do not fritter away life upon trifles, but live to purpose, with undivided heart, and decided resolution. These are equally days in which it is necessary to say "be sober." We are always having some new fad or another brought out to infatuate the unstable. "Be sober," and judge for yourselves. Nor is the third exhortation unnecessary: "Hope to the end." Be so hopeful as to be "calm mid the bewildering cry, confident of victory." I. AN ARGUMENT. "Wherefore." True religion is not unreasonable; it is common sense set to heavenly music. The apostle begins by saying, "Elect according to foreknowledge," &c. Shall the elect of God be timorous? Shall those who are chosen of the Most High give way to despair? God forbid! There is an argument, then, in the first and second verses, forcibly supporting the precepts of the text. It well behoves the elect of God to choose His service resolutely, to abide in it steadfastly, and hope for its reward with supreme confidence. But next, Peter declares that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." O ye begotten of God, see that ye live as such! You are twice-born men; live not the low life of the merely natural man. You are descended from the King of kings; degrade not your descent! Your election and your regeneration call you to holy living. Further, the apostle goes on to say that you are heirs of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Courage, then, if this be your destiny: do not be cast down by the aboundings of sin, nor even by your own personal temptations. Then he goes on to say that you are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." If the power of God keeps me, shall I be hopeless? Shall I speak like one that has no hereafter to rejoice in? Further, the apostle goes on to say that we may be passing through needful trial, but it is only for a little while. Come, then, if this fire is to be passed through, let us gird up our loins to dash through it. Let us hope to be sustained, and sanctified as the result, and let no unbelieving fear cast a cloud over our sky. Is not this good argument? Nor is this all. He tells us that even while we are in trial we are still full of joy. Once more: the apostle goes on to say that the gospel which we believe, and for which we are ready to suffer, is a gospel that comes to us with the sanction of the prophets. It seems to me that with such men as Moses and David, Isaiah and Jeremiah, to support our faith, we need not be ashamed of our company, nor tremble at the criticisms of the moderns. II. THE EXHORTATION. 1. "Gird up the loins of your mind. (1) That certainly teaches us earnestness. We brace ourselves for a supreme effort; and the Christian life is always such. (2) Does it not also mean preparedness? A true believer should be ready for suffering or service—ready, indeed, for anything. (3) It means determination and hearty resolution. By conflict throughout a whole life we come to our rest; and there is no other way. You cannot go round to a back-door, and enter into heaven by stealth. You must fight if you would reign. Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind. (4) Once more, the figure teaches us that our life must be concentrated. "Gird up the loins of your mind." We have no strength to spare; we cannot afford to let part of our force leak away. We need to bring all our faculties to bear on one point, and exert them all to one end. 2. "Be sober." (1) This means moderation in all things. Do not be so excited with joy as to become childish. Do not grow intoxicated with worldly gain or honour. On the other hand, do not be too much depressed with passing troubles. (2) Keep the middle way; hold to the golden mean. Make sure of your footing when you stand; make doubly sure of it before you shift. (3) Be clear-headed. Ask that the grace of God may so rule in your heart that you may be peaceful, and not troubled with idle fear on one side or with foolish hope on the other. "Be sober," says the apostle. You know the word translated "be sober" sometimes means "be watchful"; and indeed there is a great kinship between the two things. Live with your eyes open; do not go about the world half asleep. 3. "Hope to the end." Be strong in holy confidence in God's Word, and be sure that His cause will live and prosper. Hope to the end; go right through with it; if the worst comes to the worst, hope still. Hope as much as ever a man can hope; for when your hope is in God you cannot hope too much. But let your hope be all in grace. Do not hope in yourself or in your works; but "hope in the grace"; for so the text may be read. Hope, moreover, in the grace which you have not yet received, in "the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus

Christ." Bless God for the grace that you have not yet obtained, for He has it in store for you; yea, He hath put it on the road, and it is coming to you. III. EXPECTATION. What you have got to hope for is more grace. God will never deal with you upon the ground of merit; He has begun with you in grace, and He will go on with you in grace, therefore "hope to the end for the grace." The grace you are to hope for is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. He has been revealed once, at His first advent; hence the grace you have. He is to be revealed very soon in His second advent; hence the grace that is a-coming to you. "My ship is coming home," says the child. So is mine: Jesus is coming, and that means all things to me. But what can this grace be that will be received at His coming? Justification? No, we have that already by His resurrection. Sanctification? No; we have that already, by being made partakers of His life. What is the grace that is to be revealed at His coming? Just look at the chapter, and you will read in the fifth verse, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." 1. Perfect salvation is one part of the grace which is to be brought in the last time when Christ comes. When He comes there will be perfection for our souls and salvation for our bodies. 2. The second grace that Christ will bring with Him when He comes is the perfect vindication of our faith: "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." To-day they sneer at our faith, but they will not do so when Jesus comes; to-day we ourselves tremble for the ark of the Lord, but we shall not do so when He comes. Then shall all men say that believers were wise, prudent, philosophical. Those who believe in Jesus may be called fools to-day, but men will think otherwise when they see them shine forth as the sun in the Father's kingdom. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Christian morality*:—The great privileges we enjoy are here urged upon us as a reason why we should live like regenerate persons. I. THE ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. They are—diligence, sobriety, and hope. 1. Diligence. This virtue is here exemplified by a very striking figure. Christians are not to be like pompous peacocks, mere objects of beauty, strutting about over the green fields of earth. They are not to be languid and effeminate dreamers. They are to engage in the activities of manhood, and for this purpose must brace themselves with vigour. There is much to be accomplished. There is much to be learnt. There is much to be obtained. There is much to be endured. But the apostle is particular to remind us of the spiritual nature of this work—"Gird up the loins of your mind." The Christian life is not an outward thing. The mind is the battle-field. Here the battles are lost or won. How much does the mind require bracing up! It soon sinks into indifference and sluggishness, especially under trials or difficulties. A healthy soul results from moral discipline. We are to brace up our thoughts by wholesome restraint, our desires by a strong curb, our sentiments by calm deliberation. This requires patient and persevering diligence. 2. Sobriety. "Be sober." This does not refer to what we call temperance. It is that calm, quiet dignity which so well befits a Christian man, and which raises him above the flighty, giddy, thoughtless throng of worldly people. There is something noble in his character. 3. Patient hope. Here is a rebuke to the restless uneasiness at the trials of life which was the cause of writing this Epistle. II. THE GREAT CHRISTIAN MOTIVE. "The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." And is it not worth hoping for? 1. Consider its greatness. It is not an earthly blessing—temporary, passing, and mingled with what is evil, sinful, and transitory. It is—(1) An eternal state. All our chief sorrows here are caused by change. (2) A perfect state. Life will be perfect; here most men only half live. Health will be perfect. Taste will be perfect. Employment will be perfect. And all the surroundings of this state will be perfect also. 2. Consider its fulness. There is no stint in the eternal life which is provided. The vastness of heaven is one of the mysteries we have to contemplate, but at present cannot understand. III. THE GREAT END OF CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT—holiness. All discipline has one object to carry out. 1. Under the aspect of dutiful children. "As obedient children," &c. Here is a grand motive—the motive of love. 2. Under the aspect of similitude. We desire to be like those whom we love. Holiness, then, makes us like God. Without it we cannot be conformed to Him. Without it we cannot associate with Him. 3. Under the aspect of universality. "In all manner of conversation," i.e., in all your behaviour. Holiness is to pervade all things. (J. J. S. Bird.) *The right influence of a Christian creed*:—I. MENTAL ACTIVITY. "Wherefore gird

up the loins of your mind." First: That man has a mind. He has a thinking, conscious, undying spirit. This fact is attested both by philosophy and the Bible. Secondly: That this mind has a great work. There are some minds that are very inactive. Other minds are active, but it is the activity of children playing with toys. What is the real work of the mind? Rightly to culture self, to bless society, and to honour God. The figure implies—Thirdly: That the present condition of the mind is unfavourable to this work. What are those entangling robes? Wrong thoughts, earthly sympathies, carnal tendencies, moral indifferences, &c. "Gird up the loins," &c. II. MORAL SOBRIETY. "Be sober." It may include three things. First: Moral judiciousness. Judiciousness in our opinions, our affections, our expectations, and speech. Souls are often intoxicated with wild and extravagant sentiments. Second: Moral steadfastness. The soul should not reel to and fro like a drunken man; it should be steadfast. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free." Thirdly: Moral seriousness. Christian seriousness stands in sublime contrast both to gloom on the one hand and to levity on the other. III. PERMANENT HOPE. "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This language implies three things. First: That the perfection of our being is to be looked for in the future. Secondly: That our future perfection is to be obtained in connection with grace. "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you." Thirdly: That the grace that is to ensure our perfection will be fully manifested at the appearance of Jesus Christ. "The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Wise counsel*:—I. THE PREPARATION. "Gird up," &c. 1. Righteousness. 2. Faithfulness. 3. Truth. II. THE CONSIDERATION. "Be sober." There is such a thing, of course, as being drunk mentally or spiritually. A drunken man is very foolish, yet conceited; and he is quarrelsome, and hazardous, and he would lie down and go to sleep anywhere. III. THE DECISION. "Hope to the end." Your hope is to be in the perfect work of Christ. "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." IV. THE PROSPECT. "For the grace," &c. (*James Wells.*) *The place of mind in religion*:—One thing is presupposed—St. Peter counted it self-evident—the mind has place in the things of God. Orthodoxy has too often warned off reason from the things of God. It has made it sacrilege to touch the Bible. What St. Peter rebukes is the slovenly, the untidy, the dissolute mind. He does not fear the practised, the disciplined, the intense intellect. The "mind" of which he wrote was the rock-hewn element of thinking, equally available, for its highest processes and purposes, in palace and cottage, in philosopher and peasant. It needs not education in man's sense, classical or scientific, to gird its loins for the enterprise St. Peter has in view. That enterprise is the knowledge of a Father, in a Saviour, and in a Spirit. The enterprise is a personal knowledge, the girding up of the loins for it is a personal exertion. Shall we try to sketch one or two of the particulars of that girding? 1. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty." In reference to all knowledge, what is the chief hindrance? Is it not vanity? Is it not the "saying, We see?" Gird up the loins of your mind by a deep humility. "Thou art near, they tell me, O Lord: but I am so far off—so ignorant, so stupid, so sin-bound—O quicken me." 2. But next to it I would place its sister grace—which is patience. Patience, perhaps above all, for the reconciliation of apparently contradictory principles, and the harmonising of certain parts of Revelation with the character of God Himself the Revealer. Be willing to wait. Not indolently, not in indifference, but in a submissive waiting. 3. Hope. "Hope to the end," St. Peter says—"Hope perfectly" are his very words—meaning doubtless, perseveringly and amidst all obstacles. And St. Peter makes hope very definite when he adds, "for the grace that is being brought to us." It cannot be that this scene of confusion should be for ever. As God is true, as God is holy, as God is merciful, it shall not. We see not as yet how it shall be. But, where explanation fails, where reason fails, where revelation itself fails, hope fails not. (*Dean Vaughan.*) **Be sober.**—*Sobriety*:—Sobriety is a virtue that keeps us not only from things unlawful, but moderates us in the use of things lawful, that we exceed not our bounds therein. These may be referred to two heads, pleasures and profits, which we are most subject to abuse. 1. For the former, which is PLEASURE, thereto may be referred meat, drink, apparel, recreation, &c. All which we must use soberly to the glory of the Giver, our own good, and the good also of others. 1. For our meat and drink, we must neither be excessive nor over-curious, as Dives who fared deliciously every day, making his belly his god. We must eat to live, and thereby be more fit for duty. 2. For our apparel, we must not exceed for the matter of it,

nor for the fashion. God hath given it for necessity, comeliness, and decency. 3. For recreation, it must be sparing in time, place, measure, to make us more fit for our duty; for God hath not set us here to pamper the flesh, but to mortify the lusts thereof: not to play, but to do His work. II. For the latter, namely, PROFITS, we must also be sober, both in getting and keeping them. We must not only use no unlawful means to get the world, but use the lawful means moderately, not filling ourselves with too many businesses, and following the same too eagerly, lest we neglect good duties, or be hindered from doing them as we should. (*John Rogers.*) **Hope to the end.**—*The duty and discipline of Christian hope*:—"Girding up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope" is the accurate reproduction of the form of the original. "Hope" is the principal exhortation, and it is to be fulfilled by bracing up the mind and by sobriety. The Revised Version, which has partially shown this construction in its rendering, has given the more accurate "perfectly," instead of "to the end." It is a question, first, of the quality, and only after that of the duration of the hope. If our hope be perfect it will take care of itself in another respect, and be permanent. I. THE OBJECT ON WHICH THIS CHRISTIAN HOPEFULNESS IS TO FASTEN, like a limpet on a rock. "The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Here "grace" means the sum of the felicities of a future life. That is clear from two considerations—that this grace is the object of our hope all through life, which only an object beyond the grave can be, and also that its advent is contemporaneous with the revelation of Jesus Christ. The expression, though unusual, is valuable because it brings out two things. It reminds us that whatever of blessedness we may possess in the future it is all a gratuitous, unmerited gift of that loving God to whom we owe everything. And then there is another thought suggested by this word, namely, the substantial identity of the Christian life here and hereafter. Grace is glory in the bud, glory is grace in the flower; and all which we hope for in the future is but the evolving of that which is planted in our hearts to-day, if we love Him, though it may have to fight with much antagonism to itself both without us and within. The inheritance is a hope, but the earnest of the inheritance, which is of the same stuff as the inheritance, is a present possession. Further, this grace is on its way to us. It is "being brought," as the margin of the Revised Version has it; or "a-bringing," as Leighton translates it. It is on its road as if some band of strong-winged angels had already left the throne, and, like them who bore the Holy Grail, were steadily flying nearer and nearer to us. With all the power of strong winds and waves lifting it on, it is bearing down upon us as a ship at sea. By all the passions and convulsions of earth the day of the Lord is hastened on its course. Further, this grace, which is on its way to us, is wrapped up in the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is brought to us encased in that revelation, like a fair jewel in a golden setting. When He who "is our life shall be manifested," says another apostle, then shall we also "be manifested with Him in glory." As in an old picture you will sometimes see a saint represented as standing near the Master with a glory encompassing him, that rays from the Christ, so our glory in the future is all to be but the effluence and the reflection of His glory. Why should we let our hopes go trailing along the ground, like some poor creeping plant that the gardener has forgotten to put a stick to, when they might lift themselves to the heavens? Why should you ever feed your hopes upon the bread that perishes, and sometimes upon husks, when you may feed them on angels' food? Why should you confine your hope within the limits of this world when it might expand to the width of that great eternity that lies there before you through which you may let your hope wander at will? Set your hope there, and then it will never be ashamed or confounded. II. THE PERFECT HOPE WHICH GRASPS THE PERFECT OBJECT. "Hope perfectly" would be the true rendering, it being a question not at all of duration but of quality." There are all degrees of hope from the most doubtful "peradventure" up to almost certainty. But there is always a kind of doubt and dread mingling with hope. A certain wistful look as of one who knows not what may be drawing on is ever in Hope's blue eyes; and "hopes, and fears that kindle hope" are an indistinguishable throng. That is necessarily so, because here our hopes are fixed on contingent, external things, and are mostly born of our wishes rather than of reasonable probabilities. Therefore, this exhortation here, in effect, bids us lift our hopes higher, and set them on God that they may be sure. Are we letting our hearts lead our hopes astray after the will-o'-the-wisps of earth, instead of ordering their march by the pole-star of God's faithful promise? Does our hope leap up to lay hold on that cord let down from heaven, and by it to climb above the level of mutation and disappointment? III.

THE SELF-DISCIPLINE BY WHICH THE PERFECT HOPE IS MAINTAINED. Girding up the loins of the mind and being "sober" are the two great means to that end. The first of them enjoins concentration of mind and will, a determined effort to realise the future and persistently to hope in the teeth of all discouragement. Travellers, servants, soldiers have to brace up their robes and buckle them tight with their girdles. So we have to gather up our thoughts and cultivate the habit of fixed attention to unseen things. The loosely braced mind will be unable to cherish a lively hope; a man with his robes flapping about his feet cannot run. They hinder his stride, catch in the briars, get trodden on by rivals. There are many difficulties in the way of our Christian hope. It is hard to keep its light burning through the darkness of the night and the howling of the storm. Why, a man cannot have earthly hopes bright unless he concentrates his thoughts upon them. And how can our hope of heaven be clear, triumphant, unless we coerce our vagrant imaginations and loose flowing affections and by a dead lift and effort set our hopes in God? Wherefore, brace up the loins of your minds and hope. "Be sober." Rigid self-control and repression are needed for such a hope. The clear eye of hope cannot see the land that is very far off through the fogs that rise from the undrained marshes of our animal nature. In this sense, too, the flesh lusts against the spirit. But not only must bodily appetites be held well in hand, all desires that go out towards the present must be subdued. Hope follows desire. The vigour of our hopes is affected by the warmth of our desires. The warmth of our desires towards the future depends largely on the turning away of our desires from the present. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Hope*:—As we read this Epistle and drink in its spirit we become aware of something that lifts and enkindles; it is as if we were inhaling sea air, were basking in the glow of a genial warmth. The Peter of the Gospels was of an eager, sanguine disposition, and his hopefulness, while it was yet unchastened, repeatedly outran his real strength. The Pentecostal fire descends upon him, and he continues to be the same man, with the same basis and structure of character; but there has passed over him a refining and invigorating touch. He has become more truly a Peter; he has drawn strength from the Rock of Ages. He is "the apostle of hope." To speak of hope at all is to speak of what we instinctively recognise as a condition of fruitful effort, of anything like success or satisfaction, even in the affairs of ordinary life. To take hope from a man is to paralyse him morally; if he lives on in so dreary a condition we think of him as surviving himself. The teaching of Scripture may help us to distinguish and appreciate three characteristics of that hope which apostles would recognise as true. 1. First, then, Christian hope, as St. Peter tells us, is seated "in God"; it is, as it has been called, one of the triad of virtues specially "theological"; it takes its stand on Divine revelation, it looks on to the attainment of Divine promises. It draws its life-blood from no mere surmise as to what is possible for humanity, in the race at large or in the individual, but from the manifestation of Divine truth and goodness in the Incarnate, whom St. Paul calls "our hope" (1 Tim. i. 1), because our hope is grounded on Him and centred in Him. St. Paul, indeed, cannot think of hope without thinking of Christ; it is characteristic of him that the object of his "earnest expectation and hope" should be the glorification of Christ in his body, whether by life or by death. So he elsewhere speaks of Christians as having been "called in one hope" which grows out "of their calling," which derives all its force and charm from the act of grace that brought them into that sacred and supernatural fellowship. Christian hope, being rooted in faith, is, like faith, vivid, positive, and definite; it is, as St. Peter calls it, "living," because it is a fruit of the resurrection-life of Jesus; it gazes with calm, trustful eyes, onward and still onward, into a future literally boundless, as illuminated by the person and the work of the one everlasting Redeemer; it is a "hope of eternal life," as based on Him. 2. A hope which is thus essentially religious, thus Christian from the root upwards, and impossible except on the terms of Christian belief, is strong enough to face all facts, even such as are unwelcome or austere. Certainly there will be temptations to unhopefulness; there must be the discipline of hopes deferred, of success marred, of apparent defeats and disappointments, of much that might tempt impatience to despair. A hope thus trained, while resting on august realities, is strong because it is not fanciful; it has realised the conditions of Christian life as an uphill march; it can afford to take full account of the gravest requirements of His service, who bids no one follow save where He Himself has trod; it does not dream of being exempt from anxieties, but it "casts" the whole weight of them on "the strong hand" of that good Father who has proved so well how much He "careth for us." 3. True hope is a great

instrument of moral and spiritual discipline. When St. Peter is about to say, "make your hope perfect," he prefaces it with a call to sustained effort; we are to "gird up the loins of our mind." It is remarkable also that St. Paul does not merely exhort us to cherish hope, but to see that our hope is of the right kind, that it is such as is secured through endurance, and endurance as fortified by the encouragement, the quickening impulse to Christian exertion, which the pages of Scripture will supply (Rom. xv. 4). It is as if he had said, "The further you advance in the spiritual life, the more will you need of strength to resist temptation, or to bear outward trials bravely, brightly, and patiently; and the more you can do this, the more of true hope will you acquire." Thus we see that the hope which maketh not ashamed is always humble and always active. (*W. Bright, D.D.*) *How and for what to hope*:—The word "wherefore" bases the exhortation upon all that has preceded, not merely upon the sentence immediately before it.

I. THE DISCIPLINE NEEDED FOR CHRISTIAN HOPE. "Girding up the loins of your mind, be sober." Here are two practical injunctions, given as means towards a vigorous Christian hope. The first of these is too familiar to require many words. Girding up the loose garments was instinctively done before any kind of vigorous effort, whether it was pilgrimage, labour, or conflict. Elijah girded up his loins when he ran before Ahab's chariot. The soldier tightens his belt by another hole before the great struggle comes. The symbol, then, stands definitely here as expressing effort and concentration. There must be both, as Peter thinks, if there is to be any pulse of vitality throbbing under a Christian man's hope. And, says the apostle, thus making a concentrated effort to secure the vigour and clearness of hope, do another thing, "Be sober." Of course if I let my tastes, inclinations, desires, appetites, passions, run wild anywhere, there will be very little strength left me with which to hope for anything beyond. A man's mind is only capable of a given quantity of desire and expectation: and if he fritter it all away on the things seen and temporal, of course there will not be any left over for the things that are unseen. Every gardener knows that if he wants a tree to grow high he must pull off the side shoots, but if he likes to clip it at the top and take away the leader, it will grow nice and bushy down below. A man's mind obeys the same law.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALITIES OF THIS CHRISTIAN HOPE. As you are aware, our A.V. gives one translation of part of this verse, and the R.V. gives another. "Hope to the end," says the older. "Hope perfectly," says the newer and the better rendering. What are the imperfections that attach to men's hopes? 1. The first glaring one which attaches to the world's idea of hope is that it is something short of, less reliable than, certainty. We have not sufficiently concentrated our effort, nor have we sufficiently washed our hands of earthly follies and filths, so long as there is one shade of difference between the certitude with which we know to-day and the confidence with which, trusting to Christ, we expect the remotest eternity in the most glorious heavens. 2. Then there is another imperfection from which it is our duty and our joy to be able to clear our Christian hope, and that is that men's hopes fluctuate according to their moods and their circumstances. But the Christian man's hope should have this for the very signature of its perfection, that it is altogether independent of the changes of external circumstances. Nay! rather it should be like the pillar of fire that was only a thin film of smoke while the sunshine blazed, but kindled at its heart as darkness fell, and in the murkiest night was brightest and most blessed. 3. Then there is another imperfection which the Christian hope is permitted to put away from it; and that is that most of our hopes have no ennobling, no staying, no stimulating effect upon our lives. What a man hopes for he waits for with patience, and the perfection of the Christian hope is measured roughly by this, the extent to which it is fruitful of all lowly, persistent adherence to the most uncongenial, common-place, and smallest duties.

III. THE OBJECT THAT IS HERE PROPOSED FOR HOPE. The apostle tells us to "hope for the grace," &c. There are three things we have to note here. 1. The loftiest hope of the furthest eternity is the hope of grace. We usually keep that word in contradistinction to glory as expressive of the gifts of God which we receive here upon earth in our pilgrimage. But the apostle here goes even deeper than that, and says, "Ah! it is all of a piece from the beginning to the end. The first gifts that a believing soul receives, whilst it is struggling here with darkness and light, are of the same sort as the eternal gifts that it receives when it stands before the throne, after millenniums of assimilation to the brightness and blessedness of Jesus Christ." They are all grace; the gifts of earth and heaven are one in their source and one in their nature. 2. Further, says the apostle, this grace is "being brought to you."

The light that set out from the sun centuries ago has not reached some of the stars yet, but it is on the road. And the grace that is to be given to us has started from the throne, and it will be here presently. We are like men standing in the crowded streets of some royal city through which the king's procession has to pass. If we listened we have heard the guns fire that told that He had left the palace; and He will sweep in front of us and sweep us up into His train before very long. The grace is "being brought to us." 3. And it is being brought not merely at, but "in the revelation of Jesus Christ." "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall we also be manifested together with Him in glory." The Christ in me will be manifested when Christ is manifested on His throne, and that will be my glory. If you can fancy a planet away out on the edge of our system, such as that one that welters in the fields of space, I know not how far from the central sun, and gets but a little portion of his light and warmth, and moves slowly in a torpid round; and imagine it laid hold of and borne right into the orbit of the planet next the sun, what a difference in its temperature, what a difference in the lustre and the light, what a difference in the swiftness of its motion there would be! We here are moving round a half-veiled Christ, and we get but little, and oh! we give less, of His light and glory. But the day comes when we shall be swept nearer the throne, and all the light that is manifested to us shall be incorporated within us. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Christian hope :—I. Hope in its preliminary but indispensable conditions. II. Hope in its operation. 1. Hope is natural to the human mind, nothing more natural. It is a sweet-scented flower growing in every poor man's garden; a perennial flower, never blooming so exquisitely as in the midwinter of adversity. 2. "Hope perfectly." By this St. Peter probably means the same as St. Paul when the latter speaks of "the full assurance of hope," an unflinching persuasion in the mind that we have a personal interest in the "inheritance reserved in heaven," "the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." "When I live," wrote Latimer to Ridley, "in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, methinks I am as bold as a lion; I can laugh at all trouble; no affliction daunts me; but when I am eclipsed in my comforts I am of so fearful a spirit that I could run into a very mouse-hole." Now, how to attain this perfection of hope, this full assurance? Evidently but legitimately exercising this grace according to the Divine word and testimony, for, like other things, it grows bright in use. 3. "Hope unto the end." Persevere in the face of difficulties, however colossal, "for he that continueth to the end shall be saved." Turn your face to the Sun, pitch your hope fixedly on the inheritance reserved for you up yonder, and the shadows will all fall behind you.

III. Hope in its immutable foundation. 1. Our hope of salvation is based on Divine grace as brought to us in the past at the first revelation of Jesus Christ. 2. But not only has grace been brought to us in the past, but fresh supplies are being brought to us in the present. "The grace that is a-bringing, that is being brought to you, as the revelation of Jesus Christ." Grace came to the world in the person and work of Jesus Christ; it is still coming, a very present help in trouble, to God's people, whether that trouble be in the shape of sufferings or temptations. John Bunyan in his immortal dream beheld a fire which burnt on brightly notwithstanding all efforts to extinguish it. What was the explanation of this persistence? Oh, a man stood the other side of the wall continually pouring oil into it. "Hope perfectly, unto the end," for the gospel treasury of grace will never fail you. 3. But this hope looks forward to the future, to the final triumph of grace "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Much grace has already been revealed; but eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered the heart of man the things God hath in store for His people. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

Hope as a power in moulding character :—I. THE POWER OF HOPE IN HUMAN CHARACTER. What makes the difference between human beings and beasts? Very largely, the presence of hope as a factor in character. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests." So much the worse for them. Man is distinguished from the animals by the fact that you cannot so easily satisfy him. He may begin by living in the hole in the ground, or by lodging in the branches; but, by and by, that hole is not good enough. Something in man demands improvement. Hope is therefore one of the foremost elements in human character; distinguishing man as man, giving him a higher rank than all the rest of the animal creation. And as it is a necessary factor in character, so it is in human progress. Any conditions in human society which tend to repress hope are abnormal and unnatural, and hostile to man's well-

being. Who is to-day at the bottom of society may, under the encouragement of our republican institutions and freedom, rise until he occupies the highest position that the people can bestow. Hope presents a perpetual incentive to progress:—not an *ignis fatuus*, a will-o'-the-wisp, beguiling us into mire and marsh, but impelling us continually onward to things higher and better. The hopes of boyhood do not satisfy manhood, and the hopes even of manhood do not satisfy maturer years; and so that which once beckoned you forward, as you reach up and move up toward it, keeps still ahead of you, and becomes a perpetual inspiration, urging you ever onward and upward. If hope, therefore, could be quenched or crushed, we could make no more advancement. Because hope is so important an element in character, and so essential to human development and progress, the Word of God lays such heavy stress on this essential element of all true manhood. No other grace seems more vital to a true Christian life than hope. Then see how hope helps us to bear trials. It surrounds us with a kind of "elastic medium," so that when the terrible afflictions of this life beat against us, they rebound from us. There is a power in hope that prevents the severity of their blows from utterly crushing us.

II. What, now, are THE OBJECTS SET BEFORE THE CHRISTIAN HOPE? "The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Few of us ever think of this. When we speak of the grace that is revealed we think of what is already manifested, of Golgotha with its Cross, of Gethsemane with its agony. Peter is speaking of something future, not grace already manifested. "The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ's Incarnation was not a revelation. His divinity was rather hidden within the veil of His humanity: only now and then the glory of that divinity shone forth. When Jesus was here He was in disguise. God was only feebly and faintly manifested in the flesh, which obscured the glory. But when Christ comes a second time, no longer to make a sin-offering, but to bring full salvation unto His people, then will be the revelation of Jesus Christ. He will come like the King in His glory. All the grace that comes to you from the hour of your regeneration to the hour of your complete sanctification is nothing in comparison with the grace that is to be revealed to you by Christ in the day when you are presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

III. In view of the glorious hopes that the Bible inspires. "GIRDING UP THE LOINS OF YOUR MIND, BE SOBER, hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Let us mark these subordinate phrases: "Girding up the loins of your mind, be sober." That they may not be entangled in thorns and briars, or be defiled by the dust and the filth of the way. And so the apostle says, "Girding up the loins of your mind," your affections, so that they may not be defiled by earthly things. John Wesley used to say, "The child of God ought to be too proud to sin. When I think of myself as the disciple of Christ, born of the Spirit, I say, 'How can I sin against God?'" Set your affections on things above; gird up your loins, and keep your white garments "unspotted from the world." And then "be sober." Now, it would do a pilgrim very little good if he gathered up his garments and did not maintain sobriety. He might fall in the dust of the way, bruising himself as well as defiling his robe. And so we must not only gird ourselves, but keep sober and clear-minded for the journey.

IV. WHAT A CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OBJECTS OF CHRISTIAN HOPE AND WORLDLY HOPE! Contrast the reality of Christian hopes with the illusive nature of worldly hopes. And consider, once more, the permanence and reliability of the Christian objects of desire and expectation. We come to a limit in this world. The glory of your possessions and your achievements will all pale and grow dim when you face the last great destroyer. But, blessed be God, the point at which human hopes are utterly blasted is the point at which Christian expectations only arrive at their consummation. What should we care for the perishing treasures of this world? for the evanescent pleasures that charm for a moment, and then lose their power? (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*)

Hope:—Hope is mentioned in the text and in other parts of Scripture as a distinct grace or virtue, which the Christian should cultivate. I. I SHALL POINT OUT THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN HOPE AND FAITH. 1. Faith and hope differ as to their extent. Faith relates to all things which Almighty God has revealed in Scripture, bad as well as good; whereas hope has only to do with the good things of our Heavenly Father. 2. Again, hope may be described as ever looking forward, and advancing from one blessed prospect to another, with its eyes bent upon God and the promises. But faith has to do with the present and past, as well as with the future. With past facts. 3. Once more,

there is this great difference between hope and faith; that faith has to do with certainty, hope with uncertainty. You believe with full assurance, and it is a matter of faith that the righteous go to heaven. But that you individually are righteous, and shall finally go to heaven, is the subject of hope. Now the absolute necessity of this grace in your hearts will be at once evident, if you consider that it would interest you but little to be told of the felicities of heaven, had you no hope of ever attaining them. When you read of kings of the earth, of their royal appearance and great wealth, you at once feel that these things interest you but slightly, because they are so utterly beyond your reach. II. Now, let us ILLUSTRATE THE FORCE AND POWER OF HOPE. Stories are told us of travellers journeying in other climes, who having wandered from their course, have by degrees found themselves involved in the intricacies of the wilderness without any probable chance of rescue. What so overwhelming as the feeling of utter loneliness which must press on the heart in the midst of unlimited sand? At such a time surely, a man may well give himself up as lost, and submissively lie down to perish. But there is a God beyond that sky and sun, Who has preserved men from worse dangers, and a hope springs up within his bosom, in the protection of that God. Hope cheers his soul, braces him to exertion, overcomes fatigue, and rescues from peril. He had no certainty of deliverance, but his hope was of sufficient power to make him persevere until he found the path, or was discovered by others and rescued. When the wife of the mariner sits at home solitary, what sustains her soul but the hope that all will be well? There can be no certain safety for him who is on the water; nothing, as we know, is so variable and treacherous as the waves and wind. When the prodigal child of God, like him in the parable, comes to himself and remembers his transgressions, what is to bring him to the feet of Almighty God but the hope of pardon? When the Christian soldier has taken his oath of service to Jesus Christ, and calmly considers the duties which are necessary to his reward, when he thinks of the enemies who encompass him, and of his own frailness and alienated affections, what can lead him to the contest and keep him undismayed? What but a sure and certain hope of Christ's continued assistance? Lastly: There is a moment, if possible more trying than all, when hope is the stay and anchor of the tossed soul. It is in that hour when even the most saintly may look forward with something of dread to the departure from earth. "In hope of eternal life, which God Who cannot lie promised before the world began"; my flesh, he thinks within himself, "shall rest in hope"; "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." (*J. M. Chanter, M.A.*)

Hope ennobles the spirit:—It is pleasing to observe how the hopes of persons, by degrees, greatness their spirits from their childhood. The proper spirit of a nobleman, a prince, or a king, is greater than that of an inferior person. And the reason is because as he comes to understand his quality, his spirit grows with his hopes of what he shall attain to; his very hopes greatness his spirit, ennoble him, and make him think of living like one that expects to be in such a state as that to which he is born. And such is the property of the Christian's hope. It not only makes him not ashamed, but it heightens and ennobles his spirit, makes him aspire high, and look forward to great things. (*J. Howe.*)

Present the germ of future revelation:—I am well aware that the words of the original will bear the present signification. "Hope perfectly for the grace which is being brought unto you by the revelation of Jesus Christ." But after careful consideration I am convinced that the future sense is the right one, though the fact that the present is employed is full of significance, and discloses a fact which underlies the whole word of God. The future revelation will be but the full unveiling of the present; just as in the creation round us were our eyes eured of their films, we should see a splendour which would reveal heaven. The whole life of what lives in the world has in it the germ of that full revelation; just as when you unfold one of the soft buds of spring, sheath within sheath of delicate leafage is found there, and in the heart of it all, visible only to the aided eye, is every petal, every stamen of the flower. The forms are already perfect in their microcosm, but the colours that are to blaze in the sunlight, and the odours that are to scent the air, wait the inspirations of the spring. The colour, which is the glory of a flower, glows only under the perfect conditions of its life. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*)

A perfect hope:—I. We note THE REMARKABLE DESIGNATION HERE OF THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN HOPE—"The grace that is to be brought unto you at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Now, it is interesting to notice the various phases under which the

future perfecting of the Christian life and felicity in heaven is set forth in the New Testament. Sometimes we read of the object of our hope as being the resurrection from the dead. Sometimes we read of the "hope of righteousness"; sometimes we read of the "hope of eternal life"; sometimes of the "hope of the glory of God"; sometimes of the "hope of salvation." But all these are but the many facets of the one jewel, flashing many coloured and yet harmonious light. Peter adds another general expression when he sums up the felicities and perfectness of that future life in this remarkable and unusual phrase, "the grace that is to be brought." "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life"; and no man of the countless nations of the blessed can say, "Give me the portion for which I have worked," but all must bow and say, "Give me from thine own loving heart that which I do not deserve," "the grace that is to be brought at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Such, then, is the object of Christian hope, stated in its most general terms, a grace which includes resurrection, salvation, righteousness, eternal life, the glory of God, and that grace ever tending towards us, and that ever tending grace to be ours in its fulness, when Christ is manifested and "we shall be manifested with Him in glory." How different in its dignity, in its certainty, in its remoteness, which is a blessing—how different from the paltry, shortsighted anticipations of a near future which delude us along the path of earthly effort! II. NOTICE THE ENJOINED PERFECTION OF CHRISTIAN HOPE. What constitutes perfect hope? First, that it shall be certain; and no earthly hope is so. If my anticipations are set upon contingent things they must vary with their objects. You cannot build a solid house on a quagmire; you must have rock for that. So, the only perfect hope is that which grasps a perfect certainty. Christian hope ought to be, if I might so say, screwed up to the level of that on which it is fastened. It is a shame that Christian people should be wavering in their anticipations of that which in itself is certain. Again, the perfection of hope lies in its being patient, persistent through discouragements, burning bright in the darkness, like a pillar of fire by night; and most of all in its being operative upon life, and contributing to steadfastness of endurance and to energy of effort. This is exactly what the feeble and fluctuating hopes of earth never do. For the more a man is living in anticipation of an uncertain good, the less is he able to fling himself with wholeness of purpose and effort into the duties or enjoyments of the present. But a perfect hope will be the ally and not the darkener of the brightness of the present. And if we hope as we should for that we see not, then shall we with patience wait for it. Here, then, is the sort of hope which it is laid upon us Christian people consciously to try to cherish, one which is fixed and certain, one which is the mother of patience and endurance, one which persists through, and triumphs over all trouble and sorrow, one which nerves us for effort and opens our eyes to appreciate the blessings of the present, and one which wars against all uncleanness, and lifts us up in aspiration and aim towards the purity of Jesus Christ. We are neglecting a plain duty and impoverishing ourselves unnecessarily by the want of a treasure which belongs to us, unless we are making conscious efforts for our increase in hope as in faith and charity. Think of the blessedness of living thus, lifted up above all the uncertainties that rack men when they think about to-morrow. Try to realise the blessedness of escaping from the disappointments which come from all earthward turned expectations. The brightest blaze of Christian hope may be on the verge of the darkness of the grave. III. LASTLY, THE DISCIPLINE OF CHRISTIAN HOPE. "Gird up the loins of your mind." It suggests that there is a great deal in this life that makes it very difficult for us to keep firm hold of the facts, on which alone a perfect hope can be built. Unless we tighten up our belt, and so put all our strength into the effort, the truths of the resurrection which beget to a lively hope, of the great salvation wrought by Jesus Christ, of the meaning and end of all our trials and sorrows, will slip away from us, and we shall be left at the mercy of the varying anticipations of good or evil which may emerge from the varying circumstances of the fleeting moment. "Be sober." That means, not only gather yourselves together with a consecrated effort, but "keep your heel well down on the necks of lower and earthly desires." The fleshly lusts that belong to everybody must be subdued. That goes without saying. But, then, there are others more subtle, more refined, but not less hostile to the perfectness of a heaven-directed hope than are these grosser ones. We must keep down all the desires and appetites of our nature, both of the flesh and of the spirit. For we have only a certain quantity of energy to expend, and if we expend it upon the things of earth there is nothing left for the things above. If you take the river, and lead it all out into the gardens that are irrigated by it, or

into the stream that drives your mills, its bed will be left bare, and little of the water will reach the great ocean which is its home. We may, if we will, be as certain of the future as of the past. We may, if we will, have a hope which maketh us not ashamed. We may have a great light burning steadily, like a lamp fed with abundant oil, and shielded from every wind. We may see His coming shining afar off, and be warranted in saying, not merely "we hope," but "we know, that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." This Christ-given hope is the only one that persists through calamity, old age, and death. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

The grace that is to be brought unto you.—*Coming grace*:—I. THERE IS TO BE A REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. He has promised to come; He has given His people the hope of His coming; His coming is necessary—1. For His own final and perfect glorification. 2. For the complete salvation and glorification of His Church. 3. For the full and everlasting destruction of His and its enemies. 4. For the vindication of God's way and the exhibition of His glorious attributes to the world. II. WHAT THE REVELATION BRINGS. Grace. The Lord keeps His best wine unto the last, but He certainly sets forth good wine even now. We may, and do, receive grace now. Now is the day of salvation. But with all the grace given now to believers, and notwithstanding its present variety, fulness, and freeness, and all that it does in Christ's people, they need yet more at His revelation. 1. The grace of perfect vision of Him who is now unseen. 2. The grace of perfect likeness to Christ. 3. The grace of perfect acquittal. 4. The grace of perfect avowal and recognition. 5. The grace of perfect joy and glory for ever. III. WHAT INFLUENCE THIS REVELATION SHOULD NOW EXERT. 1. Spiritual readiness, in the loins of the mind girded, the thoughts collected, braced, prepared, and on the alert, with nothing left till the last (*Luke xii. 35, 36*). 2. Spiritual self-restraint, in sobriety; neither too elated nor too depressed. 3. Perfect hope; desiring, picturing, expecting the revelation and what it brings; hoping perfectly, never letting go hope, though the day seems far off. (*Alex. Warrack, M.A.*) *Grace and glory*:—We take grace as denoting in our text precisely what it ordinarily denotes in God's dealing with a sinner, and wish to show you that grace thus understood may become, or rather, produce glory. We will briefly examine into the twofold achievement of grace—deliverance from sin, and consignment to God's service. 1. As to deliverance from sin, shall not we be borne out by the experience of every believer, when we declare that it is his happiness to overcome sin, and his misery to be exposed to its assaults? If this corruption were wholly eradicated, he might continually walk in the shinings of the countenance of his Maker, and feel, so to speak, the fresh and free air of a better land circulating around him, as he passed on in his pilgrimage. So that all the interruptions of happiness are to be referred to sinfulness, and happiness becomes uniform, or rather, advances uniformly towards perfection, just in proportion as the sinfulness is subdued, and the whole man given over to a holy dominion. And if this be a correct account of a believer's experience, it will show us that grace and glory are one and the same. It is to the operations of grace that we must ascribe all the progress I have made in overcoming sinfulness; and if this progress be the same as progress in happiness, we proclaim that to the operations of grace must be ascribed all the happiness which a believer attains. And if it would thus be perfect happiness to realise to the full the renewing power of grace, how can we better describe perfect happiness than by supposing grace given without measure, and acting without rival? And if, yet further, perfect happiness be one ingredient of future glory, is not the gift of grace the gift of glory, and does not St. Peter address himself to the highest and most rapturous imagination when he bids us "hope for grace at the revelation of Jesus Christ?" This will be yet clearer if you observe the period at which the grace will be received. The second advent of our Lord was unquestionably present to St. Peter's mind. It is on this grand consummation that apostles and holy men of old delight to linger, and from this that they fetch their motives and consolations. They well knew that whatever the happiness of separate spirits, however deep and beautiful their repose after the clang and din of warfare, there can be no perfection of felicity until the widowhood be over, and the soul dwell once more in the body. They looked for grace "at the revelation of Jesus Christ," because they knew with that revelation would come the resurrection of the saints, the body and soul both redeemed, both purified, both endowed with eternity. If, therefore, this consummation be glory, what is glory but grace completed? 2. We have thus far only treated of grace as producing deliverance from sin; but this is not the only achievement of grace; yet further we must consider it as consignment to the service of God. There are none but true Chris-

tians who at all fulfil the great end of their being, that of promoting the glory of their Maker; and it is not through the workings of any human principle that they propose to themselves so sublime an honour; there must have been an alienation of the affections, and a withdrawal of the heart from temporary interests. We know, indeed, that all things, wickedness as well as righteousness, one way or another, promote God's glory; but while the Almighty, in the exercise of His sovereignty, compels a tribute from the rebellious, that tribute is offered by none but the believer. It is, therefore, to grace, the principle imparted by God, that we ascribe every effort to promote God's glory; nothing can be presented to God which has not first been received from Him; according to the words of David—"All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee"; and if it be the direct result of the workings of grace that we are led to consecrate ourselves to the service of God, then let grace have unrestrained operation, and, dust and ashes though we be, should we not become ineffably glorious? It will not be the robe of light which shall make us glorious, though brighter threads than sunbeams shall be woven into its texture; it will not be the palm and the harp that shall make us glorious, though the one shall have grown on the trees of Paradise, and the other have been strung by the Mediator's hands; we shall be glorious as ministering to God's glory—glorious as the servants of the Almighty—glorious with more than an angel's glory, because entrusted with more than an angel's commission. And, if this be our glory, poetry may give her music to what she counts more beautiful, and painting its tints on more sparkling and captivating things, but Christianity, the scheme of human restoration, recognises no glory but the living to the glory of God. If this be glory, then where is the word which could describe glory so emphatically as grace? Grace is that which produces consecration to God's service, and therefore grace is nothing less than incipient glory. (*H. Melville, B.D.*) **At the revelation of Jesus Christ.**—

The revelation of Jesus Christ:—I. THE GRAND OBJECT REFERRED TO. "The revelation of Jesus Christ." II. THE BLESSINGS WHICH RESULT TO BELIEVERS IN CONSEQUENCE OF THIS REVELATION. 1. By means of this revelation the kindness of God our Saviour to man is made known. 2. This revelation brings heaven to the view of believers, and assures them that they shall inherit that glory which is yet to be revealed. 3. This revelation teaches those who in consequence of receiving it have truly believed on the Son of God, that when He shall come again it will be to consummate their salvation. III. THE ENTIRE CONFIDENCE AND JOYOUS ANTICIPATION, WHICH IT BECOMES BELIEVERS CONSEQUENTLY TO INDULGE. 1. It is very important to Christians that they should indulge hope—that they should "perfectly hope." "We are saved by hope." 2. A firm foundation is laid for the exercise of perfect hope in the promises of God, ratified by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and confirmed by solemn oaths. (*W. Temple.*) *Christ and His grace*:—The display of Him is everything. Be it therefore observed that "the revelation" of Him is fourfold. 1. The first revelation of Him we call scriptural. This began very early, even in Paradise. There the Sun of righteousness dawned, and from thence shone more and more unto the perfect day. This exhibition of Him may be likened to a perfect portraiture of a most distinguished and endeared personage, at full length, rolled up on the side of a room, and which the owner gradually opens to the beholders, till the whole figure stands disclosed. 2. The second revelation of Him is incarnate. Thus He was not only declared but perceived. He appeared not in vision but in person. Not tremendously, as in the giving of the law, but familiarly, "clothed in a body like our own." Not transiently, as when He paid visits to His people of old, but by a continuance of three-and-thirty years—for "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us—full of grace and truth." 3. The third revelation of Him is spiritual. And we call it spiritual because it is produced by the Spirit of God in the spirit of man. It is expressed by sight; not a carnal sight of Him, but by the eye of faith. It is such an acquaintance with Him as draws forth our admiration, excites our love, gains our confidence, and secures our obedience. 4. The fourth revelation of Him is glorious. After all He is now much concealed. There are millions who know nothing even of His existence. Even where He is professedly known, there are multitudes to whom He has no form or comeliness, nor any beauty, that they should desire Him. But Christians are relieved and cheered with the thought that it will not be so always. But what is to be expected at the revelation of Jesus Christ? "The grace that is to be brought unto you." Two inquiries may here arise—1. What does "the grace" here spoken of mean? It comprehends the fulness of the promise, "I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "Well done, thou good and

faithful servant." His invitation, "Come, ye blessed of My Father." 2. But why is it called grace? Why is it not said, "The glory that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"? (1) May it not be, first, to exclude merit from all share in attaining it? (2) And may it not be so called to show the identity of grace with glory? (*W. Jay.*)

As obedient children.—Obedience:—I. WHY MUST WE OBEY? 1. Because obedience is the universal law, Divinely appointed, which no creature can escape. Man created to obey does not avoid this duty by separating himself from God; he only changes masters. What constitutes his greatness is that he freely responds to the design of his Creator. 2. Because as Christians we are the redeemed of Jesus Christ, and consequently the property of God. Everything in the gospel teaches obedience. II. **HOW MUST WE OBEY?** God will not be served by mercenaries nor by slaves. Who then will serve Him? The apostle answers, children. III. **WHAT INFLUENCE DOES THIS OBEDIENCE EXERT OVER OUR LIFE?** Action is but a part of obedience; to suffer is another. For many it is the larger part; for all it is the most difficult. Walking, speaking, working are to us means of obedience.

1. Some complain at being obliged to obey, and rebel. Direct them to Nazareth, to Gethsemane, to Calvary. 2. Some apparently accept the yoke of the Lord, but reserve to themselves the right of obeying in their way. Under the cover of Divine will they accomplish their own designs. 3. Some wait till an inward impulse moves them to obedience. If it does not act they do not obey at all. In obeying at first passively and without joy, their obedience would soon, under Divine blessing, be transformed into a joyous doing of His will. One word to such as do not yet possess the truth. If they ask me what is the best way of obtaining faith, I will not hesitate to answer, "Obey!" (*E. Bersier, D.D.*)

Obedience:—1. We must obey, not by halves, or where we list, but in all things (*Psa. cxix. 6; Luke i. 6; Lev. x. 2*). 2. We must not, on the other side, run without our errand, nor do things whereof we have no commandment; this is no obedience, be it never so costly or painful, have it never so goodly a show (*Jer. vii. 31*). 3. Moreover, we must obey the commandment of the Lord, be it never so strange, harsh, unpleasing, or contrary to custom, though all the world counsel to the contrary. 4. We must obey without reasoning the case, or consulting with flesh and blood: we must bind reason hand and foot to follow God (as it were) blindfold, as Abraham offering Isaac, and Joshua compassing Jericho. 5. We must obey, whosoever or whatever be against it. If profits, pleasure, farm, oxen, &c., call us away, and God invite us, we must follow Him, else we have no part in Him. 6. Speedily, not hereafter, but to-day. 7. Voluntarily, not be haled only by pain and misery. God loves a cheerful servant. 8. Constantly, not for a while only. Reasons hereof. (1) God's sovereignty over us. We clay, He our Maker. (2) His will a rule of righteousness. (3) His great mercies every way, even to the worst, but to His children wonderful ones. (*John Rogers.*)

Obedience a Christian virtue:—The idea of the Christian life, as a new sphere in which hope is predominant, and into which by virtue of our Lord's resurrection Christians enter by a second birth, leads the apostle to address those to whom he wrote as "children"; and among the typical excellencies of children he selects the virtue of obedience. Now it may be noticed, first of all, that obedience is not in our day one of the more popular Christian graces or virtues. There have been days in the Church when men have been possessed by nothing short of a passion for putting themselves under rule—sometimes, it must be granted, not being sufficiently careful as to the sort of rule they put themselves under. Those days have gone by; and while we hear of Church Temperance Societies and Church Purity Societies devoted to the enforcement of these particular virtues, we do not, as yet, hear of a "Church Obedience Society." Now the neglect into which obedience has fallen is apparently part of a larger neglect—that of the passive virtues generally; because, although obedience has an active, sometimes a very active, side, it is in the main a passive excellence. As the soul loses touch with the great Master of love, humility, self-repression, obedience it falls back on the old pagan ideal of regulated self-assertion, and a virtue like that insisted on by St. Peter—child-like obedience—is apt to be very soon at a discount. And there is another characteristic of our time which makes obedience a more or less difficult virtue. Obedience is said to be the virtue of older social conditions, such as accompanied feudalism or absolute monarchy, older conditions to which democracy has succeeded. It was natural, we are reminded, for arbitrary rulers to make much of a temper of mind which buttressed their power, but in a democratic age liberty takes the place of obedience: liberty is the typical virtue of free, self-improved, self-governing man; obedience, as a virtue, has had its day.

Again, we are reminded that we are living in an age of liberty, nor, can it be denied that the difficulties of doing justice to the virtue of obedience have been aggravated by the abuses which have gathered round the ancient centres of authority? Nothing discredits the claims of obedience like the exaggerations of the rightful claims of any who ought to be obeyed. The Monarchy of France, as Richelieu contrived to make it, was the natural forerunner of the great Revolution; the Papacy, when, among other causes, the false decretals had exaggerated a legitimate supremacy of order into a spiritual absolutism, led by reaction into that enfeeblement of Church authority which is the weakness of our part of Christendom. We have accordingly fallen upon times when, both in Church and State, the rights of liberty have been pleaded against the duties and the instincts of obedience, and pleaded more or less successfully because of abuses in the support of which obedience has been, or might be, conceivably enlisted. And, further, as a consequence of these three tendencies, attention has been in modern times largely concentrated on those parts of Holy Scripture, or the neglect of others, which lay stress upon the rights, as distinct from the duties, of a Christian; upon his freedom from the Jewish law as distinct from his obligations to the eternal moral law; upon the liberty with which Christ has made him free, as distinct from that service which he owes to God and which is itself perfect freedom. It is impossible to mistake the charm and power which attach to this word "liberty." There is, we feel, something in our own human nature which at once responds to it; it appeals to sympathies which are universal and profound. Liberty is even in one particular sense the excellence of man as man—that is to say, of man as being endowed with a free will. To attempt to crush the exercise of this endowment of freedom is regarded as a crime against human nature, while the undertaking to strengthen its vigour and to enlarge its scope appeals to man's profound desire to make the best of that which is his central self; and hence the indefinite, the magic charm which always attends upon the word and the idea of liberty. But, when in this connection we use the word "liberty," two different things are often intended. The liberty to choose between good and evil, with, it must be added, in our fallen state, an existing inclination in the direction of the evil, is one thing; the true moral liberty of man is another. True liberty is secure when the will moves freely within its true element, which is moral good. Moral good is to the human soul what the air is to the bird, what the water is to the fish. Bird and fish have freedom enough in their respective elements; water is death to the bird, as the atmosphere is to the fish. A bird can sometimes drown itself, a fish can leap out of the water and die upon the bank; but the liberty of fish and bird alike is sufficiently complete without this added capacity for self-destruction; and so it is with man. Every Christian who is living in a state of grace will understand this. He knows that he would gain nothing in the way of moral freedom by a murder, or an adultery, or a lie; he knows that our Lord Jesus Christ, who did no sin, who could have done no sin, was not, therefore, other than morally free, since it is His freedom in giving Himself to death which is of the essence of His self-sacrifice for the sins of the world: "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." Nay, a Christian knows, too, that God could not choose evil without doing violence to His essential nature. But is God, therefore, without moral freedom? Is not God rather the one Being who is perfectly free because His perfections make it impossible for Him to choose evil; and would it not follow that the more closely man approaches to the holiness of God, the more closely does he approach to the true idea of liberty? We may look at this fundamental truth from another side. The sense of liberty within the soul of man is the conscious energy of the will, its felt vigour its power of making straight for the aim before it. But what is more certain than that the will acquires this twofold excellence—strength and directness of purpose—by the discipline of obedience? The man who has never obeyed is not the man to know how to command. The steady drudgery of an apprenticeship is the necessary training for the conduct of a great business. The submissive and persistent industry of the junior clerk is the true preparation for a partnership in the firm. He would be a poor general of division who had never served as an ensign or a lieutenant, if not in the ranks. Nay, we see the operation of this law, that the strength and freedom of the will is secured by obedience, in the very quarter where we might beforehand perhaps think that it might have been dispensed with. We are told that the Divine Redeemer of the world went down to Nazareth, and was subject to His mother and His foster-father until a period long past the age of manhood; and when His ministerial life, which from first to last was a life of obedience, was ended, it was ended by a

supreme act of obedience. For He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross; wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him." The obedience which St. Peter recommends is, let us observe, the obedience of children. It is not the obedience of slaves, of slaves who are slaves against their will. The kingdom of heaven is not fashioned on the lines of an Oriental court in which a crowd of unwilling servitors tremble before a master whose word may at any moment bring to any one of them sentence of death. There have been Christians who have understood the service of God in some such sense as this, but it is not the tendency or a danger of our time. We should perhaps do better to remember that the use which a true Christian makes of his freedom is to become willingly a slave of Jesus Christ. This is St. Paul's favourite way of describing himself, "Paul, a servant"—it should be, "a slave of Jesus Christ." He means that he has freely surrendered himself, his soul, his body, his understanding, his affections, his will, his passions, his entire liberty, to the will, to the commands of Jesus Christ. But then this slavery is the highest expression of freedom, and it differs vitally from the involuntary slavery which has nothing to do with, though it may have at times been mistaken for, Christian obedience. In the current sense of the words, "Christian obedience" is not the obedience of slaves, nor is it the obedience of mercenaries. A true Christian does not serve God for the sake of what he can get from Him; he does not serve God only or chiefly even for the sake of gaining heaven, or of escaping hell. But here do not let us exaggerate. If God is to be served because He is what He is—ininitely perfect and lovable—it is not less true that a recompense does follow on Christian obedience. The picture in St. Matthew xxv. of the King sitting in judgment and making the eternal awards to the blessed and to the lost is not an illusion. If the recompense is not the first motive of service, it is a motive which our Lord Himself has sanctioned. Nay, in the last resort obedience to God for His own sake and obedience for the sake of the reward which He gives so blend as not to be distinguishable from each other, since God Himself is the only true and adequate reward of the human soul. He says to each true servant now, as He said to the Patriarch, "I am thy exceeding great reward." And yet it remains true that the obedience which keeps an eye only or mainly on what it will get is not in keeping with the higher temper of the Christian life. Every time we say "Our Father," at the beginning of the most authoritative of all prayers, we bind ourselves to a life of obedience. Of this let us be sure, that no true obedience neglects orders and duties which God has clearly prescribed. If God says by His apostle, "Pray," even "pray without ceasing," a true obedience does not say, "My heart is cold, my prayer will be formal, lifeless, resultless"—it does its best. If God says, "In everything give thanks," true obedience does not say, "God knows all about me and He will take my thankfulness for granted; I need not say grace after meals, or thanksgiving after Communion, or go out of my way to render praise to Him for some special deliverances and mercies"—it does its best. And if God bestows on us the treasure of His Holy Word, and bids us "Search the Scriptures," true obedience does not say that the Bible will not help us until we are aroused by literary curiosity, or some other sort of eagerness, to read it; it resolves to train the spiritual taste by earnest daily study—it does its best. If God desires us again and again to bear witness before the world to the faith that is in us, true obedience does not dwell on the feeble hold of the great unseen realities which is all that as yet we have, on the danger of saying more than we feel or mean, on the shifting, uncertain character of our present impressions—it goes straight to Holy Scripture and does its best. If God bids us remember the poor, visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction—in other words, look after hospitals, orphanages, homes, penitentiaries, deserted children, tramps, lone women, and the like—true obedience does not say, "There is no knowing, after all, how many of these institutions are doing any real good." It does not say, "We cannot possibly decide how many of these poor people are not gross impostors." It goes to work with the love of God in its heart, and, expecting to make a full percentage of mistakes, it does its best. Obedience cannot hope to be always and everywhere the product of a sustained enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is a great gift of God which visits souls and visits churches at intervals, but there are also intervals when there is little or no enthusiasm abroad, but during which the persistence of obedience is not the less necessary; and it is during these colder periods that we learn the value of living by rule. No obedience worth anything is to be secured without rule. "Moral force," it has well been said, "is like running water in a narrow channel which confines it on this side and that; it rushes onwards towards the

fields of duty as the dispenser of fertility and of life; but if it has no barriers to confine its energies and to direct its course, it will presently sink away into the sands and will do no good to any living thing." Not that child-like obedience is always, indeed chiefly, active. In the majority of human lives it is passive. It consists in acceptance of what is ordered, in submission, in resignation, rather than in anything demonstrative; and obedience of this kind is at once harder and more sublime than active obedience: it is the obedience of Gethsemane and of Calvary, rather than that of the preceding years of labour and of miracle. The Holiest, we are told, Himself learnt obedience, not by the things which He did, but by the things which He suffered. The best and most fruitful obedience may in some cases be that of the confirmed invalid, that of the closing weeks of a last illness. Obedience is the joy and glory of the great intelligences who move and worship around the eternal throne; and here below on earth the souls which grace has fashioned after the likeness of the pattern Man—aye, the finest natures among us—have a thirst, nay, they have a passion, for obedience, for they know that in freely obeying they touch nearly, or quite, the secret of moral victory and spiritual joy. (*Canon Liddon.*)

The obedience of hope:—These words immediately follow, and are to be taken in closest connection with, the exhortation to "hope perfectly for the grace that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Hope, then, is to be nurtured, not only by a believing contemplation of future felicities, but by exercising ourselves to godliness and practical obedience. Two points as to the words of this text must be noticed before dealing with the thoughts. As the Revised Version shows, the literal rendering is "as children of obedience." The essential or permanent characteristic of a person or thing is regarded as his or its parent. So obedience is represented as the inalienable mark of a Christian. But the immediately following reference to God as our Father seems to suggest that the Hebrew idiom here is blended with the Christian thought of sonship. One other expository remark is necessary. The Revised Version reads in the margin "but like the Holy One which called you." If we adopt that rendering, and connect the words closely with the preceding, God's own holiness is proposed as the pattern by which Christians are to fashion themselves.

I. THAT CHRISTIAN HOPE AND CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE ARE INSEPARABLE COMPANIONS. The mark of a son is to obey. And obedience means not merely doing what we are bid, but being glad to be bidden to do it; and it means not merely the active submission of will to the loving command of the Father, but also the quiet acceptance of and bowing of the will to the wise appointments of that Father. So it is the exact opposite of that temper and attitude which are characteristic of the godless world which makes self and its own will its law. There are the two courses of life, obedience or rebellion; and there is no middle point. Does our obedience cover the whole ground—of action and of surrender and submission? Such obedience can never be parted from the great Christian hope. Hope will produce obedience. Now, many professing Christians are a great deal stronger in the department of devout emotion than in that of practical righteousness. I should like all these people who find it so good to feed their souls on the meditation and anticipation of future blessedness to notice how, as in one volume, Peter binds up the two things that they keep so distinctly apart, and how emphatically he affirms that, if we have any genuine Christian hope, it will have its effect in helping us, as children of obedience, to do and to accept all our Father's will. There we come down to a very plain practical test. But, then, these two things which the Apostle thus couples by an iron band have a reciprocal action. They work upon each other; in fact, they are the outside and the inside of the same thing; but we may look at them as being different. Just as strong hope will produce obedience, so true obedience will nourish and strengthen hope. For a little sin will go much further towards obscuring and shattering a Christian man's hope than a great sorrow will. It is comparatively easy to keep up the temper of joyous anticipation of the future in the midst of the darkness of a present experience; but it is absolutely impossible for a man, at one and the same time, to be rebelling in heart and act against the will of God and to be entertaining and recreating his soul by the bright hope of a future heaven. No Christian man's hope will last through a sin. Therefore obedience and hope must co-exist and feed one another.

II. THAT HOPE, FED BY AND FEEDING OBEDIENCE, SHOULD CHANGE US FROM THE LIKENESS OF OUR FORMER SELVES. "Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance"—that may be said to all people who have been brought out of the darkness into the light. It is but an uncertain light, or twilight mainly, at the best, that shines upon the mysteries of

human life and duty, until the sunshine of God, manifested in Jesus Christ, rises and is welcomed by our hearts. So, then, non-Christian living is, in a profound sense, ignorance; and in the ignorance, just as the wild beasts of the forest go forth in the dark and are nocturnal in their habits if they are predatory, so the lusts that war against our souls expatiate and hunt and find their prey in the darkness. But, says Peter, if, hoping, you are obedient, and obedient you hope, then there will be a process of transformation going on in you. But in a world like this, and with creatures like us, unless a man has learnt not to do wrong, there is little chance of his doing right. The evil that we have to fight against is in possession, and we have to turn it out. A large part of all practical morality, Christian or not, consists in negative precepts; and the very heart and centre, in one aspect, of Christian duty lies here; self-denial, self-suppression, self-crucifixion. You have to put off the old self as part of the process of putting on the new. I press this upon you, "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance." And that will be a life-long task. For nobody knows how, like a cuttle-fish, holding on to its prey by the suckers upon its arms, his evil habits cling to him, until he have tried to fling away the loathly thing that prevents him from freely using his limbs. "Hope?" Yes! "Obey?" Yes! and that you may crucify the old man with his deeds, and put off the garments spotted by the flesh, that you may put on the "fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints." III. Lastly, THIS OBEDIENCE AND HOPE SHOULD CHANGE US INTO THE LIKENESS OF THE FATHER. If we are children we have the Father's life in us; and we ought to have the Father's likeness. This is the great aim that we have to set before ourselves. And oh! what an aim it is. Nothing less august than absolute perfection is worthy to be the goal of a soul. How different it is to say, Try to be like God as you have learned to know Him in Jesus Christ, from what it is to say, "Try to be up to the ideal of humanity"; "try to cultivate a pure morality"; "be true to yourselves," and all those other sayings, noble in their way and to a certain extent, which people who turn away from Christianity try to set up as substitutes for its morality. They are all hard and icy; and no kind of inspiration comes out of them. "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," the ideal lives; the ideal loves. Yes! and more; the ideal is our Father, and so He will make His child like Himself. And that fashioning ourselves like our Father, if it does not precede obedience to the negative precept, must at all events be carried on simultaneously with it. It is a fatal mistake to try simply to obey the negative precept unless we aim along with it at obedience to the positive one. The more we come close to Him the further we withdraw from earth and evil. But notice how hope animates the effort at becoming like God. He is "the Holy One which called you." Well, then, if He has called us to be holy, it will not be in vain that we shall try to be so. And unless we have this "hope of His calling," sure I am that we shall never earnestly and successfully aim at being like Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Obedience in small things*:—Do not always be looking for the large and the heroic, the expansive, the typical, the magnificent. Do with simplicity and consecration and faith your duty as it comes, every day; that is all. The great Earl of Lincoln held all his great estates from the Crown on the condition that he gave to the king every year one white rose in the time of roses. Now, it was not much—a white rose for a title to these estates; but mind you it was enough. It was a sign that the earl held all from the throne, and that he held all for the throne; and, as he gave his white rose, year by year, it was the signal of his loyalty. And God says to us, "I do not ask you for the large and the difficult and the impossible, day by day—but simple love, simple loyalty, simple service, one white rose in the time of roses." But mind you keep the white rose of love, of simple obedience, and consecration in your heart. That, then, is enough. He can see the heroic in the simplest service. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts.*—*We must forsake evil before we can do good*:—For the order here used, he sets renouncing of our lusts first, before embracing of holiness; men put off their old rags, ere they can put on a new apparel; purge the stomach of ill humours, ere they take good nourishment; dig up the weeds, ere they sow or set herbs: so in this case. Where, therefore, there remaineth the love of any lust or sin, there is no true grace in the heart, neither will any grow till that be rooted out. God will not plant any of His grace there, till the devil's planting be plucked up. Many think they be Christians, and do many things well, though they keep the love of some sin; no, mark, the love of grace and goodness, and the love of any sin, cannot be in one heart; they are so

contrary the one to the other; therefore, while thou livest in any known sin, and lovest any lust, as sure as God is in heaven thou art an hypocrite and standest in the state of damnation. (*John Rogers.*) Lusts are not sensual impulses and wants only, but desires of what is different from what God allows. (*G. F. C. Frau Müller, Ph.D.*)

In your ignorance.—*The sin of ignorance*:—I. WHY IS IGNORANCE NAMED AS THE SPECIAL SIN TO SET OUT THEIR UNREGENERATE ESTATE, seeing they were guilty of many other sins? Not because men sin only by ignorance, as the Platonists think, but—1. It may be the Holy Ghost doth of purpose do it to aggravate the hatefulnes of the sin because men use to excuse it and make light of it. 2. Because it is a sin none are free from. If he had named whoredom, or drunkenness, &c., many unregenerate men would have pleaded not guilty. 3. This sin serves more to reproach the rebellious nature of man. It was the knowledge of good and evil that Adam so much aspired unto, and lo, now, he and all his were set in gross ignorance. 4. Because ignorance is the mother and nurse of all sorts of sins (Eph. iv. 18; 2 Pet. ii. 12; Psa. xxxvi. 2, 3, 4). But have unregenerate men no knowledge? Yes, they have some knowledge, for they are wise to do evil, and they may have great learning in arts and sciences; but yet they are justly taxed with ignorance because they know not God as a Father by the light of faith, nor Christ Jesus whom He hath sent; and besides, they have no desire to know their own iniquities or the way how to reform their own lives; they have no knowledge to do good. II. These things being thus resolved, there are DIVERS OBSERVATIONS TO BE NOTED FROM HENCE. 1. That a true convert must make conscience of inward sins, as well as outward; of defects as well as evil desires or lusts, as here of ignorance as well as of wicked thoughts. The same God that saith, "How long shall thy evil thoughts abide in thee?" complains also of ignorance (Isa. i. 3). 2. That ignorance is no small sin; it is exceeding hateful to God; contrary to the doctrine of those that say it is the mother of devotion. 3. That without reformation of ignorance we cannot be truly turned to God; without knowledge the mind is not good; therefore, to tear the veil is one part of God's work in our conversion (Prov. xix. 3; Isa. xxv. 8). 4. That ignorance is wanton and full of lust (Eph. iv. 18). 5. That the way to be rid of lusts is to be rid of ignorance. For saving knowledge keeps us from sin (James iii. 17). Here we may see the principal use we should put our knowledge to, viz., to cleanse our hearts of base thoughts and desires. 6. That we may live in places of great means for knowledge and yet be grossly ignorant. For he writeth here to the Jews, who had the law and the prophets, and the oracles of God and the priests, &c. 7. That all knowledge or learning without the knowledge of God's favour in Christ, and the way how to reform our own lives, is but foolish ignorance. 8. That habitual lusts are a sure sign of ignorance, whatsoever knowledge men pretend. III. LASTLY, SEEING THERE IS IGNORANCE EVEN IN THE CHILDREN OF GOD AFTER CALLING, WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF UNREGENERATE IGNORANCE? 1. It hardens the heart and works a continued evil disposition to sin with greediness (Eph. iv. 11, 18). Now the ignorance in the godly may be where the heart is softened and the overflowings of corruption stopped. 2. It hoodwinketh the soul in the main things needful to salvation, as the knowledge of a man's own iniquities, God in Christ, the forgiveness of a man's own sins, and generally all the things of God (1 Cor. ii. 14). A wicked man may discern spiritual things carnally, but not spiritually. 3. It hath never been in the furnace of mortification; it hath never been truly repented of, whereas the ignorance of the godly hath often been confessed, mourned for, &c. 4. It will suffer no saving grace to neighbour by it; where ignorance hath not been repented of, there no fear of God, no holy contemplation, no uprightness, love of God, or His Word, or His people, will dwell. Now the ignorance that is in God's children is well neighboured with many holy graces that can dwell by it. And as these ignorances differ in nature and working, so they differ in imputation. For unto the godly there is a sacrifice for ignorance. God doth not impute ignorance unto the godly: it shall be to them according to what they know, and not according to what they know not. (*N. Byfield.*) *Ignorance the cause and root of a bad life*:—He fathers their following of lusts on their ignorance; and ignorance is the root of a wicked life; for, till men know the will of God out of His Word, how can they do it? and what are we prone to by nature, but to all the evil in the world? Therefore the devil labours by all means to hold people in blindness, and, of all books, hath most been an enemy to the Bible, and to sincere and diligent reading, and preaching the Scriptures, for were those away, he knows all iniquity must needs abound. As, if one comes into a house at midnight, he sees no faults, but when the morning

comes, then he sees a number of things out of order; so in the clear light of the gospel, we see the wickedness that then appeared not in the dark. Whither will not our nature run, and whither may not the devil and world lead one, when he hath no eyes to see whither he goes? As the raven first picks out the lamb's eyes, and then kills it at his pleasure, when it cannot see to escape, so doth the devil by people. (*John Rogers.*) *Slavery through ignorance*:—I have heard a reflection often expressed by thoughtful country people when they saw a great draught horse meekly submitting to be bridled and led away to labour by a child: "If the brute creatures knew their own strength, they would not submit to the yoke and the lash." These mighty quadrupeds could trample down the stripling that puts bits in their mouths. Yet they submit to whatever their master imposes, ignorant of their own strength. Oh, if man, God's greatest creature, knew his strength, he would not submit to be the slave of vile passions! Strong men in multitudes are in our country led not only to the yoke, but even to the shambles, by the appetite of intemperance. This possessing spirit says to the right arm, Do this, and he doeth it; to the foot, Go thither, and he goeth. Oh, that these captives, driven openly in gangs, not through the marshes of interior Africa, but along the streets of British cities, were at last set free! (*W. Arnot.*) **Holy in all manner of conversation.**—*Holiness in all things*:—Not where, when, to whom, and what we list, but at all times, in all places, towards all persons, and in all things, as God is holy in all His ways and works. 1. This serves to rebuke those that will yield in some things only. What is it if a man be not covetous, if he be proud, or unclean, &c.? Some will yield in great matters, but in small do as they list; as to swear by their faith and troth, especially in that which is true, talk vain a little, put a little false ware, deceive a little, &c. Some again will yield in all small matters, but in some great thing they will not; as to give all diligence to increase in every grace, and that no corrupt communication should come out of their mouths; though thou hast spoken many good words, yet hadst thou better be silent than have no more good to speak. Some in adversity will be very humble, good words, golden promises, but in prosperity nothing so. Some use their superiors well, their poor tenants or work-folks hardly. Alas, there is no part of our life, wherein God gives any license to do evil; in our particular callings let us show the truth of our Christianity. 2. Let us prove the truth of holiness in us by the generality of it; keep a constant tenour, an even hand, and let there be a proportion between every part of our life, not one part, as it were, devout, another profane and wicked. (*John Rogers.*) **Be ye holy, for I am holy.**—*The holiness of God the type and model of ours*:—What, then, is the sort of holiness to which He who is holy in calling us, does in fact call us? I. Here, negatively, LET US NOTE WHAT IT IS NOT AND CANNOT BE. 1. For one thing, it clearly is not, it cannot be, mere innocence, the innocence of one ignorant of evil, or of one who knows evil only by report, or of one who knows it only as a possibility, by a prohibitory enactment with a penalty attached to it. 2. Neither is it enough that it should be a holiness consisting merely of enforced abstinence from evil, or of such outward compliance with good as a sense of dire necessity and a dread of unpleasant consequences may produce. 3. Nor even can it be such painful discipline of self-restraint, self-denial, self-mortification, as may spring from better and more respectable motives—sometimes from motives of deep religious earnestness. 4. For, as to its essential character, our holiness, if it is to be like the holiness of God, must, at the very outset, pass out of the region of the merely negative, which implies a continual struggle to dethrone a tyrant, into the region of the positive, which is realised in our acknowledgment of Him who buys us to be His freedmen. 5. For, finally, it is indeed now a new influence, a fresh and new power. II. THE POSITIVE ASPECT OF THE GRACE IN QUESTION—how, in that changed aspect of affairs, with our new mind towards God, as connected with His new mind towards us, may His holiness thus purely and simply bear upon us? How otherwise than by our being made partakers of His holiness, in such a sense and to such an effect that we do now really become "as God, knowing good and evil"? We know evil as God knows it; because we know good as God knows it. For we are partakers of "the Divine nature," through our faith in "God's exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet. i. 4). We are thus "partakers of His holiness" (Heb. xii. 10). (*R. S. Cundlish, D.D.*) *Holiness*:—I. EXPLAIN THE EXHORTATION. 1. The nature of holiness. 2. Its different stages and degrees. 3. Its objects. 4. Its effects. II. CONSIDER THE MOTIVE. 1. God is holy, and therefore without holiness we cannot be like Him. 2. God is holy, and therefore those only who are so can truly serve Him. 3. God is holy, and without holiness it is impossible to please Him in anything we do.

4. God is holy, and unless we be so too, we cannot be owned or acknowledged by Him. 5. God is holy, and we must be holy in order to enjoy Him. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Holiness :—I. Holiness in the HEART, or as it works its way down to the depth of our nature. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." 1. In their unregenerate state men always fashion themselves after the pattern of their lusts or inward sinful desires. 2. The power of evil, however, though not expelled, is dethroned in the believer's heart, and the principle of dutiful obedience takes its place. God's people—ideal, and to a certain extent actual, people—are emphatically the "children of obedience." (1) This implies for one thing that they inwardly approve the Divine law, that they love God's commandments. It is not a law they would alter if they could. (2) Obedience, however, contains another element, namely, that the mind throws itself actively and energetically into the duties prescribed. II. Holiness in the LIFE, or as it widens out over the whole area of conduct. "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." 1. This enjoins holiness in all our thinking and reading. 2. Holiness should also be observed in all your conversation, in the modern sense of the word. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt." (1) On the one hand, you must renounce filthy and blasphemous language. (2) But as you should avoid evil communications, so, on the other hand, your speech should be such as to cause grace in the hearers. We do not faithfully mirror the Divine holiness when we foul each other's character. 3. Christian holiness, furthermore, extends to our acts as well as to our words and thoughts. "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Christianity influences the whole area of life private and public; it is commensurate with our existence. III. Holiness in its STANDARD. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." 1. Why is holiness a virtue, and therefore required of us? The Bible answer is, Because God is holy. The essence of God—that is to say, that which makes God to be God—is His infinite holiness and infinite love. Hence the Bible continually summons men to holiness; not to learning or culture, but to holiness, for only in holiness and love can we resemble our Maker. By growing in other things, however much to be coveted in themselves, we do not grow in likeness to our Maker. 2. In the text God is styled "He that called you." And His "calling" imposes a fresh obligation upon you. You are called by God—to what? To holiness, "to show forth the virtues of Him that called you." If you seek not holiness, you overlook the very purpose of your separation from the world and your incorporation into the Church. Your "call" has been in vain. 3. As the ground of our holiness is in God, so the standard of our holiness, that to which it is to grow, is the holiness of God. "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Infinite holiness surely presents a standard lofty enough. Christianity in the morality, the holiness, it demands can never be outdone. One argument Herbert Spencer urges against it is that the standard of character it offers for our imitation is too high. Observe that the objection carries in it a homage to the pure ethics of the Teacher of Nazareth. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) *The family likeness* :—

I. THE PATTERN OF HOLINESS. Religion is imitation. The truest form of worship is to copy. All through heathenism you find that principle working. "They that make them are like unto them." Why are heathen nations so sunken in their foulnesses? Because their gods are their examples, and they, first of all, make the gods after the pattern of their own evil imaginations, and then the evil imaginations, deified, react upon the makers and make them tenfold more children of hell than themselves. Worship is imitation. For religion is but love and reverence in the superlative degree, and the natural operation of love is to copy, and the natural operation of reverence is the same. So that the old Mosaic law, "Be ye holy as I am holy," went to the very heart of religion. And the New Testament form of it, as Paul puts it in a very bold word, "Be ye imitators of God, as beloved children," sets its seal on the same thought. But then, says somebody or other, "it is not possible." Well, if it were not possible, try it all the same. For in this world it is aim and not attainment that makes the noble life; and it is better to shoot at the stars, even though your arrow never reaches them, than to fire it along the low levels of ordinary life. I do not see that however the unattainableness of the model may be demonstrated, that has anything to do with the duty of imitation. Instead of bewildering ourselves with questions about "unattainable" or "attainable," suppose we asked, at each failure, "Why did I not copy God then; was it because I could not, or because I would not?"

II. THE FIELD OF THIS GODLIKE HOLINESS. Here is no cloistered and ascetic holiness which taboos large provinces of every man's experience, and says "we must not go in there, for fear of losing our purity," but

rather wherever Christ has trod before we can go. That is a safe guide, and whatever God has appointed there we can go and that we can do. "In all manner of conversation." There is nothing so minute but it is big enough to mirror the holiness of God. The tiniest grain of mica, upon the face of the hill, is large enough to flash back a beam; and the smallest thing we can do is big enough to hold the bright light of holiness. III. THE MOTIVE OR INSPIRATION OF HOLINESS. Peter would stir his hearers to the emulation of the Divine holiness by that thought of the bond that unites Him and them. "He hath called you." In which word, I suppose, he includes the whole sum of the Divine operations which have resulted in the placing of each of his auditors within the circle of the Christian community as the subjects of Christ's grace, and not only the one definite act to which the theologians attach the name of "calling." In the briefest possible way we may put the motive thus—the inspiration of imitation is to be found in the contemplation of the gifts of God. And not only so, but in this thought of the Divine calling there lies a fountain of inspiration when we remember the purpose of the calling. As Paul puts it in one of his letters: "God has not called us to uncleanness but to holiness." And so, if in addition to the fact of His "gift and calling" and all that is included within it, if in addition to the purpose of that calling we further think of the relation between us and Him which results from it, so as that we, as the next verse says, call Him who hath called us, "Our Father," then the motive becomes deeper and more blessed still. Shall we not try to be like the Father of our spirits, and seek for His grace, to bear the likeness of sons? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Of imitating the holiness of God*:—I. THE OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO IMITATE THE GOD WHOM WE WORSHIP. This is an original obligation, founded in nature itself, requiring us to imitate what it necessitates us to admire. And this obligation is confirmed by the light of reason, teaching us further that imitation of God, as it is most fit in itself, so it cannot but be likewise most acceptable unto Him and agreeable to His will. For the same absolute perfection of the Divine nature which makes us certain that God must Himself be of necessity infinitely holy, just, and good, makes it equally certain that He cannot possibly approve iniquity in others. And the same beauty, the same excellency, the same importance of the rules of everlasting righteousness, with regard to which God is always pleased to make those rules the measure of all His own actions, necessarily prove that it must likewise be His will that all rational creatures should proportionately make them the measure of theirs. In the revelation which God has been pleased to make to us of Himself in Scripture, the necessity of the same duty is more expressly and more clearly enforced (*Lev. xi. 44, xix. 1; Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10; 2 Pet. i. 4*). II. THE TRUE EXTENT AND PROPER LIMITATIONS OF THIS DUTY. 1. All imitation of God must be understood to be an imitation of His moral attributes only, and not of His natural ones. 2. Even in these moral excellencies it is evident further that it must necessarily mean an imitation of likeness only, and not of equality. 3. Yet ought we also to consider that even in the degrees of goodness it is our duty continually to improve. A perfect example is set before us that aiming always at that, we may make a perpetual progress in the ways of virtue. Conclusion: 1. If true religion consists in the imitation of God, and all imitation of God is of necessity confined to His moral perfections only, then it hence evidently follows that moral virtue is the chief end of religion, and that to place the main stress of religion in anything else besides true virtue is superstition. 2. If true religion consists in the imitation of God, and that which is imitable in God be His moral perfections, hence it follows necessarily that moral excellences, justice, goodness, truth, and the like, are of the same kind in God as in men. 3. From hence it appears of how great importance it is to men to frame to themselves right and worthy notions of God. For such as are the conceptions men have of the object of their worship, such also will proportionably be their own behaviour and practice. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *The true ideal of life, its sublime grandeur and implied attainability*:—I. ITS SUBLIME GRANDEUR. The holiness of God. To be holy is to possess, not one virtue or grace, but all virtues. "The moral magnates of the old world," says Luthardt, "are strong in this or that particular virtue; but they fail to give us the impression that the central point of their being is penetrated and renovated by the spirit of morality, and that we have in this a guarantee that the moral spirit by which they are animated would manifest itself in all aspects as occasion offered. They represent only single virtues: Aristides, justice; Epaminondas, truthfulness; Cimon, liberality; Leonidas, patriotism, &c.; but they do not represent morality itself. Socrates is the model of a noble Greek; but in his last hours he was unfeeling to his wife and children. Plato and Aristotle were teachers of wisdom; but

their verdict on the sensual errors of their fellow-countrymen was more than lenient. Cato was proverbial for his integrity in public life, but was cruel to his slaves; and we might adduce many more such instances. Everywhere we see single virtues; nowhere do we find the spirit of morality filling the whole man." God's character is the totality. God "is light." By a prism we can divide the light of the sun into various coloured rays, each of which is an object of interest and deserves study. But as in the light there is the combination of all these colours, so in the character of God we have the combination of all actual and conceivable virtues. This is our standard, nothing lower. First: Anything lower than this would not suit our nature. We are so constituted that our faculties can never unfold themselves vigorously, fully, without having some grand object ever before us; when that object is reached they collapse, and the soul sinks into dormancy if not death. Secondly: Anything lower than this would damage the universe. The well-being and blessedness of the intelligent creation depends upon every member aiming at the highest holiness, the holiness of God. II. ITS IMPLIED ATTAINABILITY. No character ever appeared in history so imitable as the character of Christ. He is the most imitable character—First: Who has the most power to command admiration—the admiration of the soul. Secondly: Who is the most transparent in character. Thirdly: Who is the most unalterable in purpose. Therefore follow Him. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Personal holiness*:—This great gift and demand of the Gospel, I wish to regard as a thing simply personal and individual. I have called it a gift, for holiness is no longer natural to, no longer rises spontaneously in the soul of man: it needs to be inspired and called forth by the "Spirit of holiness," which is the Spirit of God. And what is this gift of holiness, so needful for the Christian, the work of the Holy Ghost in His own individual soul and nature? Now if holiness has its seat in the soul, it is clear that it does not consist merely of a certain number of ceremonial, or even of religious acts, but that it consists first of a principle, and then of habits springing from that principle. It does not consist merely of religious acts, although these acts are quite necessary to a holy life. It consists in the soul of man being brought into communion and concord with God, the source of holiness. And this is done on man's part by the exercise of two qualities in his nature directed towards God—faith and love. The spiritual power of these two great gifts is unbounded, is miraculous. They transform the soul; they make it, according to its capacity, like God; they awaken new affections; they give a new bias to the will; they inspire new hopes, desires, and aims; they raise the spirit into a higher atmosphere, while they invest the commonest duties of life with a hallowing influence. This is its principle; but it is not merely an excited or elevated state of mind or feeling. It will not evaporate in sentiment, but will go forth into habits, and mix itself with all the acts of this life. Where the will of man is brought into harmony with the will of God, it must run out into deeds and habits of love and self-sacrifice, into all that is pure and holy. And if we look for a perfect exhibition, an unique pattern of the holiness here enjoined, we find it in the character and life of our Divine Redeemer. To be holy is to be like Christ; this is the final test, the consummation of human nature, wholly sanctified in body, soul, and spirit. For in that heavenly character, what is the leading idea? One stands forth pre-eminent—the supreme lesson of His life. It is the sacrifice of His will, in love to God and man. (*A. Grant, D.C.L.*) *The holiness of God*:—Why ought the holiness of God to be a reason for our holiness? I. BECAUSE HOLINESS IS THAT IDEA OF HIMSELF WHICH GOD IS MOST INTENT UPON COMMUNICATING TO MAN. II. EVERY OTHER MORAL CONCEPTION THAT YOU CAN FORM OF GOD WHEN YOU ANALYSE IT WILL CARRY YOU BACK TO THE FUNDAMENTAL THOUGHT THAT GOD IS A HOLY BEING. He is said to be good. Goodness, if you analyse it, will bring you back to the idea of doing that only which is pure and fit and just and right. III. THE RELATION WHICH SUBSISTS BETWEEN MAN AND GOD MAKES IT INDISPENSABLE THAT MAN SHOULD BE HOLY, OR PURE IN HIS PURPOSE, and this for several reasons. The Scriptures inquire, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" What harmony can there be between light and darkness, good and evil, right and wrong, purity and impurity, sin and holiness? Two persons may be most strongly attached where one supplements the other. So, even in the marriage relation, absolute identity of tastes is not always essential to the highest happiness; but, while there may be the supplementing of one with the other, if there be antagonism, there can be no sympathy or union. So that, if we are expecting to be accounted the children of God, there must be sympathy, truth, identity. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *God and obligation, or the pattern of sanctity*:—A "holy thing" is a thing that has been withdrawn from common uses and reserved for specific religious ends. A

“holy man” is one upon whom there has been laid an authoritative interdiction irrevocably separating him from the pursuits of common life, and binding him to the Divine service. But how can God be called holy in this earliest meaning of the term? He is eternally pure and perfect and separate from sinners, and does not need to draw a line between Himself and the world by a special consecration act. Well, God is separate from all those gods of the heathen kingdoms who may be thrust into competitive relations with Him. Even when the gods of the heathen are made to represent virtues and heroisms, when they incorporate the fairest ideals of the human imagination and conscience, in disposition and conduct and benign economy they fall immeasurably short of the perfection of the Most High, and He is still separate and alone. By acts that are from everlasting to everlasting in their range, He makes for Himself a consecrated sphere of life that must be ever and only His own (Micah vii. 18). Is the time-honoured logic of this injunction sound? Is God’s pattern a spring of motion and obligation to us? The logic has stood the strain of many centuries: will it do for our critical decade? I. The argument at the outset sounds like an argument basing itself upon THE AUTHORITY WHICH TAKES ITS RISE IN SUPREME AND BOUNDLESS POWER. The Divine Speaker seems to assume unlimited proprietorship over us because He imparts life and determines all the outward conditions under which life maintains itself. Now a Jew would have submitted himself at once. We, however, are disposed to go a little further into the subject than that, and ask, “Does mere power, however gigantic its scale, create obligation”? It is our privilege to live after the French Revolution, and we are not disposed to submit to superior power for the simple reason that it is superior power. For God to bind upon us the law of His personal life because He is stronger than we is surely not unlike Fate trying to vanquish Prometheus bound to the rock in the Caucasus. Well, whilst usurped power can bring no sanction with it, if the power be original, creative, unlimited in time and space, it does bring essential obligation in its train. God does not want our conformity to His pattern because His power out-towers other types of power, but because it is spontaneous, eternal, and a part of Himself. He whose breath brings the secret of life, whose word makes every vavelet of sunshine or starlight that visits the eye, every atom of air that sweetens and vitalises the blood, whose hand prepares the foundation upon which all life rests, and strikes the blow which brings our truest enfranchisements, has the right to bind men by His pattern. The rights of all fatherhoods, the prerogatives of all crowns and thrones and sovereignties, the sanctions of all law and ethic speak in this imperative “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” II. The authority that here addresses us is not that of supreme power only, but also of ABSOLUTE LOVELINESS AND PERFECTION. In bidding us be like Himself God is bidding us be like that we most esteem, for has He not captivated the entire range of our reverence and admiration? The crown of supremacy belongs to God, not by an arbitrary coronation act, but by His own inherent fitness to wear it. We must set ourselves to copy that which we irresistibly worship. The musician whose soul has been visited by dream-like melodies from other worlds, is bound to so group his notes as to realise, for those to whom he sings, the mystic enchantments that have smitten his own soul with wonder. The painter to whose inner sense the subtle charm and secret of glowing sky, or flowered landscape, or fretting sea, has made itself known, is bound to suggest, as far as the play of colours will do it, the magnificent vision that has possessed his own imagination. All admirations have as their very core and essence the force of a vast moral constraint; and if God be the best of which we can think, or reason, or dream, if He has conquered all our moral admirations, if He is the loftiest pattern a quick and healthy and highly stimulated conscience can conceive, we are bound to copy Him. The highest form of worship is imitation. The trisagion of the cherubim, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts,” confesses the law under which earth and heaven alike are placed to be like God. I need not remind you how in His pattern prayer Christ makes us subscribe to the principle whose gracious operation and benefit we need for ourselves—“Our Father, which art in heaven.” Where there is fatherhood there is sonship and its duties, the first of which is to copy the qualities of the highest fatherhood. As we confess the Divine perfection the voice of unflinching response comes back in reply to our homage, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” III. These words are an argument from THE AFFINITIES AND SIMILITUDES OF THE DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURES. God’s nature is the archetype of ours. What does it mean when it is said we are “made in God’s image” and quickened to life with God’s breath, but that God has put within us the rudiments of His own holiness? The power to grow like God is implanted in man at the very beginning. There

is a long-buried seed of spiritual excellence in him, old as his dim origins, which the processes of grace are destined to awaken and perfectly fructify. And to give us further assurance on the subject we are not only reminded of that image whose faint outlines and affinities we still bear, but we are told that this high and holy One has made Himself in our image. The correspondences are guaranteed from two stand-points. He has lived out His perfect life in an environment that is one with our own. In the person of His spotless and eternal Son, God has bowed Himself to the most abject conditions of our life, giving us a vision of that we are charged to copy, notwithstanding the strain of fierce and varied temptations. The grace that surrounds us on every side enters our natures and tends to produce there a reflection of the Holy One who has been our Friend and Saviour. In one of his books Mr. Ruskin says: "Some years ago a young Scotch student came to put himself under me, having taken many prizes justly with respect to the qualities looked for by the judges in various schools of art. He worked under me very earnestly and patiently for a time, and I was able to praise his doings in what I thought very high terms. Nevertheless there always remained a look of mortification on his face after he had been praised, however unqualifiedly. At last he could hold no longer, but one day when I had been more than usually complimentary, turned to me with an anxious yet not unconfident expression, and asked, 'Do you think, sir, that I shall ever draw as well as Turner?' I paused for a second or two, being much taken aback, and then answered, 'It is more likely you should be made emperor of all the Russias. There is a new emperor every fifteen or twenty years on an average, and by strange hap and fortunate cabal any body might be made emperor. But there is only one Turner in five hundred years, and God decides without any admission of auxiliary cabal what piece of clay his soul is to be put into.'" Come with your largest aspirations to the feet of Jesus Christ, and you may count upon a very different answer from that. "I am the 'Firstborn amongst many brethren,' and you shall be like Me, and shall realise the very qualities of Him whose manifestation I am. Trust Me, and go forward at My word, for you may be merciful and holy and perfect as the One in whose image you are made. The seed of the forgotten possibility is still in you, and I come to quicken that seed again, and in that quickening to bestow all spiritual grace and perfection. Yours is the very clay into which God determines to put His eternal ideal." IV. The argument is an argument from THE LIVING CONTACT AND MYSTIC IMMANENCY OF THE MOST HIGH HIMSELF. The very self-same energy that makes God holy dwells in us and blends itself with our life. The very motive which determines God's eternal and unspotted life of blessedness comes to infix itself in us. The power of God's personal holiness, with all its magnificent achievements, lends itself to us for our perfecting. 1. God comes very near to every man who wants to copy His personal perfection, and the reason He seems far off from some is that they have never been inspired with the desire to emulate His character. He is a model who lends Himself to the most intimate handling of reverential natures, and to the closest study of all who love Him and desire to conform themselves to His spiritual similitude. 2. God is not only accessible, but He has the art of imparting Himself to those who seek Him in sincerity and love. If we may use the term without irreverence, He is the most magnetic being in the universe, inspiring those about Him with His own thought and love and sacred spiritual ardour. He is ever ready to make known His deepest secret to us. 3. He comes also to dwell within us, and inform our nature with His hourly inspirations. And if God be in us, the imitation of God is not an extravagant or fantastic hope. And so our obligation is not measured by what we are in ourselves, but by those new ranges and outbursts of energy the Holy Spirit brings into our natures. His forces must be added to our own; the marvellous possibilities arising out of His inhabitation of human souls, the capacity attainable through His infinite and unflinching succours, must be discerned and brought into the estimate if we would know the sum of our obligation, the breadth of the law under which we are placed, the lofty standard we are summoned to reach. To be like God is a costly thing, involving stern self-abnegation, and the strenuous application of all that is within you to one end. Well, is God's holiness a cheap and easy and self-indulgent thing? Did it not cost Him the most cherished treasure of His universe to exercise that holiness and compassionate an offending race? It is only by the renunciation of self that you can begin, however faintly, to be like God. (*T. G. Selby.*) *Holiness after the Divine type*:—The word holy has received various interpretations, according to the culture of those employing it. In the law of Moses, the word of

which it is the translation seems to mean nothing more than ceremonial cleanliness. Then, certain moral ideas got associated with it, and to be holy signified to be virtuous. By and by the idea of pure feeling was added on, and it was seen that there must be an inward as well as outward purity in order to make a man holy. Our English word starts from an altogether different basis. Its fundamental conception is that of health; the holy man is the healthy, sound, whole man. But, then, it went through the same spiritualising process; first of all, health, holiness, consisted simply in soundness of body, then of mind, then of morals, and, finally, of the whole being. I like this conception better than the Hebrew; it gives one an idea more completely in harmony with the truth. I find it very hard to work my way up to spiritual holiness from the Hebrew standpoint of ceremonial cleanliness. But I discern this holiness, in the highest sense, to be wholeness, soundness, or health, that is, existence in the normal state, according to the laws of my whole being. And that, surely, is the holiness of God. He lives, He acts, according to the condition of His own absolutely perfect nature—from Himself, according to the truth of His own being. The text, then, is a call to Christian people ever to be striving after higher attainments in this holiness, ever to be setting before them the absolute holiness of God as the ideal after which they should form themselves. 1. First of all, I feel there are a great force and beauty in the terms the writer employs: "Not fashioning yourselves according to your former desires, in your ignorance." The idea is that of constructing the outward form of your life according to the inward scheme you have formed of it. And so, again, when he says, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation," it means, in every turn of your conduct, in deeds as well as words; let your outcoming be according to the perfect law of your nature. Words, actions, are simply the covering, habitation, exuded from one's soul which shows clearly what the soul is—its character, tone, refinement, thought, feeling, purposes, life. Every instant we are thus giving out from ourselves and proclaiming to those who are by us what we are. And when I say this, I do not forget that a great deal of what we say and do is done according to custom and etiquette of the set of people amongst whom we live. Very few live according to the pure, free, spontaneous impulses of their own nature. But, then, it must be remembered that these social usages of thought and expression have entered into and become a part of our inner being before they get themselves outwardly observed by us. You mingle, for example, with coarse people; their coarseness, sooner or later, consciously or unconsciously, insinuates itself into your soul; then you fall into coarse ways; that is, the coarseness your soul has grown into, comes out in coarse words and manners. Or, let us hope, you associate with refined people; the influences of their refinement purify your soul, and it, too, becomes refined; the manners, morals, modes of life which you henceforth exhibit become, of necessity, the expression of that refinement. A noble soul puts its nobleness into the smaller acts of its life as well as into the greatest: two sentences will disclose the want of order in an illogical mind; Divine love radiates its tenderness through the simplest expression; the pure soul indicates its purity by the kind of its response to purity and coarseness, as the thermometer responds to heat and cold. The only way of being good, pure, noble, holy in the high Anglo-Saxon sense of the word, is to have the soul filled with truth and goodness, and then act from the inward impulses freely. Schematise, fashion your outward life by the plastic energy of your own soul. 2. Secondly, I think this text intimates the progressive character of holiness in each individual. A past and a future are referred to; the present is the transition point from the one to the other. In the past, the outward life was fashioned by ignorance, or rather, in ignorance; now, knowledge is to take its place, and a higher ideal is to give the model of the conversation. Yet, observe, as much as the writer supposes his hearers to have risen above that former state, it was one of comparative evil rather than of positive—of privative knowledge rather than absolute ignorance. However high the attainments of to-day, and however pure the life of to-day may seem, when the higher knowledge and life of to-morrow come, we shall look back upon all we have attained to-day, as to-day we look back upon what we were yesterday. The youth at sixteen or seventeen thinks himself a man, and laughs at the childishness of ten years ago. When he has grown to forty or fifty years he will look back upon his present age as that of his boyhood. And so it always happens that our past seems to us folly, weakness, evil, in the light of the grace we have now reached. But that just leads the thoughtful to see how the past belongs to the present, and forms an essential part of it, containing within itself the rudiments of all that is truest and best in us now. 3. But thirdly, we have here given to us the primal

condition of this increasing holiness; namely, the setting before us of a perfect ideal. As He calling you is the holy One, be ye holy in all forms and turns of your life, for it is written, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Now, you will observe, this is quite accordant with all I have said about the holiness being dependent upon, not an outward rule, but an inward principle. For, although correctly, God is set before us as the pattern, type or object with which we are to conform ourselves in holiness, yet, clearly, it is not God existing outwardly and beyond ourselves, but as He is known to, and conceived in our own minds. The outward revelation of God must be construed to the mind in the form of its own ideas, before it can possibly produce the least spiritual effect upon the soul. And that is true, whether the revelation be given in nature or in books. And now, consider a little the principle that it is the forming of higher ideals which is the one primal condition of progress in holiness. You can never rise above your own thoughts, that is certain. There is nothing which you have out of which anything higher and better could come; you are kept down to that level by a law harder than fate. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* Blessed are those who can realise their thoughts to the full! For, whilst it is true that we cannot rise higher than our ideals, our thoughts, it is not true that we can always rise as high. The reverse is the truth. We never can shape the material on which we work so readily as we shape our thoughts. The thing done is never so true and good and beautiful as the idea we had of it. Sometimes the fault lies in the unshapeable, unplastic materials. More often with the untrained, disobedient hand, or other powers with which we do the work. What Divine songs our fancies, for instance, sometimes sing, and how they get never sung by the unmanageable organs of speech! What fame some artists would have, if the hand could but create the idealised picture or sculpture! And all this is still more true of the moral qualities of things, for in them we meet with more hindrances to realisation. We picture godness, which a little passing appetite is strong enough to mar in operation. We idealise justice, and the chance of some palpable advantage causes the idea to get sadly distorted when it comes out in deeds. Wonderful and mysterious is that plastic power of the soul! as it thinks of Divine things it becomes Divine, and forthwith the divineness spreads through words and deeds; and although in spreading the divineness becomes diffused, attenuated, yet it is divineness still, which, radiating through, glorifies the character, and, in proportion to the fulness of the original thought, renders the outward life Divine. Wonderful power! mirroring Thine, great Father, Thou supernal power of all, who clothest Thyself with this universe wrought out of Thine eternal ideas—ever energising the forms of beauty and life we dimly see around—dimly see, because not for us, the finite, is it to comprehend Thine infinite thoughts. But as we comprehend and rise in our conceptions of Him—as more and more our souls conceive truly and fully goodness, love, the perfect life to which we are called and of which we are capable—it issues forth into the "conversation," the character, the moulding and turning of words and deeds; and we become holy as the Holy One is holy. (*Jas. Cranbrook.*) *Holiness:—I. HOLINESS: WHAT IS IT?* 1. Holiness does not consist in bodily austerities, or in ritual observances. This view of it has widely prevailed among men; for it is the natural result of that dislike of true holiness by which they are universally characterised, when associated with the conviction that holiness of some kind is indispensable with their acceptance with God. 2. Holiness has been identified with mere external morality. This defective view of it prevails among the worldly-minded, as the false view already considered is cherished and acted on by the superstitious. 3. In what, then, does true holiness consist? (1) The words of God, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," obviously imply that holiness consists in resemblance to God, or in conformity to His moral character. God is holy—infinately and unchangeably holy. (2) Though holiness consists in resemblance to God, something more specific than the mere statement of this truth is requisite to give you a clear conception of its nature. In order to this, you must not only know how God thinks and feels and acts; but, seeing that the position which you occupy as creatures is widely different from that which belongs to Him as the Creator, and different, too, in many respects from that which is occupied by other creatures whose nature is dissimilar to that of man, you must be able to apply your knowledge of the thoughts and sentiments and conduct of God to your own condition and circumstances. The means of doing so has been provided; for His law—under which term in this statement the whole revelation of His will respecting human duty, contained in Scripture, must be regarded as included—is an expression of His own excellence, a declaration of the manner in which the moral perfections that

compose His character must operate when communicated to creatures who sustain the relations to Him and to one another which are sustained by you. (3) But the intimation that the likeness to God which constitutes true holiness denotes conformity in heart and life to His revealed will, is not all that is necessary to enable you to form a clear and accurate conception of the nature of holiness. You must be aware of what is implied in conformity to the Divine law. It contains both prohibitions and commands; it tells you both what you should shun, and what you ought to do. Now, the injunction, "Be ye holy," requires conformity to the law of God in both these departments; and none but he who hates and avoids whatever it condemns and forbids, and who loves and practises whatever it commends and enjoins, is a holy person. II. HOLINESS: WHY SHOULD WE SEEK IT? 1. You should seek holiness as an appropriate means of testifying gratitude to God for the blessings of His salvation. 2. You should seek holiness as an appropriate means of ascertaining and attesting your interest in God's salvation. 3. You should seek holiness as an appropriate means of securing present happiness. The possession of it imparts release from the distressing doubts and fearful apprehensions with respect to futurity which harass the ungodly, and gives that persuasion of interest in God's favour, and that hope of eternal blessedness, which communicate a peace that passeth all understanding, and a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. 4. You should seek holiness as an appropriate means of recommending religion, and thereby advancing the glory of God. 5. You should seek holiness as an appropriate means of preparing you for the happiness of heaven, and thus insuring your reception of it. III. HOLINESS: HOW MAY WE ACQUIRE IT? The acquisition of holiness is in Scripture made the subject both of exhortation and of prayer. Being made a subject of prayer, holiness must be regarded as a privilege, or blessing, communicated to men by God. In harmony with this view of it, the work of their sanctification, both in its commencement and in its progress, is attributed to the powerful operation of the Divine Spirit. But while the Scriptures declare that holiness is a Divine gift, imparted to men by the efficacious operation of the Holy Spirit, and, on this ground, a proper subject of prayer and thanksgiving, they also teach certain important truths in regard to the operations of the Spirit as the Sanctifier, which show that the acquisition of holiness may appropriately be made the subject of exhortation and injunction. That the acquisition of holiness is a duty incumbent on men; that they ought not merely to pray for it, but to strive after it, is a truth very plainly taught in the word of revelation—a truth which no man who searches the Scriptures with an unbiassed mind will hesitate to receive. 1. Release from the curse of the law and reconciliation to God are an indispensable prerequisite to the operations of the Spirit as the Sanctifier. 2. The operations of the Spirit as the Sanctifier do not supersede activity on the part of the subjects of them. They are created anew. But the change effected on them in this new creation does not destroy the powers or faculties which constitute them voluntary agents. It only gives a new direction to their activity; and hence, though the continued operation of the Spirit is necessary to preserve and strengthen the principle of spiritual life which has been implanted in them, yet its actings are the actings, not of the Spirit, but of the individuals to whom it has been imparted. 3. The truth revealed to us in Scripture is the means or instrument employed by the Spirit in all His operations as the Sanctifier. As His agency does not supersede human activity, so, in imparting to them the earnest desires, the ability, and the direction which are necessary to the acquisition of holiness, He always makes use of the disclosures of the mind and will of God contained in the word of revelation. 4. The operations of the Spirit as the Sanctifier are the result of prayer—of earnest, believing prayer. The atoning sacrifice of Christ has opened a channel through which the influences of the Spirit may be communicated to men, in consistency with the holiness of the Divine character, the honour of the Divine law, and the rectitude and stability of the Divine administration. (*D. Duncan.*) *On being holy:*—Hence this command to be holy requires that we bring ourselves into a moral adjustment to God and our entire moral duty. I. WHY SHOULD WE BE HOLY? II. WHAT ARE THE REASONS OF THIS REQUIREMENT? 1. We cannot but require it of ourselves. Our own nature irresistibly demands it of us—his own individual conscience of every moral agent. He knows he ought to, and therefore, by a necessity as strong as his own nature, he must become holy, or fail of peace and conscious self-approval. No moral agent can respect himself unless he is holy. Need I urge that self-respect is a thing of very great importance? Few are fully aware how very important self-respect is to themselves and to others. This form

of self-respect pertains to our relations to this world and to society. But suppose a moral agent in like manner to lose his self-respect towards God. How fearful must be the influence of this loss on his heart! How reckless of moral rectitude he becomes in all that pertains to his Maker! 2. Another reason why we should be holy is, that God requires it of us. He has made us in His own image; and therefore, for the same reasons that make Him require holiness of Himself, He must require it of us. He requires us to be holy because He cannot make us happy unless we will become holy. Remarks: 1. Sinners know they are not holy. 2. The hope that unconverted people often have that they shall be saved, is utterly without foundation. 3. Many who know they must become holy, are yet very ignorant of the way in which they are to become so. Having begun in the Spirit, they try to become perfect in the flesh. 4. Pardon without holiness is impossible, in this sense: that the heart must turn from its sins to God before it can be forgiven. 5. The command to be holy implies the practicability of becoming so. 6. Christ's promises and relations to His people imply a pledge of all the help we need. The entire gospel scheme is adapted to men—not in the sense of conniving at their weakness, but of really helping them out of it. 7. God sympathises with every honest effort we make to become holy. 8. If we become partakers of His holiness, we are made sure of the river of His pleasures! 9. All men will sometimes feel the necessity of this holiness. In some cases it is felt most deeply. 10. There is no rest short of being holy. Many try to find rest in something less, but they are sure to fail. 11. Many insensibly suppose that when they come to die, they shall be sanctified and prepared for heaven. 12. No man has any right to hope unless he is really committed to holiness, and in all honesty and earnestness intends to live so. (*C. G. Finney.*) *Holiness repugnant to sin*:—True holiness hath a repugnancy and contrariety to all sin. It is not contrary to sin because it is open and manifest, because it is private and secret, but to sin as sin, whether public or private, because both one and the other are contrary to God's will and glory, as it is with true light, though it be but a beam, yet it is universally opposed to all darkness; or as it is with heat, though there be but one degree of it, yet it is opposite to all cold; so if the holiness be true and real, it cannot comply with any known sin. You can never reconcile them in the affections; they may have an unwilling consistence in the person, but you can never make them agree in the affection. (*Obadiah Sedgwick.*) *How to become holy*:—There is only one way of becoming holy as God is; and it is the obvious one of opening the entire being to the all-pervading presence of the Holy One. None of us can acquire holiness apart from God. It dwells in God alone. Holiness is only possible as the soul's possession of God; nay, better still, as God's possession of the soul. It never can be inherent, or possessed apart from the Divine fulness, any more than a river can flow on if it is cut off from its fountain head. We are holy up to the measure in which we are God-possessed. The least holy man is he who shuts God up to the strictest confinement, and to the narrowest limits of his inner being; curtaining Him off from daily life by heavy curtains of neglect and unbelief. He is holier who more carefully denies self, and who seeks a larger measure of Divine indwelling. The holiest is the man who yields himself most completely to be influenced, swayed, possessed, inspired by that Spirit who longs to make us to the fullest extent partakers of the Divine nature. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Holy in all manner of conversation*:—The demand is, "Be holy in all manner of conversation." The meaning is, in all your intercourse with men, in every turning of your history. At home, or abroad; with your own family, or in presence of strangers; at work, or enjoying relaxation; at church, or in the market; wherever you may be, or however employed—let lips and life be holiness to the Lord. A life is like a stream issuing from a mountain-lake. The water cannot be of different colours at different places. It cannot be pure at one spot and turbid a few yards further on. If the fountain is transparent, the outflowing stream will be clear over all its breadth. The holiness that is put on, as suitable at certain times and in certain places, is not holiness; it is hypocrisy. When the streams of a life, as they disperse themselves over the individual history, are found, like the waters of Jericho, to be all bitter, it is not possible, by any medicament, to sweeten portions of them here and there, where travellers may be expected to taste them. There is only one way of cure: a certain salt must be cast into the spring, and then all the water that flows over its brim will be wholesome—all wholesome alike. (*W. Arnot.*) *Likeness to God*:—To change our physical relation to God, of absolute dependence and incommensurable littleness, is no more

possible than for the wave to become the ocean; but just as the same laws that sway the masses of the sea also trace the ripple and shape the spray, so may the very same Divine principles, the same preferences, the same constancy which belong to the spiritual life of God, reappear in the tiny currents of our will, and even the very play and sparkle of our affections. It is but the affectation of humility or the dislike of noble claims that can make us shrink from our affinity with the Father and Inspirer of all souls. (*J. Martineau, LL.D.*)

Vers. 17-21. **If ye call on the Father.**—*What the name Father implies*:—1. This condemns them that live wickedly and in their sins, and yet call God Father. They might as well say anything. If one should fight against the king and say he were a good subject; or say he is a man's servant, and yet doth nothing that he is bidden. 2. But dost thou unfeignedly desire to fear God—(1) In thy general calling as a Christian, to walk holily, righteously, and soberly? Fearest thou to offend God thyself, or to see Him dishonoured by others? Carest thou to please Him? Lovest thou to be in His presence? Dost thou conscientiously hear His Word, and patiently bear His corrections? (2) In thy special calling art thou careful to glorify God, as a parent, child, master, servant, &c., not only in ceasing to do evil, but in doing good, yea, and labouring to do it well? Thou mayest comfortably and with good leave call God Father, and make account of Him so to be, which is the greatest privilege in the world. (*John Rogers.*) *The judgment of the Father*:—In saying "if ye call on the Father," the apostle did not mean for a moment to express any doubt; the "if" simply introduces a premiss on which a conclusion is to be based, as when St. Paul wrote, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." There was no uncertainty as to whether the readers of the Epistle—Christianised Jews scattered abroad—were calling upon the Father, or more correctly, as to whether they were calling Him Father. That was just what they were doing, having learned to do so in their conversion to the Christian faith. They had always believed in a righteous, impartial Governor of the world—the God, namely, of Moses and the prophets, who was supremely the just One; and now, since their surrender to Jesus as their Master, and their acceptance of His Gospel, they had come to name this God, the Father. He whose throne was in the heavens, who hated iniquity and ruled with faultless justice, He was the Father. "And if He be," says the apostle, "pass, I pray you, the time of your earthly sojourning, in fear. A true word, a word spoken in utter sincerity, and representing what is fact, may yet prove very misleading—may convey or suggest something contrary to truth. If language be a vehicle of thought, it is far from being always an adequate or a safe vehicle. Now the word, "Father," we might anticipate, would speak alike to all. The relation which it designates is common enough. Yet how differently the word may affect different individuals, what different pictures it may conjure up before them! As to what it shall express to any of us, much will depend upon the kind of domestic experience we have had, upon the kind of home with which we are most familiar, in which our childhood and youth were spent. Oh, the world of grand and sweet meaning for you, in the word Father! What a solemn, noble, gracious sound it has! But here is another, upon whose ear it falls with no sound of music, in whose mind it is associated with harsh and tyrannical exercise of authority. It brings to his recollection a testy, passionate, wrath-provoking man, whose ways were hard to bear; or a man, cold, stern, austere, whose presence chilled and rather discomfited, or one who, while protecting and ministering, was uncertain in judgment—now weakly lenient, now unreasonably and unwholesomely strict. And St. Peter would seem to have apprehended that it might be thus with his readers, that in calling the Divine Governor, Father, they might scarcely be alive to all which the name implied; for he proceeds to indicate to them how it behoved them to be moved and affected by the sense of God's Fatherhood. "Since you worship as the Father, Him, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear." And it is very likely that this conclusion of his rather surprised and staggered them. "In fear!" they would exclaim, perhaps; "should he not have written, on the contrary, 'in comfort and peace,' 'in bright courage and hope'?" Yes, yes, most surely; but then, it should inspire you also with a great awe, and if it do not, the whole meaning of the word Father cannot have been grasped by you; for the true Father is not merely the gracious Protector, Succourer, Provider, but the constant, persistent, earnest, unsparing Educator, also, whose love deals closely and inexorably with each child of the family, in desire for his due

training and his best development. Now, as may have been the case with the people whom St. Peter addressed, we perhaps, are possessed with too poor and low an idea of fatherliness, and, more or less blinded by that idea, need to be reminded of what he saw and sought to inculcate, namely, that the Fatherhood of the Almighty is a very solemn reality, and serves to render life very serious. There is, I think, a widespread tendency to repose in it as involving rather less demand upon us for moral care and earnestness, as allowing us to be rather less particular about the cultivation of righteousness, rather less anxious concerning our spiritual condition and quality. "Let us not be troubled greatly," they say to themselves—"let us not be troubled greatly if we are negligent and unfaithful, and do not amend or improve as we should; is not the Judge and Ruler the Father, and will He not therefore be gentle with us; may He not therefore, overlook much, and make things considerably pleasanter for us in the end than we deserve?" Are there not those who reason thus from the thought of God's Fatherhood? Yet did they consider and understand, the very thought in which they find relief, would rather set them trembling. For, see, what government is so close and penetrating as the government of a true father? Is there anything in existence to compare with it? How very much it takes cognisance of, to frown upon, and rebuke, which no other government notices! Parents will often punish severely, where the police would never interfere. The man whom the lad has to fear, when others show lenity, is his father, and because he is the father. A father's rule, again, a true father's rule, consists not merely in legislating and in punishing when laws are broken, but in studying to train toward obedience—to school and discipline, with the object of eliminating or checking what is wrong, and guiding and helping to the formation of right habits. He not only commands good conduct, and visits the opposite with his displeasure, but endeavours in every way, and by every means, to influence to goodness, and to educate the child on all sides, with whatever exercises and appliances may seem fitting, to the best of which he is capable. To this end, he watches over and pursues him. Do we not acknowledge, that to be at all careless about the training of our children, and their culture by us to better things, is to be unfatherly, and that the fondness which passes by a fault demanding correction, rather than draw forth tears and put to grief, is not true paternal love? If then there be a Divine Governor of mankind, all-holy and just, the principle and spirit of whose government is really paternal, is it not a profoundly serious thing for us men, in our state of confessed imperfection, with so much in us which as yet falls short of and is contrary to holiness? What hope can there be of rest or happiness, what hope of acquittal, for unrighteous souls, if God, the infinitely righteous, be the Father? Can He ever be content to tolerate them as they are, to leave them as they are, unvisited, unmeddled with? If He be indeed the Father, what chance can there be for one of us, of our not receiving according to our works? Do you not perceive the certainty, the inevitableness of due punishment upon the supposition of His Fatherhood? I think of the suffering that must yet be in store for such; for without suffering, how are these habits and sympathies of theirs to be worked out? and I know, methinks, that they will have to be worked out; that the great paternal love will not be able to refrain from them, or stay its hand until they are. (S. A. Tipple.) *Fatherly judgment and filial fear*:—"Walk during the time of your sojourning here in fear." How does that comport with the preceding glowing exhortation to "perfect hope"? How does it fit in with the triumphant words in the earlier part of the chapter about "joy unspeakable and full of glory"? Does it not come like a douche of cold water on such thoughts? Peter thinks they can co-exist; and, more singular still, that the same object can excite both. Nay! there is no perfect hope which does not blend with it this fear; and joy itself lacks dignity and nobleness unless it is sobered and elevated by an infusion of it. I. HERE WE HAVE, FIRST, A FATHERLY JUDGMENT. Mark the meaning and the limits of the fatherly and filial relation which is laid at the foundation of the exhortation of my text. "If ye call on the Father"—he is speaking distinctly and exclusively to Christian people. Much has been said in recent days, and said in many aspects nobly, and with good results upon the theological thinking of our generation, about the Fatherhood of God. But, we are never to forget that that one word covers in the Bible two entirely distinct thoughts. In one aspect, God is the Father of the spirits of all flesh by their derivation of life from Him. But in another "to as many as believed on Him to them gave He power to become sons of God." And it is on the latter Fatherhood and sonship that the apostle builds the exhortation of my text. Well, then, further, the apostle here desires to guard us against another of the errors

which are very common in this generation. The revolt against the sterner and graver side of Christian truth has largely found footing in a mistaken idea of the implications and bearing of that thought that God is our Father. That relationship has been thought to swallow up all others, and men have been unwilling to entertain the ideas of a righteous Governor, a supreme Law-giver, a retributive Judge. And Peter brings the two ideas into juxtaposition, seeing no contradiction between them, but rather that the one necessarily involves the other. Is it not so in your own homes? Does your fatherhood swallow up your obligation to estimate the moral worth of your child, and to proportion your conduct accordingly? The judicial aspect is essential to the perfection of Fatherhood; and every family on earth mirrors the fact to those that have eyes to see. Mark, still further, the emphatic characteristics of this paternal judgment which are set forth in my text. It is "without respect of persons." Peter is going back on his old experience in that unique word. Do you remember when it was that the scales fell from his eyes, and he said, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons"? It was in the house of Cornelius in Cæsarea. Note, further, that this paternal judgment which comes on the child because he is a child, is a present one. "Who judgeth," not "who will judge." Ah! day by day, moment by moment, deed by deed, we are coming under the judicial light of God's eye, and the judicial force of His hand. "The history of the world is the judgment of the world," so the lives of individual Christians do record and bear the results of a present judgment of the present Father. Then mark, still further, what the thing judged by this present impartial Fatherly judgment is—"According to his work." The text does not say "works," but "work"—that is, each man's life considered as a living whole; the main drift and dominant purpose, rather than the isolated single acts, are taken into view. Now, from all this, there just comes the one point that I want to urge upon our hearts and consciences—viz., that Christian people are to expect, to-day and hereafter, the incidence of a Father's judgment. The Jews came to Jesus Christ once and said, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" His answer made the same remarkable use of the singular instead of the plural to which I have drawn attention as occurring in this text—"This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Yes! And if we, in any real sense, are doing that one work of God—viz., believing on Jesus Christ—our faith will be a productive mother of work which He will look upon and accept as an odour of a sweet smell, "well-pleasing unto God." There is a paternal judgment; and the works which pass it are works done from the root and on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ. II. WE HAVE HERE A SON'S FEAR. Now, fear is, I suppose, best explained as being the shrinking anticipation of evil. But, as the Old Testament has taught us, there is a higher and a lower form of that apprehension. In the higher it is sublimed into lowly reverence and awe, which fears nothing so much as being alienated from God. And that is the fear that my text would insist upon. The evil which a Christian man, the son of the Father, and the subject of His judgment, has most to apprehend—indeed, the only evil which he has really to apprehend—is that he may be tempted to do wrong. So this fear has in it no torment, but it has in it blessedness and purity and strength. It is perfectly compatible with all these other emotions of which the lower form of fear is the opposite; perfectly compatible with confidence, with hope, with joy—nay! rather, without this wholesome and restraining dread of incurring the displeasure of a loving Father, these exuberant and buoyant graces lose their chiefest security. The fear which my text enjoins is the armed guard, so to speak, that watches over these fair virgins of hope and joy and confidence that beautify the Christian life. If you wish your hope to be bright, fear; if you wish your joy to be solid, fear; if you want your confidence in God to be unshaken, cherish utter distrust of yourself, and fear. Fear only that you may depart from Him in whom our hope, and our joy, and our confidence, have their roots. That fear is the only guarantee for our security. The man that distrusts himself and knows his danger, and clings to his refuge is safe. This son's fear is the source of courage. The man whose whole apprehension of evil is dread of sin is bold as a lion in view of all other dangers. III. Lastly, HERE IS THE HOME-COMING, WHICH WILL FINISH THE FEAR. "The time of your sojourning," says Peter. That thought runs through the letter. It is addressed "to the strangers scattered abroad," and in the next chapter he exhorts Christian people, as "strangers and pilgrims," to "abstain from fleshly lusts." Here he puts a term to this dread—"the time of your sojourning." Travellers in foreign lands have to light their fires at night to keep off the lions, and to set their guard to detect the stealthy approach of the foe. You and I, whilst

we travel in this earthly pilgrimage, have to be on our guard, lest we should be betrayed. But we are going home. And when the child gets to the Father's house it does not fear any more dangers, nor need bolts and bars, nor guards and sentries. Why did God give us this capacity of anticipating, and shrinking from, future evil? Was it only meant that its red light should be a danger-signal in reference to fleeting worldly evils? Is there not a far worse possibility before us all? Let me press on you this one question: Have you ever, in all the wide range which your fears of a future have taken, extended it so far as to face this question, "What will become of me when I come into contact with God the Judge and His righteous tribunal?" You will come in contact with it. Let your fear travel so far, and let it lead you to the one Refuge. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Judgeth according to every man's work.—God an impartial Judge:—There is a verse in the Psalms which might not unfitly stand as a text for this whole Epistle of St. Peter. It is at the end of the 111th Psalm, in which David had been giving most high praise to God for His distinguishing mercy towards His own chosen people. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do thereafter: the praise of it endureth for ever." As much as to say, that, great as the mercies are, which God has provided for His elect people, they are not such as ought for a moment to set us free from that godly fear, that religious and awful sense of God's unspeakable presence, which is the beginning, the crown, of all spiritual wisdom. It must be joined indeed with love, but we must never expect to turn it entirely into such love as we feel towards those who are dear to us here among men. In a word, the love and fear of God will grow up together in a religious and thoughtful heart; as we come to know more of Him as the greatest and best of fathers. Such is the Psalmist's account of the fear of God: and lest any person, having an eye to the infinite blessings of the gospel of Christ, made known to us but unknown to him, should imagine that this description of God's fear is now as it were out of date, I wish all Christians would observe how earnestly the very same lesson is taught in the New Testament also. Our Lord forewarns us whom we shall fear; Him, namely, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell. And observe, He speaks thus, not to those who were still at a distance from Him, but to His own chosen apostles and followers, to those whom in the same discourse He calls His friends and His little flock. Surely this one text is enough to do away with all presumptuous notions of any persons ever becoming so good, or so high in God's favour, as to do without the fear of God. It is true, St. John says, "Perfect love casteth out fear," but what fear? surely not religious reverence of the ever-present Almighty Father. St. Peter was in some measure afraid, lest the Christians to whom he was writing should so dwell on favours received, be so entirely taken up with the comfortable promises of the gospel, as to forget the fear of God, and the plain duty of keeping the commandments. As if he had said, It is our privilege to call God, Our Father which art in heaven. Christ Himself in His own prayer has authorised the faithful to do it. Here the irreligious pride of some men might presently come in, and tempt them to imagine that God is partial to them; that He favours them above others, and therefore they may take liberties; He will not be so strict in requiring an account how they have kept His laws. But St. Peter teaches us just the contrary: even as the last of the prophets, Malachi, had taught before, looking forward by the Spirit to a time when men, having greater privileges than ever, would be in danger of abusing them more than ever. "If I be a Father, where is Mine honour?" How can you call the great God of heaven and earth by a name which brings Him so very near you, and not feel an awful kind of thrill, a sense of His presence in your very heart? More especially, when you add that which he takes notice of in the next place: that this our heavenly Father is one who "without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work." This was in a great degree a discovery of God's nature and character made by the Gospel. Before the coming of our Lord and Saviour, neither Jew nor Gentile looked on the God of heaven as being impartial, and judging without respect of persons. As for the Gentiles, "They thought wickedly, that God was even such an one as themselves." Again, even God's own people, the Jews, were generally apt more or less to mistake the nature and meaning of the great favour which God Almighty had shown them for so many ages. They kept continually saying within themselves, "We have Abraham to our Father"; in such a manner as if they were sure of especial consideration to be had of them on that account merely; as if they might be looser in their conduct than other men. When, therefore, both Jew and Gentile were to be called into one great family in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the things most

necessary to be taught was, "God is no respecter of persons," &c. This St. Peter had taught long ago to the Jews, when, by especial direction of the Holy Ghost, he had to convert and baptize Cornelius and his household; and now again he repeats the same instruction to the converted Gentiles themselves, lest they should abuse their own privileges, and fancy they were entitled to favour at the hands of the most holy God, merely for being on His side. Nor may we imagine that the apostle spoke to the men of those times only; the Christians of all times are in danger of the same kind of error: we are all too apt to indulge the childish imagination, that our own case has something particular in it: that God Almighty therefore, just and terrible as He is, will surely make exceptions in our favour. The reward, then, of those who shall receive God's blessing at last will be strictly in proportion, not to their deservings, but to their sincerity and steadiness in working. "They will be justified," as St. Paul says, "by faith, without works of any law"; yet, in another sense, they are justified by the works of the gospel law, not by faith only. God graciously accepts, not their bare nominal good meaning, but their good meaning proved by their works. And there is no respect of persons on this plan: because the faith meant is not a strong emotion; but it is the steady devotion of the heart to do the will of God our Saviour, and not our own will. Therefore, let us fear—for we have indeed great reason—lest, so much depending on our own works, those works be found at the last day to be nothing at all, or next to nothing. This consideration of itself is surely terrible enough; but there is one thing yet remaining, which makes it yet more alarming to the conscience: and it is that which St. Peter sets before us by his use of the word "sojourning" in this passage. "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." As much as to say, "Pass your time in fear, not knowing how short it may be." The churchyards around us are fast filling; it may be our own turn next; and how far have we advanced, by the aid of God's Spirit, in that difficult work of putting off the mind of this world, and putting on the mind of Christ? (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*)

Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.—*Fear of judgment to come, and of redemption accomplished*:—Before the word "fear" there are several reasons given for its exercise. We call God Father. He who applies such a name to God must fear if he thinks what this involves on his part. Especially when it is remembered that while He is a Father He is also a Judge strictly righteous and impartial. Succeeding it is another ground. We are redeemed. And our redemption has been effected by the most costly sacrifice—the blood of Christ. Those who believe that cannot but feel a peculiar obligation lying upon them. They must be Christ's in heart and soul and action. And they cannot but fear lest they should belie such a marvellous consecration.

I. THE SPHERE AND OPERATION OF CHRISTIAN FEAR. There are some to whom the importance attached to fear in this place and elsewhere seems in contradiction to the teaching of the Apostle John, who speaks of fear as being cast out by perfect love. But it is to be observed that it is perfect love to which this prerogative is assigned. But with imperfect love fear has an important sphere of action. It affords stimulus to imperfect love and pushes it on to perfection. Those whom the apostle exhorts to fear are the same whom he has exhorted to hope to the end. They are men to whom Christ is precious, who love Him and rejoice in Him with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Fear existing along with such elements cannot even burden. It balances, sobers, solemnises, deepens, intensifies. But it is often urged that the actions which are stimulated by fear have no moral worth, that fear is but a form of selfishness, and that therefore no fruit produced by it, however well it may look to the eye, can be truly acceptable to God. This has a very specious look. It appears a particularly fine, exalted, spiritual doctrine. And it really is so in its main features. It is true; but it is only a half truth, and half truths are often the most dangerous of errors. What is the other half of the truth? Although fear in itself and by itself cannot produce truly good or spiritually right action, it yet performs a vital function in keeping the soul awake. Fear rings the alarm bell and rouses the conscience. It blows the trumpet of warning. It creates pause and opportunity for all better and nobler things to make themselves heard. It allows a man to become aware of the realities, and when he is once placed in contact with them the best things begin. Everything depends on being made earnest, sensitive, lifted into a sense of the eternal verities. The highest principles, righteousness and love, are often in the best of men forgetful and fickle. They are ensnared, oppressed, and bewildered many a time, and need the keen influence of fear to bring them to themselves again.

II. FEAR IN RELATION TO THE FATHER THAT JUDOETH. Fear is obviously far from being the main feeling towards

God as a Father. Confidence and love are especially the feelings called out by the Fatherhood of God. But God says, "If I be a Father, where is My fear?" God claims fear as a Father—reverence, no doubt, mainly—honour, awe in the realising of His infinitude; but something more than these, something else. For God as a Father judgeth. Did He not judge and condemn all sin He could be no true Father. Love must hate sin and show its hatred. Father is no weak, soft, indulgent word. It means love, and because it means love it means right, and undying opposition to evil. The Father judgeth without respect of persons. There is no other Father than the Father who judgeth. If I believe in a Father that judges, that will certainly rouse me up—it will waken my slumbering energies, it will cause me to look well to the state of my heart and life; but the word Father will always keep the thought of judgment from overwhelming me. III. IN ORDER TO HAVE A TRUE CHRISTIAN FEAR WE MUST PLACE TOGETHER JUDGMENT BY WORKS AND REDEMPTION BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. The thought of judgment to come is essential to the depth and the reality of life. Without this everything is left in chaos. Conscience is not satisfied, nor is reason. But what reason and conscience demand cannot but awaken fear. This fear is deepened and yet transformed by the thought of redemption. Redemption seems at first wholly opposed to judgment by works, far more than even the Fatherhood of God does. For what does the Scripture mean by redemption through the blood of Christ? It means that the Son of God took our place and bore us on His heart in living and dying; it means that the sacrifice of Christ is that moral vindication of law and right, that tribute to the holiness of God which God accepts as sufficient amends and reparation. By faith man falls in with this Divine arrangement, identifies himself with it and is reconciled to God. And this faith that accepts and trusts and frees from condemnation, also works by love. Salvation by faith and judgment by works are therefore no contradiction. It is judgment by faith taken in its flower and fruit. But do we not see how fear awakes in the view of such a wonderful redemption? There is something akin to fear raised in the soul by the sight of sublimity. The wide expanse of the sky filled with sunshine or peopled with worlds raises an awe sublime, but often weighing heavily on the soul. Vast fervent love indeed banishes fear. It is the one thing that does this. And yet such a love as this—so holy, so mysterious, so resolute, so devoted—love coming from such a height, and going down into such depths, cannot but awaken a certain awe. We are overawed by the brilliancy of the light. "We fear the Lord and His goodness." And then when a man thinks of being redeemed by such a sacrifice, when he tries to realise at what a cost redemption has been effected, does not a certain fear come over him lest he should prove miserably unworthy of it all? But let not this fear in view of redemption be deemed inconsistent with the joy and freedom which belong to the gospel. It is precisely the man who has that realising sense of redemption which makes him afraid of not proving worthy of it, who has also joy. These two, fear and joy, grow out of the same root of redemption. The more joy in Christ any man has, the more will he be afraid of not conforming sufficiently to Christ. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) *God will be served in fear:*—If these words were not known for certain to be the words of Holy Scripture they would appear to many very severe, very unfit to win souls to God. "What!" it would be said, "are people to fear always? all people, those who are farthest advanced in true religion and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost? What, then, is to become of the natural cheerfulness of youth; of the enjoyments inseparable from even health and spirits, kind relations and friends; what of the testimony of a good conscience? All this and more is said by different sorts of persons against those who, following God's own method, would make them serious in the true scriptural way; by teaching them, and encouraging them in the true reverence. It may be of use to us if we consider what those tempers are which are most apt to make men impatient of being told to "pass the time of their sojourning here in fear." There is a certain time of life in which we are almost all of us, more or less, partakers of this pagan error of disliking all that is really serious, all that would impress us thoroughly with the fear and dread of Almighty God. When youth and strength are high, before we have tasted of our Father's severer discipline, we shrink from the sadder lessons of Scripture and the Church: we say to ourselves, "Surely this world, so full of enjoyment, can never have been meant merely as a place for the exercise of hard and severe penitence." If, then, any young person happen now to be listening to me, let me beseech him to be aware of this danger: to watch in himself that spirit of confidence and gaiety which, under pretence of mere youthful cheerfulness, would lead him to make light of God's most holy commandments. Let us only recollect

ourselves, how it is with us at our prayers. Are we not too much inclined to say them over without seriously bringing before our minds the awful presence of Him to whom we pray? This too is one of the reasons why outward religion, the religion of the body, is of so very great consequence; viz., that it helps very much to keep and improve in our hearts the true and wholesome fear of God. Because in truth not only does nature teach us to express our feelings in such postures, but also these very bodies of ours, so fearfully and wonderfully made, are of purpose so framed as to have an influence in their turn on our souls. Soldiers, we know, in all armies, are made to march erect, and to be firm and straight in all their bodily movements; not merely for the appearance's sake, but because the very attitude, in some unaccountable way, tends to make them bolder and firmer in mind; and in like manner there is no question, that kneeling and other humble gestures in devotion, practised not for form's sake, but in obedience to the Church, and in the fear of God, would cherish and improve that very fear in our hearts. Bishop Wilson has said, speaking of small instances of self-denial, "Say not, It is a trifle, and not fit to offer in sacrifice to God." And the same may be said of small occasions of nourishing the remembrance of Him; of short prayers frequently through the day, of turning every event and accident of life, not openly, but as much as may be in secret, into an opportunity for devout prayer and recollection. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*)

Godly fear:—I. THE FEAR HERE RECOMMENDED is a holy self-suspicion and fear of offending God, which may not only consist with assured hope of salvation, and with faith, and love, and spiritual joy, but is their inseparable companion, as all Divine graces are linked together. And, as they dwell together, they grow or decrease together. The more a Christian believes, and loves, and rejoices in the love of God, the more unwilling surely he is to displease Him, and if in danger of displeasing Him, the more afraid is he of it; and, on the other side, this fear being the true principle of a wary and holy conversation, fleeing sin and the occasions of sin and temptations to it, is as a watch or guard that keeps out the enemies of the soul, and so preserves its inward peace, keeps the assurance of faith and hope unmolested, and that joy which they cause unimpaired, and the intercourse of love betwixt the soul and her beloved uninterrupted. Certainly a good man is sometimes driven to wonder at his own frailty and inconstancy. What strange differences will be betwixt him and himself! How high and how delightful at some times are his thoughts of God, and the glory of the life to come; and yet how easily at another time base temptations will bewire him, or, at the least, molest and vex him! And this keeps him in a continual fear, and that fear in continual vigilance and circumspection. When he looks up to God, and considers the truth of His promises, and the sufficiency of His grace and protection, and the almighty strength of His Redeemer, these things fill his soul with confidence and assurance; but when he turns his eye downward again upon himself, and finds so much remaining corruption within, and so many temptations and dangers and adversaries without, this forces him not only to fear, but to despair of himself; and it should do so, that his trust in God may be purer and more entire. This fear is not cowardice. It does not debase, but it elevates the mind; for it drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude to encounter all dangers, for the sake of a good conscience and the obeying of God. From this fear have sprung all the generous resolutions and patient sufferings of the saints and martyrs. Because they durst not sin against God, therefore they durst be imprisoned, and impoverished, and tortured, and die for Him.

II. THE REASON they have here to persuade to this fear is twofold. 1. Their relation to God as their Father and their Judge. But as He is the best Father, so consider that He is withal the greatest and most just Judge. There is here the sovereignty of this Judge, the universality of His judgment, and the equity of it. "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." You are encompassed with enemies and snares; how can you be secure in the midst of them? Perfect peace and security are reserved for you at home, and that is the end of your fear. III. THE TERM OR CONTINUANCE OF THIS FEAR. It continues all the time of this sojourning life; it dies not before us: we and it shall expire together. "Blessed is he that feareth always," says Solomon; in secret and in society, in his own house and in God's. We must hear the Word with fear, and preach it with fear, afraid to miscarry in our intentions and manners. "Serve the Lord with fear," yea, in times of inward comfort and joy, "rejoice with trembling"; not only when a man feels most his own weakness, but when he finds himself strongest. None are so high advanced in grace here below as to be out of need of this grace; but when their sojourning shall be done, and they are come home to their Father's house above, then no more fear-

ing. No entrance for dangers there, and therefore no fear. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *The right feelings of the heavenly pilgrim*:—I. THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE. 1. His past condition. Whence has the pilgrim come? From the city of destruction. 2. His present state. He is a sojourner. 3. His future destination. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE SHOULD BE SPENT. "In fear." 1. A fear of reverence. Contrast the Divine majesty with our meanness. 2. A fear of caution. 3. A fear of anxiety. It is better to err on the side of timidity than presumption. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *The awe of the redeemed*:—I. Awe of the redeemed TOWARDS THE REDEEMING GOD. "If ye call on Him as Father." Not simply appeal to Him, but acknowledge His relationship to you, admit His claims on you. II. Awe of the redeemed BECAUSE OF THEIR RECOLLECTION OF THE EVIL FROM WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN REDEEMED. 1. A consciousness of being redeemed. 2. A consciousness of being redeemed from a habit of life that was evil. 3. A consciousness of being redeemed from an evil habit of life that was inherited. III. Awe of the redeemed BECAUSE OF THE COST BY WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN REDEEMED. 1. This cost in contrast with the wealth of this world. 2. This cost as revealed in Jesus Christ. 3. This cost as known to the infinite heart of the Eternal God. 4. This cost as approved by God. 5. This cost as incurred for man's sake. IV. Awe of the redeemed BECAUSE OF THE DESTINY TO WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN REDEEMED. Faith and hope in God. God the impregnable fortress, the enduring home. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *The Christian's fear*:—I. First, I would remind you of THE AWFUL NATURE OF THAT "FATHER" ON WHOM YOU PROFESS TO CALL. 1. Engaging, indeed, is the title under which your religion addresses you. But that God, that Father, to whom you must one day go, is a Being so pure that even the heavens are tainted in His sight. 2. It is not only your appearance before Him on that distant day that makes your sojourning on earth so fearful; for every hour of your existence here this incomprehensible and unseen Being is about your path. No retirement by night is so dark but His eye can penetrate it; no walk by day so intricate but He can follow it; no secret of the soul so hidden but He can see it. II. To the nature of that heavenly Father, into whose inheritance we are invited, the text directs us to add THE JUDGMENT TO WHICH WE SHALL ONE DAY BE SUMMONED. III. The third argument which the apostle uses for religious fear is drawn from THE MEANS ADOPTED THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST FOR THE EVERLASTING SALVATION OF OUR SOULS. IV. THE NATURE OF THE WORLD IN WHICH WE DWELL, AND THE WEAKNESS OF THE HUMAN HEART. All the warnings that are given us, all the hopes that are held out to us, remind us of the danger of the state in which we dwell. The world, by professing to be Christian, is more dangerous; because it has lost the appearance of enmity, and has greater power over us by its failures. Look into your own heart, and, remembering yourself as a being designed for immortality, think on its wanderings, its coldness, its impurity, its inconstancy, and say if anything was ever so poor, so frail, so blind, so unprepared to meet its God! (*G. Mathew, M.A.*) *The reverence due to God*:—I. THE NATURE OF THE FEAR WHICH IS HERE ENJOINED. Fear is a passion implanted in our nature to deter us from what is hurtful, and to guard us against danger. To lose the favour of the Almighty here, and be eternally deprived of His presence hereafter, are evils the most formidable to man. And while fear imprints these so deeply on the mind as to produce an anxious dread of incurring His displeasure, and a serious concern to gain His approbation, it becomes that religious regulating principle which is here enjoined. There is a natural fear of God impressed upon the minds of all. He has infused His fear into our minds, that, by this rational awe, He might deter us from those practices to which our corrupt nature too much inclines us, and, by the sword of justice, overrule our affections, too refractory to be otherwise reclaimed. It may be observed, farther, that the rational fear before us is equally remote from that excess of fear which gives rise to superstition, and that unwarranted defect of it from which profane levity proceeds. It is a sober cheerfulness, a manly seriousness, which become the servants of God. This demands no melancholy abstraction from the world; it condemns the indulgence of no innocent delight. But calm and temperate enjoyment is the utmost that is assigned to man. And hence religion wisely recommends a spirit cheerful but composed, equally remote from the humiliating depression of fear and the exulting levity of joy. The propriety of fear as a regulating principle, not only religion, but the nature of our present state, the business here assigned us, the instability of all things round, and the awful concerns of futurity, concur to establish and enforce. II. IN WHAT MANNER IT SHOULD INFLUENCE OUR CONDUCT IN THE PILGRIMAGE OF LIFE. To engage us to depart from

evil and to keep the commandments is the direct tendency of religious fear. Calling forth our vigilance and circumspection, it will admonish us of latent dangers, and lead us to a faithful discharge of every duty and a serious preparation for eternity. Its influence will be habitual and steady. In every state, and at all times, the serious impression will be felt, by producing in our lives a constant fear of God, a virtuous deportment in the world, and a holy reverence for ourselves. Let us first consider its influence on our religious duties. To form right notions of the Deity, cherish suitable affections, and express these by acts of religious worship and a holy life, form the chief parts of piety. But not to the more immediate acts of public and private devotion will this influence be confined; it will extend to every act of religious obedience, and to everything sacred. It will form the constant temper of the true Christian, and direct the habitual tenor of this life. Nor is this destructive to human enjoyment. The restraints it imposes are curbs on vice; but real pleasure they extend and improve. It is rational enjoyment which they prescribe, in place of momentary bliss.

III. MOTIVES TO ENGAGE ALL TO LIVE HERE IN FEAR. 1. The nature of our present state and our future prospects calls upon us thus to fear. Can we rest in security where all is changing? Can we not be apprehensive where all things cause alarm? We stand on the brink of a precipice, from which the slightest breath may drive us headlong. Is this a place, is this a time, to swell in fancied security, riot in unlawful pleasure, and indulge in unbridled joy? 2. By living in fear we will escape unnumbered evils. From thoughtless inattention fatal dangers arise—fatal not only to our worldly prosperity, but to the far more important concerns of the soul. 3. It will promote the rational enjoyment of life. Always to tremble destroys felicity, but cautious fear improves and extends it. To the man that feareth always, no accident happens unexpected; no good gives immoderate joy, nor no evil unnecessary alarm. 4. It will demonstrate our attachment to Jesus, and lead to the fulfilment of the vows you solemnly came under at the table of your Lord. 5. It leads to happiness eternal. The time is at hand when fear shall no more disquiet. (*D. Malcolm, LL.D.*) *Fear of terror*:—There is a fear towards God that might be denominated the fear of terror. It is the affection of one who is afraid of Him. There is in it the alarm of selfishness. It is at all times connected with a view of one's own personal suffering; and the dire imagery of pain, and perhaps irreversible wretchedness, is perhaps that which chiefly gives dismay and disturbance to his soul. It carries in it no homage to the sacredness of the Divinity, yet is aggravated by a sense of that sacredness; because then God, regarded as a God of unappeasable jealousy, is deemed to be intolerant of all evil; and the guilt-stricken soul, in looking up to the holiness of the Lawgiver, looks forward to its own destruction in that everlasting hell where the transgressors of the law find their doom. Now it is obvious that, while haunted by a fear of this sort, there can be no free or willing or generous obedience. There might be a service of drudgery, but not a service of delight; such obedience as is extorted from a slave by the whip of his overseer, but not a free-will offering of love or of loyalty. It is reserved for the gospel of Jesus Christ to do away this terror from the heart of man, and yet to leave untarnished the holiness of God. It is the atonement that was made by Him which resolves this mystery, providing at once for the deliverance of the sinner and for the dignity of the Sovereign. But while this view of God in Christ extinguishes one fear—the fear of terror—it awakens another and an altogether distinct fear—the fear of reverence. God is no longer regarded as the enemy of the sinner; but in the Cross of the Redeemer, where this enmity was slain, there is full demonstration of a moral nature that is in utter repugnancy to sin. Now that we have entered into reconciliation, we hear not the upbraidings of the Lawgiver for the despite which in former days we have done unto His will. But the office of the gospel is to regenerate as well as reconcile; and every disciple who embraces it is met with the saying, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” Such is the wide difference between these two affections; and, corresponding to this, there is a difference equally wide between the legal and the evangelical dispensations. Under the former economy, the alternative to do this and live is, that if you fail in doing this you will perish everlastingly. Now let this be the great stimulus to the performance of virtue, and then think of the spirit and of the inward character wherewith they are impregnated. It is, in fact, a character of the most intense selfishness. It is the fear of terror which goads him on to all his obedience, and compels him to act religiously. For such a religion as this it is not needed that he should have any capacity of moral principle. It is enough if he have the capacity of animal pain. He is driven along, not by the

feelings of his spiritual, but by those of his sentient nature. Now it is not so with the economy of the gospel. The gate of heaven is thrown open at the outset to its disciples, and they are invited with confident step to walk towards it. God holds Himself forth not as a Judge who reckons, but as a Father who is reconciled to them. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Sojourners on earth*:—1. Our life is a sojourning on earth. 2. This sojourning hath a time. 3. This time must be passed. 4. This passage must be in fear. 5. This fear must be of a Father. 6. He is so a Father, that He is our Judge. (*Bp. Hall.*)

Not redeemed with corruptible things.—*Redemption*:—I. CONSIDER, WITH GRATEFUL EMOTION, THE MERCIFUL AND IMPORTANT FACT OF MAN'S REDEMPTION. 1. On all hands it is acknowledged that redemption implies the pardon of sin, but the dominion of sin must also be subdued. 2. Are you redeemed from a vain conversation, from a useless form of religion, from an unspiritual profession of faith in the gospel, from trifling and unprofitable behaviour, from the course of this world? II. CONSIDER THE UTTER INADEQUACY OF HUMAN MEANS TO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THIS GREAT REDEMPTION. III. THE EFFICACIOUS MEANS WHEREBY THIS GREAT REDEMPTION HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. Learn—1. The necessity of faith. 2. Beware of entertaining unscriptural views of redemption. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Christianity a redemptive power*:—I. IT IS A REDEMPTION FROM BAD CHARACTER. 1. Sin is a worthless life. A vain conversation. 2. It is a worthless life transmitted. II. IT IS A REDEMPTION BY A COSTLY SACRIFICE. 1. By the sacrifice of a life. 2. By the sacrifice of a most perfect life. III. IT IS A REDEMPTION ORDAINED BEFORE ALL TIME. 1. Unsought. 2. Unmerited. 3. Absolutely free. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The things of this world are insufficient to redeem from spiritual bondage*:—The reasons hereof may be these: 1. God hath no need of any of these things, and they are His already (*Psa. xxiv. i; 1. 10.*) 2. Our soul is an immortal and incorruptible thing, a creature that hath a beginning, but never shall have end. 3. Sin is a transgression against an Infinite God, and so deserveth an infinite punishment. 4. Many times even for a trespass committed against men, these things will not be taken for a recompense. 5. These often, when God sends some bodily judgment, are unable to do men any pleasure, nor can at all pacify God. 6. These cannot redeem a man's bodily life and save it from death, nor can they prolong a man's life an hour beyond his appointed time; much less can they redeem his soul. 7. These cannot purchase wit, learning, eloquence for those that want them, much less sanctification and grace. (*John Rogers.*)

Vain conversation received by tradition.—*Children infected by parental traditions*:—I. DIVERS SORTS OF EVILS HAVE BROKEN INTO THE LIFE OF MAN BY THE TRADITIONS OF FATHERS, AS—1. Gross errors in opinion. 2. Divers superstitions in their life, as were the traditions of the Pharisees. 3. Children learn divers sins only, or chiefly from their parents. II. If any ask WHY THE TRADITIONS OF PARENTS SHOULD BE SO INFECTIOUS. 1. Because they are cast into the natures of the children in the youngest years, and so are the more infectious because they were first seasoned with them. 2. Because of the affection children bear to their parents, and their opinion of their sufficiency. 3. Because they are continually conversant with them, and so see no other or no better precepts or examples. III. The use may be for INSTRUCTION, BOTH TO PARENTS AND CHILDREN. 1. Parents should be humbled under the consideration of the misery they bring upon their children, both by propagation and tradition. 2. Children should also learn from hence—(1) Not to rest wholly upon the tradition of parents, and to know it is not a sufficient rule to warrant their actions. (2) What good is commended especially of the good fathers, those we should embrace, and the rather for their sakes. 3. Shall not this evidently confute their gross folly, that so much urge the traditions of the fathers? 4. Are men so zealous for the tradition of their fathers of the flesh; and shall not we be much more zealous for the traditions of God Himself delivered in His Word? His counsels are all perfect; there can be no defect in them; and further, no parents can afford us such acceptation, or reward for obedience. (*N. Byfield.*)

Vain conversation:—The mind of man, the guide and source of his actions, while it is estranged from God, is nothing but a forge of vanities. St. Paul speaks this of the Gentiles, that they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, their great naturalists and philosophers not excepted. And thus the Lord complains by Isaiah of the extreme folly of His people (*chap. xlv. 20.*), and by Jeremiah, that their hearts are lodges of vain thoughts (*chap. iv. 14.*), and these are the true cause of a vain conversation. The whole course of a man's life out of Christ is nothing but a continual trading in vanity, running a circle of toil and labour, and reaping no profit at all. Now, since all a man's endeavours aim at his satisfaction and contentment, that conversation which gives him nothing of that,

but removes him further from it, is justly called vain conversation. Let the voluptuous person say upon his death-bed what pleasure or profit doth then abide with him of all his former sinful delights. Let him tell if there remain anything of them all, but that which he would gladly not have to remain, the sting of an accusing conscience, which is as lasting as the delight of sin was short and vanishing. Let the covetous and ambitious declare freely, even those of them who have prospered most in their pursuits of riches and honour, what ease all their possessions or titles do then help them to, whether their pains are the less because their chests are full, or their houses stately, or a multitude of friends and servants waiting on them with hat and knee. And if all these things cannot ease the body, how much less can they quiet the mind! It is a lamentable thing to be deluded a whole lifetime with a false dream. Would it not grieve any labouring man to work hard all the day, and have no wages to look for at night? It is a greater loss to wear out our whole life, and in the evening of our days find nothing but anguish and vexation. Let us then think this, that so much of our life as is spent in the ways of sin is all lost, fruitless, and vain conversation. And as the apostle says here, you are redeemed from this conversation, this imports it to be a servile slavish condition, as the other word, vain, expresses it to be fruitless. And this is the madness of a sinner, that he fancies liberty in that which is the basest thralldom; as those poor frantic persons that are lying ragged and bound in chains imagine that they are kings, and that their irons are chains of gold, their rags robes, and their filthy lodge a palace. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

The precious blood of Christ.—*The precious blood of Christ*:—I. WHAT PRECEDED IT. Blood of lambs, bulls, and goats, without number, and through all ages. Types most costly. Prophecies grand and minute.

II. THE PRODIGIES WHICH ATTENDED THE SHEDDING OF THIS BLOOD. On previous occasions, when sacrifices had been offered, there were tokens of God's favourable notice—Abel, Noah, Abraham, Gideon, &c. But when was it heard that the sun was clothed as in sackcloth, that the rocks were rent, the earth shaken, &c.

III. WHERE IT WAS PRESENTED (Heb. ix. 7, 12). The very life laid down was taken up, and is lived on again in heaven in circumstances of the highest glory and honour.

IV. WHAT IT PREVENTS. Condemnation, wrath, curse. This blood will ward off all harm from those who trust it. Will not suffer Satan or death to destroy any who are sheltered beneath it.

V. WHAT IT PROCURES. 1. For man generally. (1) All temporal blessings. (2) The offer of salvation. 2. For believers—redemption, even the forgiveness of sins (Eph. i. 7).

VI. WHAT IT PRODUCES. The blood of Christ is omnipotent. It prevails over guilt, fear and care. It casts down pride, casts out the reigning power of sin, and introduces happiness, holiness, humility, and hope.

VII. WHAT IT WILL PERPETUATE, AND SECURE FOR EVER TO ALL BELIEVERS. Abidance before the throne of God, union with the redeemed of all ages, service in the heavenly temple, the absence of sorrow, death, and sin. (*J. Cox.*)

The precious blood of Christ:—1. Worlds in which there is no evil and no danger of evil arising would not be supplied with means of prevention or of cure; but in our planet we have remedies for almost all the ills which flesh is heir to, and there are laws of compensation which show that the God of love does not impose want and destitution willingly. Here, then, where even the juice of the sea-wort is a cordial, and "its ashes feed the spark of life," where the nightshade stops the painful vibration of the nerves, and brings sweet sleep upon eyelids which have become stiff in unseasonable wakefulness; here, where crowding insects cleanse and scavenge our earth and her firmament, and where everything has its use; here we have for the removal of sin the precious blood of Christ. 2. A ruler who never punishes his rebellious subjects, and who so pardons as to reproach his own government and laws, will spread evil by his so-called goodness, and will be cruel in his apparent kindness. The problem to be solved is, How can God be just, and yet the Saviour of the sinner? The solution of this problem is found in the precious blood of Christ. 3. Christ, according to the Scriptures, is the Word made flesh. The blood of Christ is the blood of the flesh in which God was manifest. All blood is precious—precious the blood of Abel, the blood of the persecuted prophets, &c., but there is no blood so precious as the blood of Christ. 4. Among the many things which we value, there is nothing which we so prize as the offerings of disinterested love: these surpass in interest, if not in value, the products of our labour and the blessings which we inherit as a birthright, or which reach us through the ordinary channels of Divine providence, and of our political and social institutions. Now "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The blood of Christ is a double illustration of disinterested love, for while the Son gives Himself for us, the Father gives the Son

to be the Saviour of the world. 5. How marvellous in their variety and character are the effects of the blood of Christ! It brings Jehovah forth from His secret place with the light of love in His countenance, it arrests the course of the law in its pursuit of the sinner, it magnifies the law, it restores access to God, it cleanses, justifies, and redeems unto God. Never was blood like this. 6. There are different standards by which we value precious things. Some things are valuable because of their utility, and other things because of their singularity and rarity and beauty, but how few things are beautiful and rare and useful! Precious stones are beautiful and rare, but their utility is small; and the precious metals are valuable as currency, but not comparable to iron or even to coal. When, however, rarity is combined with utility, and an important service is to be rendered by one being or by one thing, how precious that being or thing becomes! The one medicine, a specific for some dire disease, the one means of escape in the hour of peril, the forlorn hope of an army, the only son of a widowed mother, are examples. And in this position stands the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, but the blood of Christ alone. 7. Alas! many of our precious things deteriorate. Time, that devours all things, mars and breaks our choicest treasures. Business fails, commerce is arrested, empires decline, the very Church of Christ becomes corrupt; but among the things which are incorruptible and undefiled is the precious blood of Christ. 8. Often have we heard men say, "Lo! here is the panacea! and lo! there!" But where is the remedy for all disease, and where the universal medicine? The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. It removes the guilty smart from the conscience, and it relieves memory of its heaviest burden, and takes from imagination all its horrible creations. (*S. Martin.*) *Redeemed by blood.*—Probably it is the most momentous fact about us that we have been redeemed. It is much to have been created. It is much to be endowed with life in a world so full of marvellous possibilities as ours. It is much to have a soul, which can call up the past, or interrogate the present, or anticipate and prepare for the future. But it is more that we have been redeemed. Redeemed, as Israel from the bondage of Egypt; or as a slave, by his goel, from captivity to some rich creditor; or as the captive of some hideous vice emancipated from its thrall. I. THE COST OF OUR REDEMPTION HAS BEEN IMMENSE. 1. Negatively. "Not with corruptible things, as silver and gold." A moneyed man, who has been accustomed to look on his wealth as the key to every treasure-chest, is sometimes startled to find how little it can really do. God could have given suns of gold, and stars of silver, constellations of bodies glowing with precious metals, but none of these would have been sufficient to free one soul from the curse or penalty of sin, or to change it into a loyal and loving subject of His reign. The Creator must give not things, but life—not His gifts, but Himself, ere He could redeem. 2. Positively. "But with the precious blood of Christ." The blood is the life. Life is man's supreme possession, and his supreme gift. And, in addition, when blood is mentioned with the laying down of life, there is the further thought of intense suffering, of violence, &c. The blood of Jesus was precious, because of the dignity of His nature, and because of His perfect character. Without blemish, that is, without personal sin. Without spot, that is, not defiled by contact with sinners. And thus it was adequate for the work of cleansing away the terrible aggregate of sin. II. THE OBJECT OF OUR REDEMPTION. "From your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." It is our ransom price, the purchase-money of our entire being to be Christ's. The purchaser of any slave regarded him as his chattel, his goods. His word and will were absolute law. Such are the rights which our glorious Master has over us. Who, then, of us can live as we have been wont, following after vanity, treading in the footsteps of our forefathers, content to do as others before us? New claims have come in. Our Redeemer is Lord. III. THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE REDEEMED. "Who by Him do believe in God." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The precious blood of Christ* :—I. ESTIMATE IT IN ITS ADAPTATION TO ALL THE WANTS OF MAN, AND ITS ANSWERABLENESS TO ALL THE PROPERTIES OF GOD. II. ESTIMATE THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THIS BLOOD BY ITS INTRINSIC MERIT. 1. The first circumstance prominent in this description of our Saviour's sacrifice, is that it is a direct oblation to God. 2. And this oblation of Himself to God contained an ample recognition of the authority of God's law, and of His right to punish transgressors. 3. Another circumstance prominent in the description of the Saviour's sacrifice is the intelligence and voluntariness of the victim. 4. Another circumstance—one which we believe was prefigured by the sacrifices under the law, and one which substantiates the sacrifice of Christ to have been a proper sacrifice—is that He was an unblemished victim. III. Compute the value of this

precious blood with reference to the personal value of the Saviour. IV. CONSIDER THE VALUE ATTACHED TO THIS BLOOD BY THE FATHER. 1. We might illustrate this by many tokens and testimonies of His complacency towards His Son, before His sufferings and death. 2. Consider as another illustration of the preciousness of Christ's blood, either in life or death, to the Father, the personal compensation He awarded to Him for His sufferings. V. And need I remind you of the IMMENSE GOOD THIS BLOOD IS THE MEANS OF PROCURING TO MANKIND, to say nothing of the lower orders of the creation, as a further illustration of this subject. VI. By way of application, let us see WHETHER THIS BLOOD BE NOT PRECIOUS TO EVERY RIGHTLY AFFECTED HUMAN HEART. Mark its efficacy and power over every class of sinners, who are resting upon its sovereign influence through the power of the Holy Spirit. "To you He is precious." (*W. M. Bunting.*) *The precious blood of Christ:—*The blood of Christ is precious—I. When viewed in connection with the FATHER'S PURPOSE AND THE FATHER'S LOVE. II. When viewed in connection with the PERSON OF CHRIST. III. When viewed in its bearing upon man. (*A. C. Price.*) *The blood of Christ:—*I. Consider WHAT LIGHT IS SHED UPON THE INSTANCE OF CHRIST SHEDDING HIS BLOOD FOR US BY THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MANY ILLUSTRIOUS SAINTS AND HEROES "IN THE NOBLE ARMY OF MARTYRS," WHO IN ALL LANDS AND AGES HAVE LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR COUNTRY, OR ON BEHALF OF TRUTH, OF SCIENCE, AND RELIGION. Would the blood in any single instance have had the slightest moral or meritorious value apart from the character of the person, apart from the fidelity, the endurance, the self-sacrifice of the person? True, there are senses in which we say, "The blood of a living thing is the life thereof," senses in which we say, with the great Harvey, "the blood is the fountain of life, the first to live, and the last to die, and the primary seat of the animal soul." But then, do we not always, in deeper senses, distinguish between the blood and the life; do we not feel always that the blood which can be seen is but the outward sign and symbol of the inward life which cannot be seen; do we not feel that though the blood is the seat, the centre, the channel of the life, the life itself is as superior to the blood as the mind is to the brain which is its centre, or the soul to the body which is its shell or form? Equally so, when we speak of a man shedding his blood on the altar of his country or his religion, we think not of the form or the sign, but of that which is beneath and within; the extent to which the sufferer manfully endured, the degree to which he spared not himself, the spirit in which for the truth, or the cause, or the monarch, or the land, or the Lord he loved, he willingly, resolutely gave the whole force of his moral nature, the whole wealth of his heart, his character, and his soul. In like manner we should think of the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin, not as deriving its worth or its efficacy from anything that was outward or physical or material, not as being vested in the blood itself as blood. Should we not rather a thousand times say the preciousness of the blood of Christ was in the inward and personal, the spiritual and Divine life which dwelt and throbbed in that blood? II. IN THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS THE BLOOD OF CHRIST WAS REGARDED AS BUT A SYMBOL OF, OR BUT ANOTHER NAME FOR, THE LOVE OF CHRIST. "What is the blood of Christ?" asked Livingstone of his own solitary soul in the last months of his African wanderings. "It is Himself. It is the inherent and everlasting mercy of God made apparent to human eyes and ears. The everlasting love was disclosed by our Lord's life and death. It showed that God forgives, because He loves to forgive." Does not St. Paul tell us that love is the highest virtue and grace of man? Does not St. John tell us that the very essence of the name and nature of God is love? Well, then, did the early Christians reason when they declared that the blood is but the symbol of that which is the most precious, perfect, and potent force in the whole universe—whether it be affirmed of either God or man—love, unspeakable, all blessed, eternal love. (*J. T. Stannard.*) *The precious blood of Christ:—*The precious blood of Christ is useful to God's people in a thousand ways. After all, the real preciousness of a thing in the time of trial, must depend upon its usefulness. You have heard the story of the man in the desert, who stumbled, when near to die, upon a bag, and opened it, hoping that it might be the wallet of some passer-by, and he found in it nothing but pearls! If they had been crusts of bread, how much more precious would they have been! This may not be according to political economy, but it is according to common sense. I. The precious blood of Christ has a REDEEMING POWER. It redeems from the law. Our law is fulfilled, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. II. The value of the blood lies much in its ATONING EFFICACY. We are told in Leviticus, that "it is the blood which maketh an atonement for the

soul." God never forgave sin apart from blood under the law. Christ, therefore, came and was punished in the place and stead of all His people. There is none other plan by which sinners can be made at one with God, except by Jesus' precious blood. III. The precious blood of Jesus Christ has a CLEANSING POWER (1 John i. 7). IV. A fourth property of the blood of Christ is ITS PRESERVING POWER. Did not God see the blood before you and I saw it, and was not that the reason why He spared our forfeited lives when, like barren fig trees, we brought forth no fruit for Him? "When I see the blood I will pass over you." V. The blood of Christ is precious because of its PLEADING PREVALENCE (Heb. xii. 24). When I cannot pray as I would, how sweet to remember that the blood prays! VI. Christ's blood is precious because of its MELTING INFLUENCE on the human heart. Come for repentance, if you cannot come repenting. VII. The same blood that melts has a GRACIOUS POWER TO PACIFY. VIII. ITS SANCTIFYING INFLUENCE (Heb. ix. 14). IX. ITS POWER TO GIVE ENTRANCE. I am persuaded some of us do not come near to God, because we forget the blood. If you try to have fellowship with God in your graces, your experiences, your believings, you will fail; but if you try to come near to God as you stand in Christ Jesus, you will have courage to come; and on the other hand, God will run to meet you when He sees you in the face of His anointed. X. ITS CONFIRMING POWER. The promises are yea and amen, for no other reason than this, because Christ Jesus died and rose again. XI. ITS INVIGORATING POWER. "My blood is drink indeed." Oh, whenever your spirit faints, this wine shall comfort you; when your griefs are many, drink and forget your misery. O precious blood, how many are thy uses! May I prove them all! XII. THE BLOOD HAS AN OVERCOMING POWER. It is written in the Revelation, "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." How could they do otherwise? (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The atonement*:—I. IT IS PRECIOUS, BECAUSE THE BLOOD OF GOD'S ANOINTED. II. IT IS PRECIOUS, FOR IT SATISFIED THE JUSTICE OF GOD WHEN NOTHING ELSE COULD. III. IT IS PRECIOUS, FOR IT IS PLEADED BEFORE GOD FOR THE PARDON AND THE SANCTIFICATION OF SOULS. IV. IT IS PRECIOUS, AS APPLIED TO THE CONSCIENCE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR JUSTIFICATION. V. IT IS PRECIOUS BLOOD, AS APPLIED TO THE SOUL FOR SANCTIFICATION. VI. IT IS PRECIOUS, BECAUSE BY IT WE OVERCOME SIN AND HELL. VII. IT IS PRECIOUS BLOOD, BECAUSE IT WILL BE THE BELIEVER'S THEME IN HEAVEN. Application: 1. Which is most precious to you, gold and silver, and the precious things of this world, or the precious blood of Christ? 2. Have you ever felt the preciousness of this blood? 3. Remember, there is no advantage to be gained from this precious blood without an application of it to your soul. 4. Remember, that its value and virtue is just what it always was. 5. Be sure never to trample this precious blood under your feet, for its consequences will be most tremendous (Heb. x. 29, 30). (*Studies For The Pulpit.*) *Soul redemption*:—These words lead us to look at soul redemption in three aspects—I. AS AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things," &c. II. AS UNATTAINABLE BY WORLDLY WEALTH. "Not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold." III. AS EFFECTED ONLY BY CHRIST. "But with the precious blood of Christ." (*Homilist.*) *Christ's precious blood*:—Precious blood indeed! who can estimate its value! the more it is known the higher it rises in the estimation of those who are acquainted with it. And yet it is neglected and despised by the generality of mankind. Trifles light as air are preferred before it. I. WHY IS IT PRECIOUS? 1. Consider whose blood it is. "The blood of Christ," the blood of our elder Brother, of a Friend, of a Prophet, Priest, and King—the blood of our incarnate God (Acts xx. 28). 2. Regard it as the evidence of infinite love. For whom was it shed? The Messiah was cut off, but not for Himself. "He was wounded for our transgressions (Isa. liii. 5). As the apostle argues (Rom. v. 6–10). 3. Yet more precious will it appear if we notice the miseries from which it frees us—and the unspeakable blessings it has purchased for us. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 7). "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7; Rev. i. 5, 6). "They who were sometimes far off are brought nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13). "Having made peace through the blood of His Cross" (Col. i. 20). "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. iii. 20–26; 1 John ii. 1, 2; Heb. ix. 11–18). Can a man realise these blessings and live in the habitual enjoyment of them; and bear in mind the price paid to procure them, and not feel the preciousness of the blood of Christ? 4. It is precious as affording an all-pre-

vailing plea in our petitions at the throne of grace—and an universal antidote to the temptations of Satan and unbelief. 5. The efficacy of this blood enhances its preciousness. “Jesus by His one oblation of Himself once offered has made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world” (John i. 29). Who can comprehend the value of such a ransom! 6. The perpetuity of blessedness which it ensures. Whom it blesses it blesses for ever. Jesus by His own offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. x. 14). II. To WHOM THIS BLOOD IS PRECIOUS. Would to God that I could say it is so to all! but alas! this is not the case. Neither is it true of the many. The great majority “count the blood of the covenant wherewith they are sanctified an unholy thing” (Heb. x. 29). And will you not commemorate the shedding of that blood? (R. Simpson, M.A.) *Choice things costly*:—Yonder ermine, flung so carelessly over the proud beauty’s shoulder, cost terrible battles with polar ice and hurricane. All choicest things are reckoned the dearest. So is it, too, in heaven’s inventories. The universe of God has never witnessed ought to be reckoned in comparison with the redemption of a guilty world. That mighty ransom no such contemptible things as silver and gold could procure. Only by one price could the church of God be redeemed from hell, and that the precious blood of the Lamb without blemish or spot, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (T. L. Cuyler, D.D.) *The cost of redemption*:—A little boy about ten years old was once bidden by his father to go and do some work in the field. He went as he was told, but took little pains about it, and made very slow progress in his task. By and by his father called him to him very kindly, and said, “Willy, can you tell me how much you have cost me since you were born?” The father waited a while, and then said that he reckoned he had “cost him a hundred pounds.” The lad opened his eyes and wondered at the expense he had been. He seemed to see the hundred sovereigns all glittering before him, and in his heart determined to repay his father by doing all he could to please him. The reproof sank deeper into his heart than a hundred stripes. When I read the story it occurred to me, “What have I cost my Saviour?” Then I remembered the words, “Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (G. Everard.) *Suitable return for Christ’s blood-shedding*:—In an Italian hospital was a severely wounded soldier. A lady visitor spoke to him, dressed his wounds, smoothed his pillow, and made him all right for the day. When leaving she took a bouquet of flowers, and laid it beside his head. The soldier, with his pale face and eyes full of tears, looked up, and said: “That is too much kindness.” She was a lady with a true Italian heart, and looking back to the soldier, she quietly replied, “No, not too much for one drop of Italian blood.” Shall we not freely own that the consecration of all our powers of body and spirit is not too much to give in return for the shedding of our Emmanuel’s blood on our behalf? *Redemption costly*:—But why should so vast a price be required? Is man worth the cost? A man may be bought in parts of the world for the value of an ox. It was not man simply, but man in a certain relation, that had to be redeemed. See one who has been all his days a drunken, idle, worthless fellow. All appropriate to him the epithet “worthless”—worth nothing. But that man commits a crime for which he is sentenced to be hanged, or to be imprisoned for life. Go and try to buy him now. Redeem him and make him your servant. Let the richest man in Cambridge offer every shilling he possesses for that worthless man, and his offer would be wholly vain. Why? Because now there is not only the man to be considered, but the law. It needs a very great price to redeem one man from the curse of the law of England; but Christ came to redeem all men from the curse of the Divine law. (William Robinson.) *A lamb without blemish and without spot*.—*Christ’s innocence*:—1. This sets out His love so much the more, that being innocent, would suffer for us wicked wretches. 2. This teaches us to imitate Him, and in all things to be innocent as He was. 3. In that Christ being so innocent, was yet willing to suffer and offer His blood, let us imitate Him in this also; let us be patient in bearing troubles and persecution; we must suffer for His cause (though causelessly) cheerfully and willingly. We must also suffer patiently. (John Rogers.) *Without spot*:—As one flaw or vein in the marble fatally damages the sculptor’s work; as one speck in the lens of a microscope or telescope destroys its use and demands a recasting; as one leak would inevitably submerge the noblest vessel that ever rode the waters; as one leak in the Mighty Ark of Mercy would have been fatal to His qualifications as a ransom for the guilty. (J. R. Macduff, D.D.) **Fore-**

ordained before the foundation of the world.—*The ransom*:—I. THE DIVINE FOREORDINATION OF THE SACRIFICE. 1. "Who verily was foreordained." The literal word here is "foreknown." Before the world was God concentrated His thoughts upon His Son, not only in His personal, but also in His official capacity as the future Redeemer of mankind. 2. "Who was verily foreordained before the foundation of the world." Before it in time. This affords a clue to the occupation of the Divine Mind before the creative fiat first broke on the silence of immensity. 3. "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." A correspondence therefore obtains between time and eternity, between the manifestation in history and the pre-arrangement in the unfathomable abysses of the Divine Mind. Foreordination implies a plan, a plan of the world and a plan of salvation. The idea of redemption, of the Son as a propitiation for sin, seems to be the first and most important thought of God. It was not an after-thought, but the ruling thought, and around it all other thoughts were systematically arranged. Creation is to redemption what the scaffolding is to the temple; when the latter will be finished, the former will be consigned to the flames.

II. THE PRECIOSUSNESS OF THE SACRIFICE. III. THE EFFICIENCY OF THE SACRIFICE. 1. The efficiency of the sacrifice is to be seen in the fact that it satisfied Divine justice, for the text informs us that "God raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory." The exact bearing of the atonement on the Divine nature is a mystery we cannot fully explain. But whatever hindrances to our salvation there were, arising out of the essential and governmental righteousness of God, they were all removed by the death of the Cross. 2. The second proof of the efficiency, and therefore of the sufficiency, of the ransom is—that it actually delivers men from their "vain conversation received by tradition from the fathers." Three interpretations have been given of this phrase, but whichever interpretation we take we find the sacrifice of Christ equally efficacious. One interpretation is, that Christ's death has redeemed men from the oppressive sway of religious traditionalism. A second interpretation is, that by "vain conversation received by tradition from the fathers" we are to understand the combined power of habit and example in fashioning the course of men's lives. A further interpretation has been suggested, namely, that by "vain conversation received by tradition from the fathers" we are to understand original sin, the innate depravity communicated from generation to generation according to the law of heredity. And it must be conceded that this form of corruption is the most difficult of all to be rooted out of our nature. But, thanks be to God, the blood of Christ can wash out the dye; and we look confidently forward to the day when we shall have been actually redeemed from evil in every shape and form, when we shall be clean without and white within, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

The foreknown redemption:—I. THE PURPOSE FOREKNOWN; but it is well rendered foreordained, for this knowing is decreeing, and there is little profit in distinguishing them. We say usually that where there is little wisdom there is much chance, and, amongst men, some are far more foresighted than others; yet the wisest and most provident men, wanting skill to design all things aright and power to act as they contrive, meet with many unexpected casualties and frequent disappointments in their undertakings. But with God, where both wisdom and power are infinite, there can be neither any chance nor resistance from without nor any imperfection at all in the contrivance of things within Himself that can give cause to add, or abate, or alter any thing in the frame of His purposes. The model of the whole world and of all the course of time was with Him one and the same from all eternity, and whatsoever is brought to pass is exactly answerable to that pattern. Before man had made himself miserable, yea, before either he or the world was made, this thought of boundless love was in the bosom of God, to send His Son forth from thence, to bring fallen man out of misery and restore him to happiness, and to do this, not only by taking on his nature, but the curse, to shift it off from us that were sunk under it, and to bear it Himself, and by bearing it to take it away. II. THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS PURPOSE. "Was manifest in these last times for you." He was manifested by His incarnation, manifested in the flesh, and manifested by His marvellous works and doctrine, by His sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension, by the sending down of the Holy Ghost according to His promise, and by the preaching of the gospel. III. THE APPLICATION OF THIS MANIFESTATION. "For you." The apostle represents these things to those he writes to particularly for their use. Therefore he applies it to them, but without prejudice to the believers who went before or of those who were to follow in after-ages. He who is here said to be fore-

ordained before the foundation of the world is therefore called "A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And as the virtue of His death looks backward to all preceding ages, whose faith and sacrifices looked forward to it, so the same death is of force and perpetual value to the end of the world. (*Abp. Leighton.*) **For you, who by Him do believe in God.**—*We cannot believe in God, but by the Son:—For—*1. The Father dwelleth in the light that none can attain unto. How, then, shall we come to Him of ourselves, we being so poor and weak, and He of so infinite majesty? As in the summer we cannot directly look upon the sun shining in his full strength, but may view it in a pail of water, so must we see the Father in the Son, who is the image of the Father and the ingraven form of His person. 2. God is infinitely just, and we extremely wicked; He a consuming fire, and we stubble. How, then, can we come to Him, believe in Him, or take comfort, but only in and by the Lord Jesus our Mediator? (*John Rogers.*) **That raised Him up from the dead.**—*A risen and glorified Saviour the ground of hope and confidence:—*The apostle presents Christ under three grand aspects. I. AS RAISED FROM THE DEAD BY THE POWER OF GOD THE FATHER. The resurrection of Christ is a fundamental article of our religion. 1. The resurrection of Christ was necessary. The graves of earthly princes are the end of their glory, the termination of all their conquests; the grave of Christ becomes the scene of His divinest achievement. 2. The resurrection of Christ is established, as a fact, on the surest basis. Divine wisdom seems to have taken particular care to guard it against all reasonable grounds of suspicion and doubt. 3. The resurrection of Christ was the acknowledged work of a Divine power. II. AS GLORIFIED BY THE FATHER SUBSEQUENTLY TO HIS RESURRECTION. 1. The resurrection imparted to Him the glory of a Divine nature in the conviction of mortals. (1) This it effected by removing the disgrace which death attached to Him, in the professed character of a Divine deliverer, and attesting Him to be the Prince of Life. (2) The resurrection gave Him this glory also by putting the stamp of the Divine approbation on all His assertions. 2. He was glorified with the investment of sovereign power in the nature in which He rose from the dead. This is what is called His mediatorial glory. III. AS THE GROUND AND OCCASION OF A LIVELY FAITH AND HOPE IN US TOWARDS GOD. "That your faith and hope might be in God." 1. In His willingness to save sinners for His Son's sake. 2. Our faith and hope are in God, through Christ, in relation to the possession of a future and blessed state in reserve for believers after death. 3. Our faith and hope are in God, through Jesus Christ, in relation to the restoration of our bodies at the last day from the gloom and dishonour of the grave. (*J. Leifchild.*)

Vers. 22, 23. **Seeing ye have purified your souls.**—*The individual and social influence of religion:—*I. THE INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCE OF RELIGION. "Ye have purified your souls." This implies that personal corruption is an obstacle to beneficial influence over society, and that, in order to benefit others, we must first become pure ourselves. This purifying process is brought about—First, by the influence of "the truth." Sanctify them through Thy truth. The Word of God is like the sun, showing everything in its true colour; and its whole tendency is to purify the heart, by opposing all evil and promoting all good. Secondly, by the influence of the Spirit. "Through the Spirit." Thirdly, by the influence of obedience. "In obeying." This combines the work of man in union with the "truth" and Spirit of God in the purification of his heart. II. THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF RELIGION. "Ye have purified your souls . . . unto unfeigned love of the brethren." The spirit of love is essential to the welfare of every society. There is no unfeigned love of the brethren but from the purified soul. First, the spirit of selfishness is obliterated from the purified soul. Secondly, the purified soul is God-like in its nature and influence. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "God is love." Thirdly, the feelings of the purified soul are always loving and compassionate. (*H. E. Thomas.*) **Love one another with a pure heart fervently.**—*Brotherly love:—*The obedience and holiness mentioned in the foregoing verses comprehend the whole duties and frame of a Christian life towards God and men; and having urged that in the general, he specifies this grace of mutual Christian love as the great evidence of our sincerity and the truth of our love to God, for men are subject to much hypocrisy this way, and deceive themselves. They can come constantly to the church, and pray, it may be, at home too, and yet cannot find in their hearts to forgive an injury. I. THE DUE QUALIFICATIONS OF BROTHERLY LOVE. 1. Love must be unfeigned. It appears that dissimulation is a disease that is very incident in this particular. St. Paul hath the same word (Rom. xii. 9), and St.

John speaks to the same effect (1 John iii. 18). He requires that our love have that double reality which is opposed to double dissembled love; that it be cordial and effectual; that the professing of it arise from truth of affection, and, as much as may be, be seconded with action; that both the heart and the hand may be the seal of it rather than the tongue. When after variances men are brought to an agreement, they are much subject rather to cover their remaining malices with superficial verbal forgiveness than to dislodge them and free the heart of them. This is a poor self-deceit. As the philosopher said to him who, being ashamed that he was espied by him in a tavern in the outer room, withdrew himself to the inner, "That is not the way out; the more you go that way, you will be the further within it"; so when hatreds are, upon admonition, not thrown out, but retire inward to hide themselves, they grow deeper and stronger than before. 2. It must be pure, with a pure heart. Call it good fellowship or what you will, all the fruit that in the end can be expected out of unholy fellowship in sinning together is to be tormented together, and to add each to the torment of the other. The mutual love of Christians must be pure, arising from such causes as are pure and spiritual, from the sense of our Saviour's command and of His example (John xiii. 34). They that are indeed lovers of God are united; by that their hearts meet in Him as in one centre: they cannot but love one another. Where a godly man sees his Father's image, he is forced to love it. And as the Christian's love is pure in its cause, so in its effects and exercise. His society and converse with any tends mainly to this, that he may mutually help and be helped in the knowledge and love of God. 3. We must love fervently, not after a cold indifferent manner. Let the love of your brethren be as a fire within you, consuming that selfishness which is so contrary to it and is so natural to men. Let it set your thoughts on work to study how to do others good. Let your love be an active love, intense within you, and extending itself in doing good to the souls and bodies of your brethren as they need and you are able. II. "Love of the brethren." In this is implied OUR OBLIGATION after a special manner to love those of the household of faith, because they are our brethren. There is in this fervent love sympathy with the griefs of our brethren, desire and endeavour to help them, bearing their infirmities, and recovering them too, if it may be; admonishing and reproving them as is needful, sometimes sharply, and yet still in love; rejoicing in their good, in their gifts and graces, so far from envying them that we be glad as if they were our own. You are brethren by the same new birth and born to the same inheritance, and such an inheritance as shall not be an apple of strife amongst you, to beget debates and contentions: no, it is enough for all, and none shall prejudice another, but you shall have joy in the happiness one of another, seeing you shall then be perfect in love, all harmony, no difference in judgment nor in affection, all your harps tuned to the same new song, which you shall sing for ever. Let that love begin here which shall never end. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *The life of love and purity*:—I. MUTUAL LOVE THE DUTY OF THE PURE. II. PURITY, OBEDIENCE, LOVE ARE THE SIGNS OF A NEW LIFE WHICH THE CHRISTIAN IS LIVING. III. THE FORCES OUT OF WHICH THIS NEW LIFE GROWS ARE DEATHLESS. 1. "Seed"—(1) Appears insignificant. (2) Is often hidden. (3) Is vital and vitalising. 2. "Incorruptible." Truth itself never dies, nor love. IV. THE WORD OF GOD IS THE IMPERISHABLE MEANS BY WHICH THESE FORCES OF LIFE ARE BROUGHT INTO THE VERY SOUL OF MAN. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Christian brotherly love*:—I. BROTHERLY LOVE ILLUSTRATED. 1. The objects and elements of this love. (1) It is called "the love of the brethren," "brotherly kindness," as contradistinguished from that "charity" which has for its object the whole race of man (2 John ii.). (2) This circumstance, which necessarily limits this principle as to its range, gives it greater comprehension of elementary principles and greater intensity of influence and activity of operation. It includes goodwill in its highest degree; but to this it adds moral esteem, complacential delight, tender sympathy. 2. The distinctive characters of Christian love. (1) "With a pure heart." (a) The leading idea here is genuineness—sincerity. It must be real love, not affected or put on (Rom. xii. 9; 1 John iii. 18). (b) It includes freedom from all low, selfish motives and ends. (2) "Fervently." (a) This term conveys the idea of constancy. A Christian brother, when he acts like himself, "loves at all times." No change of circumstances, especially to the worse, on the part of its object, should affect it except in the way of increasing it. (b) The word also conveys the idea of intensity and power. Our Christian love should be so fervent as that "many waters" of neglect, infirmities, offences, petty injuries, "shall not quench it," or even damp its ardour. And it should manifest its strength, not merely by overcoming opposi-

obstacles, but by making exertions and sacrifices. (3) There is one character which it is of peculiar importance that our mutual affection as Christians should be distinguished by—it should be love like Christ's (John xiii. 34). His love was free and ready, considerate and wise, laborious and expensive, generous and self-sacrificing; looking to all their interests, but chiefly to their highest interests; not forgetting that they had bodies, but chiefly concerned about their souls; and such should be our brotherly love. II. BROTHERLY LOVE RECOMMENDED. 1. The intimate and indissoluble mutual relation between Christians as brethren, arising out of their intimate and indissoluble common relation to God as their Father, is a strong motive to the cultivation and exercise of Christian brotherly kindness. 2. The common character to which all Christians have been formed by the agency of the same Spirit, and the instrumentality of the same Word, is another strong motive. (*J. Brown, D.D.*) *Catholic charity*:—I. ITS NECESSITY. 1. The injunctions of Christ (John xiii. 34, 35; xv. 12; Matt. v. 24; xxv. 34, 35, 41, 42). 2. The teachings of His apostles (Rom. xiii. 8–10; Gal. v. 22; 1 Cor. xiii.; 1 John iv. 7, 16, 20, &c.). II. ITS EXTENT. 1. To all mankind. The more general it is, the more Christian and the more like God's love. 2. The more special objects of our love ought to be those who agree with us in a common faith (Gal. vi. 10)—*i.e.*, all Christians, as Christians, and because such. To love those that are of our way, humour, and opinion, is not charity, but self-love; 'tis not for Christ's sake, but our own. III. ITS EXCELLENCE. 1. It is the image of God, and of all the graces renders us most like our Maker, for God is love and the lover of men. And is it not a glorious excellency that makes men like the fountain of all perfection? 2. It is the spirit of angels, glorified souls, and the best of men. 3. Love is an eminent branch of the Divine life and nature (1 John iv. 7, 8). 4. Love is the bond and type of Christian communion. 5. Love is the most Catholic grace, and upon that account the most excellent, since that which promotes the good of the whole is better than any private perfection. 6. Love commends Christianity to those without, and cleanseth the profession of it from many spots it hath contracted. IV. THE MEANS OF ATTAINING THIS EXCELLENT AND CATHOLIC TEMPER. 1. Directions. (1) Acknowledge worth in any man. Whatever is good is from God, and He is to be loved and owned in all things, as well in the paint upon the butterfly's wing as in the glorious uniform lustre of the sun; in the least herb under our feet as well as in the stupendous fabric of the heavens over us. And moral perfections are to be acknowledged, as well as these natural ones. And we must take care that we make not our relish the measure of worth and goodness. Say not this is excellent because it is agreeable to your particular palates, and that on the other hand is vile because it is distasteful to your genius. Let us, then, be so ingenious as to own the virtue and the goodness that is in all parties and opinions; let us commend and love it. (2) Be much in the contemplation of the love of God. He that knows how much God hath loved him, hath a mighty reason to love his brother (1 John iv. 11). (3) Make the great design of religion yours; and know that the intent of that is, not to teach us systems of opinion, but to furnish our minds with encouragements of virtue and instances of duty; to direct us to govern our passions and subdue our appetites and self-wills, in order to the glory of God, the good of societies, and our own present and eternal interests. (4) Study the moderate, pacific ways and principles, and run not in extremes. Both truth and love are in the middle. Extremes are dangerous. 2. Considerations. (1) Love is part of religion; but opinions, for the sake of which we lose charity, are none. The first I have proved already, and for the other we may consider that religion consists, not in knowing many things, but in practising the few plain things we know. (2) Charity is certainly our duty, but many of the opinions, about which we fall out, are uncertainly true; *viz.*, as to us. The fundamental points of faith are indeed as firm as the centre, but the opinions of men are as fluctuating as the waves of the ocean. The root and body of a tree is fast and unshaken, while the leaves are made the sport of every wind. And colours sometimes vary with every position of the object and the eye, though the light of the sun be an uniform splendour. The foundation of God standeth sure, but men often build upon it what is very tottering and uncertain. The great truths of religion are easily discernible, but the smaller and remoter ones require more acuteness to descry them; and the best light may be deceived about such obscure and distant objects. The apostle tells us that we know but in part (1 Cor. xiii. 9), and makes confidence an argument of ignorance (1 Cor. viii. 2). (3) Christian love is necessary, but agreement in opinions is neither necessary nor possible. (4) Errors of themselves are infirmities of the

understanding, and not enormities of the will, for no man is willing to be deceived. So that they ought not to be the objects of our hatred but our pity. We all are pilgrims in our way to the Jerusalem that is above. If some will go in this path, some in the other, these in a circuit, and those amongst the rocks, we may be sure it is because they know not the danger and inconveniences which they choose. (5) We ought to make allowance for education, authority, and fair pretences, which have a mighty power, even over honest minds, and do often unavoidably lead them into error. For let us consider how easily we receive the first impressions, and how deeply they sink into our souls. (6) In many things we err ourselves; and, therefore, shall have need of the charity of others. 3. Cautions. (1) Beware of inordinate admiration and love of any sect. When we passionately admire a party, we are apt to despise them that differ from it. (2) Avoid eager and passionate disputes. In these charity is always lost, and truth seldom or never found. If thou art desirous to prevail with thy friend to lay down his opinion, assault him not by the fierceness of disputes; for such attempts will but raise his passion, and that will make him stick the closer to his error; but shine upon him with a calm light, insinuate thy better principle by modest and gentle suggestions. (3) Beware of zeal about opinions, by which I mean all the propositions of less certainty or consequence. (4) Beware of censuring and affixing odious names and consequences upon the persons or opinions of others. (*Joseph Glanvil.*) *Christian love* :—What is that love of which our Lord and His apostles speak? Not only, or primarily, kind feelings or generous impulses. Not certainly the sentimentality which breathes itself out in sighs and raptures. Not merely the fond attachment which clings as the rose against the trellis. But, above all things, service—self-denial and self-giving. To put another's well-being before our own, not because it is pleasant to do it, but because it is right. To make another the pivot around which the wheel of activity revolves. To check the hasty word, the unkind speech, the damaging criticism. I. THE MARKS OF SUCH LOVE. 1. Unfeigned. Dissimulation is a disease very antagonistic to Christian love. How subtly we are tempted to maintain appearances because of some ulterior gain. Our politeness is often but skin deep. Our smiles assumed for a purpose. Our words smoother than butter, whilst our hearts are drawn swords. 2. Pure. "Hearts may be cemented by impurity, by ungodly conversation and society in sin, as in uncleanness or drunkenness." 3. Fervently. "On the stretch." Our love seldom gets beyond "temperate," and never to boiling point. II. THE EFFICIENT CAUSE OF SUCH LOVE. "It will come through obeying the truth." 1. We must know the truth. Put two burnished mirrors opposite each other, and there will be no glow of light on either; but if a candle stand between, the beams of light are flung to and fro, to an extent impossible to either or both alone. So the mere contact of Christian with Christian will not necessarily produce the burning heart, unless there be also between them the Truth of God. 2. We must also obey the truth. Do, and you shall know. Obey, and you will love. 3. As we obey the truth, we shall be purified by it. Young men cleanse their way by taking heed to the Divine Word. III. THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE LIFE WITHIN. It is "not of man, or of the will of the flesh, but of God." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Christian love* :—I. PURITY. 1. The word for "purified" is not that denoting the infusion of virtue, but that which signifies the expulsion from the soul of all defilement, and especially of selfishness. Worldly philosophies and religions only required external lustration—the purification of the life; Christianity inculcates inward sanctity—the purification of the soul. 2. The way to effect this is by believing obedience to the truth as revealed in the Gospel. Christian truths, different from the truths of mathematics and of art, exert a sanctifying influence on the heart. This is the main purpose of their revelation. But how do they accomplish this object? By being obeyed. 3. Truth is only the wire along which the electric current flows from the spirit of God to the spirit of man, only the vehicle to convey holy influences direct from the Holy Ghost to the human soul, which influences set up a spiritual ferment within, making the impurities rise like scum to the surface, finally to be cast off altogether. What, then, is the result of this refining, purifying process? "Unfeigned love of the brethren." A new word has been ostentatiously introduced into recent literature, namely, "altruism." What is its meaning? That man should think more and care more for others than for himself, that he should be ready to sacrifice himself, if need be, for the sake of others. This idea is couched in more intelligible, because simpler, language in the text. II. UNFEIGNEDNESS. "Unfeigned love of the

brethren"—genuine love, without dissimulation, free from hypocrisy. 1. We read of "faith unfeigned," that is to say, faith which is firm and solid to the core. Faith is oftentimes hollow, simulated. "Faith unfeigned"—faith that will move forward through all the miry bogs of infidelity, that will brave the storm and stress of life.

2. "Love unfeigned"—what then is this? Love which will not give way under trial, that will suffer a burden to be put on its back.

III. FERVOUR. 1. This implies that our love of the brethren should be powerful enough to overcome all sinful obstacles in our own nature, to burn up all the relics of selfishness in our own souls, so that we may find our supreme delight in serviceableness to our fellow-men.

2. It is further implied that our love should be so intense as to overcome all national and sectarian differences. "Love one another fervently," of whatever nation you may chance to be. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) *Fervent love of the brethren*:—I. THE WORK ACCOMPLISHED. "See ye have purified your souls." There is the beginning of all. Many men are disposed to work from without, and not from within; but the Spirit works from within. Men think that if they whitewash the sepulchre it is enough. No, it must be cleansed. See to it then, and "keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" and death. II. THE INSTRUMENT OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT. "Ye obey the truth." God works by instruments in the order of His providential creation and government. God has appointed, in order to the purifying of men's souls, a divinely-constituted means. We have the word of truth, the incorruptible seed of which His people are born again. III. ONE SPECIAL RESULT OF THIS WORK. "Unfeigned love of the brethren." (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *Fervently*:—The word thus translated means extended, or on the stretch. It conveys the idea of a constant tension such as is supplied in machinery by a steel spring. In one department of a sewing machine all depends on the thread being kept constantly tight, so that the moment any slackness occurs, the loose portion is picked up instantly and without fail. If that operation were left dependent on the watchfulness and quickness of a human operator, it would entirely fail. The worker would grow weary, would forget, would hasten to tighten the thread after the time was past, and all would go to wreck and ruin. But by entrusting the watch and the work to a bent elastic steel wire, an absolute infallibility is secured. The watcher never forgets, the worker never wearies. The work is done perfectly, and always done at the right moment. The spring is always on the stretch, and never misses. Though it is obliged to watch the slackening, and pull the thread instantly tight, a hundred times a minute, all day long for twenty years, it never once forgets or fails. The precept requires a love of this sort—watching and working in a Christian's heart. If you need to remember your duty every time that a sudden injury occurs, you will not be in time with the soft answer that turns away wrath. Before love has gathered itself up, and determined on its course, the opportunity will be past. The disciple of Christ will appear as irascible, passionate, and revengeful as other men. There must be a spring—a law of love set once for all as a faculty of the new heart, that will operate instantaneously and uniformly. (*W. Arnot.*) **Being born again.**—*Regeneration*:—I. THE NATURE OF REGENERATION. 1. A change of qualities or dispositions: not a change of the substance of the soul. 2. A supernatural change (John iii. v). 3. A change into the likeness of God (2 Cor. iii. 18). 4. A universal change (2 Cor. v. 17). 5. A lasting change. (1) The mind is savingly enlightened. In the knowledge of God, sin, self, Jesus Christ, vanity of world (Psa. cxix. 96). Spiritual things (1 John ii. 20). (2) The will is renewed (Ezek. xxxvi. 26). Cured of its utter inability to will what is good. Imbued with a fixed aversion to evil (Gal. v. 17). Endowed with an inclination and propensity to good. (3) The affections are rectified and regulated. (4) The conscience is renewed. (5) As the memory wanted not its share of depravity, it is also bettered by regenerating grace. It is strengthened for spiritual things. (6) There is a change made on the body, and the members thereof, in respect of their use; they are consecrated to the Lord (1 Cor. vi. 13; Rom. vi. 13), "servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom. vi. 19). (7) This gracious change shines forth in the conversation. A new heart makes newness of life. II. WHY THIS CHANGE IS CALLED REGENERATION, a being born again. It is so called, because of the resemblance between natural and spiritual generation, which lies in the following particulars. 1. Natural generation is a mysterious thing: and so is spiritual generation (John iii. 8). 2. In both, the creature comes to a being it had not before. 3. As the child is passive in generation, so is the child of God in regeneration. 4. There is a wonderful contexture of pasts in both births. Oh the wonderful contexture of

graces in the new creature! 5. All this, in both cases, has its rise from that which is in itself very small and inconsiderable. 6. Natural generation is carried on by degrees. 7. In both there are new relations. The regenerate may call God Father; for they are His children (John i. 12, 13), "begotten of Him" (chap. i. 3). They are related, as brethren, to angels and glorified saints; "the family of heaven." 8. There is a likeness between the parent and the child (2 Pet. i. 4). 9. As there is no birth without pain, so there is great pain in bringing forth the new creature. The soul has sore pains when under conviction and humiliation. (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

The new life:—1. Unlike man's mortal life, this new moral life is independent of the earth. The productions of the earth cannot support it; the blasts and the storms of the earth cannot destroy it. 2. Unlike man's mortal life, this new moral life is ever progressive. Like the trees of the forest and the beasts of the field, man's mortal life reaches a culminating point and then dies out. Not so with this new moral life. 3. Unlike man's mortal life, this new moral life is essentially a blessing. Man's mortal life may become, and often is, a curse. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Born again:—A man shall never have occasion to curse the day of his new birth. (*J. Trapp.*)

A new creature:—In passing from nature to grace you did not pass from a lower to a higher stage of the same condition—from daybreak to sunshine, but from darkest night to dawn of day. Unlike the worm which changes into a winged insect, or the infant who grows up into a stately man, you became, not a more perfect, but a "new creature" in Jesus Christ. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*)

Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.—*The incorruptible seed*:—I. CHRISTIANITY MUST SATISFY THE INTELLECTUAL REQUIREMENTS OF EVERY AGE. 1. In order to this, Christianity in its statements, historical and doctrinal, must be in perfect accord with the demonstrations of science in the various departments of knowledge to which it devotes itself. 2. To be perpetuated as the religion of the race, Christianity must not only harmonise with the conclusions of the intellect in other provinces, but must continue to offer new problems of its own. The moment the Bible will be an understood book, it will be a moribund book. And what it proves itself to be to individual man in innumerable cases, that it claims to be to man universal. Let the ages be yet cultivated with greater diligence and trained to a higher point in knowledge than anything we have so far witnessed, and the Gospel has its questions for them, problems which will utterly baffle the finest cultured minds. This assuredly is one element which contributes powerfully to its perpetuity, that the intellect can never master it. 3. But in a religion which claims perpetuity you would further expect it would stimulate the understanding into greater activity, and infuse new life into all its pursuits. That is to say, it must become the prime factor in the history of the world. Christianity does exercise restraint, not upon progress but upon retrogression; not upon truth but upon sin; not upon the intellect but upon the spirit which is now working in the children of disobedience. It checks the spirit of the nineteenth century, it spurs its science. II. IF CHRISTIANITY IS TO LIVE FOR EVER, IT MUST MEET THE MORAL REQUIREMENTS OF EVERY AGE. 1. This implies that it must accord with the distinct dictates of our moral nature. 2. Another requisite, in order to its perpetuation, is that it be in advance of the moral performances of any particular age. 3. Christianity, to endure for ever, must enter into the morals of the world as a refining element. War—ferocity—butchery—is that your civilisation? demand our opponents. We answer, Certainly not; that is barbarism. That is not Christianity, but its opposite, and a cogent reason why Christianity should not be thrown aside till they at least have been exterminated. III. IF THE GOSPEL IS TO ENDURE TO THE END OF TIME, IT MUST CONTINUE TO MEET THE SPIRITUAL WANTS OF MAN. If it do not this it is inevitably doomed to extinction. 1. As a sinner, man needs a Saviour. The sinner finds true inward rest in the atonement of the Gospel, the sense of guilt is cancelled. 2. As a creature he needs God. Cast a glance over the history of the world; everywhere the great want is God. What then can give us God? Science does not profess to be able to give Him. Professor Huxley says that the state of mind becoming men of science on this subject is a sort of know-nothingarianism or Agnosticism. Well then, if science cannot do it, is there any religion besides Christianity that can? Mahometanism declares the unity and supremacy of God. But to say that God is, and that He is the supreme Ruler, is one thing; to bring Him to the conscious enjoyment of the soul quite another. The religion of India strives to bridge the gap; but instead of communion between man and God, it ends in the absorption of man in God. But however much we desire communion, we quite as much dread absorption. These meet only a fragment of

our nature. But Christianity meets the whole man; it presents God to our contemplation in Him in whom "all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily," and to our consciousness by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. As long as man is a sinner needing a Saviour, and a creature needing a God, Christianity will live in the grateful affection of myriads of our race. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

Vers. 24, 25. **All flesh is as grass.**—*Change and continuance* :—"What is wanting here?" said a courtier to an illustrious prince, as they stood together, the spectators of a most splendid triumph in the city of Rome. To him who spake, there appeared to be nothing wanting. The gaiety and splendour of the spectacle were in his sight complete. The supreme power represented by the entire body of the senate was there. The spoils taken from the enemy, filling many carriages and piled upon movable platforms, were there. The ministers of justice, clad in official costume, and bearing the insignia of their office, were there. And there was the victorious general, attired in the triumphalia and crowned with laurels. "What is wanting here?" "What," answered the prince, as he watched the procession pass along, and in passing pass away, "What is wanting? This is wanting, continuance." The procession would pass along the appointed route, and then all would be dispersed, and the triumph would be a thing of the past. All thoughtful men feel seriously, if not sorrowfully, the changeful character of all the things which we see and handle on this earth. Where is continuance upon this planet? God has established the earth, and it abideth, but what beside abideth? Yea, even the earth is doomed to be burned up; and while it abides, great changes are continually occurring, even in the crust of the earth, and in the waters which fill its hollow places. And where continuance would be most valued, and where one should have expected it, even there it is not. The difference between poor men and rich men, famous men and men without renown, is just the difference between grass and the flower of grass; but as both grass and the flower of grass wither, so it is appointed unto all men once to die. There are things, however, which continue, good and precious things with which men have to do, and one of these things is mentioned in our text. Let us examine it. Words are lasting things. The breath which inspires them perishes, the lips which form them return to dust, the instruments which inscribe them are destructible, but words spoken and heard, written and read, have a boundless life and an immeasurable power. A good word may continue to enlighten, to invigorate for ever and for ever. All this is true of the words of man, but still more enduring in all their effects and influences are the words of the Lord. Many words has God spoken to us men. Among these words of God there is one communication which, on account of its singularity and importance, is called "the Word of the Lord," and which, by reason of its pleasantness and graciousness, is called "the gospel." Now, the Word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you. It lives in God's mind; it lives, in fact, as a thing done and a provision completed; and it lives in the life of those who have been born again. 1. The nature of God, as revealed to us in the Scriptures, is the nature from which a gospel might be expected. 2. The gospel, so far as we appreciate it, and so far as we understand the thirsts and wants of human nature, is an all-sufficient gospel for man. 3. A gospel less than the gospel of the grace of God must have left some thirst unslaked, or some necessity unmet, or some wound unhealed, or some tears unwiped away; and while those tears were falling, that wound smarting, that want craving, that thirst burning, there could not have been the experience and enjoyment of complete salvation. 4. A gospel more real and substantial, or more worthy of the world's acceptance, could not have issued even from God. 5. And this gospel is abiding, because it is the incorruptible seed of life everlasting. The old spiritual nature is impregnated with the seed of a new man, a Divine seed and incorruptible, the seed of the truth of the gospel; and the man who has thus received the gospel enters upon a new and eternal life. The gospel now lives in a living mind, and in a living heart, and in a living character; it repeats itself in the believer; and as the character and mission of Jesus Christ may be learned from the written life of Christ, so the gospel may be learned from the spiritual life of him who believes it. Let us now indicate the practical bearing of this doctrine. 1. The text magnifies the gospel. Let us be devoutly careful to preserve its gloriousness in our own eyes. And in order to do this we must reverence the gospel. 2. The text shows that the gospel is intended to be to us personally, and thereby furnishes us with a test of our religious state. The gospel is intended to be the germ of a Godlike life within us, and if it fail of

this, it fails of its chief effect. 3. The text points out that in which is continuance; let us take care to handle perishable things as perishable, and to demean ourselves toward the gospel as everlasting. 4. The text suggests the strongest motives for the immediate and universal preaching of the gospel. Flesh is as grass. The man whose days are as grass is dying daily. And it is only here, while he is breathing out his brief life, that his nature can be impregnated with this incorruptible seed. 5. The text encourages us to sustain, and in all respects to provide for, the continuous preaching of the gospel. One after another the preachers of the gospel enter that valley, and are seen no more. But what do they leave behind? The sanctuaries in which they ministered? Yes; but something more. The flocks they tended? Pleasant memories? Yes; but much more. They leave that gospel, written not on tablets of stone, but upon the fleshy tablets of the heart; they leave that gospel more than written—they leave it in many hearts, a seed with a germ of Godlike and eternal life in it; they leave it as a new man, in many who have been born again by it as by incorruptible seed; they leave it in the rich experiences and holy activities of the new man; they leave it in a state imperishable, and they may leave it without anxiety. (*S. Martin.*) *Autumn: Life's contrast*:—The form of thought here used illustrates a common principle in the operation of the human mind—that principle of contrast by which one thing suggests its opposite. Life is made up of contrasts. The secret of this influence of contrast lies in man's twofold nature, allied on the one side to the frail and perishing, on the other to the stable and enduring; one hand grasping dust and ashes, the other seizing upon the very throne of God; the outward eye seeing only what fades and passes away, the inward eye beholding glories which nothing can destroy or dim. There is something beyond the reach of change and decay and mortality—God's truth, as it has been revealed to man; God's promise, which by His Son He has made—this cannot fail. It will outlast all the forms of outward life, and all the splendours of nature; and, though heaven and earth pass away, it shall not pass away. The connection of the text makes it more emphatic. The apostle had been speaking of Christ's resurrection, and of the faith and hope which this fact excites; and he alludes to the wasting away of all material things, so as to fix attention more joyfully on the soul's undying nature. He leaps from the vessel that is sinking with all earth's treasure in the sea of time, to the firm shore of immortality. Let the grass then wither, and the glory of man fade away. God willing, we would not have the present scene to be our permanent dwelling. The transient and the abiding in the nature and experience of man—this is, indeed, a contrast which it well becomes us to consider. The great mistake that human beings make is in regarding perishable things as though they were imperishable, and so fastening on them the feelings and expectations which belong only to the imperishable. Christianity does not forbid us to have any regard for what is perishable and passing away. Jesus Christ brought no ascetic religion into the world. He does not bid us dig a cave, and hide ourselves from all that is bright and gladsome around us, fleeting though it be. But what He and His apostles insist on is, that we shall graduate and proportion our interest in all things according to their worth. To put in its right light the contrast, I would bring out, suppose some inhabitant of that upper world—as it is thought departed spirits may—to lift the curtain, and look in upon these scenes in which we mingle. To one whose eye looks from his high station, how small and obscure this lower world, the dim, narrow entrance-way to the more glorious mansions of the Father's house! He knows that authentic tidings of the great region He dwells in, have reached the ears of that crowd of mortals who move along through this entry of the spiritual world. As the sickly generations of creatures advance, the angel-spectator scans the occupations in which they engage. What a thrill of amazement shoots through his breast to observe such multitudes living as though these narrow earthly steps to the great temple beyond were themselves the whole universe, studiously averting their eyes from the gate that leads to the immense splendours of the inner sanctuary. One is wholly absorbed in giving free scope to sense and appetite and superficial fancy. Another seems taken up entirely with swelling his pile of gold. He bends steadily down over it, and, as he stoops, gives up the lustre of heaven for its glitter. But yet another sight that angelic witness as surely beholds, and oh, there is not a pleasanter sight beneath the sun than that of a rich man for this world and for the world to come; yea, of a man who rejoices more than an old alchemist over the supposed discovery of the philosopher's stone, at the opportunity to transmute his temporary into everlasting treasure. Here surely the principle is illustrated

aright in a contrast just and holy. This, then, without further illustration, is the lesson of our text. Be not deceived in your estimate. Distinguish the things that differ. Observe the contrasts that God has established. Is the New Testament true? Shall these great scenes of judgment and doom, according to the deeds of the flesh, be soon ushered in? Make not, then, the enormous miscalculation of leaving so vast an element out of your account. Even in this life, the contrast between things earthly and things heavenly sometimes demonstrates itself in striking results. The distinct consequences of diverse characters are especially marked, as men advance in life towards old age; and the rewards and retributions already bestowed seem to anticipate the judgment-day. As I walked through the lanes of yonder growing forest, on our beautiful common, the dry leaves crushing under my feet, and the sinking sun taking his last look at the bare boughs of the trees, I met a man on whom the blow of grief had descended as sorely as upon any, and with oft-repeated stroke. A new sorrow had just fallen on his grey head and long-diseased, emaciated frame. He spoke of faith. He spoke of loyalty to God and duty. He spoke of heaven as though it were near. He said nothing of being hardly dealt with, nor hinted aught about not understanding why he should be selected for such trials, but seemed to think there was nothing but God's mercy and kindness in the world. But he seemed to me, as I looked upon him, to have an inward stay that would hold him up when all earthly props had fallen to the ground. For once, the contrast between earth and heaven was revealed to my mind; and the dissolving emblems of mortality under my feet, and the cold, shifting mists over my head, were transformed from sad tokens into symbols of hope and joy. (*C. A. Bartol.*)

The death of a servant of God.—Two doctrines naturally arise from this text—I. THAT MAN AND HIS GLORY ARE FADING AND WITHERING. All flesh is grass. 1. It is weak, and low, and little as grass. Mankind is indeed numerous as the grass of the field, multiplies, replenishes, and covereth the earth; but like grass, it is of the earth, earthy, mean, and of small account. Alas, the kingdoms of men which make so great a noise, so great a figure, in this lower world, are but as so many fields of grass compared with the bright and glorious constellations of stars, made up of the holy and blessed inhabitants of the upper regions. Proud men think themselves like the strong and stately cedars, oaks, or pines, but they soon find themselves as the grass of the field, liable to be nipped with every frost, trampled on by every foot, continually insulted by common calamities. 2. It is withering, and fading, and dying as grass; having both its rise and maintenance out of the earth, it hastens to the earth, and retires to its root and foundation in the dust. In the morning, perhaps, it is green and growing up, its aspect pleasing, its prospect promising; but when we come to look upon it in our evening work we find it cut down and withered. If it be not cut down by disease or disaster, it will soon wither of itself; it has in it the principles of its own corruption. Is all flesh grass? All, without exception of the noble or the fair, the young or the strong, the well-born or well-built, the well-fed or well-bred? Is all grass, weak and withering? (1) Then let us see ourselves to be grass, and humble and deny ourselves. Is the body grass? Then be not proud, be not presumptuous, be not confident of a long continuance here; forget not that the foot may crush thee. Grass falls; let me not be such a fool as to lay up my treasure in it. Is the body grass? Then let us not indulge it too much, nor bestow too much time and care and pains about it, as many do, to the neglect of the better and immortal part. After all, we cannot keep it from withering, when its day shall come to fall. (2) Let us see others also to be as grass, and cease from man, because he is no more than thus to be accounted of. We are now to consider, not common men, but men of distinction, and to see them withering and falling. 3. Let us inquire, What is the glory of man in this world? There is indeed a glory of man which is counterfeit, and mistaken for glory. Solomon says, "For men to search their own glory is not glory" (Prov. xxv. 27). The glory men commonly pursue and search for is no glory at all. Is beauty and comeliness of body the glory of man? So they pass with some who judge by the sight of the eye; but at the best they are only the goodliness of grass; they are a flower which death will certainly cut down; or the end of time will change the countenance; either wrinkled age, or pale death. We should therefore make sure the beauty of grace, the hidden man of the heart, which neither age nor death will sully. Is wealth the glory of man? Laban's sons thought so when they said concerning Jacob, Of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory (Gen. xxxi. 1). But this also is a fading flower. Is pomp and grandeur the glory of a man? That also withers away.

Great names and titles of honour are written in the dust. Give me leave to show you some instances of the glory of a man. (1) Is a large capacity of mind the glory of a man? (2) Is learning to be reckoned the glory of a man? (3) Is tenderness and humility, modesty and sweetness of temper, the glory of a man? (4) Is the faithful discharge of the ministry of the gospel the glory of a man? (5) Is great usefulness the glory of a man, and a delight in doing good? Well, here is the glory of man: let us be ambitious of this glory, and not of vain-glory. See true honour in the paths of wisdom and virtue, and seek it there. This is honour that comes from God, and is in His sight of great price. 4. Having seen this flower flourishing, we are now to see it withering. As to himself, this glory is not lost, is not stained, by death; it is not like worldly honour, laid in the dust, and buried in the grave; no, this flower is transplanted from the garden on earth to the paradise in heaven, where it shall never fade. The works of good men follow them, but they forsake us, and we are deprived of the benefit of them. II. Though man and glory are fading and withering, YET GOD AND HIS WORD ARE EVERLIVING AND EVERLASTING. The glory of the law was done away, but that of the gospel remains. The glory of ministers falls away, but not the glory of the Word they are ministers of. The prophets, indeed, do not live for ever, but the words which God commanded them did, and will take hold, as words quick and powerful. 1. There is in the Word of the Lord an everlasting rule of faith and practice for us to be ruled by. (1) It is our comfort that Christianity shall not die with our ministers, nor that light be buried in their graves. (2) It is our duty not to let our Christianity die with our ministers, but let the word of Christ contained in the Scriptures still dwell in us richly. 2. There is in the Word of the Lord an everlasting fountain of comfort and consolation for us to be refreshed and encouraged by, and to draw water from with joy, and an everlasting foundation on which to build our hopes. (*Matthew Henry.*) *Man compared to grass*:—We are like “grass.” 1. We are like grass in our relation to the earth. 2. We are like grass in the frailty of our nature. 3. We are like grass in the uncertainty of our lives. The blade dies in all seasons. 4. We are like grass in the unnoticeableness of our dissolution. Blade after blade withers and dies, and the landscape appears as ever. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The fleeting and the durable*:—I. THE TRANSITORY NATURE OF ALL THE THINGS WHICH APPERTAIN TO THIS OUR EARTHLY STATE. “All flesh is grass,” &c. 1. How affectingly is this sentiment verified in the personal endowments of man, beauty and strength! Survey that animal structure, once so lovely, when it is wrinkled by the hand of time; when it is withered by the action of disease; when it is blasted by the stroke of death. Survey these melancholy changes which await the sons and daughters of Adam, and you will feel the propriety of the sentiment in the text. 2. The wisdom of man, no less than his beauty and strength, serves as an example of the sentiment in the text. In the present age we are accustomed to denounce the systems of former generations as fanciful or crude, and to smile when we hear them dignified by the names of philosophy and science; boasting at the same time that the perfection of philosophy and the arts have been reserved for our own age. Alas! for us, generations will arise that will look back on the nineteenth century, and in their turn laugh at the rudeness of our inventions, the infancy of our science, and the blunders of our philosophy. The fact is, that all knowledge merely human is destined to pass away (1 Cor. xiii. 8). 3. We may also adduce as an example of the truth in the text the passing away of all those things which constitute the elegancies and decorations of civilised life; all that is designed to gratify the taste and imagination. Whatever the pencil of the painter has portrayed; whatever the chisel of the sculptor has wrought out; whatever the skill of the architect has raised; whatever the imagination has devised of rare and ornamental in furniture, dress, or manners—all must serve in its turn to show that the goodliness of man is as the flower of the field. 4. I must not omit to bring forward riches as furnishing a verification equally strong of the sentiment of the text. 5. These remarks apply with equal propriety to that idol of many hearts—fame. The historian’s pen, the poet’s muse, the tablet of marble and brass, all the means which have been employed to perpetuate a name, have only served as a comment on the text. 6. Power and dominion, desired by some and envied by others as the most abiding of human things, are only exemplifications on a larger scale of the truth affirmed in the text. Empires rise and fall; sceptres change hands, thrones are overturned, and one dynasty succeeds another. 7. One other illustration of the affecting sentiment of the text yet remains. The great globe itself, the habitation of fallen man, is destined to pass away! II. THE DURABILITY

OF THAT DISPENSATION OF TRUTH WITH WHICH JEHOVAH HAS BLESSED THE WORLD. By the Word of our God I understand Messiah's dispensation, the gospel of the Son of God, with all the fulness of its grace and truth. 1. It is proved that this Word of our God shall stand for ever, in spite of all that can be effected to the contrary by persecution. Evangelical truth has outlived the memory of her once mighty foes; has overturned the monuments reared to commemorate her own destruction; and, clothed in celestial radiance and power, has gone on from conquering to conquer! 2. The course of events has shown that the Word of our God shall stand for ever, notwithstanding the hostility of infidel men. The religion of Christ Jesus may be compared to an exceeding strong citadel, erected on the summit of an everlasting rock. They alone tremble for its security who are ignorant of its impregnable strength. 3. As a confirmation of the position in the text, that the Word of our God shall stand for ever, we may with holy exultation advert to that spread of the Christian religion which has taken place in our day. 4. I may mention as a further proof that the Word of our God shall stand for ever, that holy energy with which it is still accompanied. (*J. Bromley.*) *The withering work of the Spirit* (with Isa. xl. 6-8):—In every one of us it must be fulfilled that all that is of the flesh in us, seeing it is but as grass, must be withered, and the comeliness thereof must be destroyed. The Spirit of God, like the wind, must pass over the field of our souls, and cause our beauty to be as a fading flower. There must be brought home to us the sentence of death upon our former legal and carnal life, that the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, implanted by the Holy Ghost, may be in us, and abide in us for ever. The subject is the withering work of the Spirit upon the souls of men. I. Turning then to THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN CAUSING THE GOODLINESS OF THE FLESH TO FADE, let us, first, observe that the work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of man in withering up that which is of the flesh, is very unexpected. You will observe that even the speaker himself, though doubtless one taught of God, when he was bidden to cry, said, "What shall I cry?" Even he did not know that in order to the comforting of God's people, there must first be experienced a preliminary visitation. Many preachers of God's gospel have forgotten that the law is the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. It cannot be that God should cleanse thee until He has made thee see somewhat of thy defilement; for thou wouldst never value the precious blood if thou hadst not first of all been made to mourn that thou art altogether an unclean thing. The convincing work of the Spirit, wherever it comes, is unexpected, and even to the child of God in whom this process has still to go on, it is often startling. We begin again to build that which the Spirit of God had destroyed. Having begun in the Spirit, we act as if we would be made perfect in the flesh; and then when our mistaken up-building has to be levelled with the earth, we are almost as astonished as we were when first the scales fell from our eyes. The voice which saith, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people," achieves its purpose by first making them hear the cry, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." 2. Furthermore, this withering is after the usual order of the Divine operation. If we consider well the way of God we shall not be astonished that He beginneth with His people by terrible things in righteousness. Observe the method of creation. What was there in the beginning? Originally nothing. "The earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." There was no trace of another's plan to interfere with the great architect. So it is in the new creation. When the Lord new creates us, He borrows nothing from the old man, but makes all things new. He does not repair and add a new wing to the old house of our depraved nature, but He builds a new temple for His own praise. 3. I would have you notice that we are taught in our text how universal this process is in its range over the hearts of all those upon whom the Spirit works. "All flesh is grass; and all the goodliness thereof"—the very choice and pick of it—"is as the flower of the field," and what happens to the grass? Does any of it live? "The grass withereth," all of it. The flower, will not that abide? So fair a thing, has not that an immortality? No, it utterly falls away. So wherever the Spirit of God breathes on the soul of man, there is a withering of everything that is of the flesh, and it is seen that to be carnally minded is death. If the work in us be not the Spirit's working, but our own, it will droop and die when most we require its protection. 4. You see, then, the universality of this withering work within us, but notice the completeness of it. The grass, what does it do? Droop? nay, wither. The flower of the field: what of what? Does it hang its head a little? No, according to Isaiah it fades; and according to Peter it falleth away. There is

no reviving it with showers, it has come to its end. Even thus are the awakened led to see that in their flesh there dwelleth no good thing. 5. Let us further notice that all this withering work in the soul is very painful. As you read these verses do they not strike you as having a very funereal tone? This is mournful work, but it must be done. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled. It was a great mercy for our city of London that the great fire cleared away all the old buildings which were the lair of the plague, a far healthier city was then built; and it is a great mercy for a man when God sweeps right away all his own righteousness and strength, when He makes him feel that he is nothing and can be nothing, and drives him to confess that Christ must be all in all, and that his only strength lies in the eternal might of the ever-blessed Spirit. 6. Observe that although this is painful it is inevitable. Why does the grass wither? Because it is a withering thing. "Its root is ever in its grave, and it must die." How could it spring out of the earth and be immortal? The seeds of corruption are in all the fruits of manhood's tree; let them be as fair to look upon as Eden's clusters, they must decay. Moreover, it would never do that there should be something of the flesh in our salvation and something of the Spirit; for if it were so there would be a division of the honour. It gives me great joy when I hear that you unconverted ones are very miserable, for the miseries which the Holy Spirit works are always the prelude to happiness. 7. It is the Spirit's work to wither. Better to be broken in pieces by the Spirit of God than to be made whole by the flesh! What doth the Lord say? "I kill." But what next? "I make alive." He never makes any alive but those He kills. He never heals those whom He has not wounded. II. Now, concerning THE IMPLANTATION. According to Peter, although the flesh withers, and the flower thereof falls away, yet in the children of God there is an unwithering something of another kind. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed," &c. "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever," &c. Now, the gospel is of use to us because it is not of human origin. If it were of the flesh, all it could do for us would not land us beyond the flesh; but the gospel of Jesus Christ is super-human, Divine, and spiritual. In its conception it was of God; its great gift, even the Saviour, is a Divine gift; and all its teachings are full of deity. Now this is the incorruptible Word, that "God was made flesh and dwelt among us"; that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the incorruptible Word, that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Do you receive it? Then the Holy Spirit implants it in your soul. Do you leap up to it, and say, "I believe it"? Then you possess the living seed within your soul. And what is the result of it? Why, then there comes, according to the text, a new life into us, as the result of the indwelling of the living Word, and our being born again by it. Now observe wherever this new life comes through the Word, it is incorruptible, it lives and abides for ever. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Man and his glory—the grass and its flower*:—These verses institute a comparison and bring out a contrast between the natural life and the spiritual. Every son of man is born into one life, and every son of God is born again into another. There is a mystery in every man, but a greater mystery in every Christian. Nature is deep, but grace is deeper. The two lives brought into contrast here are the natural life of man in the body which soon fades away, and the new life of the regenerated which will for ever flourish. These two lives are not in all their aspects opposite, for the same person may at the same time possess both. He holds them, however, by different tenures: the first or natural life will soon depart, but the new or spiritual life will be his for ever. The analogy employed is exact and full and beautiful—"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." Man is like the grass, and his glory like its flower. Life is short, and the period of its perfect development is shorter still. The history of a man consists of a gradual growing to maturity, and a gradual declining to the grave. Such is his best estate, when no accident cuts him off in mid-time of his days. But if this is true of the flesh—the sensitive nature which man has in common with the brutes—what shall be said of all his distinguishing features as a moral and intelligent being? Although the mere flesh is evanescent, what of the glory wherewith his Maker has crowned his head? The text has two things to say of this glory—the first, that it greatly excels in worth and beauty the animal structure on which it grows; the second, that it is still more short-lived. If all flesh be as grass, all its glory is only as the flower of grass. The flower is indeed the glory of the grass, but it comes up later and withers earlier. What shall we say, then, of all that is peculiar to man—of all that distinguishes him from the beasts of the field—of that human face divine,

and that articulate speech, and that calculating mind, which mark him off as chief of God's creatures here and ruler of His world? Can the glory of man be compared to the herbage as well as his sentient nature? No; for though it is more brilliant while it lasts, it is sooner over. Beauty of form is one of the distinguishing glories of humanity. It has pleased God our Father so to arrange the features of our frame, and so to constitute our minds, that we count them comely. We admire the flower of the herbage, and devoutly see in it the Creator's wisdom. Shall we not look with deeper interest on a lighted human countenance, and see in that glory of man a glory to the Lord? This glory does not last long; it is a flower—fragrant, attractive; but it withers soon. The flower is later blown and earlier faded than the frail green stem that bears it. But the beauty of the new creature in Christ does not fade like a flower. It is an interesting speculation—although it can be nothing more—to imagine the beauty of man unfallen. The peculiar sweetness sometimes imparted to the countenance of an ordinary person by the sudden influx of a "great peace" in periods of spiritual revival suggests the probability that we lost by sin an external loveliness so great that we lack now the power of conceiving fully what it was. But, great though the loss be, Christians sorrow not over it as those who have no hope; for their gain is greater. Where sin abounded to mar, grace will much more abound to renew. Whatever is lost by sin is more than restored by redemption. The risen Christ is glorious, and risen Christians will be like Him. Humanity redeemed will be humanity perfect. I would fain realise the beauty of the resurrection body, as well as the spiritual purity of the saints in light.

(*W. Arnot.*) **The Word of the Lord endureth for ever.**—*The living and enduring Word*:—On what grounds does the apostle assign to the gospel exclusively this high character, that it endureth for ever? **I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH THE GOSPEL REVEALS FOR JUSTIFYING THE UNGODLY IS EVERLASTING.** Mankind are guilty before God; and what blessing is so necessary as justification? Of what avail are rank, power, wealth, learning, and even Church privileges, of which so many boast, for acceptance with God? What, then, is the glory of the self-justiciary? It is fading and transient as the flowers of the field. And what presumption in sinful mortal man to hold up any of these things, or all of them put together, if that were in his power, as his righteousness, in direct opposition to the declared will of his Creator and Lord. Is the God who made him to be dictated to by him? No. That Word, fixing the mode of acceptance, endureth for ever, while the glory which man opposes to it shall wither, and leave its worshippers covered with confusion. The certainty and the perfect reasonableness of this result must impress us more deeply if we consider the character of the righteousness which the Word of the Lord reveals and establishes. It is absolutely perfect, for it includes obedience to both the precept and the penalty of the law of God; it is divinely excellent, for it was performed by the Son of God, who condescended to assume our frail nature that He might perform it; it is the most glorious production of Divine wisdom and love: it hath magnified the law and made it honourable; it hath thus propitiated God and abolished death.

II. THE VITAL PRINCIPLE WHICH THE WORD OF GOD INSPIRES IS IMPERISHABLE. The only life which we derive from Adam is feeble, terrestrial, mortal. Its activities, aims, and enjoyments correspond to its nature and origin. They all centre in things worldly and perishing. The gospel is "the ministration of life." The Lord Jesus conveys by it the influences of His quickening Spirit into the soul that was alienated from God and absorbed in earth, and produces in it the new creature, even faith working by love. The truth which the Word testifies concerning Christ being thus known and believed becomes the principle of a new life, the activities of which appear in the outgoings of the soul towards Him in trust, hope, love, gratitude, submission. By the illuminations of His Word Christ lives in that soul, and exerts a mighty power over all its faculties—a power which inspires it with His own views, spirit, and aims. Actuated by the vital principles which His words create—for His words are spirit and life—the mind connects all things with Christ and with God, converts them into means of instruction, into motives to love and obedience, into materials for praise. It regards its most common mercies as the fruits of Divine bounty, the expressions of the Divine goodness and care. It submits to privations and afflictions, and endures them as the salutary discipline of a wise father; and the most ordinary occurrences it contemplates as the dispensations of Him who makes "all things work together for good" to them that love Him. The relations, then, and pleasures, and pains, and intercourse, and pursuits, and occurrences which are peculiar to the present transient state, and which are so insignificant in themselves, because the

state to which they belong is so fluctuating and evanescent, rise into dignity and importance, from the influence which the Divine Word exerts on the mind in which it lives, and become the means at once of present fellowship with God and of training up an immortal spirit for a holy and blessed eternity. Now this vital principle, so excellent in itself, is imperishable. In the present state, indeed, its power is small, its activities are feeble and irregular, and, of course, its influence is very limited. But let us recollect that it is only very lately since it came into being, and that it exists in the midst of much which is most hostile to it, and which continually opposes its growth. It shall exist, and notwithstanding the bleakness of the soil in which it is planted, and the noxious exhalations which rise around it and the storms which assail it, shall wax stronger and stronger; for the seed is the Word of the Lord which liveth and abideth for ever. III. THE HONOUR TO WHICH THE GOSPEL RAISES BELIEVERS, AND THE BEAUTIES WITH WHICH IT ADORNS THEM, ARE UNFADING. It dignifies them with intimate relations to Christ, introduces them into God's favour, exalts them to be His sons, gives them access with confidence to His gracious presence, a claim on His protection and care, and makes them kings and priests unto God. And these are not only enduring, but ever-increasing honours; at least their transcendent excellence and glory shine with increasing lustre, and the longer and the more fully they are enjoyed they are the more highly valued, and their power to ennoble and to bless is more abundantly experienced and more humbly and gratefully acknowledged. They are enduring, for the lovingkindness of God, which is the sum of them all, is immutable, and the charter which conveys them is irrevocable, for it is confirmed by the blood of Christ and the oath of God. IV. EVERY HOPE WHICH IS FOUNDED ON THIS WORD SHALL BE MORE THAN FULFILLED. What blessed hopes does it authorise and encourage the believer to cherish!—the hope that God will never fail him nor forsake him, that the Divine Spirit shall be his guide and comforter, that his heavenly Advocate shall secure to him mercy and grace in every time of need, that the Lord will perfect that which concerneth him. Oh! are not these glorious hopes, not only worthy of intellectual and immortal beings, but hopes which ennoble and purify and bless them! Can the greatest and best portion of worldly good which human heart ever ventured to anticipate bear comparison with them for a single moment? And that hope rests on a sure foundation. It is built on the living and imperishable Word of Him who is eternal and almighty, whose name is Faithful and True, and sooner shall heaven and earth pass than one iota or tittle of His Word remain unfulfilled. (*Jas. Stark, D.D.*) *The Word of God a living thing*:—I. THE WORD OF GOD IS THE SEED OF LIFE. It is a principle having life and energy, which sown in man's heart grows there, expands, and bears fruit to such an extent that the whole man is transformed into a new creature, and henceforth lives to God. It is not so often a broad outline of Christian truth that strikes its root into the conscience as some word or two; some thought; some blessed promise, such as 1 John i. 7; some touching invitation, like Matt. xi. 28; some alarming note of warning, as Luke xiii. 3; some fearful description, as 1 Tim. v. 6. In the private history of almost every one amongst us who has dared to confess Christ there has been, previous to that step, a time of reading and of praying over the Word of God. Schoolboys in their private rooms, trembling, it may be, at their fellows' laugh, clerks in their intervals of business, a wife in her husband's absence at his daily work, soldiers and sailors, have placed the Bible on their tables, read, prayed, applied the Word, made it their own, and so been "born again of this incorruptible seed," &c. II. THE WORD OF GOD LIVETH AND ABIDETH FOR EVER; and if we need to receive it into our hearts as the seed of life, so have we need to cherish it there as the support of life—of that life which, beginning here, goes on throughout eternity. Distinctly and for ever shall we think of and see before us the Lamb who has redeemed us to God by His blood. Distinctly and for ever will His holy law stand out as the law by which we tried to live on earth and by which we cannot fail to live in heaven. (*F. Morse, M.A.*) *Human changes and the Divine unchangeableness*:—Human changes and the Divine unchangeableness—this is the subject suggested by our text. Its first clause is an utterance of the despondency which comes over us as we contemplate the frail lives of men. The second clause answers that despondency by affirming that the Word of the Lord is not changeful like the thought of man, but enduring as God Himself. The third clause declares that in the gospel we have the abiding Word of God; and the whole passage is intended to illustrate the foregoing declaration that faith in the gospel makes men as immortal as God; we are "born again, not

of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Now the Bible is not a despondent book. Prophets and apostles give expression to our despondency only to correct and to console it. I. The first consolation our text has for this depression is that IT CONTRASTS WITH OUR FRAILTY THE WORD OF THE ETERNAL GOD. It matters little that the worker passes if his work endures. If we had but as firm a faith in "the Word of God" as we have in the results of human investigation, if we were as earnest in the Divine work as in our own, despondency would be at an end. Piety will never be checked, faith will never languish, because "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." For piety is bent on serving God, and faith receives God's revelation; and though "the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away," "the Word of the Lord endureth for ever." II. The next thought suggested by our text is that MAN'S CHANGEFULNESS ILLUSTRATES THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD. The Divine intention is brought out in His dealing with the fleeting generations of men; it becomes venerable in retrospect, while it is ever revealing itself in the freshness of a progressive history. An unvarying history would be a history of death; we gain a vaster idea of permanence by advance than we could ever gain by the continuance of unchanging forms. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever"—depository of God's creative energy. Another spring sees the grass revive; the trees look down on the renewed face of the earth. So, though men die, humanity endures; the same in its great necessities, the same in its sense of dependence and obligation, with quenchless aspirations ever rising; there is an abiding human heart. And humanity finds the same eternal God, the same object of piety, the inspirer and rewarder of faith, the fountain of an everlasting hope; finds the same salvation, the same Saviour—"Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever." There is development in humanity as there is evolution in nature; and this development witnesses to the abiding God, who needs ages to work out His will and reveal His eternal purpose of goodness and grace to waiting man. III. It is not of the eternity of God or of God's rule over the world that our text speaks; it is "THE WORD OF THE LORD," WHICH "ENDURETH FOR EVER." We need a revelation; an unrevealed were an unknown God. And yet how can we dream of abiding truth in a changing humanity? As mankind advances will not men's thoughts vary concerning even such fundamental things as moral obligation, the character of virtue, the objects of our devotion, the very being of God? The answer is, there will be development in the Christian faith; a fuller apprehension of its truths, a deeper sympathy with its spirit, a larger experience of its power, a broader application of it to the varying wants of men. But it will be from the old founts that the new inspirations will be drawn; men will turn to Christ and His gospel in every social complication, every conflict of faith, every spiritual need. The world's morals must be Christian morals; the world's religion the Christian faith. We are able to apply the test of history to this prediction. What book is there, eighteen hundred years old, which has the interest for all sorts and conditions of men the gospel has? We look inward, and we find the reason of its perpetuity to lie in its appeal to what is deepest in the soul of man. IV. The enduring Word of God is THE PLEDGE OF OUR ENDURANCE. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The gospel has been "the salt of the earth," preserving it from decay. Under it the world has renewed its youth, and its last days shall be its best. The love and righteousness, which are first revealed to our faith as ever abiding in God, and then are formed in us—graces of character as well as objects of faith—are the only things that can endure. The man in whom they are not is dead while he liveth; the man in whom they are shall live, although he die. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The enduring Word*:—I. We have here a DIVINE GOSPEL; for what word can endure for ever but that which is spoken by the eternal God? II. We have here an EVERLIVING GOSPEL, as full of vitality as when it first came from the lips of God, as strong to convince and convert, to regenerate and console, to sustain and sanctify, as ever it was in its first days of wonder-working. III. We have an UNCHANGING GOSPEL, which is not to-day green grass and to-morrow dry hay, but always the abiding truth of the immutable Jehovah. Opinions alter, but truth certified by God can no more change than the God who uttered it. IV. Here, then, we have a GOSPEL TO REJOICE IN, a Word of the Lord upon which we may lean all our weight. "For ever" includes life, death, judgment, and eternity. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Word of the Lord everlasting*:—I am glad to have a

deliverance like this, so distinct, so comprehensive, and at the same time so authoritative. Men sometimes ask us what it is that we mean when we speak so positively about the Word of the Lord. In one phrase, we answer, we mean the glad tidings of great joy which are unto all people, that unto them was born on a given day in a city of David a Saviour, who was Christ the Lord. This emphatically is the Word of the Lord. The facts which relate to the sufferings of our Redeemer and the facts which relate to His subsequent acts of everlasting glory are a message from God unto man. And the predictions, the narrations, the explanations, the invitations, and the promises altogether make up what the apostle is here designating; put altogether, they constitute the glorious gospel of the blessed God. The adversaries of the Christian faith tell us that our old gospel will presently be disproved. Strange, if it is to come to nothing, that it has survived for nineteen centuries already! I. IT IS SECURE, WHATEVER MAY BE THE EFFORTS OF POSSIBLE PERSECUTION. I do not say that you will not have apparent triumphs on the part of the persecutors. False brethren will fall away, but God's truth, somehow or other, will still survive, and He to whom that truth pertains and whose Word we are speaking will make it good in spite of opposition, and make it good in the oppressions of His faithful servants, strengthening them with strength in their souls, turning curse into blessing, and making the wrath of man to praise Him, whilst the remainder of that wrath He will restrain. II. THE OLD GOSPEL IS IN NO DANGER WHATEVER FROM THE INTELLECTUAL OPPOSITION OF OUR MODERN INFIDELS. Here and there we have the sound of triumph on the part of our adversaries. Reading their literature, as some of us do, we find those triumphs much more frequent perhaps than some of you may suppose; but what are the triumphs? They are not triumphs over the old gospel as it came down from heaven. You have had things incorporated with Christianity which God never put there—they are disproved; you have had opinions foisted upon the gospel from the traditions of men—they are being detached; you have had interpretations of Holy Scripture which are undoubtedly untrue—you have had them put to silence. But need I say that such victories are not against us? They are on our side! To get rid of error is to get rid of so much dead weight; and although the discomfiture of a Christian man, when the traditions which he has maintained are taken from beneath him, may not be that which he likes, yet such discomfiture is so much clear gain to the Christian cause, and that clear gain it will go on to acquire. III. THE OLD GOSPEL IS IN NO DANGER FROM THE DISCOVERIES OF OUR SCIENTIFIC MEN. I know of no statement so popular amongst the foes of the Christian faith as this, that the teachings of our sacred books are at variance with the teachings of the natural sciences; at variance, for example, with the teachings of astronomy, of archæology, and especially of geology. Not one of those sciences whispers a coming contradiction to your Bibles; not one of them foretokens a coming time when you will have either to give up that book or to deny indisputable facts. IV. THE OLD GOSPEL IS IN NO DANGER FROM THE ADVANCEMENT OF CIVILISATION. How is civilisation advancing! What a power is that of our commerce, our literature, our science, our art, our philanthropy, our moral and intellectual philosophy! There is much about it to be admired; it softens asperities, conciliates antagonism, refines the manners, elevates the character, combines and consolidates into one the entire family of man. Wondrous is the good which it has been doing, and wondrous is the good of which it is itself the representative and the embodiment. Tell us that civilisation will be the destroyer of Christianity! Why, abstract from your modern civilisation that which Christianity has imparted to it, and you have just that which very presently, by common consent, would be buried and out of sight. Why, it is the very child which your Christianity has brought forth; it is the very creation of which Christianity in her pure exuberance is instrumentally the creator. You might just as well think of this great superstructure in which we are assembled existing without a foundation as to think of modern civilisation existing without Christianity. V. THE OLD GOSPEL IS IN NO DANGER FROM THE ULTERIOR NECESSITIES OF HUMANITY. There may be species of human necessity that have never yet come to light in our acquaintance with mankind; and there may be species that never will come to light, except it be in some further and advanced stage of the history of our race. The capacities, the susceptibilities, and the activities of the human soul are perfectly wonderful. Give to that human soul the opportunity, the means, and the appliances which may be requisite, and where is the man that will tell me what deeper depths of the emotional he may evince, what mightier forces of the intellectual he may disclose, what intenser sympathy with the diabolical he may display,

and what more glowing apprehensions of the immortal he may manifest? Abide by your old gospel with an unflinching faith. Let that time come, and be it present to your eye now, when there shall be powers of investigation to which there is no parallel now; there will be the message to the man who possesses that power of investigation—Go and investigate the great “mystery of godliness.” Be your power what it may, it will find its occupation there. Be it so, that there shall be a capability for apprehension to which there is no parallel now: the commandment will be—Go and take the “unspeakable gift” of God, and try and find the occupation for your apprehension there. Be it so that there is guilt perpetrated—and who can tell after what we see ourselves what forms of guilt may be perpetrated?—be it that guilt is perpetrated at which even the devil stands aghast: there is “the blood that cleanseth from all sin”; let the sinner go and be cleansed and pardoned by that. Be it so that there will be unparalleled sympathy with and aspiration for the immortal; let the man who is the subject of such aspirations go and try to understand the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Oh! there is no danger for the old gospel! You may have philosophy sublimated, until that with which we are familiar shall be as nothing side by side with your philosophy; transcendently superior will be the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and so far from being inadequate to man’s requisitions then, it will supply, with an amplitude which is imperial, all that shall be required. So far from being effete and obsolete, it will exist with living and with royal power; so far from being, as we are told, an exploded superstition, an exhausted fountain, an ancient, decrepit, infirm, unavailable messenger of good, there it will be, in all the vigour of its youth, proclaiming salvation through the blood of the Lamb, and declaring to mankind in its highest elevation there is a higher elevation still. “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.” This Word of the Lord will be all adequate to the necessities and the requirements of humanity. (*W. Brock.*) *The Word of God everliving*:—How wonderfully has the Lord provided for the continuance of the vegetable world; He causes the plant to scatter broadcast a multitude of seeds, and bids the winds convey them far and wide. The fowls of the air are commissioned to bear berries and fruits to their proper soils, and even to bury them in the earth; while scores of four-footed creatures, engaged in storing up food for themselves, become planters of trees and propagators of plants. Seeds bear a charmed life about them; they will germinate after being buried for centuries; they have been known to flourish when turned up from the borings of wells from the depth of hundreds of feet, and when ponds and lakes have been dried the undrowned vegetable life has surprised the beholders by blossoming with unknown flowers. Can we imagine that God has been thus careful of the life of the mere grass of the field, which is the very emblem of decay, and yet is negligent of His Word, which liveth and abideth for ever? It is not to be dreamed of. Truth, the incorruptible seed, is ever scattering itself; every wind is laden with it, every breath spreads it; it lies dormant in a thousand memories; it preserves its life in the abodes of death. The Lord has but to give the word, and a band of eloquent men shall publish the gospel, apostles and evangelists will rise in abundance, like the warriors who sprang from the fabled dragon’s teeth; converts will spring up like flowerets at the approach of spring, nations shall be born in a day, and truth, and God the Lord of truth, shall reign for ever. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **This is the Word which by the gospel is preached.**—*The same gospel for us*:—1. The same Word of the Lord—the same glorious gospel—is now preached to you. And it is this day as young and fresh, and strong and imperishable, as ever it was. It “abideth for ever.” And the flesh is still as frail, and all the glory of the flesh still as fleeting, as of old. There is no spot on this round earth where we can escape the admonition and the rebuke to our levity and pride. It startles the wayfarer in the bright savannas of the south, and amid the sands of the desert and the icy desolation of the pole. It whispers from the green mounds of western forests, and is repeated by the billows of ocean as they roll above the multitudes that have gone down to slumber in the silent depths. There is no hope for man, save only what is provided by that Word of the Lord which in the gospel is preached unto you. 2. But remember that even this mighty Word has power to bless and save only as it is believed and obeyed. Alas! how is this simple truth wilfully forgotten by multitudes who may yet be said to be exemplary in their attendance on public ordinances! 3. Let me ask those of you who profess faith in the gospel whether your obedience of the truth is such as purifies your souls from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit; whether, in particular, it has tended in any measure to a brotherly love unfeigned. (*J. Lillie, D.D.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1-3.—Wherefore laying aside all malice.—*Malice laid aside*:—I. THAT REGENERATION AND THE LOVE OF SIN CANNOT STAND TOGETHER, it must needs be accompanied with a new life. Do vines bear brambles? II. THAT THERE IS NO PERFECTION HERE TO BE ATTAINED, for even the best have sin dwelling, though not reigning, in them. III. THAT IT IS NO EASY THING TO BE A CHRISTIAN. IV. THAT UNDER THOSE CORRUPTIONS HERE NAMED ALL OTHERS ARE INCLUDED. V. THAT MOST OF THOSE HERE MENTIONED ARE INWARD CORRUPTIONS WHICH WE MUST AS WELL AVOID AS THE OUTWARD. (*John Rogers.*) *Renovation*:—I. WHAT IS TO BE LAID ASIDE? “All malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, evil-speakers.” These are only a few specimens of the many lusts which are to be cast out, if we would enter the kingdom of heaven. If a child has swallowed poison I could not expect that wholesome food would confer any benefit upon him—the poison must be first removed; and if these poisonous evils lodge in your hearts and be not repented of, they prevent the Word of God having its proper effect, they effectually neutralise it. II. THE SPECIAL REASON WHY THESE ARE TO BE “LAID ASIDE.” The fact of their being “newborn babes,” the apostle urges as a reason why they should put away all these evils. This reason is a very efficacious one. If you are born again, what have you to do any more with the old habits of corruption? III. WHAT IS TO BE DESIRED? “The sincere milk of the Word.” IV. FOR WHAT IS THE “SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD” TO BE DESIRED? “That ye may grow thereby.” (*H. Verschoyle.*) *A catalogue of sins to be avoided*:—I. It is exceedingly PROFITABLE TO GATHER SPECIAL CATALOGUES OF OUR SINS WHICH WE SHOULD AVOID, to single out such as we would specially strive against, and do more specially hurt us. II. THE MINISTER OUGHT TO INFORM HIS FLOCK CONCERNING THE PARTICULAR FAULTS THAT HINDER THE WORK OF HIS MINISTRY where he lives. It is not enough to reprove sin, but there is a great judgment to be expressed in applying himself to the diseases of that people. III. THE APOSTLE DOETH NOT NAME HERE ALL THE SINS THAT HINDER THE WORD, but he imports that in most places THESE HERE NAMED DO MUCH REIGN, and marvellously let the course of the Word. IV. IT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED HOW THESE SINS DO HINDER THE WORD. (*N. Byfield.*) *Malice*.—*Malice* is an old grudge upon some wrong done, or conceived to be done to a man, whereupon he waits to do some mischief to him that did it. Anger is like a fire kindled in thorns, soon blazeth, is soon out; but malice, like fire kindled in a log, it continues long. This is often forbidden (*Eph. iv. 31; Col. iii. 8*). 1. We ought to take heed of the beginnings of unadvised anger. God is slow to wrath, and so should we be. 2. If we be overtaken (as a right good man may) take heed it fester not, grow not to hatred; heal it quickly as we do our wounds. The devil is an ill counsellor. (*John Rogers.*) *The venomous disposition*:—There are plants which may be said to distil venom of their own accord. The machineel-tree, for example (by no means uncommon in the West India Islands), affords a milky fluid which blisters the skin as if it were burnt with a hot iron; and indeed so dangerous has the vegetable been accounted, that if a traveller should sleep under its shade it was once popularly believed he would never wake again. The venomous disposition of these plants has its representative in the human family. There are persons to be met with who are so spiteful as to cause pain the moment you come into contact with them. Their lips distil malice, and it seems the object of their life to inflict malignant wounds. If you trust them your happiness will sleep the sleep of death. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *All guile*.—*Guile*:—It is meant of guile that is between men and men in their dealings with each other, as in buying, selling, letting, hiring, borrowing, lending, paying wages, doing work, partnership, &c.; when men would seem to do well, but do otherwise; when one thing is pretended, but another practised. We are not born for ourselves, but for the good of each other; we must not lie one to another, seeing we are members one to another, as it were monstrous in the natural body to see the hand beguile the mouth, &c., and yet how common is this sin! how doth one spread a net for another! not caring how they come by their goods, so they be once masters of them. (*John Rogers.*) *Guile in small matters as well as great to be avoided*:—“All”—this is added to show (lest any should think none but guile in great matters or measure forbidden here) that there is a thorough reformation required. Therefore it will not serve any man’s turn to say, “My shop is not so dark as others; I mingle not my commodities so much as such and such; I never deceived in any great matters.” *All guile must be abandoned by a Christian who*

cares for his soul. A Christian must show forth the truth of his Christianity in his particular calling, in his shop, buying, selling, &c., that men may count his word as good as a bond, that they dare rest on his faithfulness, that he will not deceive. (*Ibid.*)

Hypocrisies.—*Preservatives against hypocrisy*:—1. Keep thyself in God's presence; remember always that His eyes are upon thee (Psa. xvi. 8; Gen. xvii. 1). 2. Thou must pray much and often to God to create a right spirit within thee; for by nature we have all hypocritical hearts (Psa. li. 10). 3. Keep thy heart with all diligence, watching daily and resisting distractions, wavering thoughts, and forgetfulness. Judge thyself seriously before God (James iv. 8; Matt. xxiii. 26). 4. In all matters of well-doing be as secret as may be (Matt. vi.), both in mercy, prayer, fasting, reading, and the like. 5. Be watchful over thy own ways, and see that thou be as careful of all duties of godliness in prosperity as in adversity, in health as in sickness (Job xxvii. 9, 10). 6. Converse with such as in whom thou discernest true spirits without guile, and shun the company of known hypocrites. 7. Be not rash and easy to condemn other men for hypocrites, only because they cross thy opinions, or humours, or will, or practice. It is often observed that rash censurers that usually lash others as hypocrites fall at length into some vile kind of hypocrisy themselves. (*N. Byfield.*)

Hypocrisy:—Hypocrites are like unto white silver, but they draw black lines, they have a seeming sanctified outside, but stuffed within with malice, worldliness, intemperance; like window cushions made up of velvet, and perhaps richly embroidered, but stuffed within with hay. (*J. Spencer.*)

Hypocrisy ineffective:—Coals of fire cannot be concealed beneath the most sumptuous apparel, they will betray themselves with smoke and flame; nor can darling sins be long hidden beneath the most ostentatious profession, they will sooner or later discover themselves, and burn sad holes in the man's reputation. Sin needs quenching in the Saviour's blood, not concealing under the garb of religion. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Envies.—*The hatefulness of envy*:—I. Consider THE SUBJECT PERSONS in which it usually is. It is found most in natural men (Titus iii. 3), yea, in silly men (Job v. 2). This was the sin of Cain (Gen. iv), yea, of the devil himself. II. Consider THE CAUSE OF IT. It is for the most part the daughter of pride (Gal. v. 26), sometimes of covetousness (Prov. xxviii. 22), and often of some egregious transgression, such as in Rom. i. 29, but ever it is the filthy fruit of the flesh (Gal. v. 25). III. Consider THE VILE EFFECTS OF IT, which are many. 1. It hath done many mischiefs for which it is infamous. It sold Joseph into Egypt (Gen. xxxvii.), and killed the Son of God (Matt. xxvii. 8); 2. It deforms our natures, it makes a man suspicious, malicious, contentious, it makes us to provoke, backbite, and practise evil against our neighbours. 3. It begins even death and hell, while a man is alive (Job v. 2). It destroyeth the contentment of his life, and burns him with a kind of fire unquenchable. IV. It is a NOTABLE HINDRANCE TO THE PROFIT OF THE WORD, and so no doubt it is to prayer and all piety, as evidently it is a let of charity (Phil. i. 15). (*N. Byfield.*)

All evil speakings.—*Rules against evil-speaking*:—He that would restrain himself from being guilty of backbiting, judging, reviling, or any kind of evil-speaking, must observe such rules as these. I. HE MUST LEARN TO SPEAK WELL TO GOD AND OF GODLINESS. If we did study that holy language of speaking to God by prayer, we would be easily fitted for the government of our tongues toward men: we speak ill to men because we pray but ill to God. II. HE MUST STUDY TO BE QUIET and not meddle with the strife that belongs not to him; resolving that he will never suffer as a busybody in other men's matters (1 Thess. iv.; 1 Pet. iv. 15). III. HE MUST KEEP A CATALOGUE OF HIS OWN FAULTS CONTINUALLY IN HIS MIND. When we are so apt to task others it is because we forget our own wickedness. IV. HIS WORDS MUST BE FEW, for in a multitude of words there cannot want sin, and usually this sin is never absent. V. HE MUST NOT ALLOW HIMSELF LIBERTY TO THINK EVIL. A suspicious person will speak evil. VI. HE MUST PRAY TO GOD TO SET A WATCH BEFORE THE DOORS OF HIS LIPS. VII. HE MUST AVOID VAIN AND PROVOKING COMPANY. When men get into idle company the very complement of discoursing extracteth evil-speaking to fill up the time; especially he must avoid the company of censurers, for their ill-language, though at first disliked, is insensibly learned. VIII. HE MUST ESPECIALLY STRIVE TO GET MEEKNESS, and show his meekness to all men (Titus iii. 1, 2). IX. If he have this way offended, then let him follow that counsel, "Let his own words grieve him" (Psa. lvi. 5); that is LET HIM HUMBLE HIMSELF SERIOUSLY FOR IT BEFORE GOD by hearty repentance; this sin is seldom mended, because it is seldom repented of. (*Ibid.*)

Pericious and evil-speaking abundant:—Alas, evil speaking floods the world as some weeds cover the fields in early summer! My heart was made sad in some

journeys last year as I saw many large tracks of grain almost hidden by a yellow sea of flowering weeds. For the time you think it is not possible that any of the corn can come to perfection. Even there, however, a harvest is reaped; but the harvest would have been heavier if the fields had been clean. Evil-speaking, like one dominant weed, covers the surface of society, and chokes in great measure the growth of the good seed. Christians, ye are God's husbandry—ploughed field; put away these bitter things in their seed-thoughts and in their matured actions, that ye may be fruitful unto Him. If the multitude of words spoken by professing Christians in disparagement of their neighbours were reduced first by the omission of all that is not strictly true and fair; and next by the omission of all that is not spoken with a good object in view; and next by the omission of all that, though spoken with a good intention, is unwisely spoken, and mischievous in its results;—the remainder would, like Gideon's army, be very small in number, but very select in kind. The residuum would consist only of the testimony of true men against wickedness, which truth and faithfulness, as in God's sight, compelled them to utter. (W. Arnot.) **As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word.—Christian childhood and its appropriate nourishment:—**

I. THE SIMILITUDE BY WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE HERE REPRESENTED. 1. This may relate to the commencement of the spiritual life at regeneration, as compared with its subsequent growth in this world. Not only has this life a beginning here, after the natural birth, but it begins like that, in a small, feeble, and almost imperceptible manner. 2. But this childhood may relate to the whole state of the spiritual life in the present world as compared with its future manhood. **II. WHAT THAT GROWTH IS WHICH THE SCRIPTURE IS CALCULATED THUS TO PROMOTE THROUGH THE WHOLE COURSE OF OUR MORTAL EXISTENCE.** 1. In knowledge. At first this principle is weak in its perception of the things of revelation. It begins with those parts of Scripture which lie nearest to human observation, and in which the Bible most accommodates itself to human ignorance. It proceeds to those passages suited to an awakened and quickened state of feeling. 2. In purity. The mind naturally conforms itself to the sentiments with which it is conversant. 3. In heavenly-mindedness. To that world from which the Scriptures came, and about which they frequently treat, they insensibly draw the devout peruser. They facilitate the withdrawal of our minds from this world by the transitoriness which they attach to all earthly excellences, and by making them to stand for signs of others, yet greater and better, in the celestial economy. Hence our elevation is effectively promoted. 4. In peace and tranquility of mind, amidst all the disturbances and ills of life. What book is, or can be, like the Bible, for its perpetual reference of all things here to a Divine superintendence? 5. In fine, the Scripture is calculated to promote the growth of every grace of the Spirit necessary to complete the Christian character. It feeds repentance by the evil it discloses in sin; it feeds Divine love by the excellence it portrays in God, rectifying the misconceptions of the carnal mind; it feeds faith by the representation of its objects, and by the impression it makes of its innate majesty and authority on the devout peruser of its pages. In like manner it feeds hope, patience, resignation, zeal, and every other grace which branches out of the principle of spiritual life, and completes the character of the man of God. **III. WHAT THAT STATE OF MIND IS WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE REQUIRED TO CULTIVATE IN ORDER TO SECURE THIS GREAT BENEFIT FROM THE SCRIPTURE.** 1. There must be the removal of what would otherwise prove fatal impediments. James inculcates the same duty under a different metaphor (chap. i. 21). He compares the Word to a fruit-bearing plant, requiring a clean and friendly soil for its growth. The weeds of evil dispositions must be eradicated, or its roots will not spread, nor its virtue disclose itself. "Purify your hearts," therefore, he adds elsewhere, "ye double-minded. Be ye doers of the Word," &c. 2. These impediments being removed, we must cherish and promote the spiritual appetite. The appetite of the infant for its appropriate supply is natural. The spiritual appetite, to be analogous to it, must have several properties. (1) It must be earnest. The child cries, is impatient for its designed support; and it is not an idle, cold, sluggish desire after the aliment provided for spiritual growth that will subserve our growth. "My soul breaketh," says David, "for the longing it hath to Thy statutes." (2) It must be specific and suitable. No toys and gew-gaws, no gifts of gold and silver, no, nor even of the most delicious food, will compensate the infant for the absence of its natural support. Thus we must take heed not to substitute for the truth of Scripture the sentiments of men, though set forth with all the advantages of learning and eloquence. (3) It must be constant. The infant tires not of its proper food, but

finds in it all it wants both nutritive and delicious. Nor must we tire of the Word of God, nor seek for a greater variety than it presents. It contains within itself all that is necessary for life and godliness, for comfort and improvement. (*J. Leifchild.*) *God's newborn babes and their food*:—I. OUR CONDITION AS GOD'S LITTLE ONES. "Newborn babes." This world is but the nursery in which the heirs of God are spending the first lisping years of their existence, preparatory to the opening of life to full maturity yonder in the light of God. 1. This word should teach us humility. Our best pace and strongest walking in obedience here is as but the stepping of children in comparison with the perfect obedience of glory, when we shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. All our knowledge here is but as the ignorance of infants, and all our expressions of God and of His praises but as the first stammerings of children, in comparison with the knowledge we shall have of Him hereafter. It becomes us, therefore, not to exercise ourselves in great matters, or in things too high for us, but to quiet ourselves as a child that is weaned of its mother. Not surprised, if unnoticed or unknown; not angry, if treated with small respect; not discouraged, if face to face with incomprehensible mysteries. 2. This word should also teach us hope. There is no young thing so helpless as a babe. But He who has appointed the long months of babyhood has also provided the love and patience with which mother and father welcome and tend the strange wee thing which has come into their home. And shall God have put into others qualities in which He is Himself deficient? Shall He have provided so carefully for us in our first birth, and have provided nought in our second? Your weakness, and ailments, and nervous dread, and besetting sins, and hereditary taint of evil habit and dulness of vision, will not drive God from you, but will bring Him nearer. 3. This word should also teach us our true attitude towards God. Throw yourself on Him with the abandonment of a babe. Roll on Him the responsibility of choosing for you—directing, protecting, and delivering you. If you are overcome by sin, be sure that it cannot alienate His love, any more than can small-pox, which has marred some dear tiny face, prevent the mother from kissing the little parched lips. II. OUR FOOD. "Long for the spiritual milk which is without guile" (R.V.). There is nothing which so proves the inspiration of the Scriptures as their suitability to the nurture of the new life in the soul. As long as that life is absent, there is no special charm in the sacred Word: it lies unnoticed on the shelf. But directly it has been implanted, and whilst yet in its earliest stages, it seeks after the Word of God as a babe after its mother's milk; and instantly it begins to grow. III. HOW TO CREATE AN APPETITE FOR THE WORD. "Desire." One of the most dangerous symptoms is the loss of appetite. And there is no surer indication of religious declension and ill-health than the cessation of desire for the Word of God. How can that appetite be created where lacking, and stimulated where declining? 1. Put off the evil that clings to you. 2. Remember that your growth depends on your feeding on the Word. 3. Stimulate your desire by the memory of past enjoyment. "If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Spiritual development*:—The text urges three important elements of holy living. I. SOUL-MORTIFICATION—"Lay aside all malice," &c. This is a sacrifice. It does not come natural to the human soul. It demands effort. It is not an immediate attainment, but demands a period of growth. The series of worldly developments here alluded to are important marks of fallen men, and at the same time are painful disfigurements to professing Christians. 1. There is malice—*i. e.*, ill-feeling of every kind. Under malice may be ranged political animosities which disturb the kindly relationship of men; unreasoning prejudice; the desire to injure those whom we dislike; bitterness, &c. 2. There is guile. This includes deceit. 3. There is hypocrisy—pretending a fictitious goodness which we do not possess. I take it that this includes cant, boasting, parade of religion, &c., for the word is not hypocrisy, but hypocries. 4. Envy. Again in the plural, for there are different kinds of envy. 5. Evil-speakings. The failing here alluded to goes far to cause all the bitterness of worldly society. II. SOUL-DEVELOPMENT. There must be not only casting out of the evil, but also the taking in of what is good. The first requirement for development is to be brought into a state fit for growth. III. SOUL-INCITEMENT—"Since ye have tasted," &c. The first taste creates a desire for a more abundant supply. (*J. J. S. Bird, B.A.*) *Soul-evolution*:—I. That soul-advancement is an EVOLUTION—"That ye may grow thereby." That is, the growth of the whole soul—all its faculties, forces, and germs of power. Growth implies—1. Inner life. A dead thing cannot grow. Sometimes education is spoken of as if the mind were a vessel into which a certain amount of information is to be poured until the mind is

filled. Sometimes, as if the mind were a stone, on which the instructor was to act as a lapidary, and polish it into some beautiful form. Hence we hear so much of accomplishments, painting, drawing, music, &c. Sometimes, as if the mind was arable land, to be ploughed and in which to plant seed to germinate and develop. Philosophically, nothing can grow in the soul. It is the soul itself that grows.

2. An inner life of latent power. A thing may have life, and nothing within for future development. Not so with the soul; it has boundless possibilities. 3. A life possessing developing conditions. II. That soul-evolution involves SOUL-HUNGER. "As newborn babes desire [R.V., long for] the sincere [R.V., spiritual] milk." Vegetable life grows without a desire; so, indeed, with animal life. But if the soul is to grow, it must desire it intensely. 1. The hunger must be for natural nutriment. 2. The nutriment must be of the best kind—"Sincere [R.V., spiritual] milk." What is the best kind? The "truth as it is in Jesus." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The milk of the Word*:—I. HEALTHY APPETITE: or, in other words, an earnest desire for spiritual nourishment. 1. It is of prime importance that we have a real craving for spiritual truth, for Christ will benefit us only as we appropriate Him. 2. We should further cultivate a discriminating taste. The babe's taste guards it against unwholesome food; it covets nothing but the mother's milk. So ought we to acquire a sensitive palate in respect of spiritual things, a palate able to discriminate between the precious and the vile. Is not the vitiated taste of many hearers of the gospel a symptom of a long-standing disease? 3. We should further habituate ourselves to desire strong meat, to digest well the great fundamental doctrines of the gospel. This then is the first requisite of orthodoxy, namely that we possess vigorous, healthy digestive organs. Gospel truth must be mixed with faith in them that hear it; that is to say, they must possess healthy organs, able to supply the spiritual secretions necessary to convert what we read and hear into part and parcel of our spiritual life. II. HEALTHY FOOD; or, in other words, God's truth as contained in Holy Writ. 1. The milk of the Word. The great verses of the Bible are like so many breasts, from which we are to suck in the spiritual aliment necessary to our well-being. Do you know what it is to eat words, and especially God's words? The process is as real as eating bread and meat, and the results are much more abiding. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them": he converted them into an integral part of his spiritual nature. 2. "The milk of the Word," or rational milk. Rational milk in contrast to the rites and ceremonies both of the Jewish and heathen religions. Christians are to live more by mind and less by the senses. 3. "The sincere—unadulterated—milk of the Word," that is to say, milk free from all deleterious admixtures. III. HEALTHY GROWTH. "That we may grow thereby unto salvation." In this Epistle salvation is used technically for salvation in the future, salvation full, complete, perfect. Now what does this growth unto salvation imply? 1. For one thing it implies growth in knowledge, for spiritual enlightenment is an essential factor in salvation. 2. Growth unto salvation further implies growth in holiness. "Having laid aside all sin, and all malice, and all evil-speaking." Other religions forbid particular sins; but whilst prohibiting one class of sins, they tolerate other classes. Mahometanism, for instance, prohibits drunkenness; seldom does a Mahometan get intoxicated. But whilst prohibiting drunkenness it licenses adultery. And by thus flinging away sin from us our spiritual palate will gradually recover its normal, healthy tone; we will relish the unadulterated milk of the Word more than our ordinary food and drink. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) *The Christian life in some of its characteristics*:—It is agreed that religion, subjectively considered, is life. "He that hath the Son hath life." If a man has religion, it is life in him. But it is finite life, limited and dependent. It requires for its continuance outside support and supply. Turning now to this life let us take note of some of its characteristics. 1. And, first, all life grows. This may not be apparent to the eye, but it is to the reason. Growth is the most unambiguous and decisive sign of life. A swelling bud, a beating pulse—this is proof. Life and growth go together as inevitable antecedents and consequents; and where there is growth, there is increment. This does not necessitate augmentation in size. It is not untrue to fact or absurd to say of a thing growing that it is growing small. Many a tree, many an animal, not a few persons of our acquaintance, are not as large as they formerly were. 2. Wherever there is growth, there is eating. The plant eats; down in the ground at the end of the rootlets we find spongi-oles, and these are mouths. In transplanting a shrub or tree the thing we care for is not to destroy these mouths. If true of vegetable life that it lives by eating, it is more obviously true of animal life. Do you say that in many of the lowest forms

of sentient life we find no mouths? True apparently; but the bodies of such invertebrates abound in absorbents that serve the same purpose. 3. That nothing eats without an appetite. The etymology of this word (*appetitus*) gives as its striking meaning a seeking for, longing after. In vegetable life we have the analogue of appetite; for we find that every root, trunk, branch, is elongating itself in pursuit of its required supply. The tree in the thick forest extends itself to get up into the light and heat; and the stray vegetable in the cellar does the same to get out of the dark and cold just where the light and warmth have been pouring in. This power to elongate and reach its supply is one of the most interesting phenomena in the vegetable kingdom. Nor is it otherwise among animals. Their power to help themselves is itself a department of science, and awakens the deepest interest. Besides the power of elongation to get supply, they have the power of locomotion. Appetite unsupplied is hunger, one of the most intense forms of physical unrest; and impels to the most intense exertions to get relief. But what next after appetite? You say that our series of organic facts cannot end in appetite; you say it must have its correlative supply. You add that there is a wonderful law in nature ordaining in every grade of life that there shall be as many forms of reciprocal supply as there are subjective wants. For every mouth there is the required morsel, and, in general a superabundant supply. In man this law bears sway in a threefold form, for he has in him three lives: life of body, brain, and soul. The physical life grows by eating what the physical appetite craves; the supplies here are found in the outward physical world. This life can live and grow on bread alone. The intellectual life grows by eating what the intellectual appetite craves; the supplies here are found in the truths of fact and principle discoverable in the world of science. The moral and spiritual life grows by eating what the moral and spiritual life craves; here the supplies are found in all the verities that appertain to the soul in relation to God and the immortal life. Having these three forms of life, and, in natural order, these three forms of growth, eating, and appetite, and, having these three forms of supply, man can have three forms of satisfaction: he can be physically, intellectually, and morally supplied and at rest. Therefore he can have three forms of health. He can be whole in body, mind, and soul; or he can be ailing in one department of his being, and well in other respects. In order to perfect health in each life there must be a perfect working of the functions of each in possession of a perfect supply. A man can have as many forms of hunger, starvation, and death by starvation, as he has lives. The inference here is inevitable, that if a man has in him three lives, and, in his prerogative of free will, can make each growthful or not, according as appetite is fed or not fed, then man has in him the power of a threefold suicide. Thus far we have been considering life as it develops normally. In its various grades we find it growing according to a natural law inlaid in the constitution. We find it interfered with only by encroachment and want of supply. Unfallen human life observed this law in the primeval garden. But this adherence to law in an orderly unfolding did not continue. Sin entered, and with it a new factor, disease. It is an easy consequence of sin, itself wholly unnatural; it belongs to that category of thorns and thistles, toil and sweat and birth-pangs, visited upon the race as instruments of probationary discipline and culture. This prepares us to notice the benignity of nature in providing not only for normal but as well for abnormal wants. Not only does she provide for hunger, thirst, rest, to repair waste and recover tone, but she is a storehouse of remedies for disease. There are provisions not only for life when exhausted by expenditure, but when assailed and wounded by assault. It is well known that animals when ill either refuse to eat, or, eating, select a medicinal diet. Such food is found in those forms of supply abounding in nature that are repelled in a state of health. Disease sharpens an instinctive appetite for them, and impels to a search for them. Man as a physical being, diseased, like all animals, finds himself dependent for cure on medicinal remedies stored in nature. There is a more subtle force in man, and a more destructive one, than disease, and whose proper seat is the soul. It is sin: what disease is to the body, sin is to the spiritual powers of man. The spheres in which these destructive forces work greatly differ, but such is the organic connection between them that we are quick to see the natural alliance of sin and disease. As in physical disease there is a suppression of appetite for common food, and a search for a medicinal diet, so in man's apostate condition and severance from God there is disclosed in the remains of his fallen nature, in the intuitions of reason and the instincts of a guilty conscience, a longing after some form of deliverance that has an expiatory value. Sin itself seems to evoke a long-

ing for a remedy that will destroy it. A sick man wants health, and if he finds it at all, he finds it in nature's stores; a lost man wants salvation, and if he finds it at all, he finds it in Christ crucified. Mark here the point of critical interest: when the sinner in the consciousness of his need turns to Christ and believes on Him, he is born again. In this change, his third life has been taken off the creature as having a supreme interest and placed upon God where it originally belonged; and so, being in Christ Jesus, the man, dead in trespasses and sins, is made alive from the dead. But the new man that is born in him is, to use the apostle's figure, a babe in Christ. There exist still in the converted man the remains of the old nature, and these remains are summed up by the apostle and called the old man. And now what have we? A marvellous phenomenon! a man with four lives in him. The physical and intellectual lives remain; then we have the new life, the babe in Christ, called the new man; finally we have a fourth life in the remains of the old life, called by St. Paul the old man. In the soul of the renewed man then we find two lives; and let us mark their relation to each other. In the first place, the new man though a babe holds the ascendency. He is so much the creation of the Spirit that we can say of him that he is the child of a King. In his minority in this world he has to retain his throne by warfare. In the text, St. Peter, addressing believers, urges them to exercise the appetite, characteristic of newborn babes, in their longing for the spiritual milk of the Word which is without guile, that they may grow thereby. He assumes the existence of life, and life that is to grow by eating in compliance with an awakened appetite. The reign of law is supreme in all growth. All the characteristics of life in the lower kingdoms of nature reappear here in the spiritual sphere. We have seen that all appetite, wherever found, finds its corresponding supply in its environment. This is true of the life of the believer. That life is Divine in its origin from heaven, and in its nature spiritual; therefore corresponding to it is an objective supply equally Divine and spiritual. But you ask, How about the old third life, now called by the apostle the old man, and which we have seen to be living a dying life? Does it grow? I reply that the old man still lives, but, struck with death, is in a mortal decline; there is growth too; but in proportion as the new man grows strong, he grows weak. If the new life is stationary, the old life holds its own; if it is retrograde, the old life waxes and regains ascendency, "sin reigns." But you say that if the old life lives in any form, even a lingering death, it must have food, and what is it? This is a vital question; can we find an answer? We have seen that the new life is in spirit totally unlike the old life, and cannot therefore live on the same diet, unless it is mixed. Here we fall upon the great source of weakness among believers—adulteration of food. The Divine plan for the new life is that it should live and grow "on spiritual milk, which is without guile." The word "spiritual" here does not refer to the Holy Spirit as the originator of this diet, but to the Spirit of the new life itself, with which this diet is perfectly congruous. The new life is spirit, and has a diet fitted to it as such; but the diet must be without guile, unadulterated, the pure Word of God. When the new life has this food, and only this food, and enough of it, it hastens on to full growth. Instances abound in the Church of persons of signal excellence in whom this life has had a luxurious exposition. But this food, so nutritious and medicinal to the new man, is innutritious and destructive to the old man. The Divine plan is to kill the old life by the natural process of starvation. It is said that in certain soils clover will not grow under butternut trees; the roots of the butternut extract from the soil all the elements the clover lives on, and so the clover starves and dies. It is by this same law of death by starvation that the old life in believers is to end its career. But the painful fact is that its law is not obeyed. Strange as it may be, believers do not insist that the spiritual milk they drink shall be without adulteration. They allow a mixed diet—elements introduced that are agreeable to the old man. When the diet is half and half, when both the old and the new man can sit at the same table and partake of the same food with equal pleasure, neither is satisfied; both live a stunted life. It is just here that we find an explanation of the mystery of the weakness that abounds in Christian living. Believers half live, because fed on a diet half of which is prepared for the old life. They consult with flesh and blood. They are self-indulgent; and the self they indulge is the old self. They hanker after forbidden food. In them the old life is robust and well to do, the new is pinched and emaciate. Why is this? Because the Divine law of growth in the text is not heeded. Believers are not studious as to their diet. They do not live on the spiritual milk of the Word, and insist that it shall be

without guile. They are too tender and sympathetic with the old self. Vigorous self-denial is here demanded. This order is never introverted. It is always the new man in us that drives out the old; and to have the strength required to do it he must have for his diet the spiritual milk of the Word, which is without guile. (*C. B. Hulbert*) *The Word compared to milk*:—1. The Word is compared to milk in respect of the plainness of it to young children, which is therefore opposed to strong meat, that is, harder points, and mysteries of religion, so especially for the nourishing nature thereof. 2. It is also compared to milk for the sweetness of it. The Word is sweet to a newborn Christian. 3. Besides, as milk is a general food for all rich and poor, so is the Word the common food of all Christians, the means of their edifying. (*John Rogers*.) *The simultaneous outgoing of evil and incoming of good*:—Observe the relation in which the negative and the positive stand to each other. Although the precept about putting off first meets our eye on the page, the act is not represented as taking precedence in point of time. It is neither first put off the evil and then admit the good, nor first take in the good and then get quit of the evil. The language of the text determines that the two acts are strictly simultaneous. The form of the sentence is, "Laying aside these, desire this." This is scientifically correct as well as scripturally true. The coming of Christ unto His own, to the throne of a human heart, "is like the morning." And how does the morning come? Is it first that the light comes and then the darkness departs? or first the darkness departs and then the light advances? It is neither. As the light advances the darkness recedes. The processes are strictly simultaneous, but in nature the advance of light is the cause and the departure of darkness the effect. Such, also, is the rule in the spiritual sphere. It is indeed true that evil must depart to let in the good, but it is the advance of the good that drives the evil before it. Christ is the stronger who overcomes the strong and casts him out and reigns in his stead. To take in the milk and retain also the envies and evil-speakings will give neither comfort nor growth. The effort to mingle these opposites mars the happiness of many a life, and distorts all its testimony for the truth of the gospel. (*W. Arnot*.) *Desire*:—As in children, all speak and work at once—hands, feet, mouth. The Greek word signifieth vehemently to desire. (*J. Trapp*.) *The sincere milk of the Word*:—Guileless, unmixed milk, not sugared or sophisticated with strains of wit, excellency of speech, &c. (*Ibid.*) *Appetite for Divine things wanted*:—The Rev. Mr. Walker, of Muthil, was preaching in a neighbouring parish. Next day he was met by one of the resident landowners, who explained to the reverend gentleman that he had not been hearing him on the Sabbath afternoon, as he felt he could not digest more than one sermon. "I rather think," said Mr. Walker, "the appetite is more at fault than the digestion." (*C. Rogers, LL.D.*) **That ye may grow thereby.**—*Christian growth*:—I. CHRISTIANS ARE TO "GROW"—"grow unto salvation." This implies present immaturity—that they have not yet reached "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Their hope is oftentimes indistinct and tremulous, even when it is not averted from its appropriate object. Their holiness is stained by innumerable defilements of the flesh and the spirit. Their fear dissolves into a carnal security or a worldly dissipation. Nor does "brotherly love continue." But if they are Christians indeed all these elements of the new creature exist at least in the germ. Growth may be slow, and, for a time, even imperceptible. Obstructed by the remaining constitutional taint of the old nature, it may be hindered also by unfavourable circumstances, by the diseases incident to childhood, or through neglect of the appropriate means of growth. But the tendency is there, and that tendency is to be fostered by Christian education. II. THE PARTICULAR MEANS HERE SPECIFIED BY WHICH THIS GROWTH IS TO BE PROMOTED IS "the sincere milk of the Word." III. But, in order to the profitable use of even the pure milk of the Word, there are CERTAIN CONDITIONS PRE-REQUISITE. 1. There is, first, the necessity of spiritual life. Without it, as there can be no growth, so neither is there any desire after the means of growth. 2. If the soul is to enjoy the full benefit of the provisions of grace it must also be careful of its spiritual health, avoiding all occasions of disease, and especially maintaining a constant guard against the evil tendencies of its own constitutional taint. 3. When the soul has thus been "purified of malice and wickedness," one unfailing sign of its healthy condition is a "desire"—an earnest desire—for the nutriment of the Divine Word. 4. If we would grow by means of the Word it is important that we use the Word for that end. IV. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THIS EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED. 1. In this growth itself there is blessing enough to be

its own motive and great reward. There are other considerations, however, suggested by the text. Observe—2. The introductory word, “wherefore,” literally “laying aside, therefore,” &c., referring back to the illustrious attributes of the Word, as these had been set forth at the close of the first chapter. It had there been magnified as the Word of the Lord, as the incorruptible seed, as the living, abiding, everlasting Word. Seeing, then, says Peter, this precious Word decays not, grows not obsolete, and can as little be exhausted as it can be superseded by the word of man or of angel, what remains but that ye “follow on to know” it, “give yourselves wholly” to it, and drink deep, drink daily, drink for ever of the Divine fountains. This might the rather be expected of them as—3. In the third place, they had already experienced the regenerating power of the Word, “as newborn babes.” This is not so much a comparison as a reason. If, moreover, they remember still that they are but children, what more natural than that they should be ambitious to grow? 4. And finally, as they had been made subjects of the gospel’s regenerating power, so they had likewise tasted the sweetness and blessedness of its revelations. “If so be”—or if indeed, as you profess, and as I fully believe—“ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,” good, kind. You “tasted,” and you are well aware that you did no more than taste, “of the heavenly gift,” of that which shall be the eternal satisfaction and joy of all the redeemed. With what confidence, then, in your ready compliance may I not say, Open your mouths wide and the good Lord will fill them. Enlarge to the uttermost both your capacities and your desires, and you will still find this cup of blessing, this river of God, as full as at the first. (*J. Lillie, D.D.*)

Soul-growth:—I. It involves YOUNG LIFE. There is no growth without life, and old life grows not. Soul-growth consists in the simultaneous and harmonious development of all the powers of the mind under the inspiration and direction of supreme love to God. II. It involves SUITABLE ALIMENT. 1. The Word must be taken into the soul by hearing and reading. 2. The Word must be digested by the soul by reflection and prayer. 3. The Word must be incorporated in the soul by holy activities and habits. III. It involves A HEALTHY APPETITE. 1. The soul must have an appetite for truth before it will take it. 2. The soul must have an appetite for the genuine truth before it will get the right nutriment. (*Homilist.*)

Growth by the Word:—I. THE GREAT END TO BE SOUGHT AFTER. “That ye may grow.” The newborn babe is a fit emblem of the Christian. He is one who has in him the principle of a higher life, and therefore the capacity of growth. 1. In what is it the Christian is to grow? In all that constitutes the new nature which he has received of God. (1) The foundation of the Christian life is laid in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. (2) On this there must be a superstructure of virtue and moral goodness reared, and the advancement of the one must keep pace with that of the other. 2. This growth is a gradual process. We must be prepared for fluctuations and vicissitudes in our spiritual condition. 3. Whenever this growth takes place it will be discernible. Not directly, or in itself. A child grows without being in the least degree sensible of it. Nor can even the keenest onlooker see the child grow. The fact that it has grown is discovered from the comparison of what it is now and what it had been at some period more or less distant in the past. Even so it is with Christian growth. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS GREAT END IS TO BE SECURED. 1. The truth of God is revealed to us as being adapted to nourish the life of God in the soul. 2. We are to desire God’s Word in order that we may grow thereby. It is very possible to desire Divine truth for other reasons and other ends than this. It is quite possible to desire to read Holy Scripture because we have been accustomed to do so, or because this wonderful book is very pleasant to read, and touches every part of our intellectual nature. But we must use it intelligently, perseveringly, to secure the great end. 1. Have we any right to call ourselves babes in Christ, children of God, born again? If not, then simply we cannot grow. Dead things, stones, cannot grow. 2. Ought not the necessity of growing to be more deeply felt, and the duty on which it depends to be more faithfully discharged? (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*)

Retaining infantile ideas:—What man amongst us would consent to be dressed in the garb of his infancy, and to be sent forth into the world dandled in the arms of bearers and habited in the long clothes of his babyhood? But so far as spiritual knowledge and attainments are concerned men are only too willing to retain their infantile ideas, and to resent any attempt to lead them to larger and loftier conceptions of truth, to a more robust and manly faith. (*J. Halsey.*)

The influence of food on spiritual growth:—Spiritual growth and development are required of us, and spiritual growth and development are a matter

of spiritual diet. Buckle, in his "History of Civilisation," shows how the characters and dispositions of the various races of men are affected by the food they eat. The broad general truth of this is obvious. The gross feeders are slow thinkers, and the difference in the intellectual qualities between the Eskimo with his blubber and the Frenchman with his cutlets and claret is as great as the difference between the foods themselves. We are what we are—physically, mentally, and to a great extent even morally—mainly in virtue of our diet. If we were to be always subsisting on babies' food, farinaceous powders and sopped rusks, we should never grow into a stalwart manhood. At the same time you do not expect elevation and refinement of thought from the gourmand and the epicure. The man who confines himself to the elements of thinking limits himself to the infantile stages of growth, to their helplessness and dependency. (*Ibid.*) *Spiritual growth to be sought* :—They take a pride in cultivating their physical nature, in developing their muscle and sinew to the highest efficiency; they will even go into severe training to achieve this end; but in the spiritual sphere the toothless, flabby, milk-imbibing infant is their ideal. (*Ibid.*) *Thinking aids growth* :—And it is in that thinking faculty that resides your power of growth. The machine can never be anything else or anything better than it is unless human thought be brought to bear upon it. You cannot teach a machine anything, and because it cannot think it cannot grow. The instinct in the animal is always mere instinct. It never grows. The instinct whereby the bee makes its cell to-day is the same as that of its ancestors who sipped honey in primeval Eden. The ox is as bovine to-day as when it first appeared upon the stage of existence. Not one solitary idea has ever entered its brain during all those perhaps hundreds of thousands of years. It has never been able to think itself out of the animal groove, to lift itself, by force of its own will, one step in the scale of creation. But in virtue of his thinking faculty man's capacity for growth is illimitable. If he will only use it, cultivate it, develop it, no bounds can be set to its power to expand and elevate him. (*Ibid.*) *Appropriate aliment* :—The relation of growth to nutrition is a law of the universe. Every description of life has its appropriate aliment, and only as it is provided with this will it grow; and if you were a farmer you would find that you could not raise your corn and other crops without first charging the soil with silica and ammonia and phosphates, and other elements essential to the building-up of the tissues of the plant. The religious manhood is built up no otherwise. It is purely a question of nutriment. (*Ibid.*) *Deep Christian knowledge to be desired* :—You have seen on a summer's evening the gnats gliding upon the smooth surface of a great river. What do they know of the river's wealth, of the beautiful gardens of aquatic weeds, of the shoals of silvery fish and other forms of life that teem in the clear depths beneath? Such is the knowledge of the universe that many Christian people possess, and that they think it right to possess. They skim the surface, but are careful not to wet their wings, and to go no deeper than the guardians of orthodoxy assure them it is safe. (*Ibid.*) *A sermon for men of taste* :—"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." "If, if"—then this is not a thing to be taken for granted. "If"—then there is a possibility that some may not have tasted that the Lord is gracious. "If, if"—then this is not a general but a special mercy, and it becomes our business to inquire whether we are comprehended in that company who know the grace of God by inward experience. I. First, then, TASTE is prominent in the text. 1. The taste here meant is doubtless faith. Faith, in the Scripture, is all the senses. It is sight (Isa. xlv. 22); hearing (Isa. lv. 3); smelling (Psa. xlv. 8); touch (Mark v. 30, 31). Faith is equally the spirit's taste. "How sweet are Thy words to my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my lips." We shall have an inward and spiritual apprehension of the sweetness and preciousness of Christ as the result of living faith. 2. The taste here meant is faith in one of its highest operations. To hear Christ's voice as the very voice of God in the soul will save us, but that which gives the true enjoyment is the aspect of faith wherein Christ, by holy taste, becomes assimilated to us; we feed on Him; He becometh part of us; His living Word sustaineth us, and His precious blood cheereth us as generous wine. Do you ask, "In what respect does faith taste that the Lord is gracious?" It is faith operating by experience. 3. Faith, as exhibited to us under the aspect of tasting, is a sure and certain mark of grace in the heart. It is a sure sign of vitality. Man, by nature, is dead in trespasses and sins. Or, to put it in another light, if men have a taste of Christ, it is certain evidence of a Divine change, for men by nature find no delight in Jesus. 4. This taste, where it has been bestowed by grace, is a discerning faculty. If thou

canst live upon a gospel which leads thee to depend upon thyself, thou hast no spiritual taste, or else thou wouldst loathe, as much as ever Egyptian loathed to drink of the waters of Nile when turned into blood, to drink of any river which flows from created springs; thou wouldst only drink of the cool stream of the river of life which rises at the foot of the throne of God and flows around the base of Calvary, where Jesus shed His blood. Say, soul, dost thou love Jesus only? Is He all thy salvation and all thy desire, and dost thou repose wholly and solely in Him? For if not, then thou hast no spiritual taste, and thou hast no reason to believe that thou belondest unto Jesus Christ at all. 5. Faith as a taste is not simply a discerning but a delighting faculty. Men derive much satisfaction from the organs of taste. I pray you delight yourselves in Christ! Let your faith so taste Jesus as to make you glad. Let your joy be as the joy of harvest, and sing ye with Zechariah, "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." 6. This taste of ours is in this life imperfect. As old master Durham says, "'Tis but a taste!" We have not yet rested beneath the vines of Canaan; we have only enjoyed the firstfruits of the Spirit, and they have set us hungering and thirsting for the fulness of the heavenly heritage. We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption. 7. Though ours is an imperfect, we thank God it is a growing taste. We know that sometimes in the decline of life the taste, like the other powers of manhood, decays; but, glory be to God, a taste for Christ will never decay. II. MEN WHO HAVE THUS TASTED OF CHRIST HAVE SPECIAL SINS TO AVOID AND OBJECTS TO DESIRE. 1. We first dwell upon evils to be avoided. 2. The apostle, having told us what to avoid, tells us what to eat and drink. "As newborn babes desire," &c. The Christian man should desire pure doctrine; he should desire to hear the gospel plainly and truthfully preached—not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. It is a sign of declining health in a Christian when he does not love the means of grace. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christian experience exemplified*:—I. DEFINE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE SO FAR AS EXPRESSED IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXT. Tasting supposes life; where there is no spiritual life there can be no spiritual taste. Tasting implies reception, and this is requisite in order to appreciation. They who savingly prove the gracious character of God are such who have the inward evidence of it. Religion is not a matter of speculation, but of experience; not of form, but of hallowed feeling. Such participation is no criterion of extraordinary proficiency in Christianity; it is essential to its existence. II. THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF SUCH EXPERIENCE OF RELIGION IN THE SOUL. 1. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," what thanks do you owe Him? 2. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," be gracious like Him. 3. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," you know what you are to hope for. Proofs hitherto of His love are pledges for the future. 4. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," think what is expected from you. Grow in spiritual stature. The more ample the crop the more delightful to the husbandman and to every beholder who feels an interest in what is excellent. 5. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," pity those that have not. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *A gracious experience of God*:—I. We may consider THE GOODNESS OF GOD. He is said to be gracious, or of a bountiful, kind disposition. The graciousness of God is always sweet; the taste of that is never out of season. God is gracious, but it is God in Christ. Though God is mercy and goodness in Himself, yet we cannot apprehend Him so to us, but as we are looking through that medium, the Mediator. His grace is all in Christ. Let us therefore never leave Him out in our desires of tasting the graciousness and love of God, for otherwise we shall but dishonour Him and disappoint ourselves. II. YE HAVE TASTED. There is a tasting exercised by temporary believers spoken of in Heb. vi. 4. That is merely tasting, rather an imaginary taste than real; but this is a true feeding on the graciousness of God; yet is it called but a taste in respect of the fulness to come. Jesus Christ being all in all unto the soul, faith apprehending Him, is all the spiritual senses. Faith is the eye that beholds His matchless beauty, and so kindles love in the soul, and can speak of Him as having seen Him and taken particular notice of Him. It is faith that touches Him and draws virtue from Him, and faith that tastes Him. In order to this there must be a firm believing of the truth of the promises, wherein the free grace of God is expressed and exhibited to us—a sense of the sweetness of that grace being applied or drawn into the soul, and that constitutes properly this taste. He that hath indeed tasted of this goodness, oh, how tasteless are those things to him that the world calls sweet! As when you have tasted something that is very

sweet, it disrelishes other things after it. Therefore can a Christian so easily either want or use with disregard the delights of this earth. III. THE INFERENCE. If ye have tasted, &c., then lay aside all malice and guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil-speakings. Surely if you have tasted of the kindness and sweetness of God in Christ, it will compose your spirits and conform them to Him. It will diffuse such a sweetness through your soul that there will be no place for malice and guile; there will be nothing but love, and meekness, and singleness of heart. As the Lord is good, so they who taste of His goodness are made like Him (Eph. iv. 32). Again, if ye have tasted, then desire more. This is the truest sign of it. He that is in a continual hunger and thirst after this graciousness of God has surely tasted of it. "My soul thirsteth for God," saith David (Psa. xlii. 2). He had tasted before; he remembers that he went to the house of God with the voice of joy. This is that happy circle wherein the soul of the believer moves. The more he loves it the more he shall taste of this goodness, and the more he tastes the more he shall still love and desire it. But observe—If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, then desire the milk of the Word. This is the sweetness of the Word, that it hath in it the Lord's graciousness, gives us the knowledge of His love. This they find in it who have spiritual life and senses, and those senses exercised to discern good and evil, and this engages a Christian to further desire of the Word. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *The test of taste*:—Peter is here quoting from Psa. xxxiv. 8: "O taste and see that Jehovah is good," and Peter does not hesitate for a moment to apply the passage to the Lord Jesus. I. A ROYAL DAINTY. "The Lord is gracious." Jesus is full of grace. Once tasted, this grace is remembered. 1. The Lord is gracious in His person, nature, and character. He would never have been Immanuel, God with us, if He had not been gracious. 2. We have found Him exceeding gracious in the manner of dispensing His salvation. He is most free, spontaneous, and generous in His gifts of grace. 3. As He is gracious by nature and gracious in manner, so is He gracious in His gifts. How gracious was He when He gave Himself for us! What priceless boons follow therefrom! He gave us pardon and life. Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. Since we have come to know our Lord, how gracious have we found Him to be! "He giveth more grace." Oh, the wonders of free grace in its continuance and perseverance! Truly "the Lord is gracious." 4. The Lord is gracious, for He hears prayer. 5. Some of you have been favoured with choice times, "as the days of heaven upon the earth." You have climbed the mount and been alone with God. Oh, the rapture of intimate fellowship with God! 6. Possibly your experience has been of a sadder kind; you have backslidden, and He has restored you in His grace. But you do not know how gracious the Lord is. 7. Remember that He is preparing us for a glory inconceivable. Everything is working out His perfect design. II. But now think of a SPECIAL SENSE which is exercised in tasting that the Lord is gracious. Faith is the soul's taste by which we perceive the sweetness of our Lord and enjoy it for ourselves. In answering the question, What is meant by taste? I would bid you notice the likeness of the word "taste" to another, namely, "test." 1. Taste is a test as to things to be eaten. We prove and try an article of food by tasting it. Even so we do not speculate upon the grace of God, but "we have known and believed the love which God has toward us." 2. In order to spiritual taste there must be apprehension. We must have some idea of what being gracious means, and some conviction that this is truly the character of our Lord Jesus. The clearer the knowledge the more distinct the taste may become. 3. After apprehension must come appropriation. Martin Luther saith, "And thus I call tasting, when I do with my very heart believe that Christ hath given Himself unto me, and that I have my full interest in Him, that He beareth and answereth for all my sins, transgressions, and harms, and that His life is my life. When this persuasion is thoroughly settled in my heart, it yieldeth wonderful and incredible good taste." Appropriate Christ, I pray you. Let each one take Him to himself, and then you will know what tasting means. But taste further means appreciation. You may have a thing within yourself and yet not taste it, even as Samson's lion had honey within its carcase, but he was a dead lion, and so could not taste it. A man may get the gospel into his mind, but never taste it. It wants a living man, and a living appropriation, and a living appreciation, or else the royal dainty is not tasted. Have you ever enjoyed the truth that the Lord is gracious? Jesus is all in all to all who are in Him. III. A SEARCHING QUESTION. "If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." 1. This is a very simple elementary question. I may

not know what a dish is made of, but I may have tasted it for all that. I may be grossly ignorant of the mysteries of cookery, but I can tell whether a dish is sweet to my taste. I put it to every one here, whether babes or strong men—Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious? 2. However simple is the question, it goes to the root of the matter; it takes in the whole case of a man's soul. Do you know Christ by personal reception of Him? If not, you are in an evil case. Oh, that you would come to the feast! Oh, that you would eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness! 3. Every man here must answer that question for himself. We cannot in this matter be sponsors for one another. Tasting is an operation which must be performed by the individual palate. There is no other method of practising it. Let me tell you when we have tasted the graciousness of the Lord. We have done so after great bitterness. Our Lord, as George Herbert would say, has put His hand into the bitter box and given us a dose of wormwood and gall. We have drunk the cup in submission, and afterwards He has made us taste that the Lord is gracious, and then all bitterness has clean gone, and our mouth has been as sweet as though wormwood had never entered it. The taste of grace is always on some men's palates; their mouths are filled all the day with the praises of the Lord. These are happy beings; let us be of their number. IV. A SERIES OF PRACTICAL INFERENCES. 1. "Desire the sincere milk of the Word." If you have tasted it, long for more of it. 2. Next, expect to grow, and pray that you may do so. Pray for more faith, more hope, more love, more zeal, and so let us grow. "Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow." 3. Next, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," abhor the garlic flavour of the world's vices. I mean those alluded to in the first verse—"malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and all evil-speaking." 4. I want you also, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to lose taste for all earthly trifles. Let the ox have its grass and the horse its hay, but souls must feed on spiritual meat. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The experimental test*:—There are two ways of ascertaining whether a reputed loaf of bread is really bread, or a reputed glass of water is water. One way is by chemical analysis; the other way is by eating and drinking. Upon the whole the common and experimental test is the more satisfactory, and it is quite as scientific. Some people reach Christ by long and painful argumentation and searching into all the evidences of Christianity, while others simply take God at His word and come to an experimental knowledge of the truth and saving power of the gospel. This is by far the better way. "O, taste and see that the Lord is good." (*J. R. Pentecost.*) *Tasting*:—A taste whets the appetite. (*J. A. Bengel.*) *Experience in religion*:—A hundred thousand tongues may discourse to you about the sweetness of honey, but you can never have such knowledge of it as by taste. So a world full of books may tell you wonders of the things of God in religion, but you can never understand them exactly but by the taste of experience. (*N. Caussin.*)

Vers. 4, 5. **To whom coming, as unto a living stone.**—*Coming—always coming*:—The Christian life is begun, continued, and perfected altogether in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes when you go a journey, you travel so far under the protection of a certain company, but then you have to change, and the rest of your journey may be performed under very different circumstances, upon quite another kind of line. Now we have not so far to go to heaven in the guardian care of Jesus Christ, and then at a certain point to change, so as to have somebody else to be our leader, or some other method of salvation. No, He is the author and He is the finisher of our faith. We have not to seek a fresh physician, to find a new friend or to discover a novel hope, but we are to look for everything to Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "Ye are complete in Him." I. **HERE IS A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** It is a continuous "coming" to Jesus. Notice that the expression occurs in connection with two figures. There is one which precedes it in the second verse, namely, the figure of a little child fed upon milk. Children come to their parents, and they frequently come rather longer than their parents like; it is the general habit of children to come to their parents for what they need. Just what your children began to do from the first moment you fixed your eyes on them, and what they have continued to do ever since, that is just what you are to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. You are to be always coming to Him—coming to Him for spiritual food, for spiritual garments, for washing, guiding, help, and health: coming, in fact, for everything. You will be wise if, the older you grow, the more you come, and He will be all the better pleased with you. If you will look again at your Bibles, you will get a second

illustration from the fourth verse, "To whom coming as unto a living stone," &c. Here we have the figure of a building. A building comprises first a foundation, and then the stones which are brought to the foundation and are built upon it. This furnishes a very beautiful picture of Christian life. II. NOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, WHAT IS THE BEST WAY OF COMING TO CHRIST AT FIRST? 1. The very best way to come to Christ is to come with all your needs about you. If you could get rid of half your needs apart from Christ, you would not come to Jesus half so well, for your need furnishes you with motives for coming, and gives you pleas to urge. Suppose a physician should come into a town with motives of pure benevolence to exercise the healing art. What he wants is not to make money, but to bless the townsmen. He has a love to his fellow-men, and he wants to cure them, and therefore he gives notice that the poorest will be welcome, and the most diseased will be best received. Is there a deeply sin-sick soul anywhere? Is there man or woman who is bad altogether? Come along, you are just in a right condition to come to Jesus Christ. Come just as you are, that is the best style of "coming." 2. If you want to know how to come aright the first time, I should answer, Come to find everything you want in Christ. I heard of a shop some time ago in a country town where they sold everything, and the man said that he did not believe that there was anything a human being wanted but what he could rig him out from top to toe. Well, I do not know whether that promise would have been carried out to the letter if it had been tried, but I know it is so with Jesus Christ; He can supply you with all you need, for "Christ is all." 3. The best way to come to Christ is to come meaning to get everything, and to obtain all the plenitude of grace which He has laid up in store and promised freely to give. III. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO COME AFTERWARDS? The answer is—Come just as you used to come. The text does not say that you have come to Christ, though that is true, but that you are coming; and you are to be always coming. The way to continue coming is to come just in the same way as you came at first. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Christ a living stone*:—I. CHRIST THE SURE FOUNDATION. Without Christ the Bible is meaningless, the world hopeless, heaven charmless. You might as well have a summer without a gleam of light, without the smell of flowers, or the song of a bird, as have a life without Jesus Christ. You might as well have a year without a summer, nothing but barrenness and death, as to have a life without Jesus Christ. You might as well have a night without a morning, as to live in this world, and die, and be buried without Jesus Christ. You might as well speak of the astronomy of the world and leave out the sun, as speak of history, philosophy, and creation, and leave out Jesus Christ. In Christ, and in Him alone, the real and the ideal meet. Christ was the perfect, the symmetrical Man, the true centre of redeemed humanity. II. CHRIST REJECTED BY MANY. He reveals character; He makes men declare themselves; He is the touchstone that draws worth and develops worthlessness. Come near to Christ, and if you have the elements of nobility you will be drawn toward Him; if you are worthless you will hate Him. III. A STARTLING CONTRAST—God's judgment of Christ as compared with that of men: "Chosen of God, and precious." God knew Him, and He knew God as it is impossible for men to know Him; and this is the judgment which God here gives. IV. In order to receive the blessing of Christ's life, we must come to Him. God's promise includes God's condition. (R. S. MacArthur.) *The living stone*:—I. THE CHURCH OR SPIRITUAL TEMPLE IN ITS FOUNDATION. 1. Jesus Christ is here set forth as the foundation of the Christian Church. 2. The apostle here seems to violate the rules of rhetoric and elegant composition by attributing life to a stone. God's thoughts were so infinite that the laws of grammar stood in constant need of expansion to receive them. 3. "Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God." This Divine choice does not refer primarily, if at all, to God's eternal election of His Son to be the foundation of the Church, but to His choice of Him in consequence of His holy life and atoning death. The disallowing by men and the choosing by God were simultaneous processes. God chose Him, not arbitrarily, but on account of fitness after trying Him. II. THE CHURCH OR SPIRITUAL TEMPLE IN ITS SUPERSTRUCTURE. 1. What then is the first step you should take to be built into the walls of this spiritual edifice? This—you must come to Jesus Christ. "To whom coming"; or, as the words might be rendered, "To whom coming close up," "to whom coming very near"—so near as to be in personal contact with Him, nothing whatever intervening. You must remove all the earth and brush away every grain of sand, and build your house on the clean face of the rock, with nothing whatsoever between. 2. "To whom coming close up, as unto a living stone," then it follows that "ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." The word for

“stones” here suggests—I do not say it positively means, but it suggests stones dressed, smoothed, and polished, fitted to their place in the walls of the spiritual edifice—the root of the English word lithograph. Young people, and old, you will not do to be built into the walls of this temple in the rough, as you come from the quarry of the world. The Holy Spirit alone can prepare you for this. III. THE CHURCH OR SPIRITUAL TEMPLE IN ITS SERVICE. 1. “A priesthood.” So there is a priesthood in the Christian Church. The whole body of believers forms the Christian priesthood. 2. “An holy priesthood.” A learned priesthood? No. An educated priesthood? No. No; an holy priesthood. 3. “To offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” “Spiritual sacrifices”: what are these? Singing? Yes. Praying? Yes. Preaching? I am glad to believe it. Under the law material sacrifices were required—oxen, sheep, doves; but under the gospel only those sacrifices which proceed from a regenerate heart, and which testify to the gratitude and devotion of an emancipated spirit. God condescends to accept the offering for the sake of the love which inspires it. What else is necessary? That we present all by, or, as in the Welsh, “through” Jesus Christ. Our sacrifices must ascend to the throne through Him; and as they go through Him they are beautifully filtered and refined. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) **Disallowed indeed of men.—Christ disallowed** :—Disallowed He was, indeed, of men; they called Him the carpenter’s Son, a Samaritan, winebibber, deceiver; they would have no other king but Cæsar; with them Barabbas was meeter to live than He. What was the cause? They looked for one that should come as an earthly prince, to deliver them out of the hands of the Romans; but His kingdom was not of this world. They looked also for one that should have upheld their customs, laws, and traditions; but the date of them was out. Again, how came they to this height of disallowing Him? At the first of ignorance and blindness, but after of malice; so men grow (when they desire not to amend and see the truth) from one degree of wickedness to another. (*John Rogers.*) **Ye also, as lively stones, are built up.—Living stones** :—Religious art finds its culmination in the temple of the ancients and the cathedral of the moderns. Higher than this it cannot reach. That the temple made a profound impression upon the minds of the apostles, that its association interpenetrated their religious life and coloured their teaching, we have unmistakable evidence. In his Epistle to the Ephesians Paul seizes hold of the idea to illustrate the stability, the growth, and the grandeur of the Church. It is precisely the same idea which Peter had in his mind. The idea is a grand one, and it has had a fascination for more than one of the great men of the Church. To mention only one instance, it has given to us the immortal work of John Howe, “The Living Temple.” Let us look at it. Rising slowly in the midst of the world, noiselessly and unobserved by the majority of men, are the fair proportions of a temple in comparison with which the grandest conceptions of man are but blurred and broken lines of beauty. Century after century has contributed its quota to the pile, and during the unborn ages it will continue to increase in symmetry and perfection, until with the last man the edifice will be complete. The text reminds us that believers are the living stones of this living temple. Let us pay a visit to the temple, and look upon the stones that are being built into it. I. As soon as we approach our attention is arrested by some **HUGE, UNSHAPELY BLOCKS OF STONE, SHARP-ANGLED, AND DISFIGURED HERE AND THERE WITH MUD.** We glance hastily up at the superb building before us, re-examine the stones, and then in some wonder ask our guide, “What possible use can these be put to?” Touching the stone tenderly with his fingers, the master-builder replies that there is no better material built up in the whole fabric than this. Despite their roughness and shapelessness, these stones, he says, possess a nature which yields readily to the tools and skill of the workmen. Do we understand the teaching? Have we not in our Church fellowship met with men and women freshly hewn from the world’s quarry, with such angularities of character, with such imperfect knowledge, with such lack of grace, that we have begun to question if such rough material could be used for anything but stumbling-blocks in the cause of Christ? It may have been, even, that we have treated them with indifference, if not with contempt, and denied them the assurance of a brother’s sympathy. Forgetting “the hole of the pit from whence we have been digged,” we have despised these little ones for whom Christ died. Let us be consistent with ourselves. We profess to believe in spiritual capacities and capabilities, and we cry each day out of the depths of our weakness and ignorance, “Lord, help us.” In what lies the difference between us and them? Are not their souls endowed with the same faculties, the same capabilities, spiritually, as ours? But if we have seen anything of the operation of

Divine grace upon the heart, we surely have seen enough to lead us to the belief that there is no limit to its power, that it can fashion the roughest into symmetry and grace. The tinker of Elstow is transformed into the immortal dreamer. Ah, surely bitter must be our humiliation if by our spiritual pride we mar the beauty and usefulness of our Christian life, and see those whom we have despised outstripping us in service, and bearing more vividly upon them the imprint of Divine favour. Proceeding in our examination of the stones, we have one pointed out to us as being of great importance. II. Examining it we find that WHILE IT BEARS EVIDENT MARKS OF THE WORKMEN'S TOOLS, IT IS ONLY A LARGE PLAIN BLOCK OF STONE, WITH NO PRETENSION TO ORNAMENT WHATSOEVER. We acknowledge at once its solidity, but have to ask an explanation of its use. We are led to a part of the building where the first stones are being laid in the freshly excavated earth, and there we are told that these plain blocks of stone are used for the wall foundations. "What!" we exclaim, "are they to be hidden out of sight, and their worth never to be appreciated?" "True," replies our guide, "they are hidden, and the thoughtless dream not of them; but the architect knows their value. They serve a grand purpose; upon them depends the strength, aye, and the beauty of the building, too." Unspeakable comfort this to many a lonely, toiling Christian. Look at that mother, the object of her children's lavish affection—their most trusted adviser in times of difficulty and doubt. But she is unknown to the world and fame. Men do not know that the strength and nobility of character which they have been accustomed to admire in her son, has a foundation in her life and heart. Let us take courage, therefore, and labour on in the dark a little while longer. We cannot pass by these pillars without stopping a minute or two to admire their strength and various beauty. III. In these pillars we see GRACE, STRENGTH, AND UTILITY COMBINED. To be a pillar in the Temple of God is the highest honour to which we can reach. Do we covet their position, their fame, or their worth? Then we must drink of the cup they have drank of, and be baptized with the baptism they were baptized with. That the Church has had such pillars, and will continue to have them, is her strength and hope. "Ah! more ornamental than useful," we exclaim, as we are called to look at some stones covered with filigree work, or highly-finished carving. "A judgment somewhat hasty and thoughtless," replies the architect. "See, this stone you have despised because of its ornament is fashioned for a keystone, and its utility will be enhanced by its beauty. This other, with all its marvellous delicacy of carving, has a sound core, and is fashioned for the capital of one of these pillars. It will add grace to the pillar, and will sustain part of its load." Hasty and thoughtless judgments are, alas! too frequent among professing Christians. By some zealous workers the men and women of culture are despised as being necessarily more ornamental than useful. They are not seen to be enthusiastic in the service of the Master, and forthwith, without a moment's calm thought, they are spoken of rather as hindrances than helps in the cause of righteousness. Have we been tempted to think so of any one? Let us see to it that we have not been doing great injustice to a keystone or a capital in God's Temple—living stones, perchance, not only more beautiful than we, but vastly more useful also. Some of the most zealous and humble Christian workers are to be found among the men and women of culture to-day. And not only is it so, but they do a work that the less cultured cannot do. Like the carved capital or keystone, they can catch the eye of the careless or sceptical men of culture and compel them, by the force of their intrinsic worth, to investigate the claims of religion. "How beautiful is the polish on this stone! How it reveals the beauty of the granite! How it flashes back the sunlight!" Such is our exclamation over a stone which our guide regards with a look of mingled tenderness and delight. "Very beautiful," he replies, "but at what cost!" and then he explains to us the hard pressure, the constant friction, and the other processes to which it had been subjected before it took on this lustrous beauty. Just so. We have a friend in whose Christian life there is a sparkle, a heavenly beauty, as exceptional as it is delightful. Would we know the secret? Then let us look into his past life. Sorrow came to his heart suddenly, overwhelmingly. "Made perfect through suffering!" How difficult the lesson! Instinctively we shrink from pain. Truly, pain is a mystery. "Hold, hold!" cries the stone to the polisher when the cold water and rough sand are thrown upon it, and the heavy polishing-plane passes over it for the first time. "Hold, hold! Why this rough treatment? What wrong have I done? Have I not already suffered at the hands of workmen?" "Peace, foolish stone," cries the polisher. "Dost thou not know that there are yet roughnesses in thy nature to be rubbed down, and wilt thou grudge the pain? Dost thou not know

that I will bring to light thy hidden beauty by this process? Thou wilt become a mirror to catch the faintest smile of heaven if thou wilt but suffer it to be so now." IV. What mean these quantities of SMALL STONES lying here and there? Is it possible that they can be used in the great building?" To which question our instructor replies, "The temple could not be built without them. There is not only a place for them, but there are places which nothing but they can fill. Unseen by the eye, these small stones supplement the deficiencies of the larger ones, and there would be many an interstice through which the wind and rain would penetrate were it not for these insignificant-looking stones." Little children living stones in God's temple! Sweet thought! What parent does not clutch at it with unspeakable joy? The fact may well fire the zeal and intensify the love of every parent and teacher of the young in pouring out their souls labouring for their weal. We would do well to ponder—1. In the first place, it is quite possible for the living stones to be deceived with regard to their position and importance. 2. In the second place, a true view of our own hearts, as well as of the importance of Christian service, will lead us to cast ourselves at the Master's feet, saying, "Choose my place for me." (*W. Skinner.*)

The Church the temple of God :—I. IT IS ORGANISED AFTER A DIVINE PLAN. 1. This is the leading plan in the world's history. 2. This plan, though unknown by men, is being worked out by them. II. IT IS COMPACTED TOGETHER INTO A NECESSARY UNITY. Supreme love for a common Father, unbounded confidence in a common Christ, life consecration to a common cause, are the indissoluble bonds of union. This union is—1. Independent of local distances. 2. Independent of external circumstances. 3. Independent of ecclesiastical systems. 4. Independent of mental idiosyncrasies. III. IT IS THE SPECIAL RESIDENCE OF THE ETERNAL SPIRIT. There is more of God to be seen in the true Church than anywhere else under heaven. In nature you see His handiwork, in saints you see His soul. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Living stones :—The only idea which I think can be legitimately connected with purity of matter, is this of vital and energetic connection among its particles; and the idea of foulness is essentially connected with dissolution and death. Thus the purity of the rock contrasted with the foulness of dust or mould is expressed by the epithet "living," very singularly given the rock in almost all languages; singularly I say, because life is almost the last attribute one would ascribe to stone but for this visible energy and connection of its particles; and so of water as opposed to stagnancy. (*J. Ruskin.*)

Cohesion in God's spiritual house :—The apostle assumes, as a matter of course, that if one is in Christ, one is also in His Church. Detached stones are mere rubble. There is contact, cohesion, mutual attachment and support in these "living stones" of God's spiritual house. Based on the "living stone," the bed-rock of the Church, they grow together into God's glorious human temple. (*G. G. Findlay.*) *Mind the temple is not built without you* :—Travellers sometimes find in lonely quarries, long abandoned, or once worked by a vanished race, great blocks squared and dressed, that seem to have been meant for palace or shrine. But there they lie, neglected and forgotten, and the building for which they were hewn has been reared without them. Beware, lest God's grand temple should be built up without you, and you be left to desolation and decay. (*A. Maclaren.*)

Living stones :—Tyndall, speaking of the frozen crystals in snowflakes, says: "Surely such an exhibition of power, such an apparent demonstration of a resident intelligence in what we are accustomed to call 'brute matter,' would appear perfectly miraculous. If the Houses of Parliament were built up of forces resident in their own bricks, it would be nothing intrinsically more wonderful." (*Hours of Exercise on the Alps.*)

An holy priesthood :—*The priesthood of the laity* :—Christians are a royal priesthood; they are united together in the Church to be a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ: the joy of priesthood should be the tasted joy of every member of the Church of Christ. True it is that in its fullest sense there is but one priest—Jesus, the anointed of the Father. No other priest can be, since He ever lives and ministers in His priesthood. But He ministers as priest under two conditions—in heaven in His glorified human body: on earth in His mystical body—the Church. When He was on the earth "in the days of His flesh," He ministered to men through His natural body. In it He interceded for them with God, and instituted and offered the holy Eucharistic sacrifice. By it He spake to them God's words, and did among them God's works. But when His body was taken up into heaven, it could not be the instrument of His priesthood on earth. So He created His mystical body—the Church. Thus the Church, as the mystical body of Christ, is the extension of His natural body, and so is the fulness of Christ. As, then, before

His ascension, Christ ministered on earth in His natural body, since His ascension He ministers on earth in His mystical body. Hence His Church is a sacerdotal society. It is a kingdom of priests, because its members are the ministers of Christ's priesthood. Its priesthood is not one existing side by side with, nor is it supplemental to, the one priesthood of Christ. It is not the delegated representative of an absent Lord fulfilling priestly ministries on His behalf; it is the organism of a present Lord. It is the organism whereby Christ intercedes with God for men in prayer and Eucharist on earth, and by which He teaches men God's faith, and ministers to them God's grace. This sacerdotal vocation and character is not the exclusive possession of any one section of the mystical body of Christ—it is common to all Christian men. Each member of the mystical body of the Great High Priest is himself a priest unto God. But he is a priest called on to minister in the unity and in the order of that mystical body. Each member in it is placed in his position in its structure to fulfil the ministry proper to him as the organ of the whole body. The priestly character is common to all, but all are not called to the same measure of priestly ministries or gifts. The priesthood of the laity is recognised by the Church in confirmation. Christians are born to priesthood in the sacrament of regeneration as sons of the second Aaron, just as Aaron's sons were born to the priesthood of Israel. But as in Israel of old those thus born were at a given age solemnly consecrated and commissioned to execute the priest's office; so in the Church of Christ the regenerate are consecrated, commissioned, and dowered, for the lay priesthood in the sacrament of confirmation. This priesthood of the laity has, as priesthood always has, a twofold aspect—Godward and manward. The Church, as a sacerdotal society, has primarily to minister to God—to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The first duty of the lay priesthood is by co-operation with the consecrated ministers of the Church to offer to God continual worship in Christian sanctuaries. Closely allied with the ministry of worship is the ministry of intercession. He whose soul ascends to God and rests in God in adoration will share with God His love to men, and, sharing this love, he will breathe it out in intercession. Moreover, as God's priest, the layman is called to minister to man for God in active service. He has his place in that great mediatorial system by which God wills to give to men the two great gifts of truth and grace. Each Christian Churchman is here in a position of grave responsibility. All wealth is a trust held by each for all. And, in addition to this, as the priest of God, the layman is called on to do what he can to bring his fellow-men into the knowledge of the truth as he knows it, and with those gracious conditions of life in which he is privileged to live. He must be an evangelist—the bearer to others of the good tidings in the joy of which he is privileged to live. Let me conclude with two cautions bearing on this question of lay priesthood. 1. Avoid individualism in its exercise. Priesthood is an official status; it exists in the body of Christ, and can only be rightly exercised according to the will of God in the unity of that body. All its ministries must be performed "decently and in order." God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, in all churches of the saints, "and peace is," as St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches us, "the harmony of ordered union." 2. The one motive of the layman in his priesthood must always be to reveal to men and to bring them to submit to the One Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, as He ministers in and through His Church. No one can rise to the realisation of his lay priesthood except he be one who, in the unity of the Church, tastes and sees the goodness of the Lord. (*Canon Body.*) *The Church the priesthood of God*:—I. THE PERSONS OF WHOM THIS PRIESTHOOD IS COMPOSED. The apostle is here writing, not to Church officers, but to individual Christians scattered throughout the world. Why should they be represented as a priesthood? 1. On account of their entire devotedness to Divine service. 2. On account of their free access to the Divine presence (Eph. ii. 18; Heb. x. 19-22). II. THE CHARACTER BY WHICH THIS PRIESTHOOD IS DISTINGUISHED. "Holy." Moral holiness is resemblance to Christ—the spirit of supreme love to the Father and self-sacrificing love for man. III. THE SERVICE TO WHICH THIS PRIESTHOOD IS CONSECRATED. 1. The sacrifices are spiritual. 2. Mediatory. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The Christian priesthood*:—The priesthood of the law was holy, and its holiness was signified by many outward things, by anointings, and washings, and vestments; but in this spiritual priesthood of the gospel, holiness itself is instead of all these, as being the substance of all. The children of God are all anointed and purified, and clothed with holiness. There is here the service of this office, namely, to offer. All sacrifice is not taken away, but it is changed from the offering of those things formerly in use to spiritual sacrifices. Now these are every way preferable:

they are easier to us, and yet more acceptable to God. How much more should we abound in spiritual sacrifice, who are eased of the other! But though the spiritual sacrificing is easier in its own nature, yet to the corrupt nature of man it is by far the harder. He would rather choose still all the toil and cost of the former way, if it were in his option. A holy course of life is called the sacrifice of righteousness (Psa. iv. 6; and Phil. iv. 18; so also Heb. xiii. 16), where the apostle shows what sacrifices succeed to those which, as he hath taught at large, are abolished. In a word, that sacrifice of ours which includes all these, and without which none of these can be rightly offered, is ourselves, our whole selves. Now that whereby we offer all spiritual sacrifices and even ourselves, is love. That is the holy fire that burns up all, sends up our prayers, and our hearts, and our whole selves a whole burnt-offering to God—and, as the fire of the altar, it is originally from heaven, being kindled by God's own love to us, and the graces of the Spirit received from Christ, but, above all, with His own merits. The success of this service; acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The children of God delight in offering sacrifices to Him; but if they could not know that they were well taken at their hands, this would discourage them much; therefore this is added. He accepts themselves and their ways when offered in sincerity, though never so mean; though they sometimes have no more than a sigh or a groan, it is most properly a spiritual sacrifice. No one needs forbear sacrifice for poverty, for what God desires is the heart, and there is none so poor but hath a heart to give Him. But meanness is not all. There is a guiltiness on ourselves and on all we offer. Our prayers and services are polluted. But this hinders not, for our acceptance is not for ourselves, but for the sake of one who hath no guiltiness at all, "acceptable by Jesus Christ." In Him our persons are clothed with righteousness. How ought our hearts to be knit to Him, by whom we are brought into favour with God and kept in favour with Him, in whom we obtain all the good we receive, and in whom all we offer is accepted! In Him are all our supplies of grace and our hopes of glory. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

The true priesthood, temple and sacrifice:—I. First, all those who are coming to Christ, daily coming nearer and nearer to Him, are as living stones built up into a TEMPLE. 1. They are called a spiritual house in opposition to the old material house in which the emblem of the Divine presence shone forth in the midst of Israel, that temple in which the Jew delighted, counting it to be beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth. When we become holy, as we should be, we shall count all places and all hours to be the Lord's, and we shall always dwell in His temple because God is everywhere. 2. We are a spiritual temple, but not the less real. The Lord has a people scattered abroad everywhere, whose lives are hid with Him in God, and these make up the real temple of God in which the Lord dwelleth. Men of every name and clime and age are quickened into life, made living stones, and then laid upon Christ, and these constitute the true temple, which God hath built and not man, for He dwelleth not in temples made with hands; that is to say, of man's building, but He dwelleth in a temple which He Himself hath builded for His habitation for ever, saying, "This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." 3. This temple is spiritual, and therefore it is living. A material temple is dead, a spiritual temple must be alive; and so the text tells us, "Ye also as living stones." 4. We are a spiritual house, and therefore spiritually built up. Peter says, "Ye are built up"—built up by spiritual means. The Spirit of God quarries out of the pit of nature the stones which are as yet dead, separating them from the mass to which they adhered; He gives them life, and then He fashions, squares, polishes them, and they, without sound of axe or hammer, are brought each one to its appointed place, and built up into Christ Jesus. 5. We are a spiritual house, and therefore the more fit for the indwelling of God who is a Spirit. It is in the Church that God reveals Himself. If you would know the Lord's love and power and grace you must get among His people, hear their experiences, learn from them how God dealeth with them, and let them tell you, if ye have grace to understand them, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, for He manifesteth Himself to them as He doth not to the world. Hath He not said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them"? II. In addition to being a temple, God's people are said to be a PRIESTHOOD. Observe that they are spoken of together, and not merely as individuals: they make up one indivisible priesthood: each one is a priest, but all standing together they are a priesthood, by virtue of their being one with Christ. 1. This stands in opposition to the nominal and worldly priesthood. 2. This priesthood is most real, although it be not of the outward and visible order; for God's

priests become priests after a true and notable fashion. 3. We are priests in the aspect of priesthood towards God. You are to speak with God on man's behalf, and bring down, each of you, according to the measure of your faith, the blessing upon the sons of men among whom you dwell. 4. And you are priests towards men also, for the priest was selected from among men to exercise necessary offices for man's good. The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and if ye be as ye should be, ye hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints. 5. This is to be your function and ministry always and in every place. You are a holy priesthood; not alone on the Lord's day when ye come into this house, but at all times. III. Consider the SACRIFICES which we offer—"spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1. We offer spiritual sacrifices as opposed to the literal. 2. This sacrificing takes various forms. "I beseech you, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." You are to present yourselves, spirit, soul, and body, as a sacrifice unto God. You are also to "do good and to communicate, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." To Him also you are to "offer the sacrifice of praise continually, the fruit of your lips giving glory to God." To the Lord also you must present the incense of holy prayer; but all these are comprehended, I think, in the expression, "I delight to do Thy will, O God." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The doctrine of sacrifice*:—The theory of sacrifice seems to be intuitively inherent in all religions. The sacrifice of the life and death of Christ is the one essential foundation of every acceptable offering which can be made to God. God never requires what we cannot offer. He never asks a sin or trespass-offering from us. You and I could not offer that. But He asks what we can give, a sweet-savour offering, as a testimony of our gratitude and love. Not a sin-offering. As far as Christ's work was propitiatory, it stands absolutely alone. "He offered one sacrifice for sin." But though no sufferings, no work, no worship, no service of ours can propitiate, God still requires from us offerings of another character. These are called "spiritual sacrifices," which we are "ordained" to offer. There is no more attractive form in which a devout life can appear than that of a constant oblation to God, of all that we are, have, or do. Let the thought of sacrifice be inwoven into the texture of your life. Study to turn, not your prayers alone, but your whole daily course and conversation, into an offering. Surely the thought that God will accept it if offered in union with the merit of His Son, is enough to give stimulus to the sacrifice; to open purse, and hand, and heart. You can please Him if you give, strive, work in His name. To please God. What a privilege to lie open to us day by day, and hour by hour! What a condescension in our heavenly Father, when we consider the strictness of His justice, the impurity of our hearts, and our manifold falls, to admit of our pleasing Him, or to leave any room for our touching His complacency. We may have this dignity if we offer all in Christ. We need not go far to seek the materials of an acceptable offering; they lie all around us; in our common work; in the little calls of providence; in the trivial crosses we are challenged to take up; nay, in the very recreation of our lives. If work be done (no matter how humble) in the full view of God's assignment of our several tasks and spheres of labour, and under the consciousness of His presence, it is a sacrifice fit to be laid upon His altar. If we study the very perversity of our enemies with a loving hope that we may find something of God and Christ about them yet, which may be the nascent germ of better things; if we try to make the best of men, and not the worst, treating them as Christ treated them, we may thus redeem an hour from being wasted, and sanctify it by turning it into a sacrifice to God. If you should obey an impulse to divert some trifle meant for self and luxury to Christ's poor and charity, here, again, is a sacrifice, sweet smelling before God, which will buy the better luxury of His smile and love. And if you regard time as, next to Christ and the Holy Spirit, the most precious gift of God; if you gather up its fragments and put them into God's basket by using them for holy things and thoughts—this, too, grows into a tribute which God will accept. It is the altar which sanctifieth the gift. Apart from Christ and Christ's sacrifice, no offering of ours is redolent of the sweet savour. For our best gifts are flecked and flawed by duplicity and evil. (*A. Mursell.*) *Christians are priests*:—Christians, you are priests. Be like Christ in this. 1. Wherever you go carry a savour of Christ. Let men take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus; let it be plain that you come from within the veil; let the smell of your garments be as a field which the Lord hath blessed. 2. Carry a sound of Christ wherever you go. Not a step, Christians, without the sound of the gospel bell! Even in smallest things, be spreading the glad sound. Edwards says, wherever a godly person enters, he is a greater blessing than if the greatest monarch

were entering. So be it with you. (*R. M. McCheyne.*) **To offer up spiritual sacrifices.**—*The Christian's sacrifices*.—1. The offering up of our bodies and souls, and all that is in us to serve God; having neither wit, will, memory, nor anything else, but for the Lord's use. It is meet we should offer this sacrifice, for it is His by right of creation, redemption, and continual preservation. 2. The sacrifice of a contrite and broken heart. 3. Prayer and praise. 4. Alms, mercy to all in hunger, thirst, sickness, prison, especially to the household of faith. (*John Rogers.*)

Ver. 6. **It is contained in the Scripture.**—*Wherein the Scriptures exceed all other writings*.—I. THEY WERE INSPIRED ALL OF THE HOLY GHOST (2 Tim. iii. 17; 2 Pet. i. 21), so were no other writings. II. THEY CONTAIN A WISDOM FAR ABOVE ALL THAT CAN BE HAD BY THE PRINCES AND MEN OF THIS WORLD (1 Cor. vi. 7). III. THEY WERE PENNED BY MORE EXCELLENT MEN THAN ANY OTHER WRITINGS: the greatest, wisest, holiest men—Moses, David, Solomon, prophets, evangelists, apostles, &c. IV. THEY HAVE SUCH PROPERTIES AS NO OTHER WRITINGS HAVE: they are more perfect, pure, deep, and immutable than any man's writings. These contain all things necessary unto faith and a good life (2 Tim. iii. 17, 18). V. IF WE CONSIDER THE EFFECTS THAT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED TO THE PRAISE OF THE SCRIPTURES, no writings can describe God so fully to us, do so bring glory to God; no Scripture but this can convert a soul (Heb. iv. 12, 13; Psa. xix. 11; cxix. 14, 15, 27). (*N. Byfield.*) **I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone.**—*The Divine foundation*.—I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION STONE, OR THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. Jesus Christ is the cardinal truth of the Christian system. 2. Jesus Christ is the central truth of Christianity. 3. Jesus Christ is the all-comprehensive truth of Christianity. Christ is Christianity. What is meant by it? Two things. (1) First, that Jesus Christ is essential to His religion. Plato is not essential to Platonism. Suppose that nothing was known of the birth, life, and death of Plato, that his writings came down to us anonymously, it would make but very little difference to his students. And what is true of Plato as a philosopher is also true of Çakya-mouni, Confucius, and Mahomet, as founders of religions. Their personalities form no integral portion of their systems. Plato said, "Accept my ideas"; Christ said, "Accept Me." Çakya-mouni said, "This is the way, by renunciation"; Christ said, "I am the Way." They, each and all, put the centres of their systems outside themselves; but Christ put the centre of His in His own person. (2) But, secondly, the phrase, Christ is Christianity, means precisely the same as when we say that the tree is the branches. The tree throws itself out into branches, and it must be patent to all that there can be no more in the branches than there is already in the tree. II. JESUS CHRIST IS THE CORNER-STONE, OR THE HARMONISING TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. He is the Corner-stone of the religions of the world; that is to say, in Him and the religion He instituted all other religions meet and are unified. 2. Jesus Christ is the Corner-stone of Christian doctrines; in other words, in Him they find the principle of their reconciliation. 3. Jesus Christ is also the Corner-stone of Christian Churches; in Him is their one point of union. III. JESUS CHRIST IS THE SURE FOUNDATION. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be confounded." 1. Jesus Christ is the sure foundation, the one truth which maintains its ground notwithstanding the fierce assaults made upon it from time to time. 2. He is a sure foundation for us to build thereupon the hope of everlasting life. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

The corner-stone.—I. STABILITY. The corner-stone upholds and is the strength of the building. So it is in the Church, whether viewed collectively, or as composed of individual Christians. Strength is in Christ alone. II. BEAUTY. Corner-stones give beauty and ornament to a building. They are often graceful and rich, and curiously wrought; and the other and ordinary stones of the building get comeliness from the very relation in which they stand to the corner-stones. Now Christ is the beauty of the spiritual temple. III. UNITY. Corner-stones are the medium by which the walls of a house, with all the several stones which compose those walls, are united in one building. Take away the corner-stones, and the sides of the house would be separated from each other. The stones of which the walls are built may be of different sizes, and of different degrees of value or beauty; yet so long as they are held together by the corner-stone, the house is one house; nor is there any stone in it however small or common but that stone is necessary to the unity of the house. It cannot be spared. Such is Christ as the precious corner-stone of the spiritual temple. (*A. C. Price.*) *The chief corner-stone*.—I. THE FOUNDATION is called here "a chief corner-stone." Jesus Christ is the alone Head and King of His Church, who gives it laws, and rules it in

wisdom and righteousness. "Elected," or chosen out for the purpose, and altogether fit for it. Isaiah hath it, "A stone of trial or a tried stone." As things amongst men are best chosen after trial, so Jesus Christ was certainly known by the Father, as most fit for that work to which He chose Him before He tried Him, as afterwards, upon trial in His life and death and resurrection, He proved fully answerable to His Father's purpose in all that was appointed Him. He was God, that He might be a strong foundation; He was man, that He might be suitable to the nature of the stones whereof the building was to consist, that they might join and cement together. "Precious," inestimably precious, by all the conditions that can give worth to any: by rareness and by inward excellency.

II. THE LAYING OF THIS FOUNDATION. It is said to be laid in Zion; that is, it is laid in the Church of God. And it was first laid in Zion, literally, that being then the seat of the Church and of the true religion. He was laid there in His manifestation in the flesh, and suffering, and dying, and rising again; and afterwards, being preached through the world, He became the foundation of His Church in all places where His name was received. He saith, "I lay"; by which the Lord expresseth this to be His own proper work, as Psa. cxviii. 23. And it is not only said, "I lay," because God the Father had the first thought of this great work, but also to signify the freeness of His grace in giving His Son to be a foundation of happiness to man, without the least motion from man, or motive in man, to draw Him to it. This, again, that the Lord Himself is the layer of this corner-stone, teaches us the firmness of it. Psa. ii. 6, "I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion"; who then shall dethrone Him? "I have given Him the heathen for His inheritance, and the ends of the earth for His possession"; and who will hinder Him to take possession of His right?

III. THE BUILDING ON THIS FOUNDATION. To be built on Christ is plainly to believe in Him. It is not they that have heard of Him, or that have some common knowledge of Him, or that are able to discourse of Him and speak of His person and nature aright, but they that believe in Him. Much of our knowledge is like that of the poor philosopher, who defineth riches exactly, and discourseth of their nature, but possesseth none; or we are as a geometrician, who can measure land exactly in all its dimensions, but possesseth not a foot thereof. And truly it is but a lifeless unsavoury knowledge that men have of Christ by books and study, till He reveal Himself and persuade the heart to believe in Him. There is in lively faith, when it is infused into the soul, a clearer knowledge of Christ and His excellency than before, and with it a recumbency of the soul upon Him, as the foundation of its life and comfort; a resolving to rest on Him, and not to depart from Him upon any terms.

IV. THE FIRMLINESS OF THIS BUILDING. "He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." This firmness is answerable to the nature of the foundation. Not only the whole frame, but every stone of it abideth sure. It is a mistake to judge the persuasion of perseverance to be self-presumption. They that have it are far from building it on themselves, but their foundation is that which makes them sure; because it doth not only remain firm itself, but indissolubly supports all that are once built on it. In the prophet whence this is cited it is, "Shall not make haste," but the sense is one. They that are disappointed and ashamed in their hopes, run to and fro, and seek after some new resource; this they shall not need to do who come to Christ.

V. THE GREATNESS AND EXCELLENCY OF THE WORK intimated in that first word, "Behold," which imports this work to be very remarkable, and calls the eyes to fix upon it. The Lord is marvellous in the least of His works; but in this He hath manifested more of His wisdom and power, and let out more of His love to mankind, than in all the rest. Look upon this "precious stone," and behold Him not in mere speculation, but so behold Him as to lay hold on Him; for we see He is therefore here set forth, that we may believe on Him; and so not be confounded, that we may attain this blessed union, that cannot be dissolved. All other unions are dissoluble. A man may be plucked from his dwelling-house and lands, or they from him, though he have never so good a title to them; may be removed from his dearest friends, if not by other accidents in his life-time, yet sure by death, the great dissolver of all such unions, and of that straitest one, of the soul with the body; but it can do nothing against this union, but on the contrary perfects it. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *Christ the one foundation*.—St. Peter, when arraigned before Annas and Caiaphas, had reminded them of that passage (Psa. cxviii. 22) which speaks of a stone cast aside by the builders as unfitted for their purpose, but afterwards, by the Lord's own act, chosen out to be "the head of the corner." The sacred irony of this contrast had evidently taken hold of his mind. In the context here he has been referring to that passage

in combination with one of Isaiah's (xxviii. 16), and applying both to the Lord Jesus, as identified with that Lord of whom another Psalmist had said, "O taste and see that the Lord is gracious." He now quotes from Isaiah, applying the title of "corner-stone" to his Master, just as St. Paul says (1 Cor. iii. 11; Eph. ii. 20). What does this ancient and sacred image, thus borrowed by St. Peter and St. Paul from the stores of Hebrew prophecy, convey to us Christians? When Isaiah was drawing near to the close of his public life, a worldly and irreligious party had risen to influence and temporary command in the kingdom of Judah. Their aim was to strengthen it by a secular policy, with an Egyptian alliance for its basis. Their thoughts, if put into modern shape, would run somewhat as follows: "Judah must be set free from the bondage of a narrow clerical interest: it is essentially a kingdom, existing side by side with other kingdoms; its needs, its emergencies, are like theirs; it must, perforce, do as they do. It must therefore shake off the tyranny of meddlesome preachers, who can only look at secular matters from their own theological point of view, and pretend to school practical men like children, with a dull iteration of precept upon precept. We have outgrown all that; it is time for common sense to reign. We know how to make safeguards for the throne and for the country, which will enable us, so to speak, to be on friendly terms with death, exempt from the peril of destruction; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come to us." Isaiah turns round upon them as the minister of Him who scorneth the scorers. "No," he says, "your hopes are vain; your covenant with death shall be cancelled; your hiding-place is a refuge of lies, and the hailstorm and the rising flood will sweep it away. The scourge, when it comes, will simply trample you down. But I will tell you where a refuge can be found; there is a stone laid by God for a sure foundation, a stone tried and precious; he that trusteth to it shall not make haste, shall not be shaken from his foothold." This refers first to that sacred character of the house of David, which belonged to it as destined to culminate in David's future pre-eminent Son, and in the fuller sense to that Son in His own Person, as realising all that could be indicated by the glorious titles of "the Emmanuel, the Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God." Because He was one day to appear, the pious in Judah would rest their hopes and stay their souls on Him. And this should be, in a far more effective sense, the experience of those who know the Christ as having come. Consider a few of the senses in which He makes good this title of corner-stone. How, do we think, did the first preachers to the heathen win converts? By appealing to men's deepest sense of need, to the felt necessity of a centralising, consolidating principle for human life. 1. Two things, at least, we must secure, if life is not to be a failure. (1) One is, something certainly true, a truth to stand by amid uncertainties. As we advance in our earthly journey, perplexities gather round on all sides. Life has not verified our first expectations; it raises questions which it does not answer; there is a confusion of theories; but where is that which we can depend upon, and grasp firmly, looking life and death in the face? The answer is in the words of Jesus, "I am the Truth." (2) Man also needs a power of moral and spiritual rectification. He believes Christ is all-precious, because He can and does help them to become pure and single-hearted, high in aim and active in duty. 2. These two great questions well answered by the acceptance of Jesus Christ, one sees how in His relation to the several doctrines and institutions of His Kingdom, He sustains the character of the One Foundation. (1) It is so in regard to doctrines. (2) He is also the foundation of all His ordinances. All the instrumental agencies whereby He waits upon the soul—the means, as we call them, or channels of His grace—derive their efficacy from Him; nay, more, it is He who is the real though unseen Minister in them all, the true Celebrant, Baptizer, Absolver, Ordainer, the sovereign Priest of His Church. 3. If Christ be, in these ways, the foundation of our spiritual life, in all its aspects, should He not be also the foundation of all that we do? (*W. Bright, D.D.*) *The corner-stone*.—I. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone, uniting JEWS AND GENTILES. 1. Jews and Gentiles met in His Person. He was of the seed of David according to the flesh, a Jew of the Jews, His genealogy complete and flawless right up to Abraham. But as we carefully survey the stream of His ancestry, we here and there discover Gentile blood flowing as tributaries to it. It is rather remarkable that the only women mentioned in the line of His pedigree are of Gentile blood and soiled character. 2. Jews and Gentiles had also a place in His ministry. The Jewish Rabbis never looked over the Wall of Separation, never gave a kindly thought to the great world without, lying in wickedness, seething in misery. Jesus Christ, however, distinctly purposed

from the first to bring Jews and Gentiles into one community—an idea absolutely original. 3. As Jesus Christ united Jews and Gentiles in His person and teaching, so He has also joined them in the Church He established. To-day we behold Jews and Gentiles, the civilised nations of the earth and the newly-reclaimed barbarians of the South Sea Islands, reclining under its refreshing shade. II. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone, uniting MEN and ANGELS. 1. Jesus Christ has united men and angels in His person. He is our countryman, cry the angels, the Lord from heaven; but He is our kinsman, men make reply. He belongs to us by the ties of citizenship, say the angels; but He belongs to us by the ties of blood, answer men. Thus angels and men can legitimately claim a share in this Son of Jesse. 2. He represents men and angels in His teaching as being one in Him. 3. Men and angels are brought together in unity in His Church. III. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone, uniting GOD and MAN. 1. Both meet in His person. 2. He brought God and man together in His ministry. The great, one might say the central doctrine of His preaching is the Fatherhood of God, and the corresponding sonship of man. 3. In the Church of Christ God and man are welded together in the bonds of closest friendship. God is reconciled to man in the sacrifice of His Son, and now He is reconciling men to Himself. Sinners are being brought into line with the corner-stone, and thus into union with God. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

Jesus Christ the corner-stone:—1. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone of religious doctrine. He was the Son of the God of truth; He was truth Himself, and He came into the world to bear witness to the truth. By His personal ministry and by the ministry of His apostles, He revealed to the fallen children of men the things which belonged to their peace. 2. Christ is the corner-stone of morality. During the whole period of His ministry He afforded a constant example of perfect obedience to the moral law. Every duty which it became Him as a man to fulfil towards men He discharged no less punctually than those obligations of which the immediate object was God. 3. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone of salvation. Through Him we are justified, sanctified; through Him we receive the inheritance of eternal life. (*T. Gisborne, M.A.*)

The corner-stone:—The figures woven into this passage are architectural. They do not, however, touch the imagination as much now as they did when they were first drawn; for we have been misled with regard to the truths they are designed to illustrate, by the degradation that has befallen the corner-stones which we plant. The corner-stone is not a foundation-stone with us. It might just as well be put at the middle of the wall as at the corner; at the top as at the bottom; and, for that matter, it might as well be put in the tower as in the wall. It is merely a ceremonial corner-stone, made to contain a few records, giving the date, the time, and what not, belonging to the building. But there are real corner-stones yet. When builders have dug down and found the bottom level, and desire to lay a foundation which no fire can reach, no water undermine, no weight sway, and lay broad and vast stones, then these stones have a marked relation to the integrity of the whole building above. If they are weak, or easily displaced, the foundation will be unstable; and when that gives way, the superstructure, no matter how carefully it may be built, will follow it. There was, however, another kind of corner-stone in former times—namely, a massive slab, which, standing upright, united to itself firmly the two side walls, and so bound together the building laterally. Both of these terms are in our text, and both of them are applied to Christ, who is represented as not only bearing up the whole structure of piety as a foundation, but binding it together as a corner-stone, or the head of the corner, so that, vertically and laterally, the building takes hold and sustains itself by the foundation and the corner-stone. This passage teaches that as a building rests upon its foundation-stones, so every Christian rests upon Jesus Christ. They are not merely connected with Him: they rest upon Him. So do they rest upon Him, that if He were to be removed from them all their religious experience would fall, as a wall would go down if its foundation-stones were taken out of the way. I. I first ask you to mark THE DISTINCTION WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN A MERE GENERAL DEPENDENCE UPON GOD, AND A CONSCIOUS PERSONAL LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS, for that is the distinction which demarks between the school of what may be called the naturalists in religion, and of evangelical Christians. It is one thing to be a believer in God's government; it is another thing to hold company with God—to behold Him, to love Him, and to commune with Him, to twine your life about Him. II. I remark, secondly, THAT THIS DIRECT, INTIMATE, HOURLY, AND DAILY LIVING WITH CHRIST, IS THE THING WHICH THE GOSPEL PROPOSES AS ITS CHARACTERISTIC AIM. Morality is a good thing. A man without it certainly cannot be a Christian, although he may not be one with it. Moralities are mere day-labourers, who dig out the roots

and clear off the weeds, and get the ground ready for something else. Morals do but plough the soil—piety is the fruitful stem, and love the fair flower which springs from the soil. It is only love that can find out God without searching. Upon its eyes God dawns. Love is that regent quality which was meant to reveal the Divine to us. It carries its own light, and by its own secret nature is drawn instantly towards God, and reflects the knowledge of Him back upon us. When love hath brought forth its central vision of the Divine, and interpreted it to all the other faculties, then they, in turn, become seers, and the soul is helped by every one of its faculties, as by so many eyes, to behold the fulness of God. III. I remark, thirdly, THAT IT IS DEEMED BY MEN VERY DELUSIVE, AND BY SOME WISE MEN UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE, IN THIS MORTAL STATE, FOR A MAN TO LIVE BY FAITH IN AN INVISIBLE BEING, so that Christ shall seem to be a present companion to him. You might as well attempt to root up an oak of a hundred years' growth as attempt to eradicate my faith in Christ present with me—Christ living with me, and I with Him, so that my life is joined to His. Imagine that I stand, tearful and tremulous, yet joyful, by the side of a magnificent picture, which electrifies me, which touches all the great fountains in my nature, causing them to rise and overflow; which translates my mind, and purifies it. As I stand looking at such a picture, a man comes to me, and says, "What are you gazing at, sir?" I begin, in broken language, to tell him what effect the picture is having upon me; and he looks at me with astonishment, and says, "Well, it may be that it affects you so, but it does not stand to reason; for it is natural to suppose that if it affected you so, it would affect me in the same way; and I do not have any such feelings as you profess to have. I am sure I would not pay a sixpence for the thing." There I stand trembling before the picture; he reviles it, because his sensibilities are all materialised. Next there comes to me a utilitarian—one of those men who think nothing good unless it be useful, and with whom use means that which is good to sell or to eat. "Is it possible," he says, "that this picture can operate upon your feelings? It makes no impression upon me whatever. I do not see how it can do such a thing. If you were to tell me that it was one of Raphael's great productions, and that it was worth five or six thousand dollars, I should understand that it had some value. You are a little touched, are you not?" Then a bloated sensualist comes to me, and says, "I would give more for one flagon of wine than for all the old painted rags on earth." He and I live in different worlds. But if none of these could be made to understand my feelings in the presence of a picture, how much less can they know the reality and glory of my feelings before that more glorious revelation of heavenly beauty which shall remain unrolled for ever and for ever, and which, as I stand before it, causes everything in me of faith, and hope, and joy, and love, to cry out! IV. NEED I SPEAK OF THE PRECIOUSNESS OF YOUR SAVIOUR? Need I call to your remembrance the experiences in which He has manifested Himself to you? Do you not remember those days of struggle and distress, through which you passed, and that day of hope and joy which succeeded them, when Christ dawned upon you, and you felt that your troubles were over, and your resistance to His will was ended, and you cried out, "My Lord and my God!" and He raised you to His bosom? Has He not revealed Himself to you, saying, "I am with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you"? The manifestation of Christ to us takes away from trouble all its sting. By and by we shall stand, every one of us, in the narrow passage of death, and there is but one Pilot there. If He comes, bright and shining, from the dark waters of the troubled sea, how sweet and precious will He be to the dying soul that has loved Him, and longed to see Him! (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Faith's sure foundation*:—I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE BELIEVER'S FAITH. "He that believeth on Him." The foundation of the believer's faith is Christ Jesus Himself. But in what sense am I to believe in Jesus Christ? 1. I reply, first, as God's appointed Saviour of men. "Behold I lay in Zion a sure foundation." We trust in Christ Jesus because God has set Him forth to be the propitiation for sin. 2. We also believe in the Lord Jesus because of the excellency of His person. We trust Christ to save us because we perceive Him in every way to be adapted by the nature and constitution of His person to be the Saviour of mankind. 3. Another ground of our reliance upon Christ is that He has actually finished the work of our redemption. There were two things to be done. The first was the keeping of the law on our behalf: that He has performed to the uttermost, even as He said to His Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." We see our Lord also doing the other part of His work, namely, suffering in consequence of our sin, and our faith becomes fully established. 4. One other truth must be mentioned, seeing that our Lord is now no longer dead,

we feel it more easy to place our confidence in Him because He ever liveth to see to the completion of our salvation. A living faith delights in a living Saviour. This is the seal of all that went before. II. THE MANNER OF THIS BELIEVING. How do we believe in Jesus Christ? Now, we have not to go a single inch to find an instructive illustration of what faith in Jesus is. The verse before us is connected with building. 1. If, then, you want to know what it is to believe on Jesus, it is to lie upon Him as a stone lies upon a foundation when the mason puts it there. Faith is leaning, depending, relying. 2. A stone rests wholly on the foundation. That is faith: resting upon Christ wholly and entirely, looking to Him for everything that has to do with our salvation. Genuine faith in Christ does not trust Him to pardon sin, and then trust itself to overcome sin. No, it trusts Christ both for the conquest of evil and for the forgiveness of it. 3. The stone laid on the foundation comes closer to that foundation every day. When a house is finished there still goes on a measure of settlement, and you are glad if it settles all in a piece together. Every day the stone is brought by its own weight a little closer to the foundation; may every day's pressure bring you and me closer to Christ. Oh, that the pressure of our joys and griefs may press us nearer to our Lord! 4. A well-built stone gets to be one with the foundation. In the old Roman walls the mortar seems to be as hard as the stones, and the whole is like one piece; you must blow it to atoms before you can get the wall away. So is it with the true believer: he rests upon his Lord till he is one with Jesus by a living union, so that you scarce know where the foundation ends and where the upbuilding begins; for the believer becometh all in Christ, even as Christ is all in all to him. III. THE EVIL WHICH WILL NEVER COME UPON THE MAN WHO BELLEVETH ON JESUS. The text says, "He shall not be confounded," and the meaning of it is, first, that he shall never be disappointed. All that Christ has promised to be He will be to those who trust Him. And then comes the next rendering—you shall never be confounded. When a man gets to be ashamed of his hope because he is disappointed in it, he casts about for another anchorage, and, not knowing where to look, he is greatly perplexed. If the Lord Jesus Christ were to fall through, what should we do? No, Jesus, we shall not be confounded, for we shall never be disappointed in Thee, nor made ashamed of our hope! According to Isaiah's version, we shall not be obliged to "make haste"; we shall not be driven to our wit's end and hurried to and fro. We shall not hurry and worry, trying this and that, running from pillar to post to seek a hope; but he that believeth shall be quiet, calm, assured, confident. He awaits the future with equanimity, as he endures the present with patience. Now, the times of our special danger of being confounded are many; but in none of these shall we be confounded. Let us just turn them over in our minds. There are times when a man's sins all come up before him like exceeding great armies. All your thoughts, words, and deeds, your bad tempers and rebellions against God—suppose they were all to rise at once, what would become of you? Why, even then, "he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." The depths have covered them, there is not one of them left. He that believeth on the pardoning Saviour shall not be confounded, though all his sins should accuse him at once. The unbelieving world outside labours to create confusion. The scientific discoverers, the possessors of boastful culture, and all the other braggars of this marvellously enlightened nineteenth century are up in arms against the believers in Jesus. Faith in Jesus can be justified before a synagogue of savans, it deserves the respect of a parliament of philosophers. To trust the Son of God incarnate, whose advent into this world is a fact better proved by history than any other that was ever on record—to trust oneself upon His atoning sacrifice is the most reasonable thing that a man can do. He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded by human wisdom, for God hath long ago confounded it and turned it into foolishness. But the world has done more than sneer; it has imitated Cain and sought to slay the faithful. There they stand. The lions are loose upon them. Do they cry for mercy, and treacherously deny Christ? They are feeble men and women; do they recant and leave their Master? Not they. They die as bravely as ever soldier fell in battle. Well, but there will come other troubles to Christians besides these, and in them they shall not be confounded. They will be tried by the flesh; natural desires will break forth into vehement lustings, and corruptions will seek to cast them down. Will believers perish then? No. He that believeth in Christ shall conquer himself, and overcome his easily besetting sins. There will come losses and crosses, business trials and domestic bereavements. What then? He shall not be confounded; his Lord will sustain him under every tribulation. At last death will come to us. We may not be able to shout "victory"; we may be too

weak for triumphant hymns, but with our latest breath we will lisp the precious name. They that watch us shall know by our serenity that a Christian does not die, but only melts away into everlasting life. We shall never be confounded, even amid the grandeurs of eternity. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 7. 8. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.—*Jesus precious to true believers* :—I. THE PERSONS, TOGETHER WITH THEIR FAITH, TO WHOM JESUS IS PRECIOUS.

1. The grace of faith, which renders Jesus precious to the soul, is not the faith of assent, or such a faith by which men credit the testimony of Jesus through the gospel. 2. It is not only a believing of Christ, but a believing in Christ—the soul's receiving of, and resting upon Him alone for righteousness, pardon, and salvation. 3. That faith works by love (Gal. v. 6). (1) This faith is ever attended with an affectionate desire of the company of Jesus Christ (Cant. iv. 6; Psa. iv. 6; Job xxiii. 3; Isa. xxvi. 8). (2) With delightful thoughts of Him (Psa. cxxxix. 17). (3) With cheerful service to Him (Psa. cxix. 4, 5). (4) Such as believe in and love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, are tender of His name and honour. (5) They are afraid to offend Him. (6) True faith in Christ, and sincere love to Him, are ever attended with the soul's longing to be more and more like Him—in humility, in patience, in service, in resignation, and in holiness. (a) It is such a faith as is the act of a living soul; for these believers, to whom Christ is precious, are said to be "new born." (b) Those to whom Jesus is precious are such as have "tasted of His grace." (c) They are described by their living by faith on Christ—"to whom coming."

II. UPON WHAT ACCOUNT IS JESUS PRECIOUS TO THEM THAT BELIEVE? I answer, in general, that it is from His suitability to them, their relation to Him, and the benefits they receive from Him. But, more particularly

—1. Jesus is precious to believers, in the constitution of His person, which is very wonderful. 2. On account of His excellent qualifications and rich anointing for His work, as Mediator between God and men. 3. On account of the discharge of His offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, in order to the salvation of His people. 4. On account of the relations that He stands in to them that believe. He is their Head of influence, and they are members of His spiritual Body. He is their Shepherd. He is their best Friend—loving, tender, compassionate, sincere, sympathising, and constant. He is their great Physician and Healer. 5. On account of the display of His transcendent love and riches of His grace in order to their salvation. 6. He is most precious to believers, as whatsoever makes any of the creatures lovely, desirable, and precious one to another, is originally in Him; it is in them as a cistern, but in Christ as an inexhaustible fountain. (1) Is beauty one ground of the creature's delighting in each other? The Lord Jesus excels them all (Psa. xlv. 2). (2) Does wisdom recommend any creature to the affection of another? The Lord Jesus is the Wisdom of God. He not only governs the world in wisdom, but as a Prophet He teaches men to know God and Himself, which is eternal life. (3) Does usefulness in any creature bespeak the affections and esteem of others? Jesus Christ is more than all the creatures put together; He is all things to His people—their light, their life, their food, their strength, their clothing and ornament, their riches and honour, their guide and leader, their healer, their advocate and intercessor, and all in all. (4) Does a meek and quiet spirit, attended with patience and humility, commonly win the esteem of fellow-creatures? Jesus Christ excels them all in these most desirable endowments; He is a perfect pattern of humility and meekness for all His disciples. (5) Does faithfulness to any trust win the love and esteem of one to another? This is eminently found in Jesus Christ (Heb. iii. 2). (6) Does sincere and ardent love in any one call for the love and esteem of others? The Lord Jesus excels them all; no creature can possibly love another at such a rate as He has done; His love is strong as death, many waters cannot quench it. And it is as free as it is great and uncommon.

III. HOW DO BELIEVERS SHOW THAT CHRIST IS PRECIOUS TO THEM? 1. By choosing Him for their own, and careful endeavour to clear up their interest in Him. 2. By their frequent and delightful thoughts of Him (Psa. cxxxix. 17). 3. By earnest desires of His presence, communion with Him (Job xxiii. 3; Psa. xlii. 1, 2). 4. They yield to Him the seat and habitation of their very hearts (Eph. iii. 17). 5. By making use of Him, for all the ends that God the Father has appointed Him. 6. By their sincere love to Him. (1) They love to think of Him, and their love inclines them to think and speak honourably of Him. (2) They love His image wherever they can perceive it (Psa. xvi. 3). (3) They love His Word (Job xxiii. 12; Rom. vii. 22). (4) They highly esteem His ordinances, and the places and means where they may enjoy Him. (5) They

are careful to keep His commandments (John xiv. 21). (6) They desire to be more and more like Him (Rom. viii. 29). (7) They rejoice in Him, and all He is made of God to them (Phil. iii. 3). (*W. Notcutt.*) *Christ precious to believers*:—I. First, this is a positive fact, that UNTO BELIEVERS JESUS CHRIST IS PRECIOUS. In Himself He is of inestimable preciousness, for He is very God of very God. He is, moreover, perfect man without sin. The precious gopher wood of His humanity is overlaid with the pure gold of His Divinity. He is a mine of jewels and a mountain of gems. He is altogether lovely, but, alas! this blind world seeth not His beauty.

II. WHY IS CHRIST PRECIOUS TO THE BELIEVER? 1. Jesus Christ is precious to the believer because He is intrinsically precious. But here let me take you through an exercise in grammar; here is an adjective, let us go through it. (1) Is He not good positively? Election is a good thing; but we are elect in Christ Jesus. Adoption is a good thing; but we are adopted in Christ Jesus and made joint-heirs with Him. Pardon is a good thing; but we are pardoned through the precious blood of Jesus. And if all these be good, surely He must be good in whom, and by whom, and to whom, and through whom are all these precious things. (2) But Christ is good comparatively. Bring anything and compare with Him. One of the brightest jewels we can have is liberty. If I be not free, let me die. Ay, but put liberty side by side with Christ, and I would wear the fetter for Christ and rejoice in the chain. Besides liberty, what a precious thing is life! "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." But let a true Christian once have the choice between life and Christ—"No," says he, "I can die, but I cannot deny." (3) And then to go higher still—Christ is good superlatively. The superlative of all things is heaven, and if it could be possible to put Christ in competition with heaven, the Christian would not stop a moment in his choice; he would sooner be on earth with Christ than be in heaven without Him. 2. Still, to answer this question again: Why is Christ precious to the believer more than to any other man? Why, it is the believer's want that makes Christ precious to him! The worldling does not care for Christ, because he has never hungered and thirsted after Him; but the Christian is athirst for Christ, his heart and his flesh pant after God. This is the one thing needful for me, and if I have it not, this thirst must destroy me. Mark, too, that the believer may be found in many aspects, and you will always find that his needs will endear Christ to him. 3. Look at the believer, not only in his wants, but in his highest earthly state. The believer is a man that was once blind and now sees. And what a precious thing is light to a man that sees! If I, as a believer, have an eye, how much I need the sun to shine! And when Christ gives sight to the blind He makes His people a seeing people. It is then that they find what a precious thing is the sight, and how pleasant a thing it is for a man to behold the sun. From the very fact that the Christian is a quickened man, he values the robe of righteousness that is put about him. The very newborn powers of the Christian would be very channels for misery if it were not for Christ. But, believer, how precious is Christ to thee in the hour of conviction of sin, when He says, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." How precious to thee in the hour of sickness, when He comes to thee and says, "I will make all thy bed in thy sickness." How precious to thee in the hour of trial, when He says, "All things work together for thy good." How precious when friends are buried, for He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." How precious in thy grey old age, "Even in old age I am with thee, and to hoary hairs will I carry you." How precious in the lone chamber of death, for "I will fear no evil, Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me." But, last of all, how precious will Christ be when we see Him as He is! All we know of Christ here is as nothing compared with what we shall know hereafter. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ precious to believers*:—I. WHAT CHRIST IS TO HIS PEOPLE. The Revised Version reads the text, "For you therefore which believe is the preciousness." His very self is preciousness itself. He is the essence, the substance, the sum of all preciousness. Many things are more or less precious; but the Lord Jesus is preciousness itself, outsoaring all degrees of comparison. 1. How do believers show that Christ is thus precious to them? (1) They do so by trusting everything to Him. Every believer stays his hope solely upon the work of Jesus. Our implicit faith in Him proves our high estimate of Him. (2) To believers the Lord Jesus is evidently very precious, because they would give up all that they have sooner than lose Him. Tens of thousands have renounced property, liberty, and life sooner than deny Christ. (3) Saints also find their all in Him. He is not one delight, but all manner of delights to them. All that they can want, or wish, or conceive, they

find in Him. (4) So precious is Jesus to believers, that they cannot speak well enough of Him. Could you, at your very best, exalt the Lord Jesus so gloriously as to satisfy yourself? (5) Saints show that in their estimation Christ is precious, for they can never do enough for Him. It is not all talk; they are glad also to labour for Him who died for them. Though they grow weary in His work, they never grow weary of it. (6) Saints show how precious Christ is to them, in that He is their heaven. Have you never heard them when dying, talk about their joy in the prospect of being with Christ? (7) If you are not satisfied with these proofs that Christ is precious to believers, I would invite you to add another yourself. Let every one of us do something fresh by which to prove the believer's love to Christ. Let us invent a new love-token. Let us sing unto the Lord a new song. Let not this cold world dare to doubt that unto believers Christ is precious; let us force the scoffers to believe that we are in earnest.

2. In thinking Christ to be precious, the saints are forming a just estimate of Him. "He is precious." For a thing to be rightly called precious, it should have three qualities: it should be rare, it should have an intrinsic value of its own, and it should possess useful and important properties. All these three things meet in our adorable Lord, and make Him precious to discerning minds.

3. The saints form their estimate of Him upon Scriptural principles. "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." We have a "therefore" for our valuation of Christ; we have calculated, and have reason on our side, though we count Him to be the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. (1) Our Lord Jesus is very precious to us as "a living stone." As a foundation He is firm as a stone; but in addition, He has life, and this life He communicates, so that we also become living stones, and are joined to Him in living, loving, lasting union. A stone alive, and imparting life to other stones which are built upon it, is indeed a precious thing in a spiritual house which is to be inhabited of God. This gives a character to the whole structure. (2) Our Lord is all the more precious to us because He was "disallowed indeed of men." Never is Christ dearer to the believer than when he sees Him to be despised and rejected of men. (3) He becomes inconceivably precious to us when we view Him as "chosen of God." Upon whom else could the Divine election have fallen? But He saith, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." The choice of Jehovah must be divinely wise. (4) Note well that the apostle calls Him "precious," that is, precious to God. We feel abundantly justified in our high esteem of our Lord, since He is so dear to the Father. (5) Moreover, we prize our Lord Jesus as our foundation. Jehovah saith, "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone." What a privilege to have a foundation of the Lord's own laying! It is and must be the best, the most abiding, the most precious foundation.

II. WHAT IT IS IN THE SAINTS WHICH MAKES THEM PRIZE CHRIST AT THIS RATE. It is their faith. "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." Faith calls Him precious, when others esteem Him "a root out of a dry ground."

1. To faith the promises concerning Christ are made. The Bible never expects that without faith men will glorify Christ. 2. It is by faith that the value of Christ is perceived. You cannot see Christ by mere reason, for the natural man is blind to the things of the Spirit. 3. By faith the Lord Jesus is appropriated. In possession lies much of preciousness. Faith is the hand that grasps Him, the mouth that feeds upon Him, and therefore by faith He is precious. 4. By faith the Lord Jesus is more and more tasted and proved, and becomes more and more precious. To us our Lord is as gold tried in the fire. Our knowledge is neither theoretical nor traditional; we have seen Him ourselves, and He is precious to us. 5. Our sense of Christ's preciousness is a proof of our possessing the faith of God's elect; and this ought to be a great comfort to any of you who are in the habit of looking within. 6. Christ becomes growingly precious to us as our faith grows. If thou doubtest Christ, He has gone down fifty per cent. in thine esteem. Every time you give way to scepticism and critical questioning you lose a sip of sweetness. In proportion as you believe with a faith which is childlike, clear, simple, strong, unbroken, in that proportion will Christ be dearer and dearer to you.

III. WHAT BELIEVERS RECEIVE FROM HIM. Take the exact translation—"Unto you that believe He is honour." 1. Honour! Can honour ever belong to a sinner like me? Worthless, base, only fit to be cast away, can I have honour? The Lord changes the rank when He forgives the sin. Thou art dishonourable no longer if thou believest in Jesus. Thou art honourable before God now that He has become thy salvation. 2. It is a high honour to be associated with the Lord Jesus. 3. It is a great honour to be built on Him as a sure foundation. A minister

once said to me, "It must be very easy for you to preach." I said, "Do you think so? I do not look at it as a light affair." "Yes," he said; "it is easy, because you hold a fixed and definite set of truths, upon which you dwell from year to year." I did not see how this made it easy to preach, but I did see how it made my heart easy, and I said, "Yes, that is true. I keep to one fixed line of truth." "That is not my case," said he; "I revise my creed from week to week. It is with me constant change and progress." I did not say much, but I thought the more. If the foundation is constantly being altered, the building will be rather shaky. 4. It is an honour to believe the doctrines taught by Christ and His apostles. It is an honour to be on the same lines of truth as the Holy Ghost. 5. It is an honour to do as Christ bade us in His precepts. Holiness is the truest royalty. 6. It will be our great honour to see our Lord glorified. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Practical trust in Christ the highest honour*:—"Unto you therefore who believe is the honour." I. Practical trust in Christ gives man the **NOBLEST CHARACTER**. What is true nobility or honour? Disinterested love is the spring and essence of a noble character, this is the soul of the hero. Where it is not, though a man be sage, statesman, poet, king, he is contemptible. How does a man get this? By practically trusting in Christ—in no other way. II. Practical trust in Christ gives man the **HIGHEST FELLOWSHIPS**. But into what society does practical trust in Christ introduce them? First, into the society of sainted sages—the great and good men of all lands and times. Secondly, into the society of holy angels—the firstborn of the Eternal. Thirdly, into the society of the great God Himself. III. Practical trust in Christ gives man the **SUBLIEST POSSESSIONS**. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The honour of believing in Christ*:—"Many will doubtless feel some regret at the loss in the Revised New Testament of the familiar words, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." The marginal reading of the Revised Version is even preferable to that of our text, "For you therefore which believe is the honour." Men object to be told that they must believe in order to know the truth, the power, the value of Christianity. 1. Faith is the condition of all knowledge. The student of natural science believes that there are hidden secrets of nature, laws unknown as yet, which will be revealed to patient investigation. Because he believes this, he laboriously toils and patiently waits. 2. Faith is the condition of all enterprise. It is because men believe, not merely in the possibility, but in the probability of the success of an undertaking that they are willing to engage in it, and even to incur toil and risk. 3. Nay, more, faith is the condition of existence. We eat because we believe that food is necessary and will nourish us. We rest at home or walk abroad because we believe in the stability of nature's laws and the goodwill of our fellow-men. 4. Faith, which is the condition of everything else, itself rests on conditions, and compliance with those conditions involves the believer in much "honour." It depends on knowledge, on experience, *i.e.*, on evidence. 5. Nor does faith rest on evidence simply, but on an emotion, on the feeling which the evidence excites, and on the will which is thereby awakened and influenced. 6. What, then, is the faith in Christ which is the condition of this honour? What do we believe about Jesus Christ? What are we called upon to believe, and on what evidence? (1) Ascending from the lower to the higher, we believe first in Jesus Christ as the ideal man. (a) Faith in the perfect humanity of Christ brings with it the assurance of immortal life and of undying sympathy. (b) And as we think of Him living still, we feel assured of His sympathy with us. For His perfection was not something inherent in Himself, something necessary and unavoidable, but a perfection attained through conflict and suffering. (2) From the belief in the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ we rise to a higher faith in His Divinity, His Deity. For we find that He stands alone in His sinlessness, in His perfection. This is, I believe, the real genesis and growth of true faith in Christ. It is through His humanity that we rise to the conception of His Deity. "The person of Christ is the perennial glory and strength of Christianity." (3) The faith attained through looking at Christ, meditating on Christ, reasoning about Christ, is developed and perfected by experience. Experience is the test of faith, of its value or worthlessness. The strongest faith, that which cannot be shaken, is that which rests on personal experience. Unto you that believe is the honour. What honour? I. IT IS THE HONOUR OF BUILDING ON A FOUNDATION WHICH CAN NEVER GIVE WAY. It is the safety of having an unfailing refuge in which to hide. We have an experience of which nothing can rob us, and a hope that maketh not ashamed, which will never disappoint, as the anchor of our soul. "Unto you that believe is the honour." II. MAN'S HIGHEST HONOUR IS TO RENDER HOMAGE TO PERFECT LOVE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS;

AND THE TRUEST HOMAGE IMITATES THAT BEFORE WHICH IT BOWS IN REVERENCE. Dishonouring Christ, men dishonour themselves. Many may admire a picture which only one could paint, and the consciousness of inability would prevent them from attempting to emulate the artist whose work fills them with delight and wonder. But if the artist were to offer to enable us to do what he had done, and assure us of his power to do so by the example and experience of numbers who had been taught by him, should we not gladly accept such an offer? Such an offer Christ makes to every one. He sets before us in His life a purity, a nobility, a righteousness which we cannot attain by ourselves, but which He can and will help us to attain. III. THE HONOUR IS THAT OF TESTIFYING TO THE POWER AND GRACE OF THIS SAVIOUR AND FRIEND OF MAN, THE HONOUR OF MAKING HIM KNOWN TO OTHERS. We can only do this as we believe in Him ourselves, and our life must prove our faith. (*A. F. Joscelyne, B.A.*) *Christ is our honour* :—The doctrine from these words is this, that Jesus Christ is an honour to all believers. 1. He is the author of honour to them. 2. He is, and ought to be, the object of honour from them. He honours them, and they do and should honour Him. I. HOW IS THE LORD JESUS THE AUTHOR OF HONOUR TO ALL TRUE BELIEVERS? We use to say concerning the king, that he is the fountain of honour, that is, all his subjects that are men of honour derive their honour from him. Others give them honour, but it is he that makes them honourable. Now King Jesus is He, and He alone, that is the fountain of honour to all true believers. 1. He hath Himself an honourable esteem of them. They are persons of honour, even the meanest of them, in His account (*Isa. xliii. 4*). 2. His will is that every one else should be in this like Himself, in having an honourable esteem of them. As when the king bestows a degree of honour upon a person, makes him a knight, or a lord, or an earl, he expects others so to regard him; so it is here (*Esther vi. 3, 6, 7*). How much soever they may be despised by others, they are the excellent of the earth in His eye because they are so in Christ's eye (*Psa. xvi. 2*). 3. He hath done that for them which in the account of men may and doth deserve that honour. What is it that He hath done for them that may be the ground of men's honouring them? (1) One ground of honouring men is upon the account of their personal excellences and endowments; some are honourable for their learning and knowledge in arts and sciences; some for their wisdom and prudence in the management of secular affairs; in the field, as soldiers; in the senate, as counsellors. Now if so, the people fearing God deserve honour indeed, for they have better knowledge than others. They from the least even to the greatest know God. And whence have they that knowledge but from Christ, who gives them an understanding? (*1 John v. 20*.) They have wisdom also, another sort of wisdom—wisdom from above in soul affairs. (2) Upon the account of their great usefulness in their particular places and stations; in court or camp, for peace or war. By their prayers, fetching down mercies, keeping off judgments, as Moses. By their pattern, they are the lights of the world. (3) Upon the account of their honourable relations wherein they stand. He that is himself in honour reflects honour upon all that are related to him. Now what are the relations of true believers? They are all the children of God, and how but by faith in Jesus Christ? (*Gal. iii. 16; John i. 12*.) And is not that a high honour? To be a servant, even the meanest, to men of honour, carries honour in it (*Psa. cxvi. 16*). Nay, they are His friends, admitted to His secrets, acquainted with His counsels (*John xv. 15*). As Hushai was a friend to David (*2 Sam. xv. 37*). Zabud to Solomon (*1 Kings iv. 5*). (4) Some are honourable on account of their honourable hopes. Young heirs are honoured for their inheritance sake, though as yet under age. (5) Some are honourable on account of their honourable offices and employments (*Rev. i. 5*)—kings and priests, so He makes them. (6) Others are honourable on account of their honourable name (*James ii. 7*). The word Christian is from Christ; all this honour have all His saints (*Psa. cxlix. 9*). II. WHAT KIND OF HONOUR IS IT THAT TRUE BELIEVERS HAVE FROM JESUS CHRIST? It hath these properties. 1. It is real honour. Other honours are but a shadow, a dream, a fancy. This hath substance in it (*Prov. viii. 21*). 2. It is righteous honour. Other honours which the honourable men of the earth have are oftentimes unrighteous—unjustly given, and unjustly taken. 3. It is heavenly honour. Other honours are from below, this is from above; other honours are upon earthly accounts, this upon heavenly. The birth of a believer is heavenly, his endowments heavenly. 4. It is harmless honour. Other honours often hurt those that have them, puff them up with pride, as Haman, but so doth not this. 5. It is unsought honour. What endeavours are there to obtain other honours,

what struggling, what bribing and waiting! 6. It is unfading honour. It is honour that lasts, it is everlasting. III. WHAT MAY WE LEARN FROM THIS SUBJECT? 1. We learn what to think of the great and glorious majesty of heaven and earth. His name, and His Son's name, is certainly upon this account to be adored by us and by all His creatures, angels and men. For what? For His infinite love and free grace in condescending in this manner to a remnant of Adam's seed, so as to put all this honour upon them. 2. We learn what to think of those who are not believers; all the ignorant, careless, unregenerate generation: certainly they have no part nor lot in this matter. They are none of those that God will honour. 3. We learn what is the true way to true honour. It is in our nature to desire it. But the misery is, we mistake our end, and consequently our way. We take those things to be wealth and pleasure and honour that are not so, and that not to be so which is so, and we pursue accordingly. 4. We learn what is our duty towards those to whom Christ is an honour. Certainly it is our duty to see them truly honourable, and to love and honour them accordingly (2 Kings xx. 12, 13). 5. We learn what is their duty to whom Christ is an honour. To make it their business to honour Him all they can. Why is He to be honoured? He is worthy that it should be so. It is the Father's will it should be so (John v. 22, 23; Col. i. 18, 19). It will be our own benefit and comfort, living and dying. We shall be no losers, but gainers by it. Wherein are we to honour Him? In general—let Him be precious to you. Have high and honourable thoughts of Him. Speak high and honourable things concerning Him, as Paul did. Do nothing to displease and dishonour Him, but everything contrary (Phil. i. 2). (*Philip Henry.*) *The preciousness of Christ:*—1. He is precious as a Redeemer from sin. The believer appreciates salvation, because he knows what it is to be lost. 2. He is precious as a manifestation of God. 3. Look at His mission. He enters into my sin and poverty to pity and to aid. 4. He is the central glory of heaven. Human loves are not extinguished, but they will be subordinated to Him. (*J. M. Buckley, D.D.*) *The preciousness of Christ:*—I. IN WHAT THIS PRECIOUSNESS CONSISTS. 1. I would mention, first, the difficulty of securing the possession of the Saviour. He is freely offered "without money and without price." Yet "all men have not faith." The reason is, that there are difficulties in the way of their believing, which is one cause why we may say that Christ is precious. 2. There are few who possess this invaluable gift; not, indeed, that there is not in Christ a sufficiency for all, but Christ can only be received in one way—by faith. You may try to discover the Saviour by your works, but you cannot find Him. 3. There is a great demand for the Saviour; not, indeed, amongst the worldly, the frivolous, the luxurious and selfish, the sensual and profane. But the demand is amongst those who are convinced of their sin. 4. There are advantages accruing to the possessor, which can leave no doubt of the preciousness of Christ. His blood is precious; His intercession is precious; His righteousness, His Word, His doctrine. II. WHO EXPERIENCE THIS PRECIOUSNESS? Gold is valueless to the infant. Pearls are as nothing to swine. And, alas! the precious blood of Jesus is to many as an unholy thing. 1. To the openly profane, Christ is as nothing. 2. The men of the world can see nothing in Christ in which they should rejoice; but they do see their lusts forbidden, and their lives condemned (Titus ii. 11, 12). 3. The luxurious experience no comfort in Christ. He who had "not where to lay His head" is a continual reproof to them. 4. Nor is Christ more precious to the formalist (Rom. x. 3, 4). 5. It is to the believer, and to the believer alone, that Christ is precious. It is the believer who has felt the burden of sin. He can say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." (1) Meditate on His name—Jesus, Saviour! How much does that word convey to a believer's heart! (2) Consider how precious to us is the sympathy of Jesus (Prov. xviii. 24; John xiii. 1). (3) Call to mind the power and strength of our Redeemer. We know that we are surrounded by enemies, that we are subject to misrepresentations, to persecutions for righteousness' sake. But Jesus, the mighty God, is on our side, and we become "more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (4) Again, behold the righteousness of Jesus. (*H. M. Villiers, M.A.*) *Christ precious to the believer:*—I. CHRIST IS PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS ON ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE IS IN HIMSELF. II. CHRIST IS PRECIOUS TO THEM WHO BELIEVE ON ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR THEM. III. CHRIST IS PRECIOUS UNTO THEM WHO BELIEVE, ON ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE HAS DONE IN THEM. IV. CHRIST IS PRECIOUS UNTO THEM WHO BELIEVE, ON ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE IS STILL DOING BOTH FOR THEM AND IN THEM. V. CHRIST IS PRECIOUS TO THEM THAT BELIEVE, ON ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE HAS PROMISED AND PLEDGED HIMSELF TO DO FOR THEM HEREAFTER. (*D. Dickson, D.D.*) *Christ precious to them*

that believe :—I. THE CHARACTER OF THEM THAT BELIEVE. 1. This is the peculiar privilege of those who are Christians indeed, whereby they are distinguished from others. "All men have not faith" (2 Thess. iii. 2). Many there are who impose upon themselves, and vainly suppose that they believe, because they entertain some speculative opinions about religion. 2. Those who believe possess not only a peculiar but an important privilege. Faith is everywhere represented in the Word of God as a Divine and powerful principle, which is of unspeakable moment to the eternal interest of men. 3. Those who believe are endowed with a useful principle. True saving faith in Jesus Christ is not a dormant disposition, but a vigorous and active grace, attended with the happiest effects. It unites to Jesus Christ. It purifies the heart from the love and power of sin. It is the source of all holy obedience to God; it worketh by love, and is fruitful in all good works. II. THE DISTINGUISHING EVIDENCE WHICH IS PECULIAR TO YOU THAT BELIEVE. (*W. McCulloch.*) *The Christ of experience* :—This is a recognition of the practical religious value of the Christ—of what He is to those who have put Him to experimental tests. All the qualities that constitute preciousness are in Him, in a degree of excellence that imagination cannot overcolour, that even love cannot exaggerate. 1. In respect of rarity, He is the only Saviour of men; the "one Mediator between God and man"; the only hope of sinful souls. 2. In respect of beauty, He is the perfection of all moral excellence. 3. In character He is ideally good, pure, devout, benevolent, loving. 4. His work, as the Redeemer of men, realises our very loftiest conceptions—first, of moral philosophy; next, of spiritual holiness; next, of self-sacrificing love. 5. In respect of serviceableness, of personal beneficial relations to men, as their Redeemer from sin, His preciousness transcends all our words or thoughts. (1) We might apply a comparative test, and put the preciousness of Christ into comparison with all other possessions of our human life. How does our practical judgment estimate Him? Or we might subject Him to a comparative estimate with other good men; His character with that of all other saints; His teaching with that of all other prophets; His redeeming work with all other schemes for human improvement. How instinctively we give Him the transcendency! (2) Our estimates are largely influenced by the judgments of others. Let us think, then, of the estimate put upon Christ's character and work by other moral beings. Is it not significant of His excellence that He attracts the most readily and attaches the most profoundly the holiest and noblest natures? (3) The conclusive appeal, however, is to the conscious experience of our own religious souls: "If so be we have tasted that the Lord is gracious." This is the ground upon which myriads of religious men, men whose knowledge is limited, whose theology is confused, whose reason is easily baffled, who are able neither to defend their Christianity, nor theoretically to understand it, justly trust in Him. They have personally come to Christ; He has consciously quickened the life and the love of their souls; they "know that they have passed from death unto life," that "whereas once they were blind, now they see." His Divine presence witnesses in their souls. In some mystic way He is their daily Saviour, and Sanctifier, and Comforter. I. Is not Christ precious to us WHEN WE GROPE AND STUMBLE AT THE MYSTERY OF GOD, when we feel that "the gods of the heathen are no gods"? When we cannot by any searching of our own find out God; when a thousand possibilities of ignorance and superstition torment us with vague and nameless fears; what a marvellous revelation of light and power of assurance it is when Jesus Christ puts before us His great teaching of God; when, with the strong confidence, and in the quiet ways of perfect knowledge, He tells us of the Father! Upon the conceptions of God which Jesus Christ has taught us our religious life rests. These ideas are the practical inspirations of what we are and do. In the sore feeling of our rebelliousness and guilt we go to Him, as the prodigal to his father, to ask the generous forgiveness of His fatherly love. In the helplessness of our need we cast ourselves upon the care of Him who clothes the lily and feeds the raven. Whether true or not, this conception of God is the greatest, the most inspiring, the most satisfying thought ever presented to men; the highest, purest, most endearing that the world has known. II. How precious the Christ is WHEN THE SENSE OF SIN IS QUICKENED within us, when we awaken to the grave culpability of its guilt, when we realise its essential antagonism to the Divine holiness, its transgression of God's inviolable law, the imperative necessity of its dread penalty of death! The moral sense, the conscience within me, that which makes me a moral being, demands atonement for sin as much as my safety does. Mere security is no moral satisfaction to a righteous being. I could not be happy in the salvation of Christ if I were saved as a man is saved who breaks prison, or to whom the prison

doors are illicitly opened; if I were saved at the cost of a single righteous principle. How unspeakably precious, then, the Christ when He is "set forth as a propitiation for sin," "who Himself bare our sin in His own body on the tree." "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." True or not true, it is, to say the least, a theory of forgiveness, the most perfect and satisfactory to all the feelings of our moral nature.

III. How precious again is the Christ in OUR STRUGGLE WITH PRACTICAL EVIL, as we fight with lusts, resist temptation, overcome worldliness, subdue selfishness, or mourn over failures and falls! How assuring and helpful His perfect life, His promised grace, His ready and tender sympathy! But for Him we should have despaired in our degradation and helplessness. Again we say, this conception of Him, true or not, is practically the greatest moral force that we feel. Therefore He is precious to us, because He enables the moral redemption of our soul.

IV. How precious the Christ is IN TIMES OF GREAT SORROW; when we stand by open graves, and "refuse to be comforted because those whom we love are not"! How He comes to us, as He came "from beyond Jordan to Bethany"! How He talks with us about "the resurrection and the life"! How He weeps with us in the silence of ineffable sympathy! V. And how precious He is IN OUR OWN MORTAL CONFLICT; when "the shadow feared of man" falls upon ourselves; when "heart and flesh fail"; when human love falls away from us, and we hear its receding voices as we go forward alone into the dark valley! "Into His hands we commit our spirit"; "His rod and staff comfort us"; His hand clasps ours; He leads us through the darkness into the eternal light and life. (*H. Allon, D.D.*)

*Christ precious to believers:—*I. THAT JESUS CHRIST IS NOW PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS. Notice attentively how personally precious Jesus is. There are two persons in the text: "Unto you that believe He is precious." You are a real person, and you feel that you are such. You have realised yourself; you are quite clear about your own existence; now in the same way strive to realise the other Person. "Unto you that believe He is precious." You believe in Him, He loves you; you love Him in return, and He sheds abroad in your heart a sense of His love. Notice, too, that while the text gleams with this vividness of personality, to which the most of professors are blind, it is weighted with a most solid positiveness: "Unto you that believe He is precious." It does not speak as though He might be or might not be; but "He is precious." If the new life be in thee, thou art as sure to love the Saviour as fish love the stream, or the birds the air, or as brave men love liberty, or as all men love their lives. Tolerate no peradventures here. Mark, further, the absoluteness of the text, "Unto you that believe He is precious." It is not written how precious. The text does not attempt by any form of computation to measure the price which the regenerate soul sets upon her Lord. The thought which I desire to bring out into fullest relief is this, that Jesus Christ is continually precious to His people. Unto you that believe, though you have believed to the saving of your soul, He is still precious; for your guilt will return upon your conscience, and you will yet sin, being still in the body, and thus unto you experimentally the cleansing atonement is as precious as when you first relied upon its expiating power. Nay, Jesus is more precious to you now, for you know your own needs more fully, have proved more often the adaptation of His saving grace, and have received a thousand more gifts at His blessed hands.

II. LET US THINK HOW CHRIST IS TO-DAY PRECIOUS TO YOU. To many of you there is as much in Christ undiscovered as you have already enjoyed. As surely as your faith grasps more, and becomes more capacious and appropriating, Christ will grow in preciousness to you. Ask, then, for more faith.

III. BECAUSE JESUS IS PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS HE EFFICACIOUSLY OPERATES UPON THEM. The preciousness of Christ is, as it were, the leverage of Christ lifting up His saints to holiness. Let me show you this.

1. The man who trusts Christ values Christ; that which I value I hold fast; hence our valuing Christ helps us to abide steadfast in times of temptation.
2. Notice further: this valuing of Christ helps the believer to make sacrifices. Sacrifice-making constitutes a large part of any high character. He who never makes a sacrifice in his religion may shrewdly suspect that it is not worth more than his own practical valuation of it.
3. Moreover, this valuing of Christ makes us jealous against sin. He who loves the Redeemer best purifies himself most, even as his Lord is pure.
4. High valuing of Christ helps the Christian in the selection of his associates in life. If I hold my Divine Lord to be precious, how can I have fellowship with those who do not esteem Him? You will not find a man of refined habits and cultured spirits happy amongst the lowest and most illiterate. Birds of a feather flock together. Workers and traders unite in companies according to their occupations.

Lovers of Christ rejoice in lovers of Christ, and they delight to meet together; for they can talk to each other of things in which they are agreed. IV. CHRIST BEING THUS PRECIOUS, HIS PRECIOUSNESS BECOMES THE TEST OF OUR CHRISTIANITY. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The precious Saviour*:—There are very few people who would not agree with the apostle when he says that Christ is precious to believers. But when one comes a little closer, and asks professing people why He is precious to them, and in what degree, the answers to this question are vague. It is not of Christ Himself that most professors will speak. Some will say they need His righteousness, others that they hope in His death; but ah! the genuine child of God alone can say, from the very bottom of his heart, "To me Christ is precious." Christ's righteousness cannot be separated from Himself, and nothing but faith in a living, reigning Jesus will save the soul. But now, to apply the subject more directly, we shall briefly notice a few characteristics in believers themselves which seem to show that to them Christ is precious. 1. Innumerable marks might be given, but here is a distinguishing one—Christ is the object nearest to a believer's heart. He dwells in the soul, nearer than any creature—more closely entwined round the heart-strings than aught beside. 2. The second mark of the believer's value for the Lord Jesus is, that he puts no society in comparison with His presence; no other company has such power to refresh and comfort and purify the soul. 3. The third proof of the estimation in which Christ is held by His people is that, for His sake, and for the love they bear Him, they give up all known sins. 4. The fourth proof that we shall now mention is that where Jesus is precious His ordinances are highly prized—we shall value His Word, alone and in the family, as well as in the house of God. And so also with His house, His table, His Sabbath. 5. Again, God's people are precious to the believer. 6. Another mark that Christ is precious to believers is that they are longing for His second coming. The way to heaven is to be in Christ; and heaven is to be with Christ. (W. C. Burns.) *Christ precious to all true believers*:—"To you therefore which believe, He is precious." The illative particle "therefore" shows this passage as an inference from what went before; and the reasoning seems to be this: "This stone is precious to God, therefore it is precious to you that believe. You have the same estimate of Jesus Christ which God the Father has; and for that very reason He is precious to you, because He is precious to Him." 1. He is precious to all the angels of heaven. Angels saw, believed, and loved him in the various stages of His life, from His birth to His return to His native heaven. Oh, could we see what is doing in heaven at this instant, how would it surprise, astonish, and confound us! Do you think the name of Jesus is of as little importance there as in our world? Do you think there is one lukewarm or disaffected heart there among ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands? Oh no! there His love is the ruling passion of every heart and the favourite theme of every song. 2. He is infinitely precious to His Father, who thoroughly knows Him, and is an infallible judge of real worth (Isa. xlii. 1). And shall not the love of the omniscient God have weight with believers to believe Him too? And now what think you of Christ? Will you not think of Him as believers do? If so, He will be precious to your hearts above all things for the future. Oh precious Jesus! are matters come to that pass in our world that creatures bought with Thy blood, creatures that owe all their hopes to Thee, should stand in need of persuasion to love Thee? What horrors attend the thought! (1) None but believers have eyes to see the glory of Christ. The god of this world, the prince of darkness, has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into them. (2) None but believers are properly sensible of their need of Christ. They are deeply sensible of their ignorance and the disorder of their understanding, and therefore they are sensible of their want of both the external and internal instructions of this Divine Prophet, but as to others they are puffed up with intellectual pride, and apprehend themselves in very little need of religious instructions, and therefore they think but very slightly of Him. (3) None but believers have known by experience how precious He is. They, and only they, can reflect upon the glorious views of Him, which themselves have had, to captivate their hearts for ever to Him. (S. Davies, M.A.) *Christ more than precious*:—"When asked by a member of his family as to his hope he answered: 'I am a sinner saved by grace,' and added, 'Jesus!—Oh, to be like Him!' At another time he said: 'To you that believe He is precious.' Then with stronger voice he broke forth into holy rapture, and exclaimed: 'Precious, precious, more than precious!' The writer of this notice, highly honoured with the friendship of the

family, saw Mrs. Simpson a few minutes after the bishop had spoken these words. While her heart was breaking, she murmured amid her sobs, 'Precious, precious, more than precious!' She might well say: 'No one knew him as we did at home. He was so good and kind. We thought he would be spared to us a little longer.' Then she turned again to his comforting words about his Lord: 'Precious, precious, more than precious.' They sound as a refrain after his 'Psalm of life.'" (*Memoir of Bishop Simpson.*) *Where Christ is valued He will be made known:*—If He is precious to you, you cannot help speaking about Him. We remember, in a house which we used to visit, an ornament under a glass shade which delighted the children. It was a gilt casket, with a cameo on the top, and inside a nugget of gold, the ore in its rough state. It had been brought from Australia, and was kept locked up and rarely seen. No one was the richer for that gold. There are many saved ones now who have the priceless nugget, the living Christ, whom they would not part with for worlds; but He is hidden in the deep recess of their soul, and no one is the richer. You must breathe out and pass on that name of Jesus; there is in it a living power, more than that of the philosopher's stone, of turning all into gold. *The preciousness of Christ:*—I like what was said by a child in the Sunday school, when the teacher said, "You have been reading that Christ is precious; what does that mean?" The children were silent for a little while, but at last one boy replied, "Father said the other day that mother was precious, for 'whatever should we do without her!'" This is a capital explanation of the word. You and I can truly say of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is precious to us, for what should we do, what could we do without Him? **Them which be disobedient.**—*Disobedience the converse of faith:*—It is eminently worthy of notice that over against "believe" in ver. 6 stands, not its exact correlative "unbelieving," but "disobedient." They who receive Christ believe: you would expect to read conversely, they who reject Him are unbelieving; but instead, you read that they are disobedient. People raise a great debate upon the question whether a man is responsible for his belief, and whether he can be condemned for not believing. Quietly this debate is all quashed here by the representation that unbelief is disobedience. Unbelief is indeed the root, but the outgrowth is disobedience. (*W. Arnot.*) **The stone which the builders disallowed.**—*Christ rejected by the Jews:*—1. To show that God had purposed the salvation of His Church and building of His kingdom by a way that the wise men of the world never dreamed of. 2. That their malice might appear to their punishment, and God's power in resisting them. 3. To show that great men are not always the greatest maintainers of the truth, but often great enemies and hindrances thereto. **Uses:** 1. This serves to teach us not to stand upon great men's opinion, approving and disallowing upon their testimony or example. 2. To magnify the power and wisdom of God, that hath used to build His kingdom, not only without the help, but against the will of great men. (*John Rogers.*) *The stone which the builders disallowed*—I. A GREAT OPPORTUNITY MISSED. Who are the builders? All the sons and daughters of men. But there are blind builders that reject the "chief corner-stone." They cannot perceive the glory of the largest and divinest truth. The causes of this blindness are manifold—worldliness, prejudice, and intellectual pride. The immediate cause is ever a superficial spirituality, however it may be produced. II. TRUE GREATNESS IGNORED AND NEGLECTED. The neglect suffered by the prophet in his own age is proverbial. He lets in the glory from the eternal into this half-blind world until it becomes a pain, and he is accused of being the enemy of his generation. We pride ourselves that such a history is a thing of the past, that we enlightened ones honour our prophets. It is for a future generation to discover whether we have done so. "Demos" is emphatically the builder to-day. Is the democracy laying the foundations of its temple on the "corner-stone" of Divine and eternal truth? But there is ever great danger that "the spirit of the age" may ignore the divinest message that is delivered to it. III. THE CERTAIN SUPREMACY OF TRUTH. The divinest truth must ultimately become the "chief stone of the corner." False prejudices are powerful, and may seem for a time all supreme. Truth is God, and God is truth. The eternal energies have the world in their grip, and "He must reign for ever and ever." IV. THE WORDS FIND THEIR IDEAL FULFILMENT IN JESUS CHRIST. Unspeakably magnificent was the opportunity lost by the Jewish nation. God guard us from similar blindness! May the Christ be apprehended by us in all the fulness of His glory, so that we may not be ashamed when He appears to reign. (*John Thomas, M.A.*) **A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.**—*Jesus, the stumbling-stone of unbelievers:*—I. THE RESULT OF THE UNBELIEF, AND

THE OPPOSITION OF MEN, UPON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1. First came the Jew. He had the pride of race to maintain. Were not the Jews the chosen people of God? Jesus comes preaching the gospel to every creature, He sends His disciples even to the Gentiles: therefore the Jews will not have Him. But the opposition of His countrymen did not defeat the cause of Christ; if rejected in Palestine, His word was received in Greece, it triumphed in Rome, it passed onward to Spain, it found a dwelling-place in Britain, and at this day it lights up the face of the earth. 2. Next arose philosophy to be the gospel's foe. But though it made terrible inroads for a while on the Church of God, in the form of gnostic heresy, did it really impede the chariot wheels of Christ? The stone from the sling of Christ has smitten the heathen philosophy in the forehead, while the Son of David goes forth conquering and to conquer. 3. After those days there came against the Church of God the determined opposition of the secular power. All that cruelty could do was done; but what was the result? The more the Christians were oppressed, the more they multiplied; the scattering of the coals increased the conflagration. 4. Since that period the Church has been attacked in various modes. The Arian heresy assaulted the deity of Christ, but the Church of God delivered herself from the accursed thing, as Paul shook the viper into the fire. Be of good courage, for brighter days are on the way. There shall come yet greater awakenings, the Lord, the avenger of His Church, shall yet arise, and the stone which the builders disallowed, the same shall be the head stone of the corner. II. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS OPPOSITION TO THE OPPOSERS. 1. When men stumble at the plan of salvation by Christ's sacrificial work, what is it that they stumble at? (1) Some stumble at the person of Christ. Jesus, they will admit, was a good man, but they cannot accept Him as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. (2) Some stumble at His work. Many cannot see how Jesus Christ is become the propitiation for human guilt. (3) Some stumble at Christ's teaching; and what is it they stumble at in that? Sometimes it is because it is too holy: "Christ is too puritanical, He cuts off our pleasures." But He denies us no pleasure which is not sinful, He multiplies our joys; the things which He denies to us are only joyous in appearance, while His commands are real bliss. We have found some object to the teachings of Christ because they are too humbling. He destroys self-confidence, and He presents salvation to none but those who are lost. "This lays us too low," saith one. Still I have known others object that the gospel is too mysterious, they cannot understand it, they say. While again, from the other corner of the compass, I have heard the objection that it is too plain. Do not cavil at it. What if there be mysteries in it? Canst thou expect to comprehend all that God knoweth? Be thou teachable as a child, and the gospel will be sweet to thee. (4) We have known some who have stumbled at Christ on account of His people, and truly they have some excuse. They have said, "Look at Christ's followers, see their imperfections and hypocrisies." But wherefore judge a master by his servants? 2. What does the stumbling at Christ cost the ungodly? I answer, it costs them a great deal. (1) Those who make Him a rock of stumbling are great losers by it in this life. What anger it costs ungodly men to oppose Christ! Some of them cannot let Him alone, they will rage and fume. Concerning Jesus it is true that you must either love or hate Him, He cannot long be indifferent to you, and hence come inward conflicts to opposers. (2) Ah, what it costs some men when they come to die! If you oppose Him you will be the losers, He will not. Your opposition is utterly futile; like a snake biting a file, you will only break your own teeth. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Dangerous to stumble* :—A bridge is made to give us a safe passage over a dangerous river; but he who stumbleth on the bridge is in danger to fall into the river. (*J. Trapp.*)

Vers. 9, 10.—**But ye are a chosen generation.**—*The true Israel* :—I. "Ye are a CHOSEN GENERATION"—the word "generation" here meaning not contemporaries but the offspring of one common parent, the offshoots of one original stock. 1. The Israelites were a special "generation," having sprung from Abraham as their common progenitor. Similarly, believers are a distinct "generation" of men, being all born of one God, and animated by the self-same Divine life. Consequently a striking family likeness prevails among them. 2. The Jews were, moreover, a "chosen generation"—called out of the darkness of Chaldean idolatry to the marvellous light of Divine revelation. And so it is with believers now. 3. "Ye are a chosen generation, that ye should show forth the praises—the excellences—of Him who hath called you." The mistake of the Jews was to take

for granted that they were chosen to show forth their own excellences. Their election they converted into food for pride. Let us remember the Church is a generation to show forth the excellences of God. Through good men, not necessarily great men, does God reveal His character; through holy men, not necessarily able men, does He make known the benevolence, the uprightness, the genial warmth of His nature. II. "Ye are a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD"—a phrase borrowed from Ex. xix. 6. 1. The Jewish nation was a nation of priests, its fundamental idea being religious, not secular. This idea is now embodied in the Christian Church. Every believer is now a priest, having a right to enter into the Holiest of all. 2. "A royal priesthood." "Ye are kings and priests"—kings over yourselves and priests unto God. 3. "Ye are a royal priesthood, to show forth the excellences of Him who hath called you." By your holy conversation, upright demeanour, you are to show forth the character of your God. III. "Ye are a HOLY NATION." 1. The Israelites in Egypt were a "chosen generation," but not a "holy nation." Not till they were established in their own land, with laws and a king of their own, did they develop into a nation. Believers, scattered in the world, without mutual recognition, might be of the right seed; but not till they attach themselves to a Christian institution, variously termed the kingdom or the Church, do they become a nation. 2. "A holy nation." God set the Israelites apart from all the world. He made them what all nations ought to be—holy. True, they did not live up to their profession; but in theory, in ideal, they were holy. 3. As a people bound together for the purposes of holiness, we should show forth the excellences of our God. As a holy nation, scattered amongst all the nations of Europe, we ought to propagate the principles of God's kingdom. IV. "Ye are a PECULIAR PEOPLE." 1. "Ye are a people." The Israelites were brought out of Egypt a host of undisciplined slaves, capabilities of great things slumbering within them, but only half civilised. But after forty years' pilgrimage in the wilderness, God was able to form them into a people, and settle them in the land promised unto their fathers. And in our natural state, we cannot be said to be a people in the true sense of the word, bound together by rational and spiritual ties. As individuals you can hardly be said to really exist till you believe. "Of Him ye are in Christ Jesus." Ye were not before, but now ye are—you live in the higher ranges of the soul. Before you only lived in your animal nature—you did not live the distinctive life of man. But through union with Christ first, and with the Church afterwards, you fulfil the idea of your being, you live in the higher faculties instead of the lower, having higher purposes and different interests from the rest of the world. 2. "Ye are a peculiar people," the word "peculiar" here being used in its etymological, not its colloquial sense, as meaning property, not singularity. "These people have I formed for Myself—they are My very own." 3. But mark, we are God's, purchased at a great price, in order that we may tell forth with a loud voice His praises. The word for "show forth" means literally "to proclaim to those without what has taken place within." Here Israel failed. Let the Christian Church beware of committing the same mistake—God has purchased us to be His special possession, on purpose that we should proclaim to the world lying in darkness the excellences of His love in the Gospel of His Son. We must either send or carry the light to the heathen. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) *The Christian estate*:—I. THE STATE OF CHRISTIANS, "a chosen generation;" so in *Psa. xxiv.* The psalmist there speaks first of God's universal sovereignty, then of His peculiar choice. As men who have great variety of possessions have yet usually their special delight in some one beyond all the rest, and choose to reside most in it, and bestow most expense on it to make it pleasant; so doth the Lord of the whole earth choose out to Himself from the rest of the world a number that are a chosen generation. "Generation." This imports them to be of one race or stock. They are of one nation, belonging to the same blessed land of promise, all citizens of the New Jerusalem, yea, all children of the same family, whereof Jesus Christ, the root of Jesse, is the stock, who is the great King and the great High Priest. And thus they are a "royal priesthood." They are of the seed-royal, and of the holy seed of the priesthood, inasmuch as they partake of a new life from Christ. Thus, in *Rev. i. 5, 6*, there is first His own dignity expressed, then His dignifying us. There is no doubt that this kingly priesthood is the common dignity of all believers; this honour have all the saints. They are kings, have victory and dominion given them over the powers of darkness and the lusts of their own hearts, that held them captive and domineered over them before. This royalty takes away all attainders, and leaves nothing of all that is

past to be laid to our charge, or to dishonour us. Believers are not shut out from God as they were before, but, being in Christ, are brought near unto Him, and have free access to the throne of His grace. They resemble, in their spiritual state, the legal priesthood very clearly. 1. In their consecration. The levitical priests were washed; therefore this is expressed (Rev. i. 5), "He hath washed us in His own blood," and then follows, "and hath made us kings and priests." 2. Let us consider their services, which were diverse. They had charge of the sanctuary, vessels, lights, and were to keep the lamps burning. Thus the heart of every Christian is made a temple to the Holy Ghost, and he himself, as a priest consecrated unto God, is to keep it diligently, and the furniture of Divine grace in it; to have the light of spiritual knowledge within him, and to nourish it by drawing continually new supplies from Jesus Christ. The priests were to bless the people. And truly it is this spiritual priesthood, the elect, that procure blessings upon the rest of the world, and particularly on the places where they live. 3. Let us consider their course of life. We shall find rules given to the legal priests, stricter than to others, of avoiding legal pollutions, &c. And from these, this spiritual priesthood must learn an exact holy conversation, keeping themselves from the pollutions of the world: as here it follows: "A holy nation," and that of necessity; if a priesthood, then holy. II. THE OPPOSITION OF THE ESTATE OF CHRISTIANS TO THAT OF UNBELIEVERS; we are most sensible of the evil or good of things by comparison. Though the estate of a Christian is very excellent and, when rightly valued, hath enough in itself to commend it, yet it doth and ought to raise our esteem of it the higher, when we compare it both with the misery of our former condition, and with the continuing misery of those that abide still and are left to perish in that woeful estate. We have here both these parallels. The happiness and dignity to which they are chosen and called, is opposed to the rejection and misery of them that continue unbelievers and rejectors of Christ. III. THE END OF THEIR CALLING. That ye should show forth the praises, &c. To magnify the grace of God the more, we have here: 1. Both the terms of this motion or change, from whence and to what it is. 2. The principle of it, the calling of God. (1) From darkness. The estate of lost mankind is indeed nothing but darkness, being destitute of all spiritual truth and comfort, and tending to utter and everlasting darkness. And it is so, because by sin, the soul is separate from God, who is the first and highest light, the primitive truth. And the soul being made capable of Divine light, cannot be happy without it. And as the estate from whence we are called by grace is worthily called darkness, so that to which it calls us deserves as well the name of light. Christ likewise, who came to work our deliverance, is frequently so called in Scripture, not only in regard of His own nature, being God equal with the Father and therefore light, but relatively to men: "The life was the light of men." There is a spirit of light and knowledge flowing from Jesus Christ into the souls of believers, that acquaints them with the mysteries of the kingdom of God, which cannot otherwise be known. And this spirit of knowledge is withal a spirit of holiness; for purity and holiness are likewise signified by this light. Then from this light arise spiritual joy and comfort, which are frequently signified by this expression. There are two things spoken of this light, to commend it, "His marvellous light;" that is—it is after a peculiar manner God's—and it is marvellous. All light is from God, the light of sense, and that of reason; therefore He is called the Father of lights. But this light of grace is after a peculiar manner His, being a light above the reach of nature, infused into the soul in a supernatural way, the light of the elect world, where God specially and graciously resides. Now this light being so peculiarly God's, no wonder if it be marvellous. And if this light of grace be so marvellous, how much more marvellous shall the light of glory be, in which it ends! Hence learn to esteem highly of the gospel, in which this light shines unto us; the apostle calls it therefore the glorious gospel. Surely we have no cause to be ashamed of it, but of ourselves that we are so unlike it. (2) The principle of this change, the calling of God. "He hath called you." Those who live in the society and profess the faith of Christians, are called unto light, the light of the gospel that shines in the Church of God. Now this is no small favour, while many people are left in darkness and in the shadow of death, to have this light arise upon us and to be in the region of it, the Church, the Goshen of the world; for by this outward light we are invited to the happy state of saving inward light, and the former is here to be understood as the means of the latter. This is God's end in calling us, to communicate His goodness to us, that so the glory of it may return to Himself. As this is God's end, it ought to be ours, and therefore ours because it is His. And for this

very purpose, both here and elsewhere are we put in mind of it, that we may be true to His end and intend it with Him. This is His purpose in calling us, and therefore it is our great duty, being so called, to declare His praises. All things and persons shall pay this tribute, even those who are most unwilling; but the happiness of His chosen is, that they are active in it, others are passive only. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

The Church of Christ:—I. THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH. 1. "An elect race." Separated, called, chosen, quickened. Not a casual result out of ordinary forces. II. HER FUNCTION IN THE WORLD—"a royal priesthood." Here king and priest are blended to show the power and function of the priesthood. We plead with man for God and with God for man: the regal kings are the saints of God. III. THE BEAUTY OF HER CHARACTER—"a holy nation." With us holiness frequently is a bundle of negation, an emptiness; but holiness is a cluster of positive glories, the glory of courage, the gleam of tenderness, the radiancy of mercy. IV. HER PRECIOUSNESS TO GOD. "A peculiar people." His delight, joy, resting-place. It is easy to depreciate. It takes a wise man to see the background as well as the figure on it. If the Church can be chosen, royal, priestly, beautiful, dear to God, she wants no earthly help. V. HER WORK IN THE WORLD—"that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." 1. Every quickened soul has its own story to tell. There is a gospel according to you and me. The truth of God is the gathering up of all these gospels. 2. We have the power to utter praise. 3. We have the motive—gratitude for deliverance from darkness. (*R. Glover, D.D.*)

The glory of the Church as a commonwealth:—I. THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH IN ITS CHARACTERISTICS. A people for God's own possession. First, by acquirement—"He gave," &c.; second, by endearment—"He loved," &c. II. THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH IN ITS MISSION. Here is its great purpose—"That." This throws us back on the thought in the word "elect"—chosen for what end, choice for what uses? The purpose is: 1. A great manifestation. "That ye may show forth." Tell out by word and deed some great message. 2. A great manifestation of the true greatness of God. "The excellencies of Him." The virtues, the glories of God; what (1) a lofty theme; (2) boundless theme; (3) sacred theme. 3. A manifestation of the excellencies of God in blessing men. "Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." The Spirit of God calls from (1) the darkness of ignorance; (2) the darkness of guilt; (3) the darkness of dread. The Spirit of God calls to (a) the "marvellous light" of truth; (b) the "marvellous light" of holiness; (c) the "marvellous light" of love; (d) the "marvellous light" of heaven. III. THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH IN ITS PRESENT CONDITION AS CONTRASTED WITH THE PAST HISTORY OF ITS MEMBERS. "Which in times past"—the mention of this is to kindle gratitude, to inspire humility, to awaken watchfulness. (*Homilist.*)

A royal priesthood.—*Every baptized man a priest of God*:—I. It is amongst the most common, and certainly not the least dangerous, of THE MISTAKES OF THE PRESENT DAY TO IDENTIFY THE CHURCH WITH THE CLERGY, AS THOUGH THE LAITY WERE NOT TO THE FULL ONE OF ITS CONSTITUENT PARTS. I am indeed a minister of the Church, but not on that account more a member of the Church than any of those amongst whom I officiate. We are not speaking of what that community may be by practice, but only of what it is by profession; and of what it would be if it acted up to the obligations taken on itself. Let a parish of nominal Christians be converted into a parish of real Christians, so that there should not be one within its circuit who did not adorn the doctrine of the gospel; and what should we have but a parish of priests to the living God? We call it a parish of priests, because we can feel that it would be as a kind of little sanctuary in the midst of a country or city, which might elsewhere be deformed by great ignorance and profligacy. There would be no trenching upon functions which belong exclusively to men who have been ordained to the service of the temple; but, nevertheless, there would be that thorough exhibition of Christianity, which is amongst the most powerful of preaching, and that noble presentation of every energy to God, which is far above the costliest of sacrifices and burnt-offerings. And you will easily see that, in passing from a parish to a nation, we introduce no change into our argument; we only enlarge its application. We cannot tell you what a spectacle it would be in the midst of the earth, if any one people as a body acted on the principles of Christianity; but we are sure that no better title than that of our text could be given to such a people. Neither is it only through the example they would set, and the exhibition they would furnish of the beneficial power of Christianity, that the inhabitants of this country would be as the priests of the Most High. You cannot

doubt that such a nation would be, in the largest sense, a missionary nation. Conscious of the inestimable blessing which Christianity had proved to its own families, this people would not send forth a single ship on any enterprise of commerce, without making it also a vehicle for transmitting the principles of religion. II. But consider next: CERTAIN OF THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH WOULD FOLLOW, IF THE PRIESTLY CHARACTER WERE UNIVERSALLY RECOGNISED. We begin with observing that the members of the church watch its ministers with singular jealousy, and that faults which would be comparatively overlooked if committed by a merchant or a lawyer, are held up to utter execration when they can be fastened on a clergyman. We might press them home with the question, are not ye priests? You may be forgetful, you may be ignorant of your high calling; but, nevertheless, you belong incontrovertibly to "a royal priesthood"; and if there be avarice amongst you, it is the avarice of a priest; if there be pride amongst you, it is the pride of a priest; if there be sensuality amongst you, it is the sensuality of a priest. We are quite persuaded that men vastly underrate, even where they do not wholly overlook, the injury which the vices of any private individual work to the cause of God and religion. III. If you were to regard yourselves as the priests of God, YOU COULD NOT BE INDOLENT WITH RESPECT TO ANY ENTERPRISE OF CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPY. You have been appointed to the priesthood that you may "show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." If ye be priests of Christianity, for what end can you have been consecrated, if not that you may disseminate the religion which you have embraced as the true? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The sacred in the secular*:—The New Testament knows no such thing as different degrees of consecration to God's service for different men. A man is no more consecrated to the work of God when he is made a clergyman than he was before as a layman. He is simply consecrated to a special department of that work; to the department, namely, of the Word and Sacraments. But, in fact, the ministry of Christ takes in much more than this. The word "ministry" means simply service; and in this sense all Christian people belong to the Christian ministry. We are all ordained to it in Holy Baptism. In which department of this one great ministry a man is to work—whether in the department of the Word and Sacraments or in what may be called the department of temporal supplies—this is a question which the man must settle for himself; but whether or not he shall serve in the ministry of Christ at all, this is not an open question for any one. It has been settled. One man may go to the altar, and another to the counting-room; but the man who goes to the counting-room has no better right to be selfish than the man who goes to the altar. Many people in entering the Church think not to do anything in particular, but to keep out of danger; not to battle for the truth, but simply to "flee from the wrath to come." In the most solemn manner they pledge themselves wholly to God's service, and yet seem to have no idea of serving any one but themselves in what they call their secular sphere; that is, in by far the greater part of their inner and outer life. What is worse than all, the Church does not seem shocked at the inconsistency. If pleasure have been a man's aim in the world, pleasure may continue to be his aim in the Church; only in the Church his pleasures must be innocent. They may be selfish, but they must be innocent. If the man's aim in the world was to amass wealth just for selfish uses, he may pursue that aim quite as safely in the Church, and perhaps a trifle more successfully; only his methods must be honest. If he has no ambition in this direction; if he says, "I have enough to supply my wants, I have no desire for further gains, I will retire from work and live on what I have"; the selfish indifference is likely enough to be taken as a mark of Christian moderation. "I have enough." No matter for others. No matter that want, myriad voiced, is crying from altar and from hearthstone. Suppose that a clergyman should talk in this way: "I am now fifty years old; I have for many years been in receipt of a large salary; I have, by God's blessing, been able to lay up enough of it to maintain me the remainder of my days; I will stop preaching." The inconsistency in that case would shock people. Why not the same inconsistency in the case of a layman? Simply because of the unscriptural distinction between religious and secular in a Christian's life and work. A gospel which does nothing more than simply provide Christian manners for selfish lives will never do. Only the gospel which directs all human motives to the one supreme end, of serving God; which proclaims the priesthood of all believers, and the sacredness of all spheres of duty and of life; only this is the true gospel of the kingdom, and only this can win the world. (*J. S. Shipman, D.D.*) **An holy nation.**—*Corporate*

holiness:—On first hearing these words, we may think that they have more of a Jewish than a Christian sound. Undoubtedly they have a Jewish application. Three times over, at the least, it was declared to the Jews by God: "Ye are a holy nation"; "Thou art an holy people to the Lord thy God"; and certainly they were so. It was both their glory and their condemnation. But, besides that we cannot think that any blessing conferred upon the Jews is withheld from Christians, these words were expressly spoken by St. Peter of Christians—of Christians as a body, and they declare one of the great blessings resting upon them, a condition of their individual and personal blessings, one which they could not forget or deny without great injury to themselves. I propose to draw out this great truth, the truth, I mean, of the corporate holiness of Christians, a holiness of which, by being incorporated into Christ, they are made to partake together; and separation from, or loss of, which is death. See how this is brought out, not merely by the apostles, but by our Lord Himself. It is remarkable how the words and the symbols of our Lord all pointed to the disciples as a body; how He called them the salt of the earth; called them friends; how He addressed them as His flock, His household, as a vine—branches at least of it, for He was the Vine, and they all lived in Him. Observe how St. Paul enlarges the same idea, using his favourite image of a body; the whole body living in Christ, and Christ in it; how he speaks of Christians as a family, a peculiar people, a Temple of God; nay, addresses them all as saints, though we know that several of them personally could not claim the title of holy. Still, in virtue of their having been made members of a spiritual body, they were sharers of the Spirit that dwelt in the whole body until they had utterly cast it from them and were reprobate. Even their children were declared in this respect to be holy; they themselves were said to be "called with an holy calling," "partakers of the Divine Nature"; not some only, but all. What the exact nature of this corporate holiness pervading the whole body is, I do not attempt to describe beyond saying that it is union with Christ. Only it is not a fiction, not merely a title, it constitutes a real consecration to God and the participation of a real gift, which cannot be done despite to without danger of sacrilege. Let us try to grasp this truth. It brings into full light and gives reality to the relation of each Christian to Christ. There is not a baptized soul to whom we may not say, "God hath chosen and called you by a holy calling in His Son; He hath sealed you, as He has consecrated the whole body, with the spirit of promise"; and if in that soul there is any power of making a true response, we use the strongest engine in our hands to quicken it to newness of life. See the power of this argument in effecting a true conversion. The first pre-requisite in a converted soul is repentance. Must it not deepen that repentance for one to feel that all along, up to that time (in whatever measure it may be so) he has been sinning against grace, resisting his holy calling, dishonouring Christ? See, too, how this truth tends to check that narrow spirit which leads many pious people to form themselves into small parties of those like-minded with themselves; thus, not merely rending the body of Christ, but frequently fostering a temper of much uncharitableness and self-assumption. (*A. Grant, D.C.L.*)

A peculiar people.—*A people proper to the Lord*:—That is a people proper to the Lord which He Himself hath purchased, whom He keeps under His protection, to whom also He reveals His secrets: His undefiled. In the flood He saved His Church, when all others were drowned. No marvel, though the Lord set such store by His Church, seeing He hath been at such cost therewith, as to redeem it with the blood of His Son, and to give His Spirit thereto, to sanctify and make it like Himself. The lands we purchase are dear to us; we are God's purchase. 1. If we be so peculiar and choice to the Lord, how choicely should we walk; how should we set as great store by the Lord and His commandments, as He hath done by us! 2. This is a comfort that God makes such special reckoning of His; therefore, though we have many and mighty enemies, yet we need not fear. 3. Terror to the wicked. How dare they hurt or persecute any of these little ones, lest their angel be let loose to destroy them (Judges v. 23)! (*John Rogers.*)

A peculiar people:—The word "peculiar," by which the thought is expressed in English, we derive directly through the Latin, and the use of the term in the secular life of the Romans will throw light on its meaning here in the spiritual sphere. The system of slavery prevailed in the Roman Empire. It interpenetrated all society. An elaborate code of laws had sprung up to regulate its complicated and unnatural relations. The slave, when he fell into slavery, lost all. He became the property of his master. But if he served faithfully, law and custom permitted him to acquire private property through

his own skill or industry. A man might, for example, hire himself from his owner, paying him so much a day. He might then employ himself in art or even merchandise, and, if successful, might soon accumulate a considerable sum. Some slaves in this manner purchased their own liberty and raised themselves to a high position. Now the savings of a slave, after satisfying the demands of the master, were called his "peculium." The law protected him in his right to this property. It may be supposed to have been very dear to the poor man. It constituted his sole anchor of hope. He cherished it accordingly. From this a conception and expression have been borrowed to show the kind of ownership that God is pleased to claim in the persons who have been won back to Himself after they were lost. (*W. Arnot*.)

A peculiar people :—A people of purchase; such as comprehend, as it were, all God's gettings. His whole stock that He makes any great reckoning of. (*J. Trapp*.)

"A purchased people" (margin, A.V.) :—Suppose you go out and make some purchase. You pay down the price and get the receipt, and tell the seller to send it home to you at once. The day goes by and it does not come. Weeks go by and it does not come. You send to the shop a message, "What are you doing with what I bought?" They reply, "We sent it up." "Well, it has not arrived." "Then the errand boy has kept it on the way; we suppose he is using it for himself for a bit before he gives it over to you." You do not make purchases on these terms. How often God's own people are like that errand boy! You have been bought with a price. Have you sent yourself home to the purchaser, or have you kept yourself on the way? "I keep myself to myself," people will say. That is the last thing a Christian ought to do; he ought to give himself away to God at once. (*Hubert Brooke, M.A.*)

Show forth the praises of Him.—*Mirrors of God* :—The Revised Version, instead of "praises," reads "excellencies"—and even that is but a feeble translation of the remarkable word here employed. For it is that usually rendered "virtues"; and by that word, of course, when applied to God, we mean the radiant excellences and glories of His character, of which our earthly qualities, designated by the same name, are but shadows. It is, indeed, true that this same expression is employed in the Greek version of the Old Testament in Isaiah xliii. in a verse which evidently was floating before Peter's mind: "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." I. Here we get a WONDERFUL GLIMPSE INTO THE HEART OF GOD. Note the preceding words, in which the writer describes all God's mercies to His people, making them "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation"; a people "His own possession." All that is done for one specific purpose—"that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness." Now that aim has been put so as to present an utterly hard and horrible notion. That God's glory is His only motive may be so stated as to mean merely an Almighty selfishness. But if you think for a moment about this statement, all that appears repellent drops away from it, and it turns out to be another way of saying "God is love." Because what is there more characteristic of love than an earnest desire to communicate itself and to be manifested and beheld? That is what God wants to be known for. Is that hard and repellent? Why does He desire that He should be known? for any good that it does to Him? No; except the good that even His creatures can do to Him when they gladden His paternal heart by recognising Him for what He is, the Infinite Lover of all souls. But the reason why He desires most of all that the light of His character may pour into every heart is because He would have every heart gladdened and blessed for ever by that received and believed light. The Infinite desires to communicate Himself, that by the communication men may be blessed. II. There is another thing here, and that is a WONDERFUL GLIMPSE OF WHAT CHRISTIAN PEOPLE ARE IN THE WORLD FOR. "This people have I formed for Myself," says the fundamental passage in Isaiah already referred to, "they shall show forth My praise." It was not worth while forming them; it was still less worth while redeeming them except for that. But you may say, "I am saved in order that I may enjoy all the blessings of salvation, immunities from fear and punishment, and the like." Yes, certainly! But is that all? I think not. There is not a creature in God's universe so tiny but that it has a claim on Him that made it for its well-being. That is very certain. And so my salvation is an adequate end with God, in all His dealing, and especially in His sending of Jesus Christ. But there is not a creature in the whole universe though he were mightier than the archangels that stand nearest God's throne, who is so great and independent that his happiness is the sole aim of God's gifts to him. Every man that receives anything from God is thereby made a steward to impart it

to others. So we may say, "You were not saved for your own sakes." One might almost say that that was a by-end. You were saved—shall I say?—for God's sake, and you were saved for man's sake? Every yard of line in a new railway when laid down is used to carry materials to make the next yard; and so the terminus is reached. Even so Christian people were formed for Christ that they might show forth His praise. Look what a notion that gives us of the dignity of the Christian life, and of the special manifestation of God which is afforded to the world in it. You, if you set forth as becomes you His glorious character, have crowned the whole manifestation that He makes of Himself in Nature and in Providence. What people learn about God from a true Christian is a better revelation than has ever been made or can be made elsewhere. III. Lastly, WE HAVE HERE A PIECE OF STRINGENT PRACTICAL DIRECTION. The world takes its notions of God, most of all, from the people who say that they belong to God's family. They read us a great deal more than they read the Bible. They see us; they only hear about Jesus Christ. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" nor any likeness of the Divine, but thou shalt make thyself an image of Him, that men looking at it may learn a little more of what He is. If we have any right to say that we are a royal priesthood, a chosen nation, God's "possession," then there will be in us some likeness of Him to whom we belong stamped more or less perfectly upon our characters; and just as people cannot look at the sun, but may get some notion of its power when they gaze upon the rare beauty of the tinted clouds that lie round about it, if, in the poor, wet, cold mistiness of our lives there be caught, as it were, and tangled some stray beams of the sunshine, there will be colour and beauty there. A bit of worthless tallow may be saturated with a perfume which will make it worth its weight in gold. So our poor natures may be drenched with God and give Him forth fragrant and precious, and men may be drawn thereby. Nor does that exclude the other kind of showing forth the praises, by word and utterance, at fit times and to the right people. But above all, let us remember that none of these works can be done to any good purpose if any taint of self mingles with it. "Let your light so shine before men that they may behold your good works and glorify"—whom? you?—"your Father which is in heaven." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Showing forth the excellences of Christ:—I. THE SPHERE IN WHICH WE ARE TO SERVE GOD. In "His marvellous light." There is—1. The light of His truth (Psa. cxviii. 29; cxix. 105, 130). 2. The light of His favour (Psa. iv. 6; Num. vi. 26). 3. The light of His holiness (Eph. v. 8; 1 John i. 7). II. **IN WHAT DOES THIS SERVICE CONSIST?** 1. In a life of gratitude (Heb. xiii. 15; Eph. v. 20). 2. In a life of testimony (1 John i. 1-3; Phil. ii. 15, 16). 3. In a life of godliness. Show forth the excellences of Christ (2 Cor. iv. 10; Phil. i. 11). III. **WHAT ARE THE CHIEF HINDRANCES TO THAT SERVICE?** 1. Some are afraid to begin, lest they should fall back (1 Cor. i. 8; Jude 24; Psa. lvi. 13). 2. Some are hindered by a feeling of shame (Mark viii. 38; Rom. i. 16). 3. Others are idle, because they do not see their resources (Phil. iv. 13; Eph. i. 3). (*E. H. Hopkins.*)

*Christians must be real and true:—*There is a headman of a kraal in Natal, South Africa, who does not object to his people becoming Christians, but who decidedly objects to their becoming bad Christians. This is how he puts it to natives who profess conversion: "If you become better men and women by being Christians, you may remain so; if not, I won't let you be Christians at all." (*Christian World.*)

Showing forth God's excellences:—The picture of a dear friend should be hung up in a conspicuous place of the house; so should God's holy image and grace in our hearts. (*J. Trapp.*)

A living doxology:—A child of God should be a visible beatitude for joy and happiness, and a living doxology for gratitude and adoration. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Called out of darkness into His marvellous light.—Darkness and light:—I. THE DARKNESS FROM WHICH THE SOUL HAS BEEN DELIVERED. 1. It is a darkness which involves the loss of truth, the light and life of the soul, and of the soul itself. 2. This darkness carries with it a heavy load of guilt. 3. This darkness, as regards the moral nature, is woe and misery. II. **THE MARVELLOUS LIGHT TO WHICH THE SOUL IS ADMITTED.** 1. Its nature. 2. Its source. 3. Its effects. (*Homilist.*)

Out of darkness into light:—I. WHAT FROM. 1. The power of Satan. 2. Moral confusion. 3. Impurity. 4. Spiritual loss—ignorance. 5. A state of misery. 6. A state of danger. 7. God calls us out of this darkness; and if we do not obey His call we "love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil." But let us count the cost of such a choice. II. **WHAT TO.** 1. God's kingdom. 2. Moral order. 3. True wisdom. 4. Spiritual purity. 5. Heaven in prospective. III. **WHAT FOR.** 1. That we may be obedient to His will, and follow the example

of Christ—God's ideal of perfected humanity. 2. To live as His children, and render unto Him a loving, loyal service, bearing His gentle yoke with cheerfulness and meekness, and so recommend the service of God by our conduct before men, that they shall be drawn to God by our example. (*W. Harris.*) *Spiritual darkness and light*:—It is very desirable that Christians should realise both what they have been and what they are; both the degradation and disadvantages of the condition from which they have been delivered, and the dignity and privileges of the condition into which they have been called. Peter contrasts the two conditions of life by characterising the one as "darkness" and the other as "marvellous light." Perhaps it may help in some degree to give vividness to his thoughts if we recall an incident in the history of Israel in Egypt. One of the plagues sent on the Egyptians—the last but one, and probably the severest, except the last—was a darkness which might be felt. The humblest hut of an Israelite was far preferable to the palace of Pharaoh. When we regard this as a figure of what still exists, there are everywhere two peoples dwelling side by side, one of which is enshrouded in a darkness more dismal than that which lay upon the Egyptians, while the other is enjoying a far more pleasant light than was in the dwellings of the Israelites. There are two conditions of life which divide between them all human society—a state of nature and a state of grace. And these two states are as opposite as night and day. God's people know both conditions, for they have been delivered out of the one and brought into the other. The world lieth in darkness; there is darkness in our natures, a darkness which hides the light, which turns away from it, although the light may be shining all around it. This darkness extends to the whole spiritual nature, and affects its observation, sentiments, and actions, after the manner that physical darkness affects the senses, sensations, and emotions of the body; broods, for example, over and within the intellect of man. It hides from him, in consequence, one vast region of most important truth, and it does not allow him to attain what is the highest kind of knowledge. There is a natural world with which natural sense and intellect are competent to deal, but it does not follow that there is not also a spiritual world with which they are incompetent to deal. This is what Scripture testifies. Natural things do not need to be spiritually discerned, spiritual things do. We may know, indeed, much about even many of these things in a natural way; we may become versed in the controversies of theology, we may be able to discourse learnedly of the Divine attributes—on redemption, on regeneration, and kindred themes—but so may a blind man theorise and discourse on optics or painting. A true perception of spiritual things, however, is as impossible to the merely natural man as a true perception of light and shade and colour is to the bodily blind. Let us not suppose that this spiritual blindness is a slight misfortune. There can be none greater. Physical blindness only excludes the perception of some of the works of God, and from enjoyment of some of His gifts; spiritual blindness deprives us of the perception and enjoyment of God Himself, and of all living insight into His ways and dispensations. God can easily and richly compensate a man for the want of knowledge of anything finite; but what compensation can there be for the want of knowledge of His own perfections, and especially of His love and mercy in Jesus Christ, when that knowledge is the highest good, true, and eternal life? Spiritual blindness is the most awful blindness; blindness as to what is alone essential, and as to all that is essential; blindness which involves loss of the truth, the light and the life of the soul, the loss of the soul itself. The darkness of which Peter speaks presses not merely on the intellect of man, it extends also to his will, and affects his whole moral life and dignity. It involves moral as well as intellectual blindness, wickedness not less than ignorance. For one thing, this darkness, implying as it does love of the darkness and aversion to the light, is not only a cause of sin, but is of itself a grievous sin. Our rejection of this light can only be because while it is pure we are impure; while it is Divine love, there rages in us selfish and carnal passion; and, in short, that through perversity of heart, we will not recognise God to be what He is, or acknowledge His claims to our admiration, gratitude, and services. This darkness is itself sin, but it also calls forth and shelters all other sin. The evil in us is not only unchecked, but fostered, and every passion which prompts to wicked action is allowed a most dangerous advantage. Spiritual darkness thus tends to spread and deepen into outermost moral darkness and corruption. But yet, further, the darkness of man's merely natural state is, as regards the intellect, ignorance and blindness; and, as regards the will and moral life, a guilt and sin. As regards our moral nature, it is guilt and misery. Light and enjoyment are always associated; darkness and sadness are as naturally

joined. It is pleasant to the eyes to behold the light of the sun. Gladness seems to shrink away in proportion as light is withdrawn. The happy rejoice in the light, but the sorrowful seek to be in darkness; night is the season of terrors, of dismal clouds, and of a million fancies and gloomy forebodings. Here, too, outward darkness is a symbol of the inward. So long as a man is in the spiritual darkness of his natural state, so long as he is not cheered by the light from the countenance of a reconciled God and Father, he cannot be happy. God has so made each human heart that it can only find true satisfaction in Himself, and when it lives under the light of His approval. Happiness must be something real, permanent, and elevating, not something fleeting, delusive, and degrading. And it is only this true happiness which I say cannot be where God is ignored, where the light of His presence is not recognised, and the blessings of His presence are not felt. I have dwelt long on the state and condition of life which Peter calls darkness, but I may touch so much the more briefly in consequence on that which he calls "marvellous light." For darkness and light are contrasted, and not only cannot be understood except as contrasted, but whatever is truly said about either implies something true about the other. Therefore, as you have already had explained to you how the darkness of which Peter speaks is in one ignorance and error, in another sin and unrighteousness, and in yet another disquiet and unhappiness, so you may, without further explanation, conclude that the light of which Peter speaks must be knowledge and truth in the intellect, obedience and holiness in the moral life, and joy and happiness in the heart. "Marvellous" light! So St. Peter most appropriately calls it. It is marvellous in its source, a marvellous light of Him who is called the Father of Lights. It comes from no earthly luminary, but directly from Himself, specially revealed through His Son Jesus Christ, conveyed to the soul by the Divine genius of His own Spirit, freely given to whom, in His wisdom, He will; so given, that many a poor, uneducated man can see what the wise of this world are blind to. It is marvellous, too, as appearing after such darkness; the nature of the light of the world is very marvellous, although, owing to its commonness, we seldom think how marvellous it is. But a prisoner brought from long confinement in a darkened dungeon, or a blind man restored to sight, will not fail to appreciate it aright. It is those who have just been brought out of the darkness of the state of nature into the light of a state of grace who feel most vividly how marvellous the light of the Father is. It is marvellous, also, in its own nature; marvellous for its exquisite beauty, and marvellous because it is so pure and penetrative. It reveals to men sins and shortcomings in their own hearts of which the light of nature had awakened no suspicion, and causes evils of all kinds, even the most secret and subtle, to be seen in their real hatefulness. It is marvellous in the extent of its disclosures, in rendering clear and intelligible to us the wonders of redemption, and marvellous in its power of diffusing light and happiness. It is exceedingly marvellous in its issues, for it is this light of grace which shineth more and more unto the perfect day, and ends as the light of heavenly glory. I have still to remind you that, according to the teaching of the apostle, those who have passed from the darkness to the marvellous light are bound to show forth the praises, or—as may be more accurately rendered—the excellences of Him to whom the change is due. They have not worked their own way out of the darkness into the light, but God has had compassion on them. The final end of redemption, as of creation, is to show forth the glory of God. It becomes every rational creature, and it becomes still more every partaker of redemption, to act on this truth. But what will doing so imply? Clearly this at least, that we are not ashamed to honour His name, or defend His cause with our lips; that we are willing to declare His perfections when we can do so; that whenever a word in season tending to exalt the character or justify the ways of God can be uttered by us with good effect, we are ready and glad to utter it. But not less certainly it means also that whatever excellence of nature or grace God has imparted to us, we should so use it as that the glory should redound to the Giver, and the wealth of His excellences be seen in the richness of His love to us. It implies that we should consecrate our talents to His services, dedicate to Him our reasons, imaginations, affections, and souls, and strive to render and keep them as worthy of Him as we can. (*Prof. R. Flint.*) *Darkness and light*:—I. OUR ORIGINAL CONDITION AS SINNERS. "In darkness." II. THE GRACIOUS CHANGE PRODUCED. "Called out of darkness into marvellous light." III. THE RESULTS OF BEING THUS CALLED. "That ye show forth God's praises." 1. By extolling His mercy (Psa. ciii. 3-5, 11-13). 2. By exhibiting His image (Eph. v. 8; 1 Thess. v. 5, 6). 3. By obedience to His

authority (2 Cor. x. 4-6). 4. And by zeal for His glory (2 Cor. x. 17; Gal. vi. 14).

IV. THE IMPROVEMENT. 1. Consider the state of the sinner before God, as in darkness of soul. 2. The only way of deliverance is by the death and obedience of Jesus Christ, as made known by the gospel. 3. Also let the Christian learn from this subject his great obligations to God, and consider what ought to be his conduct. 4. But especially let him see to whom the glory of so much mercy belongs. (T. B. Baker.)

The gospel a light:—Why is this a marvellous light? I. Because it is a light upon SPIRITUAL REALITIES. The sun can light up landscapes, but where is the light which can reveal man to himself and God to man? We need another light—a light above the brightness of the sun. 1. The gospel throws a marvellous light upon sin. 2. Upon the holiness and awfulness of Divine law. 3. Upon the elements which are requisite to a perfect reconciliation to God. II. Because it is a light upon SPIRITUAL DESTINIES. Man can throw no light on his own future. He can but speculate and hope. The gospel distinctly deals with the mystery of time to come. 1. Judgment. 2. Rewards and punishments. 3. Duration. 4. Service. The fact that the gospel claims to be a marvellous light shows—(1) That the world is in a state of marvellous darkness. (2) That the diffusion of the gospel is a diffusion of light. (3) That all who believe the gospel should walk as children of the day. (J. Parker, D.D.)

Refusing light:—Is it not strange that any will refuse to receive this light? If any one would persist in living in a dark cave far away from the light of the sun, with only dim candles of his own making to pour a few feeble, flickering beams upon the gloom, we should consider him insane. What shall we say of those who persist in living in the darkness of sin, with no light but the candles of earth's false hopes to shine upon their souls? (R. Miller.)

Opened eyes:—There is an old legend dating back to the seventh century, of St. Modabert, who had such sympathy for his blind mother that he one day rushed forward and kissed her eyes, and her sight came immediately to her, and she rejoiced in the beauties of nature as they shone about her. Whether the legend contains any truth it matters not; but it certainly gives us a very striking illustration of the kiss of Christ's love as it opens the eyes of the penitent believer, and reveals to him the riches and beauty of the pardon of all sin, and makes him a dweller in the kingdom of our God. (G. W. Bibb.)

The superior light of the gospel:—In the old dispensation the light that broke through clouds was but that of the rising morning. It touched the mountain tops of the loftiest spirits; a Moses, a David, an Elijah; caught the early gleams while all the valleys slept in the pale shadow, and the mist clung in white folds to the plains. But the noon has come, and from its steadfast throne in the very zenith, the sun which never sets pours down its rays into the deep recesses of the narrowest gorge, and every little daisy and hidden flower catches its brightness, and there is nothing hid from the light thereof. *Children of light*:—There are children of light and children of darkness. The latter shun the bright, the pure azure shining sky of truth with all its loving beams. Their world is like the world of insects, and is the world of night. Insects are all light-shunners. Even those which, like the bee, labour during the daytime, prefer the shades of obscurity. The children of light are like the birds. The world of birds is the world of light—of song. Nearly all of them, says Michelet, live in the sun, fill themselves with it, or are inspired by it. Those of the south carry its reflected radiance on their wings; those of our colder climates in their songs; many of them follow it from land to land. (*Scientific Illustrations and Symbols*.)

Which in time past were not a people.—*Consider what you were*:—In that he sets before them the time past, and what they were; note, that for a people to look to their beginnings is of singular use. As for us, who since Christ's coming are admitted to the same privileges with the Jews. This serves—1. To make us humble and take down our pride. 2. To stir us up to thankfulness. 3. To strengthen our faith to believe in God for ever afterwards, and for all blessings needful to salvation. (John Rogers.)

The people of God:—The apostle is speaking of believers not individually, but collectively. He says of them that in their former condition they "were not a people"; that is, they had no organised existence. The present condition of the Jews may supply us with an illustration. They are now "not a people." They exist as individuals, and in a state of distinctness from all the nations amongst which, in their calamitous dispersion, they are scattered; but they have no national existence—no king, no country, no organisation, no government, no political being. Just so the great community of believers—God's spiritual commonwealth—had no being; for the members who now compose it stood in no covenant relation to God, and they had no bond of union, no spiritual incorporation among themselves. Reverse the statement and you have

their present condition. For, in the first place, all believers, by virtue of their faith in Christ, are in covenant with God. God and believers walk with each other in amity. Whereas once there was alienation and enmity, there is now mutual love. They have taken Him to be their God, and He has taken them to be His people. And then, secondly, being in covenant with God, all believers are in union with each other. This second conjunction flows by a necessary consequence from the first; for, being reduced under one sovereignty, they necessarily compose one community. While they were estranged from God, they were estranged from one another. Now of this commonwealth of the faithful, many things may be said. 1. God places Himself at its head. As He stands in close connection with every individual member of it, so He establishes a connection, not less close, between Himself and all the members collectively. He originates the community, and He governs it. 2. It is composed of all believers. This great community excludes from its fellowship none whom Christ does not exclude from salvation. All the saints are your fellow-subjects in that kingdom. Not all the saints on earth simply, but the saints also in heaven. 3. The blessings of the new covenant constitute its privileges. These blessings consist in whatever is obtained through the blood of Christ; all "spiritual blessings in heavenly places," or heavenly things; things, that is, which have a heavenly origin and nature, and a tendency to prepare us for heaven. Hence all believers are justified and sanctified. 4. Heaven is the place of its perfect development, and its everlasting home. It is never seen as a whole on earth. Here it has never existed otherwise than in detachments, and separated portions. And these never stay long. God's people are gathered out of the world, collected into little fellowships, trained, sanctified, and then drafted away to the great meeting-place of the redeemed. (*E. Steane, D.D.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **As strangers and pilgrims abstain.**—*Abstaining from fleshly lusts* :— "Dearly beloved, I beseech you." There is a faculty of reproving required in the ministry, and sometimes a necessity of very sharp rebukes. They who have much of the spirit of meekness may have a rod by them too, to use upon necessity (1 Cor. iv. 21). But surely the way of meekness is that they use most willingly; with ingenious minds, the mild way of sweet entreaties is very forcible; they prevail as the sunbeams, which, without any noise, made the traveller cast off his cloak, which all the blustering of the wind could not do, but made him rather gather it closer and bind it faster about him. Now this word of entreaty is strengthened much by the other, "Dearly beloved." Scarcely can the harshest reproofs, much less gentle reproofs, be thrown back, that have upon them the stamp of love. "Abstain." It is one and the same strength of spirit that raises a man above the troubles and pleasures of the world, and makes him despise and trample upon both. EXPLAIN WHAT THESE FLESHLY LUSTS MEAN, then to consider THE EXHORTATION OF ABSTAINING FROM THEM. Unchaste desires are particularly called by this name, but to take it for these only in this place is doubtless too narrow. That which seems to be the true sense of the expression here, takes in all undue desires and use of earthly things, and all the corrupt affections of our carnal minds. To abstain from these lusts is to hate and fly from the very thoughts and first motions of them; and if surprised by these, yet to kill them there, that they bring not forth; and to suspect ourselves even in those things that are not sinful, and to keep far off from all inducements to the polluted ways of sin. It was a high speech of a heathen, that "he was greater, and born to greater things, than to be a servant to his body." How much more ought he that is born again to say so, being born heir to a crown that fadeth not away? Again, as the honour of a Christian's estate is far above this baseness of serving his lusts, so the happiness and pleasantness of his estate set him above the need of the pleasures of sin. The philosopher gives this as the reason why men are so much set upon sensual delights, because they know not the higher pleasures that are proper to the soul. We are barred fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, to the end that we may have fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ. This is to make men eat angel's food indeed, as was said of the manna. The serving of the flesh sets man below himself, down amongst the beasts, but the consolations of the Spirit and communion with God raise him above himself, and associate him with the angels. But let us speak to the apostle's own dissuaves from these lusts, taken—1. From the condition of Christians: "As strangers." If you were citizens of this world, then you might drive the same trade with them and follow the same lusts; but seeing you are chosen and called out of the world, and invested into a new society, made free of another city, and are therefore here but

travellers passing through to your own country, it is very reasonable that there be this difference betwixt you and the world, that while they live at home, your carriage be such as becomes strangers; not glutting yourselves with their pleasures, but, as wise strangers, living warily and soberly, and still minding most of all your journey homewards, suspecting dangers in your way and so walking with holy fear, as the Hebrew word for a stranger imports. 2. The apostle argues from the condition of these lusts. It were quarrel enough against "fleshly lusts which war against the soul," that they are so far below the soul, that they cannot content, no, nor at all reach the soul; they are not a suitable, much less a satisfying good to it. Although sin hath unspeakably abused the soul of man, yet its excellent nature and original does still cause a vast disproportion betwixt it and all those base things of the earth, which concern the flesh and go no further. But this is not all: these fleshly lusts are not only of no benefit to the soul, but they are its pernicious enemies; "they war against it." And their war against it is all made up of stratagem and sleight, for they cannot hurt the soul, but by itself. They promise it some contentment, and so gain its consent to serve them, and undo itself. They embrace the soul that they may strangle it. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

*The stranger here:—*I. IN WHAT RESPECTS THE REAL CHRISTIAN IS A STRANGER IN THE WORLD. 1. The language of the Christian is strange to the world. Take, for instance, those simple words which sum up in one comprehensive sentence so much of the faith and hope of the true Christian, "The God of all grace." This is an expression so rich in its associations to a faithful mind, that the subject can never be exhausted. But how few, if any, ideas does an unfaithful person attach to it? or take the language which a true Christian uses to express his ideas of the corruption of human nature, and the necessity of the new birth. The wondering ignorance displayed by Nicodemus affords an apt illustration of the strangeness of Christian language in every age, to a yet unchristian heart. 2. The manners of the believer are strange to the world. Both in business and pleasure. "They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess." 3. The most remarkable and chief difference between the world and the Christian, is to be found in their religion. There is a religion of the world outward and formal. The religion of the believer is promotive of humility and self-distrust.

II. NOW SO MARKED A DIFFERENCE IN SENTIMENT MUST PERPETUALLY BE MAKING ITSELF MANIFEST IN HIS CONDUCT. 1. He feels himself a stranger only sojourning here for a time, and then passing away. He does not permit himself to be entangled in the affairs of this life, or so engrossed therewith as to find in them his chief happiness. 2. Again, he feels himself a stranger in a land which he believes to be full of danger; and therefore he is one that walks warily. 3. It is another consequence of the believer's strangeness sojourning in a strange land, that he is attracted to all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth. There is a common sympathy between them; and no truer test can be given of God's children than that, in spite of their lesser differences, they love one another. 4. But if such be the feeling with which they regard each other, what must be their affection for their native land, and for that special spot within it which is called by the magic name of home? Whatever may be the counteracting force of outward circumstances, the heart still yearns for home! 5. With these expectations as an abiding principle, he can withstand the powerful seductions of the world, sit loosely affected by its most innocent and useful engagements, "waiting" for his summons to return home, "ready to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." (*T. B. Paget, M.A.*)

*The plea against disorderly passions:—*I. INDULGENCE IN DISORDERLY PASSIONS IS BECOMING NEITHER TO OUR PRESENT CONDITION NOR TO OUR DESTINY. II. THE INFLUENCE OF DISORDERLY PASSIONS IS HOSTILE TO OUR OWN INWARD LIFE. They war against reason, memory, imagination, conscience, affection, and hope. III. FREEDOM FROM THESE PASSIONS WILL MAKE OUR OUTWARD LIFE A SOCIAL BLESSING. 1. Our outward life is closely scrutinised. "They behold." 2. Our outward life is readily calumniated. "Speak against you." Gossip and slander are eager. 3. Our outward life should be beautiful. No human loveliness, no natural scenery so influential as "good works." Souls ought to have a grandeur, a richness, a variety transcending all the fascination of flowers, all the glory of mountains, all the majesty of the sea. The noblest beauties are "the beauties of holiness." 4. Such outward life glorifies God. (1) Directly. For it is a tribute of praise to Him. (2) Indirectly. For it leads others to praise Him. A holy example is often "the gate beautiful" by which men enter into the city of God and go up to the knowledge of Him and communion with Him. (*Homilist.*) *Employed away from home:—*In military monarchies it has always been the policy to employ the soldiers far from home. When the

Austrian Empire was a conglomerate of many nationalities, German regiments were sent to campaign in Italy, and Italians served in Germany. When the men had not a home to care for, they were more completely at the disposal of their leaders. This is Peter's idea here. Christians are not at home in the world. There is less to distract them. They should be better soldiers of Jesus Christ. The more loose their hearts are to the earth, the more firm will be the anchor of their souls on high. Conversely, the more they are attached to their home in heaven, the less will they be entangled with the wealth and the pleasures of the world. (*W. Arnot.*)

Fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.—*The passions*. :—I. IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE PASSIONS, WE WILL EXPLAIN THE SUBJECT BY A FEW PRELIMINARY REMARKS. 1. An intelligent being ought to love everything that can elevate, perpetuate, and make him happy, and to avoid whatever can degrade, confine, and render him miserable. This, far from being a human depravity, is a perfection of nature. By "fleshly lusts" St. Peter doth not mean such desires of the heart as put us on aspiring after real happiness and true glory. 2. An intelligent being united to a body, and lodged, if I may speak so, in a portion of matter under this law, that according to the divers motions of this matter he shall receive sensations of pleasure or pain, must naturally love to excite within himself sensations of pleasure, and to avoid painful feelings. This is agreeable to the institution of the Creator. This observation affords us a second clue to the meaning of the apostle: at least it gives us a second precaution to avoid an error. By fleshly lusts he doth not mean a natural inclination to preserve the body and the ease of life; he allows love, hatred, and anger to a certain degree, and as far as the exercise of them doth not prejudice a greater interest. 3. A being composed of two substances, one of which is more excellent than the other; a being placed between two interests, one of which is greater than the other, ought, when these two interests clash, to prefer the more noble before the less noble, the greater interest before the less. This third principle is a third clue to what St. Peter calls "lusts," or passions. What is the meaning of this word? The Scripture generally uses the word in two senses. Sometimes it is literally and properly put for flesh, and sometimes it signifies sin. St. Peter calls the passions "fleshly" in both these senses; in the first because some come from the body as voluptuousness, anger, drunkenness, and in the second because they spring from our depravity. II. THIS IS A GENERAL IDEA OF THE PASSIONS; BUT AS IT IS VAGUE AND OBSCURE, WE WILL ENDEAVOUR TO EXPLAIN IT MORE DISTINCTLY. 1. The passions produce in the mind a strong attention to whatever can justify and gratify them. The most odious objects may be so placed as to appear agreeable, and the most lovely objects so as to appear odious. Certainly one of the noblest advantages of man is to reason, to examine proofs and weigh motives, to consider an object on every side, in order on these grounds to regulate our ideas and opinions, our hatred and our love. The passionate man renounces this advantage, and never reasons, in a passion his mind is limited, his soul is in chains, his fleshly passions war against his soul. 2. Having examined the passions in the mind, let us consider them in the senses. To comprehend this, recollect that the passions owe their origin to the Creator, who instituted them for the purpose of preserving us. When an object would injure health or life, it is necessary to our safety that there should be an emotion in our senses to effect a quick escape from the danger; fear does this. A man struck with the idea of sudden danger hath a rapidity which he could not have in a tranquil state, or during a cool trial of his power. It is necessary, when an enemy approaches to destroy us, that our senses should so move as to animate us with a power of resistance. Anger doth this, for it is a collection of spirits. Such are the movements excited by the passions in the senses, and all these to a certain degree are necessary for the preservation of our bodies, and are the institutions of our Creator; but three things are necessary to preserve order in these emotions. First, they must never be excited in the body without the direction of the will and the reason. Secondly, they must always be proportional. I mean, the emotion of fear, for example, must never be except in sight of objects capable of hurting us; the emotion of anger must never be except in sight of an enemy, who actually hath both the will and the power of injuring our well-being. And thirdly, they must always stop when and where we will they should. When the passions subvert this order they violate three wise institutes of our Creator. The motions excited by the passions in our senses are not free. An angry man is carried beyond himself in spite of himself. A voluptuous man receives a sensible impression from an exterior object, and in spite of all the dictates of reason throws himself into a flaming fire that consumes him. The emotions excited by the passions

in our senses are not proportional ; I mean that a timorous man, for example, turns as pale at the sight of a fanciful as of a real danger ; he sometimes fears a phantom and a substance alike. A man, whose God is his belly, feels his appetite as much excited by a dish fatal to his health as by one necessary to support his strength and to keep him alive. The emotions excited by the passions in the senses do not obey the orders of our will. The movement is an overflow of spirits, which no reflections can restrain. This is what the passions do in the senses, and do you not conceive that in this second respect they war against the soul ? They war against the soul by the disorders they introduce into that body which they ought to preserve. They dissipate the spirits, weaken the memory, wear out the brain. They war against the soul by disconcerting the whole economy of man, and by making him consider such sensations of pleasure as Providence gave him only for the sake of engaging him to preserve his body as a sort of supreme good, worthy of all his care and attention for its own sake. They war against the soul because they reduce it to a state of slavery to the body, over which it ought to rule. 3. If the senses were excited to act only by the presence of objects, if the soul were agitated only by the action of the senses, one single mean would suffice to guard us from irregular passions ; that would be to flee from the object that excites them. But the passions produce other disorders, they leave deep impressions on the imagination. When we give ourselves up to the senses, we feel pleasure, this pleasure strikes the imagination, and the imagination thus struck with the pleasure it hath found recollects it, and solicits the passionate man to return to objects that made him so happy. 4. Let us consider, in fine, the passions in the heart and the disorders they cause there. What can fill the heart of man ? A prophet hath answered this question, and hath included all morality in one point, " My chief good is to draw near to God " (Psa. lxxiii. 28) ; but as God doth not commune with us immediately while we are in this world, but imparts felicity by means of creatures, He hath given these creatures two characters, which, being well examined by a reasonable man, conduct him to the Creator, but which turn the passionate man aside. On the one hand, creatures render us happy to a certain degree—this is their first character : on the other, they leave a void in the soul which they are incapable of filling—this is their second character. This is the design of God, and this design the passions oppose. They remove us from God, and by removing us from Him deprive us of all the good that proceeds from a union with the supreme good, and thus make war with every part of ourselves, and with every moment of our duration. War against our reason, for instead of deriving, by virtue of a union with God, assistance necessary to the practice of what reason approves, and what grace only renders practicable, we are given up to our evil dispositions, and compelled by our passions to do what our own reason abhors. War against the regulation of life, for instead of putting on by virtue of union to God the easy yoke, and taking up the light burden which religion imposes, we become slaves of envy, vengeance, and ambition ; we are weighed down with a yoke of iron, which we have no power to get rid of, even though we groan under its intolerable weightiness. War against conscience, for instead of being justified by virtue of a union with God, and having " peace with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ " (Rom. v. 1), and feeling that heaven begun, " joy unspeakable and full of glory " (chap. i. 8), by following our passions we become a prey to distracting fears, troubles without end, cutting remorse, and awful earnestness of eternal misery. War on a dying bed, for whereas by being united to God our death-bed would have become a field of triumph, where the Prince of life, the conqueror of death, would have made us share His victory, by abandoning ourselves to our passions we see nothing in a dying hour but an awful futurity, a frowning governor, the bare idea of which alarms, terrifies, and drives us to despair. III. NOW LET US EXAMINE WHAT REMEDIES WE OUGHT TO APPLY. 1. In order to prevent and correct the disorders which the passions produce in the mind, we must observe the following rules—(1) We must avoid precipitance and suspend our judgment. (2) A man must reform even his education. In every family the minds of children are turned to a certain point. Every family hath its prejudice, I had almost said its absurdity ; and hence it comes to pass that people despise the profession they do not exercise. To correct ourselves on this article we must go to the source, examine how our minds were directed in our childhood ; in a word, we must review and reform even our education. (3) In fine, we must, as well as we can, choose a friend wise enough to know truth, and generous enough to impart it to others ; a man who will show us an object on every side when we are inclined to consider it only on one. 2. Let us now lay down a few rules for the government of the senses. Before we proceed,

we cannot help deploring the misery of a man who is impelled by the disorders of his senses and the heat of his constitution to criminal passions. Such a man often deserves pity more than indignation. However, though the irregularity of the senses diminishes the atrociousness of the crime, yet it cannot excuse those who do not make continual efforts to correct it. To acknowledge that we are constitutionally inclined to violate the laws of God, and to live quietly in practices of constitutional heat, is to have the interior tainted. Certainly the best advice that can be given to a man whose constitution inclines him to sin, is, that he avoid opportunities, and flee from such objects as affect and disconcert him. Three remedies are necessary to our success in this painful undertaking: to suspend acts, to flee idleness, to mortify sense. 3. The disorders produced by the passions in the imagination, and against which also we ought to furnish you with some remedies, are like those complicated disorders which require opposite remedies, because they are the effect of opposite causes, so that the means employed to diminish one part not unfrequently increase another. It should seem at first that the best remedy which can be applied to disorders introduced by the passions into the imagination, is well to consider the nature of the objects of the passions, and thoroughly to know the world; and yet, on the other hand, it may truly be said that the most certain way of succeeding would be to know nothing at all about the world. We hazard a fall by approaching too near, and such very often is the ascendancy of the world over us that we cannot detach ourselves from it though we are disgusted with it. Let us endeavour, then, to preserve our imagination pure; let us abstain from pleasures to preclude the possibility of remembering them; let retirement, and, if it be practicable, perpetual privacy, from the moment we enter into the world to the day we quit it, save us from all bad impressions, so that we may never know the defects which worldly objects would produce on our passions. This method, sure and effectual, is useless and impracticable in regard to such as have received bad impressions on their imagination. People of this character ought to pursue the second method we mentioned, that is, to profit by their losses, and derive wisdom from their errors. When you recollect sin, remember the folly and pain of it. 4. To heal the disorders which the passions produce in the heart, two things must be done. First, the vanity of all the creatures must be observed, and this will free us from the desire of possessing and collecting the whole in order to fill up the void which single enjoyments leave. Secondly, we must ascend from creatures to the Creator, in order to get rid of the folly of attributing to the world the perfection and sufficiency of God. (*J. Saurin*.) *Fleshly lusts*:—There is, I fear, a large body of our fellow-creatures by whom those “fleshly lusts” are regarded as affording the only tangible benefits of their existence. Too little touched by the spirit of piety to derive any delight from the abundant sources of religious contemplation; too devoid of those kind affections which constitute the charm of domestic intercourse, to receive any satisfaction from the society of their family and friends; and too narrow and unimproved in mind to find interest in any intellectual pursuit, they are no sooner freed from the confinement imposed upon them by their business than they turn, as to their only relief for the tedium of inactivity, and the only means of enjoyment for which they have any value, to the gross gratification of their animal appetites. But, however general such a course of life may be, it is decidedly unchristian. Even under the most favourable circumstances, though a man should abstain from all gross excesses, and scrupulously respect those limits of external decency, he cannot act upon the principle of habitual self-indulgence, without being guilty of violating one of the most clearly-expressed duties of the gospel. His religion demands of him a course of conduct the very reverse of that which he pursues (1 John ii. 15, 16; Romans viii. 5, &c.; Matthew xvi. 24). Those precepts of self-denial and mortification which we find inculcated in the gospel, did not originate with the gospel. They made a part of the system of every distinguished moral teacher among the heathen themselves. Even the wise, and the scribe, and the disputer of this world could perceive, that voluptuousness and sensuality were most miserably unworthy the attention of the human soul. The grounds on which I would exhort you to abstain from “fleshly lusts,” are those suggested by St. Peter, “they war against the soul.” 1. They are hostile to the intellectual faculties of the soul. No man, whose avocations demand of him any great and frequent stretch of mental exertion, is ignorant of this fact: and we find those instructors of youth, who merely treat of worldly arts and sciences, and treat of them in a worldly manner, almost invariably inculcate on their pupils, as one of the indispensable requisites of eminence, the practice of a strict and almost ascetic

temperance, for the sake of securing to themselves the possession of the full, free, and active use of the powers of their own minds. Such precepts derive their reasons from the very constitution of the human frame. If the body suffers from excess, the mind becomes proportionately affected. It receives its impressions slowly and indistinctly, from the derangement of the channels through which it holds communion with the external world; and it revolves, compares, and decides upon them doubtfully and inefficiently, from the lassitude and exhaustion of the machinery with which it acts. 2. They are also inimical to the moral qualities of the soul. If the generous affections are not cultivated by exercise, they dwindle away and perish. If the selfish affections are allowed to act without restraint, they acquire a frightful and gigantic development. As we live to ourselves and for ourselves, we become gradually absorbed in our own selfish views and interests. As we pamper our appetites, the objects they delight in acquire consequence in our estimation. As we devote ourselves more and more to our own personal gratifications, we can less and less endure that those gratifications should encounter any opposition; till, at length, we prove blind and insensible to every claim but those of our own overweening will, and only regard our fellow-creatures with favour, as they minister to our passions, or with enmity, as they cast impediments in their way. Where are we to look, among the dissolute children of the world, for instances of permanent attachment, of disinterested friendship, of long-cherished gratitude, and of self-sacrificing tenderness? Are such things among the fruits and flowers found to flourish in that tract which they cultivate with so indefatigable a pursuit of the pleasures of this life, and so fatal an oblivion of the treasures of the next? No, that false light of cordiality, which glows so brightly during the convivial hour, becomes extinguished as the vapours of the goblet which enkindled it are dispersed. Let any individual, even the most cherished of their society, suffer a reverse of fortune, and he will put these maxims to the proof. Let him be the deer which is stricken, and he will find himself abandoned by the herd. 3. Such gratifications are not only pernicious to the intellectual faculties and moral qualities of the soul, but they affect its temporal existence. They disorder and destroy the earthly tenement in which it is contained. They wear away, and overstrain, and often suddenly rend asunder those fine fibres, by which it is confined to its present transitory home. 4. Finally, according to the clearly-declared principles of the Christian faith, we know that they are most pernicious to the eternal interests of the soul (Rom. viii. 7; 1 Tim. v. 6; Rom. viii. 6; Gal. v. 24; Rom. viii. 13). Indeed, if we look with an unprejudiced eye on the terms and conditions of the gospel covenant, we shall find that no course can be more destructive to the eternal interests of the soul than the course pursued by the voluptuary. This earth is not designed to be a house of feasting; life is not meant to be a holiday festival; we are sent into the world as a place of discipline and preparation, in which our souls may be educated for a more glorious state of being; and the allurements which address us, the difficulties we have to combat with, and the restraints we are bound to lay on our inclinations, constitute the very means by which our souls are so prepared, and disciplined, and educated. But we sometimes hear the sensualist assert that it cannot be very criminal to yield to such temptations, because it is natural to do so. This I utterly deny. They are, on the contrary, diametrically opposed to nature. The excesses of the voluptuary are only natural if we regard him as a being in the lowest possible state of demoralisation, as an anomaly in the creation, as a monster possessing passions without conscience and appetites without reason. But to the man who is complete in all the essentials of humanity, it is anything but natural that he should abandon himself to such a course of life. His reason opposes it; his moral sense opposes it; his regard for his personal health and welfare opposes it: so thoroughly indeed does every higher principle of his nature oppose it, that he must drown reflection; he must close his eyes against all experience; he must, in short, forcibly extinguish those moral and intellectual lights which God, in His mercy, has given him as his guides, before he can pursue such habits without repugnance, without being painfully oppressed by the sense of his own sin and folly, and without spending one-half of the day in mourning over the excesses of the other. (*W. Harness, M.A.*) *A fight for life*:—The flesh aims to damn the soul. It is in this conflict as Cæsar said in the battle he had once in Africa with the children and partakers of Pompey, that in other battles he was wont to fight for glory, but there and then he was obliged to fight for his life. Remember thy precious soul lies at stake in this conflict. (*Christopher Love.*) *Destructive*

lusts :—Men that reject religion in favour of indulgence, do not stand any chance of permanent prosperity. Such men are like gipsies, that, by some freak of fortune, are turned into a magnificent mansion, well built, well furnished, and well stored with works of art. These gipsies go to work and break to pieces the exquisitely-carved furniture, pull down the rare pictures, and strip the house of all the valuable things in it, and burn them, in order to make their pot boil, and thus to serve their lower nature, until, by and by, the whole building is desolate, and bleak, and barren. And men who reject religion and serve their passions are doing the same thing. They are kindling those lower fires at the expense of everything broad, and fine, and beautiful in their higher nature. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Destroyed by lust :—I can remember the time when flowers, pictures, beautiful faces and music set stirring always some strong emotion within me, in which it seemed that I saw hidden away in a crystal cell in the depths of my own strange heart, the shining form of a white-robed Soul-maiden, who cried out to me, "Ah! cannot you make your life as pure and beautiful as the flowers and the music, that so you may set me free?" But I chose the ignoble part, and gave myself up body and soul to the greed for gain. And often in the hour when, tempted by an evil thought, I turned to do some shameful or selfish action, I seemed to see the white arms of the Soul-maiden uplifted in piteous entreaty to heaven, until at last the time came when her voice was silent, and when I knew that I had thrust her down and down into a darkness whence she would never again come forth. (*A Dead Man's Diary.*)

Destructive nature of fleshly lusts :—That word "war" is full of meaning. It gives the idea of the march of an army against a city, as of the Greeks to surround and capture Troy—an assault which began with open war and ended by the stratagem of the wooden horse, from which the armed warriors descended into the heart of the city at dead of night. Of course we should all admit that excessive indulgence in any appetite injures the body, and especially the organs through which the sin against the whole fabric has been committed. But we may not all realise how destructive these fleshly lusts are to the inner life. They attack and conquer it, and lead it into captivity, impairing its energies, sullyng its purity, lowering its tone, and cutting off the locks of moral strength. Remember, then, when tempted to yield to some unholy prompting, even though you only indulge the thought and wish, you are exposing yourself to a certain diminution of spiritual force, which will inevitably cripple your endeavours, and show itself in failure and defeat. No act of sensual indulgence is possible without inevitable injury to our true selves. It may be forgiven, and put away, through the forgiveness of God, by the blood of Jesus; but the soul can never be quite what it would have been had the temptation been overcome, and the grace of self-restraint exercised. How many there are around us, eminently fitted by their gifts, to lead the hosts of God, who, like Samson, grind in the prison-house, making pastime for their foes, because they have been mastered by appetites which they should have controlled, as the horseman his fiery steed. Is there not a deep spiritual truth in the notion of the savage warrior, that the strength of a fallen foe enters the arm which has smitten him to the dust? Indulge the flesh, and you are weak. Curb it by self-restraint, and you are strong. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Fleshly lusts are the soul's adversaries :—These desires that belong to the flesh are adversaries of the soul. There is a difference between a war and a battle. It is not a random stroke; it is warfare on a plan. A battle may be won, and yet the victor be overcome ere the war be over. The first French emperor gained several great battles in the Russian campaign; but his army was not only vanquished, it was almost annihilated in the end. It is thus that certain appetites and passions, although once and again overcome by a resolute will, return to the charge, and watch their opportunity. It is not a battle, and done with it: the vanquished foe often enslaves his conqueror. A young man in modern society must do battle for his life with strong drink. He can taste it freely and stop in time. He despises the weak who seek safety in flight and abstinence. He knows what is good for him, and will not allow himself to be overcome. He obtains a good many victories, and counts himself invulnerable. But the wily foe persists. By little and little a diseased thirst is generated. The enemy now has an accomplice within the castle gates; and in the end the strong man, like Samson with his eyes out, grinds darkling in his enslaver's prison. (*W. Arnot.*)

Inward lusts :—Not only acts of sin breaking out in the body, but the inward lusts that are in the heart, though they should never break out, for even the heart and soul is flesh as well as the body, and fleshly, even corrupt and sinful, as the sinful lusts of unbelief, impatience, hardness

of heart, hypocrisy, rebelling against that which is good, weariness in well-doing, pride, anger, envy, self-love, covetousness, uncleanness, uncharitableness, &c. (*John Rogers.*) **Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.**—*Christians are to live godly, even among the wicked*:—It is our duty not only to live godly among the godly, but even among the wicked; we must not follow a multitude to do evil. True, it is no easy thing with the cruel to live mercifully, with the hurtful to live helpfully, with the profane to live holly; yet it is to be attained unto, and we must labour for it. 1. This rebukes such as severing themselves from all company, because they would not be tainted nor troubled with men's ill manners, betake themselves to a solitary, hermit's life. We are not born for ourselves, but for our parents, country, God's Church, &c. Besides, it is no such mastery for a man to avoid all occasions, as to live among occasions, and not be tainted with them. 2. It rebukes those that be for all companies. In good company they will be sober, in ill as the company is, will swear with swearers, lie also and dissemble when they be with such, so thinking that they may hold with the hare and run with the hound; like the chameleon they change themselves into all colours; but these are none of God's honest men, they are not for His turn, as if He were not the God of all places and times. Let such know that they have rotten and unsanctified hearts. But how should a man do, to live well among such? As they that live where the plague is, use preservatives; so must we daily pray God to keep us in a continual hatred of sin, considering the happiness of them that hold out. Think of Noah, Lot, Abraham, and their commendation; observe the judgments that fall upon bad men, and think what will be hereafter. Again, avoid familiarity with them; we cannot touch pitch and not be defiled, walk on coals and not be burnt. 3. It rebukes such Christians as living among such, walk not so holily as they should, but if they do not approve of, yet consent to their bad behaviour, without dislikes, especially being with their betters. 4. If God would have us live well among the wicked, what would He then in the midst of all good means? What, then, is their sin, and where shall they appear, that break out and live badly in the midst of the means of good, the ministry of the Word, &c.? What would these do, if they were far from such means? 5. It rebukes those that professing religion more than ordinarily, yet remember not with whom they live, but as if they were only among the good, which would hide all their frailties, or interpret them to the best, not as if they were among the wicked, that seek occasion against God's servants, that desire no better booty than the fall of a professor, &c. (*ibid.*) *The witness of a pure life*:—"Having your conversation honest." Both terms need some explanation. In modern English, conversation means the talking of two or three persons with each other; but the sense in this text is, the whole habit and life-course of a person—his character and temper and conduct in presence of his fellows. At all times, and in all circumstances, walk circumspectly, for you never know who may be looking on. The modern meaning of honest is, that you do not cheat in a bargain; but as used here, and in ancient times generally, it signifies beautiful—first a material and then a moral winsomeness. These two terms in conjunction convey the precept, Let all the circumference of your life shine in the beauty of holiness. Alas! bid this dull earth shine like a star of heaven! To have commanded the house of Israel to shine as a light to surrounding nations, would have been an impossible requirement, if the precept had not been mated with a promise. But as the record runs, it is a reasonable service that is demanded (*Isa. lx. 1*). This precept given by Peter is on both its sides the echo of Isaiah's words. A light is needed because darkness reigns around. Peter desiderates a beautiful life among the Gentiles; and Isaiah expects that, when Israel basks in the favour of God, the Gentiles shall come to their light. It is a characteristic of true faith that it has positive hope. It does not despair even when things are at the worst, for it trusts in God. It is not enough that the primitive disciples should repel surrounding, assailing evil, and hold their own. They expect to make aggression and to gain a victory; to turn scoffs into hymns of praise, and enemies of Christ into zealous disciples: "That, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers," &c. It is not by the loudest debate and profession that these conquests can be made. It is not by what Christians say, but by what Christians are, that they can win the neighbourhood. The call is not so much to give evidence, as to be witnesses. Still further the precepts run down into detail. Submission to magistrates is prescribed as a Christian duty. Considering the time and the circumstances, this is a remarkable feature of the New Testament. The gospel fosters liberty; but does not suggest insurrection. Witness the emigration of the persecuted Puritans from

England to America. These men would not resist constituted authority; but neither would they allow themselves to be crushed by a despot, as long as a remedy, which they could with a good conscience adopt, lay within their reach. The results will tell with decisive effect on the future condition of the human race. Ordinances of man should be obeyed, but they stand not on the same level with ordinances of God. (*W. Arnot.*) *The Church in relation to the world*:—The relation in which Christians stand to those who are not Christians is of vital importance to understand and feel (*Psa. xxxix. 1; Neh. v. 9; Titus ii. 7, 8*). These and like references inculcate the duty of conserving the Christian name and the glory of God. That the Christian character should be perfect for the sake of its own beauty is a truth worthy of prayerful solicitude at all times; but the Christian character is more than a garment to be observed—it is an influence to be imparted to others.

I. WE BEGIN WITH THE FACT THAT WE ARE WATCHED BY THOSE WHO ARE OF OPPOSITE TENDENCIES. We are under daily examination. There are those who take a greater delight to look at an eclipse of the sun for five minutes than to enjoy its light for a lifetime. But if there were no light in the sun there could not be an eclipse. So with men of worth; the contrast between the excellent and the not excellent fixes the eye of envy upon them, but where excellency is it cannot be altogether ignored. Young Christians, bear with me, and suffer the word of exhortation. You are not sufficiently alive to the fact that your Christian life is under a perpetual scrutiny. Not only that, but efforts are made to draw you aside from the way of peace. An honest conversation means a life true in every part to the great pattern set before us in the gospel.

II. LET US FURTHER CONSIDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS. "Glorify God," &c. Too frequently it is supposed by some that because they cannot take a prominent part in gospel services, and thereby possibly become instrumental directly in the conversion of souls, their lives are comparatively unobserved and useless. Let us remove this notion. As there is not a single ray of light, or drop of water, or breath of air, which does not contribute to the vast system of light, of water, and of air, so there is not a single Christian example which does not minister in the circle of the Church and lead to higher results.

1. Men will feel the need of the change which they see in us.
2. Men will feel the need of the peace which we enjoy.
3. Men will feel the need of the prospect which cheers us. We have a good hope through grace.
4. And lastly, the influence of the Christian life leads to the highest results. It may be that to-day we think so much of self that we cannot rise to the highest point in our life. The highest degree of Christian excellence is the service and glory of God. To realise this we must look beyond ourselves, and beyond those to whom we may bring salvation; and beyond any benefits faith may confer on either them or us, to God. He will manifest Himself in the day of visitation, when we shall see and feel that our life is intended to reach even to Himself. In the day of visitation all matters will be seen in their true light. The text is a warning to the world as well as to the Church. That any soul, however degraded, should delight in making the sins of others his prey, passes comprehension. What, a vulture, with only a taste for carrion! A sense of guilt endeavours to fix all eyes on the sins of others to avoid personal detection. The sins of others will help no man in the day of judgment. (*T. Davies, M.A.*)

The power of a consistent walk:—The Rev. Dr. Stalker once related the following incident in an address on "Religion in Common Life": "A lady went to him with a request to join his church. She and her husband were foreigners and Roman Catholics, but had lapsed from all church-going for ten or eleven years. One night their servant went home rather late from a meeting. Upon pressure being brought to bear upon her, this servant acknowledged that she had that night been convicted of sin, and stayed behind to speak about her soul. The lady resolved to watch the girl for the next fortnight. Such a change in her temper and diligence was observable that, at the end of the fortnight, the mistress asked where the meeting was held, and went on the next Sabbath evening, with the result that both she and her husband were converted. The servant's consistent walk was more powerful than anything she could have said, so true is it that example is better than precept." *Beautiful behaviour*:—*καλην* ("honest"), good, or comely. The deeper view of Greek philosophy represented immorality and ugliness, and morality and beauty as convertible ideas. (*J. Muller.*)

Inconsistency noticeable:—The whole complexion of a negro is less noticed than a single stain on the features of a white countenance. (*Wm. Jay.*)

They speak against you as evildoers.—*The transgressions of Christians*:—Amongst

the numerous attempts to throw doubt upon the evidence of our religion, not the least successful has been suggested by the imperfections of those who profess themselves the disciples of its Author. I. THAT THE OBJECTION ITSELF IS ON SEVERAL ACCOUNTS DELUSIVE. It is drawn, not from any difficulties inherent in religion or its evidence, but from a supposed insufficiency of its influence and effects. Christianity itself never supposes its followers to be without fault, that its influence can secure unerring obedience to its own laws. So far from this, indeed, "it is impossible," according to its own language, "but that offences will come." II. One great reason why the lives of Christians do not always correspond to their religion, IS THAT FREEDOM OF MIND AND ACTION, WITH WHICH OUR CREATOR HAS ENDOWED US, AND WHICH IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO CREATURES RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR CONDUCT. Impelled by passions impatient for gratification, and surrounded with temptations, frequently perplexed with difficulties between duty and inclination, and sometimes deceived by appearances; can it be a just subject of wonder, if the love of the present sometimes prevail over the expectation of the future, or the delusions of pleasure for a while withdraw the mind from the prospect of its consequences; if we violate the laws which we confess to be just, and practise what our religion condemns? III. These defects in the conduct of individuals appear also the more striking WHEN COMPARED WITH THE PURITY OF THE RULES BY WHICH OUR ACTIONS OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN DIRECTED, AND WITH THE WEIGHT OF THE SANCTIONS BY WHICH THOSE RULES ARE ENFORCED. IV. ANOTHER PLAUSIBLE BASIS FOR THE SAME CENSURE MAY BE LAID IN THE OPPOSITE CHARACTERS OF VIRTUE AND VICE. Virtue is always modest, peaceable, and silent; vice often forward, loud, and conspicuous. V. CHRISTIANS, AGAIN, HAVE BEEN SEVERELY CENSURED ON ACCOUNT OF THE NUMEROUS DIVISIONS AND DISTINCTIONS AMONGST THEM. It would be unreasonable to expect that mankind should differ in their opinions on almost every other subject, and yet should be all agreed on this; on a subject which is of all others the most interesting, the most extensive, and the most complex. To this let us add the effects of the weakness and folly, of the vanity and ambition, of the enthusiasm or the hypocrisy of various individuals amongst us, and we shall be able to account very satisfactorily for the multiplicity of our tenets and parties. VI. Such as these are the censures that have been thrown upon Christianity and its professors. But as far as they have any foundation in truth, THE ONLY ADEQUATE REPUTATION IS AN AMENDMENT IN OUR OWN MORALS, a regulation of our lives, more agreeable to the principles that we profess. (*W. Barrow, D.D.*) *Christians maligned*:—I. "Whereas they speak against you as evildoers." This is in general the disease of man's corrupt nature, and argues much the baseness of it—this propensity to speak evil of another, either blotting the best actions with misconstructions, or taking doubtful things by the left ear; not choosing the most favourable, but, on the contrary, the very harshest sense that can be put upon them. All these kinds of evil speaking are fruits that spring from that bitter root of pride and self-love, which is naturally deeply fastened in every man's heart. But besides this general bent to evil speaking, there is a particular malice in the world against those that are born of God, which must have vent in calumnies and reproaches. These evil speakings of the world against pious men professing religion, are partly gross falsehoods invented without the least ground or appearance of truth. Then again, consider, how much more will the wicked insult upon the least real blemishes that they can spy amongst the professors of godliness. And in this there is commonly a threefold injury—they strictly pry into and maliciously object against Christians the smallest imperfections and frailties of their lives, as if they pretended to absolute perfection. Men are apt to impute the scandalous falls of some particular Christians to the whole number. It is a very incompetent rule to make judgment of any man by one action, much more to measure all the rest of the same profession by it. They impute the personal failings of men to their religion, and disparage it because of the faults of those that profess it. II. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles." As the sovereign power of drawing good out of evil resides in God, and argues His primitive goodness, so He teacheth His own children some faculty this way, that they may resemble Him in it. He teacheth them to draw sweetness out of their bitterest afflictions, and increase of inward peace from their outward troubles. The sharp censures and evil speakings that a Christian is encompassed with in the world, are no other than a hedge of thorns set on every side, that he may not go out of his way, but keep straight on in it, not declining to the right hand nor to the left; whereas if they found nothing but the favour and good opinion of the world, they might, as in a way unhedged, be subject to wander out

into the meadows of carnal pleasures that are about them, which would call and allure them, and often divert them from their journey. And thus it might fall out, that Christians would deserve censure and evil speakings the more, if they did not usually suffer them undeserved. III. "That they may glorify God in the day of their visitation." He says not, 'They shall praise or commend you, but, "shall glorify God." It is this the apostle still holds before their eyes, as that upon which a Christian doth willingly set his eye and keep it fixed, in all his ways. He doth not teach them to be sensible of their own esteem as it concerns themselves, but only as the glory of their God is interested in it. "In the day of visitation." The beholding of your good works may work this in them, that they may be gained to acknowledge and embrace that religion and that God, which for the present they reject; but that it may be thus, they must be visited with that same light and grace from above, which hath sanctified you. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

The wicked speak ill of God's children:—The more sincere any is in professing the truth, the more the wicked naturally hate him. Thus have God's children ever been ill-spoken of (*Matt. v. 11; Gen. xxi. 9; Gal. iv. 30; 1 Kings xviii. 17; 2 Kings ix. 11; Ezra iv. 5-16; Neb. vi. 5, 6; Esther iii. 8; Acts xxiv. 14; Matt. xi. 19; Luke xi. 15; John viii. 48; Acts ii. 19; vi. 11, 16, 20, 21*). 1. Seeing the wicked are so apt to speak evil, we should give all diligence to look so to our ways as to give them no just occasion. 2. Think it not strange to be ill spoken of; it is the nature of the world thus to do, as for the birds to fly, and we must not be discouraged at it, and say, "I have striven to do as well as I can, and yet I am ill spoken of; I cannot tell what to do," and so faint and melt as wax. Oh, no; but let it be as a whetstone to sharpen you on more (*2 Sam. vi. 22*). 3. This might make men not too ready to believe reports, and think ill of men by and by upon flying reports, seeing the world are so apt to speak wrongfully, especially of God's children. 4. For them that be ill speakers of God's servants, they cannot bear a worse badge, as ill a sign as can be of any; for if he be translated from death to life that loves the brethren, what then he that hates them? He is no true member of the Church, nor led by David's spirit (*Psa. xv. 8; xvi. 2*), but is of Ishmael's generation, and will be cast out as he. How shall they escape the curse threatened (*Isa. v. 20; Prov. xvii. 15*)? (*John Rogers.*)

Your good works, which they shall behold.—*The ministry of good works:*—All religion which does not lead to a life of good works is a counterfeit. It is bad money, which will never pass current at the court of heaven. It may bear the name of Christ, but it lacks His mind and spirit. It hinders the progress of the gospel, and is one of the worst enemies of His kingdom. On the other hand, a life fruitful in good works brings honour to our Father in heaven. It manifests His wisdom in the free salvation which He bestows. It prepares the way in many a heart for the reception of the truth, and kindles in many others a desire to walk more closely with God. Let me give a single example, from the writer's personal knowledge, of the effect of a consistent, holy life. A wealthy tradesman in London was most zealous and self-denying in his labours and liberality in the Lord's work. Each year he gave away many thousands of pounds, and a large part of this anonymously. I had it from this man's own lips that in early life he was saved from infidelity by noticing the holy, godly, blameless walk of a young banker's clerk. Who can tell the countless benefits that thus arose to the Church of Christ through the consistent life of that young man? There are one or two points as to the life of good works on which it is needful to dwell. I. WHAT IS THE PREPARATION FOR SUCH A LIFE? How can any one hope to enter upon such a course, and then persevere in it? 1. Your first duty is to embrace the blessed hope of life which is in Christ Jesus. As the shipwrecked man must first lay hold of the rope or get into the lifeboat that so he may escape destruction and get safe to shore, and then can again enter upon the works of his calling, so must you first accept the free invitation of Christ in the gospel, and reach the shore of peace and reconciliation with God. Believe in the readiness and power of Christ to save you. Rejoice that He welcomes you to His care, and will keep you by His power. Then you may go forward, and will not fail. A life of good works will be a necessity to you. You possess a new motive. A spirit of grateful love to God will fill your breast. You will keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. 2. Moreover, you will possess a new power. In the strength of the Spirit you can do those good works which are pleasing to your Father in heaven. Be sure, therefore, that you begin your course aright. Begin in humility and faith. II. IN WHAT WAY MAY YOU BEST CARRY OUT IN DAILY PRACTICE A LIFE DEVOTED TO GOOD WORKS?

Take a sample of "a good work," one that we know to have been truly such from the lips of Christ Himself. You remember Mary in the house of Simon the leper (Mark xiv. 6, 8, 9). Here was every element of a good work. It was done to Christ Himself, and out of love to Him. It was a costly work, for the ointment was very precious. It was a lowly work. Both hands and hair were used in anointing the Lord's feet. It was a work of personal service. She did not do the work by another, but herself ministered to Christ. It was a work which spread a sweet savour around, and thus of benefit to those in the house. It was a work which brought honour to the Lord, which pointed to His death of suffering, and which was abundantly recompensed in the gracious words which Christ spoke of her. III. Let me add that THERE IS A FOURFOLD MINISTRY OF GOOD WORKS IN WHICH EACH CHRISTIAN SHOULD SEEK TO EXCEL. 1. There is the ministry of home life. This stands in the first rank of duty. The lamp which the Lord hath lighted should give light to all that are in the house where it is found. The most commonplace duties ought to be done before God, and thus become an acceptable sacrifice. The care of children, the work of the house, the use of the needle, the rising in the morning, attention to the wants and comforts of each member of the family—such ordinary things as these may afford scope for self-denial, for manifesting an unselfish spirit, and in many ways for proving the sincerity of our Christian profession. No less important is it that a diligent guard should be set over tongue and temper, over infirmities and irritabilities, over clouded looks and wayward passions, over doing little things which ought not to be done, or over doing right things in a wrong way. 2. There is the ministry of glad, willing, freehanded gifts. Of whatever we possess we are but stewards. It belongs not to us, but to Him who gave it into our charge. Let there be real self-denial. Above all, never forget that a ready, cheerful spirit is especially pleasing to God. 3. There is the ministry of personal work and effort in the Lord's vineyard. Give not only money, but the gold of time to do work for God, for His Church, for the souls of poor and rich, of sick and strong, of young and old. 4. Lastly, there is the ministry of fervent prayers and intercessions. Of all agencies this is the most powerful. There are those who by sickness and extreme poverty can do little or nothing in the way of personal service, who yet by true, believing prayer may bring down rich benefits on Christ's Church. And those who can both work and give yet fail to employ the very greatest talent, if they neglect constant intercession on behalf of others. (*G. Everard, M.A.*) *True revenge*:—Be revenged by shining. (*Toplady.*) *Looking for one thing and finding another*:—"Which they shall behold," while they pry and spy into your courses (as the Greek word imports) to see what evil they can find out and fasten on. (*J. Trapp.*) **Glorify God in the day of visitation.**—*How God is glorified by us*:—I. BY KNOWLEDGE, when we conceive of God after a glorious manner. Seeing we can add no glory to God's nature, we should strive to make Him glorious in our own minds and hearts. And we may, by the way, see what cause we have to be smitten with shame to think of it, how we have dishonoured God by mean thoughts of Him. II. BY ACKNOWLEDGMENT, when in words or works we do ascribe excellency unto God, as—1. When in words we magnify God and speak of His praises, and confess that He is worthy to receive honour, and glory, and might, and majesty (Rev. iv. 11; Psa. xxix.; lxxxvi. 9). 2. When men confess that all the glory they have above other men in gifts or dignity was given them by God (1 Chron. xxix. 11, 13). And thus we make God the Father of glory, as He is called (Eph. i. 17). 3. When the praise of God or the advancement of His kingdom is made the end of all our actions, this is to do all to His glory (1 Cor. x. 31). 4. When we believe God's promises, and wait for the performance of them, though we see no means likely for their accomplishment. Thus Abraham (Rom. iv.). 5. When we publicly acknowledge true religion, or any special truth of God, when it is generally opposed by the most men. 6. When men suffer in the quarrel of God's truth and true religion (1 Pet. iv. 16). 7. When on the Sabbath men devote themselves only to God's work, doing it with more joy and care than they should do their own work on the week-days (Isa. lviii. 13). 8. When men do in particular give thanks to God for benefits or deliverances, acknowledging God's special hand therein. Thus the leper gave glory to God (Luke xvii. 18; Psa. xi. 3, 4). 9. By loving, praising, and esteeming of Jesus Christ above all men; for when we glorify the Son we glorify the Father (John i. 14; xi. 4). 10. When we account of and honour godly men above all other sorts of men in the world. III. BY EFFECT, when men make others to glorify God. Thus the professed subjection of Christians to the gospel makes other men glorify God (2 Cor. ix. 13). So the fruits of righteousness are to the

glory of God (Phil. i. 10). So here the good works of Christians do make new converts glorify God; so every Christian that is God's planting is a tree of righteousness that God may be glorified (Isa. lxi. 3). So are all Christians to the praise of the glory of God's grace, as they are either qualified or privileged by Jesus Christ (Eph. i. 7). (*N. Byfield.*) **The day of visitation.**—*Conversion the day of visitation*:—I. CONVERSION IS THE WORK OF GOD. 1. Let them which have felt this work acknowledge God in it, and give Him all the glory. 2. They that be yet without it, let them not defer it as a small matter to the last, as if they could convert themselves when they list, but humbly seek it of God in attending on His ordinances. II. IT IS GOD'S GREAT MERCY TO CONVERT A SINNER. This is the greatest mercy that can be bestowed: to be delivered from sickness into health, from prison into liberty, from poverty to riches, from death to life. Let those that have obtained it give glory to God. III. A MAN CAN NEVER GLORIFY GOD TILL GOD THUS VISIT AND CONVERT HIS SOUL. IV. WHEN A MAN IS CONVERTED HE WILL GLORIFY GOD; yea, he cannot choose but in heart admire God's goodness and love, and in his life seek to glorify Him. Then will he also do all he can to gain others (Luke xxii. 32). V. EVEN SUCH AS HAVE BEEN ILL-SPEAKERS OF THE TRUTH AND GOD'S SERVANTS MAY YET BE CONVERTED AND PROVE GOOD CHRISTIANS (Acts ii. 13; Rom. vi. 17; 1 Cor. vi. 9; Tit. iii. 3). 1. Never despair of them that be very bad, but pray for them, and give them good counsel. 2. This may be an exceeding provocation to the worst, that they may prove good and be saved, as unlikely as it is. 3. Yet let none instead of good take hurt by this, and heart to go on in sin, seeing the worst may become converts. They shall find God a just and severe revenger of such proud despisers and presumptuous sinners. (*John Rogers.*)

Vers. 13-16. **Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man.**—*The limits of subjection to civil rulers*:—What if the rulers themselves be wicked men, and the government itself a tyranny? 1. Let it be considered that there is probably no government, not even that of the worst slave plantation, that is not on the whole to be preferred to anarchy, or no government at all; and that, therefore, the argument from the uses of government never quite fails. 2. There is no question whatever that, when human government errs and transcends the limits prescribed by its very nature and the ends of its being, forbidding what God has commanded, or commanding what God has forbidden, our duty in every such case is to hearken unto God more than unto men. In the conflict of authorities the higher authority must rule. 3. The Christian law does not strip a man of whatever civil rights his country's law allows him, nor does it prohibit him from defending those rights in any lawful way (Acts xvi. 37; xxii. 25; xxv. 11). 4. These things being understood, the apostle's rule may safely be taken as absolute and universal in its application. Reverencing still the dark and distorted shadow of the Divine sovereignty, they will leave it to His all-controlling providence, and to outraged humanity, to redress the wrongs of nations. (*J. Lillie, D.D.*) *The duty of submission to authority*:—I. ALL AUTHORITY OF EVERY KIND IS FROM GOD, AND IS TO BE REGARDED AS SUCH. The Word of God goes further, and says, "that there is no power but of God." Nor is this truth confined to the case of kings and their subjects; it applies to every authority whatever; all the relations in life, and our obedience, is due simply because it is the will and ordinance of God. II. THE PERSONS WHO RECEIVE THIS THEIR AUTHORITY FROM GOD ARE BUT MEN. Now man in his natural state is full of corruption, pride, selfishness, unrighteousness, covetousness, maliciousness. It is therefore to be calculated upon, and God contemplated this when He gave the precept, that the persons who are in authority should abuse it in some way or another. And therefore it is nowhere written: Children, obey good parents; servants, obey kind masters; subjects, obey a good government; there is no such limitation, but quite the contrary, "not only the good and gentle, but also the froward." If those in authority abuse or neglect their trust, they will assuredly have to give account to God; but our duty is to submit, while using all lawful means to be delivered from unjust treatment. (*John Tucker, B.D.*) *Submission to rulers*:—I. AN AUTHORITATIVE COMMAND OF obedience, "Submit yourselves." II. THE OBJECT, to which this obedience must be yielded, "Every ordinance of man." III. THE DIVISION OF THIS ORDINANCE OF MAN into supreme and subordinate. "Submit to the King, as supreme; and to governors" sent by Him, as subordinate. IV. THE DUTY OF ALL GOVERNORS, and the end of all governments expressed, and that is, "The punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of

them that do well." V. THE MOTIVE, which enforceth this exhortation and command: submit to them "for the Lord's sake." (*Bp. E. Hopkins.*) *Subjection to authority*:—I. NO SUBJECTION IS DUE TO AN UNLAWFUL AND USURPING POWER, UPON GOD'S COMMAND, AND FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE. II. UPON PRUDENTIAL AND SELF-PRESERVING PRINCIPLES, SUBMISSION MAY SOMETIMES BE YIELDED TO THE LAWFUL COMMANDS OF AN UNLAWFUL AND USURPING POWER. III. WE OUGHT TO OBEY THE COMMANDS OF THE LAWFUL MAGISTRATE, IN THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE IN THEMSELVES NECESSARY TO BE DONE AND OUR INDISPENSABLE DUTY, AND THAT, NOT ONLY OUT OF CONSCIENCE TO GOD, BUT ALSO OUT OF CONSCIENCE TO MAN. IV. IF THE THING COMMANDED BE INDIFFERENTLY LAWFUL, AND APPEAR SO TO US; that is, if it be in its own nature such as we may either do it, or not to do it without sin; THEN ARE WE TO BE DETERMINED BY THE MAGISTRATE'S COMMANDS TO DO WHAT HE REQUIRES, AND TO ABSTAIN FROM WHAT HE FORBIDS. V. IF THE THING BE INDIFFERENTLY LAWFUL IN ITSELF, BUT APPEARS DOUBTFUL UNTO US, AND WE CANNOT RESOLVE OURSELVES WHETHER IT BE LAWFUL OR EVIL, I THINK WE ARE OBLIGED, till we receive clearer light and information, TO TAKE THAT PART OF THE DOUBT WHICH THE MAGISTRATE COMMANDS US, AS BEING THE SAFEST AND MOST SATISFACTORY TO CONSCIENCE. VI. IF THE THING ENJOINED BE IN ITSELF SINFUL AND UNLAWFUL, OR AT LEAST APPEAR SO UNTO US, THEN TAKE THESE TWO FOLLOWING RULES—1. We ought not, upon any pretences or inducements whatsoever, to yield active obedience to such a command. 2. Though we may not yield active obedience to the unlawful commands of our superiors, yet we are bound to yield passive obedience to them. VII. WE OUGHT, IN NO CASE WHATSOEVER, TO RESIST AND REBEL AGAINST THE LAWFUL POWERS WHICH GOD HATH SET OVER US; yea, though they should use their power unlawfully; for whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. (*Ibid.*) *Submission to government*:—1. The reasonableness of this apostolical precept is suggested by the terms used to convey it; for why "rulers and governors," unless it be indeed their office to rule and govern, our duty to submit and obey? 2. But that there should be government, and that men should obey it, is the will and appointment of God. 3. A third reason assigned for obedience to government is the benefit derived from it to the community. It is instituted for the protection of good men by the punishment of evil ones. 4. A fourth reason for the precept inculcated is the honour of Christianity. (*Bp. Horne.*) *Bad rulers to be obeyed*:—You will say the doctrine is unreasonable, and of tyranny there can be no end if it be unlawful to resist it. Perhaps, if we only lay aside for a moment our passions and prejudices, we shall see how much better God has provided for our happiness than we ourselves should do. 1. For, if you allow to subjects a power of taking arms and deposing their princes, who is to be judge when there is a sufficient reason for exerting such power? Men will never judge fairly and impartially in their own cause. 2. It should be considered that, although government may sometimes be bad, rebellion will generally be worse. "The wrath of a king," says the Scripture, "is as the roaring of a lion," he may destroy some; but "the madness of the people" is as the raging of a tempestuous sea when it has burst its bounds; it overwhelms all. Compare the mischief said to be done, or designed, by our unfortunate Charles I. with the bloodshed, the devastations of the great rebellion, from the horrors of which the nation was at length obliged to seek protection by re-establishing the government that had been cast off. 3. But respecting the principle of obedience, and the inconveniences to which it may sometimes subject us, we do not sufficiently rely upon the providence or the promises of God. The Scriptures teach us that as He setteth a righteous prince over a people that fear and serve Him, so He often sendeth an unrighteous one to punish a wicked nation. (*Ibid.*) *Civil authorities have their authority from God*:—Water may be made to assume different forms, in fountains and cascades, and be made to flow in different channels or aqueducts by the hand of man; but the element itself, which flows in them, is from God. So again, marble may be hewn by man's hand into different shapes; under the sculptor's chisel it may become a statue, a frieze, or sarcophagus, but the marble itself is from the quarry, it is from the creative hand of God. So it is with the civil power. The form which power may assume, and the person who may be appointed to exercise it, may be ordinances of man, but the authority itself is from God. (*C. Wordsworth.*) *Any kind of government better than none*:—There was a law amongst the Persians that when their governor was dead there should be a lawlessness for five days after, that every man should do what he list; now for those five days there was such killing and robbing, and such destroying one another, that

by the time the five days were over, they were glad of government again. So that any kind of government is better than no government; but happy is that people that live under a good government, where justice flows from the Supreme as head, and is conveyed by subordinate ministers unto the people. (*A. Burgess.*) **That with well doing ye may put to silence.**—*On silencing objections against Christianity*:—I. WHAT WAS THAT CAVIL AND OBJECTION AGAINST CHRISTIAN RELIGION WHICH THE APOSTLE HERE HATH RESPECT UNTO, AND WOULD HAVE SILENCED? From vers. 13, 14 we learn that it was that old clamour, that Christian religion was an enemy to government, and the professors of it seditious persons. This was indeed the very masterpiece of Satan's policy; by this he wrought the condemnation of the blessed Jesus, and even constrained Pilate to give sentence against Him (John xix. 12-13). And by the same artifice he hoped also to destroy His religion, and to root the profession of it out of the world. II. BY WHAT MEANS THE APOSTLE WOULD HAVE THIS DONE. There is not a more excellent way to take off all scandals against religion than the exemplary lives of those that profess it. But the notion of well-doing here is that honest and regular, that ready and conscientious subjection to government, that he had pressed in the preceding verses. And it is certainly the most effectual way. 1. All men have not parts to examine what the principles of a religion are, or to understand what the natural consequences from them be; and many that can do this are idle, or cannot spare time to do it, and all these will go that near way of judging a religion to be such, as they behold the professors of it to be. 2. Actions are commonly more convictive, than principles and professions. III. THE GREAT REASON AND ARGUMENT UPON WHICH HE PRESSES IT. 1. This is God's will, because He knows this to be so very much for the good and happiness of the world. 2. The maintaining His own appointment and institution. 3. For the credit of His holy religion. (*H. Hesketh.*) *Why it is so hard to cure ignorance and silence ignorant men*:—1. Because it is natural to them to be hateful and hating others, and it is a hard task to overcome a natural disposition in man (Titus iii. 3). 2. Because the unregenerate mind of man is full of objections, and the devil supplies them with cavils. 3. Because many withhold the truth in unrighteousness; they love darkness and lies, and therefore resist the power of the truth. 4. Because they encourage one another in an evil way; they observe that the great men of the world, and many that are in reputation for wisdom, are scornors as well as they; they think they may revile securely. 5. Because many ignorant persons, when they are confuted, yet are so foolish that they will wilfully persist in their objections, though they cannot reply against the answer, yet they think if such and such were there, that have more experience and learning, they would make good what they say. 6. Because malice hath no ears; they hate the truth and godly men. If it be not as they say, yet their malice would fain have it so, and if it may disgrace the godly, they care not whether it be true or no. 7. Because many times God gives them over to such a reprobate sense, that through custom and evil surmises, they think verily they do not much amiss to oppose and hate such persons. This was the case of such as reviled and persecuted the apostles, they thought they did God good service. Uses—(1) Therefore we should not wonder if we see this daily come to pass that men of all sorts should reproach the good way of God so unjustly, so pertinaciously. (2) It shows that godly men had need to be circumspect, and that they which will confute ignorant men must strive to be thoroughly furnished with wisdom of words and abundance of good works. (3) It shows that ignorant persons are in a lamentable case, that so wilfully run towards the gates of death and ruin, that are so hardly cured of this spiritual blindness. (4) It imports that self-willed Christians that cannot be advised are to be reckoned in the rank of these fools, what show soever they make of a better estate. (5) It does comfortably import that when one is teachable, and hates reproaching, and will do or say nothing against the truth, and uses the means to get the knowledge and love of the truth, that such a person is escaped from the congregation of these fools, and is in some measure enlightened with true wisdom from above. (6) It may warn all that love their own souls, hereafter to take heed, to avoid wilfulness and self-conceitedness. (*N. Byfield.*) *The vices of Christians detrimental to the general interests of religion*:—I. THE VICIES OF BELIEVERS AFFORD AN ARGUMENT TO INFIDELITY. The vices of believers are not the consequences of religion, but of its abuse or neglect; the corruption of Christian manners cannot be at all compared with the enormous wickedness of the heathen nations; those excesses, which seem more peculiarly the offspring of Christianity, were the real production of ignorance and superstition. Unbelievers are not the only persons whom our misconduct may

fatally misled. II. EVEN IN PROFESSED CHRISTIANS THERE IS A COLD OR CONTEMPTUOUS NEGLECT OF PUBLIC WORSHIP, AND OF REVEALED DOCTRINES, WHICH IS OFTEN DEFENDED ON THE SAME PRETENCE: that it does not appear that they have either of them any actual influence on the conduct of those who regard them most scrupulously. Belief in the doctrines of religion, and attendance on its solemnities, have plainly a natural tendency to awaken our sense of those duties which the Being, whom we adore, has commanded, and to quicken our pursuit of those virtues, which it is the end of revelation to promote. And though it must be acknowledged that these means, however wisely adopted, partake in the imperfection of everything relating to man, and often fail of their ends; yet is it far from being certain that they fail so frequently, or so considerably, as the objection supposes. Religious observances, it is true, cannot divest us of our natural frailty; but they certainly give us awful ideas of the moral Governor of the world, and have a peculiar tendency to encourage that serious disposition of mind which will best secure us from great or frequent excesses. III. THE VICIES OF BELIEVERS NOT only furnish a pretence to the infidelity of some, and the irreligion of others, but SPREAD ALSO A VERY DANGEROUS SNARE IN THE PLAINER PATHS OF MORAL VIRTUE. The force of example on the minds and manners of mankind is universally acknowledged. Interest, inclination, and duty, the laws of man, the laws of nature, and the laws of God, are in vain united to resist its progress: every principle of action is perverted by the magic influence of prevailing fashion. As therefore the consequences of our conduct on the belief and manners of those around us are thus important in themselves; as they cannot be prevented by any prudence, nor averted by the sincerest repentance; they surely form a motive to goodness, which no thinking man can overlook, and no generous man will disregard. (*Jas. Fawcett, B.D.*)

As free, and not using.—*Freedom and law.*—Freedom is one of those words which need no recommendation: it belongs to the same category as light, order, progress, law. It is one of the ideas which, in some sense or other, mankind accepts as an axiom; as a landmark or principle of healthful life which is beyond discussion. What do we mean by freedom? We mean the power of a living being to act without hindrance to the true law of its life. I. Christ has given men POLITICAL OR SOCIAL FREEDOM. He has not indeed drawn out a scheme of government, and stamped it with His Divine authority as guaranteeing freedom. Yet with our Lord there came the germs of political liberty. When individual men had learnt to feel the greatness and the interest of life; the real horizon which stretches out before the soul's eye beyond the grave; the depths of being within the soul; its unexhausted capacities for happiness and for suffering; the reality and nearness of God, of His Divine Son, of our fellow-citizens the blessed angels; the awful, inexpressible distinction of being redeemed from death by the blood of the Most Holy, and sanctified by the Eternal Spirit; it was impossible not to feel also that each man had, in the highest sense, rights to assert and a bearing to maintain. Thus a Christian was a free man, simply because he was a Christian. It has often been alleged that, as a matter of fact, our Lord left the great despotisms of the world for a while untouched. Jesus Christ taught, He was crucified, He rose, He ascended. But the Cæsar Tiberius still sat upon the throne of the Roman world. There never was a more odious system of personal government than that of the Roman Emperors; the surviving forms of the extinct republic did but make the actual tyranny which had succeeded it more hard to bear. Yet it was of such an Emperor as Nero that St. Paul wrote (Rom. xiii. 1); and St. Peter (chap. ii. 13, 14). And in the same way apostles advise Christian slaves to give obedience to their masters as unto the Lord; to obey, not with eye-service, as if they had only to do as much as might be insisted on by a jealous owner, but with singleness of heart, as men who throw every energy into their work. It may be asked, How are such precepts compatible with the assertion that Christ gave us political freedom? The answer is that He gave us a moral force which did two things. First, it made every Christian independent of outward political circumstances; and, secondly, it made the creation of new civil institutions only a question of time. II. Christ gave men also INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM. He enfranchised them by the gift of truth. He gave truth in its fulness; truth not merely relative and provisional, but absolute and final. Until He came the human intellect was enslaved. It was enslaved either to degrading superstition, or to false and one-sided philosophies. When Christ, in all the glory of His Godhead and His Manhood, had enthroned Himself in the soul, He taught men to think worthily of the greatness of God and of the greatness of man, notwithstanding man's weakness and corruption. He freed men from all

the cramping influences of local philosophies, of local teachers, of petty schemes and theories for classes and races. He led men out into the great highways of thought, where, if they would, they might know the universal Father, manifested in His Blessed Son, as the Author of all existence, as its object, and as its end. Certainly our Lord has given us a body of Truth, which we can, if we like, reject, but which it is our happiness to believe. What He did for men in this way is embodied in His own teaching, in the writings of His apostles, and in the creeds of the universal Church. These are to intellectual liberty what law is to social liberty. They protect, they do not cramp it. They furnish a fixed point, from which thought may take wing. III. Christ has made men MORALLY FREE. He has broken the chains which fettered the human will, and has restored to it its buoyancy and its power. What had been lost was more than regained in Christ. Not merely was the penalty of old transgressions paid, so that man was redeemed from a real captivity: but the will was reinvigorated by a Heaven-sent force or grace, once more placing it in true harmony with the law of man's life (Rom. vi. 18). Here it is objected that moral freedom is not worth having if it be only a service after all. "You talk of freedom," men say, "but you mean rule. You mean restrictions upon action; restrictions upon inclination; restrictions upon speech. You mean obligations: obligations to work; obligations to self-discipline; obligations to sacrifice self to others; obligations to all the details of Christian duty." You are right: certainly we do. A Christian lives under a system of restrictions and obligations; and yet he is free. Those obligations and restrictions only prescribe for him what his own new heaven-sent nature would wish to be and to do. Whatever a Christian may be outwardly, he is inwardly a free man. In obeying Christ's law he acts as he desires to act: he acts according to this, the highest law of his life, because he rejoices to do so. He obeys law; the Law of God. But then he has no inclination to disobey it. He is, as St. Peter says, a servant of God; but then, as he would not for all the world be anything else, his service is perfect freedom. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Freedom and servitude*:—It often happens that apparent contradictions disappear when we reach a purer and higher range of life. Many of the things which perplex us when children, and seem to our eyes to be inconsistencies on the part of our parents, now appear, when we look back on them with the clearer vision of later years, to be not only consistent, but perfectly justifiable. And may that not be the same in all the regions of life? Of course it might be said on a superficial view, that servitude and freedom were inconsistent with one another. But in the larger life I gather that it is not so. The apostle at all events speaks as though a man might be perfectly free, and at the same time be living a life of servitude. I. The first law almost of existence is that which expresses itself in THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM. Would you not say that the child that was born but yesterday is very much like a man that has just been drawn out of the water after drowning? All the struggle, all the painful symptoms you notice in that drowned man are the efforts of life, so to speak, to recover itself, and to take possession of those conditions under which its existence alone can continue. The child, in the same way, is not yet, as it were, adjusted to the conditions by which it is surrounded, and the earlier stages of life are the struggle to lay hold of the conditions in which it finds itself. Thus I should say the struggle of all early life is the struggle to get possession of the right of life. And this will become more apparent if we ask ourselves what we mean by freedom. Freedom is the educated capacity to live according to the capacity of our being. The least reflection will show us that this is true. Take, for example, what we know perfectly well, that our struggle as a child turns upon the conception that that is the meaning of freedom. When you take your child and say, "It is now time that it began to learn those little physical exercises, whether you call them calisthenics or dancing classes." You say to yourself: "The child is not yet in possession of its full power. These exercises are to give it mastery over itself with regard to its physical organisation, and we are trying to give it such a mastery that it may be able to use all its physical power according to the order, law, and condition of that physical framework." It is the same when you come to the mental region. The man who thinks freely thinks truly, and a man only thinks freely according to the law and order of thought; and when you take your lad and say, "It is time you were educated," and send him to school, you do so because you know that exactly as physical training is to make him master of his own frame, so the mental training is to make him master of his own intelligence. It is the same thing in social life. The awkwardness which you see in your children is just that which arise out of the fact that they are not self-

possessed. But when they go into society and are trained they become, by the education of mixing with their fellow men, possessors of themselves, and what you call ease, manner, grace, is only that the man is master of himself, that the self-consciousness which disturbs his own happiness has vanished in entering into his rightful heritage of being a self-possessed individual. Look at it from the religious point of view. It is also true that religion comes to set a man free. Religion is the great co-ordinating power of the moral and physical forces of life. It is that which gives us power over ourselves. It sets us free from false conceptions. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free," means, "Stand fast in the possession of principles which clear your mind from false conceptions." The bulk of men are not to be charged with being slaves of the grosser or more vulgar passions, but they are very much the slaves of false conceptions of life. The competition for wealth, the desire to achieve physical ease, free from the anxieties of life—these things rise up in men's minds, and are fostered by the conditions of society, and man is the victim of a false idea of life. Christianity is sent surely to emancipate men from that, to show men what the real significance of life is, that those are little weaknesses in us which betray us into conditions and surroundings which make us less and lower than we ought to be. Therefore Christianity would not be a complete or valuable system if its only idea were that we should negate the positive sins in the world. No, we must re-organise humanity upon noble lines, make man master of himself and give him a true conception of life, that conception of life which God intends him to take. II. The second stage is THE STAGE OF SERVICE. As truly as the earlier stage is the stage of struggle, so it is true equally that the second stage is a stage of service. It is true in our ordinary life. There is no difference, as I take it, between the religious point of view and the purely natural point of view. The man who is educated to freedom only reaches that freedom in serving. It is true in the fields of nature: you only bring a thing to maturity in making it of service. The corn shall grow by slow degrees. That is the process by which it struggles into its freedom. It struggles first for bare existence and then for conditions under which it may reach its maturity; but the moment that maturity is reached the harvest is come, it has reached the condition of life in which service is absolutely imperative to it. This wheat grain means the law of service; therefore the moment its maturity is acquired it is acquired in order that it may be utilised. This is true with regard to human life. How we dreamed of what we would do when we were twenty-one! And yet, now that the twenty-one years are passed, the man's only freedom is service. He is not content to be a free man. Set him free and he is miserable. It comes in the gentle dawn of new emotions, which lead him to form his own little home nest. He has parted with freedom to dream of domestic life, a life in which he has pledged himself to service in the great citizenship of the world. Perhaps you are going to make your son a surgeon; you send him to his long training, in which his eye is skilled to perceive the symptom and meaning of every disease, to keep his nerve steady. The very moment the seven years of training are past, what is it that is springing up in his soul? The consciousness of power. But what does that lead him to? The necessity of service. Trained, we must use our powers. Make a man free in his whole nature, and you will make him thirst to lay down those powers for the service of his fellow men. Christ was free, but look at that life of our Lord: precisely because it was free, the whole of it was consecrated to service—so much so that to Him the only idea of human existence was this, that the powers of it should be used in the service of men. "I am among you as one that doth serve." III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO PRINCIPLES IS THE IMPORTANT THING. It is not simply that we are to live a life of service, nor that we are to seek to be free men. It is because we do not see that there is an indissoluble connection between the two that we sometimes blunder in many of the matters submitted to us. It is the free man who can yield the true service. That is what we want to get hold of. It is not that we want to make men serve one another by compulsion. That would be of no value at all. You do not want the enforced service of your wife or child. What you ask is free service. You speak of a man's freedom because all his actions are free; he is a free man in the use of his powers. You speak also of the charm and the graciousness wherewith a thing is done. The meaning of it is that it is the homage of a free man. There is a difference between the attitude of the slave and the splendid homage of a free man. Make men conscious of their freedom, let them feel that what they do is the free homage of the free men, and you will have from them what is worth more than all the tyranny of law. (*Ep. Boyd Carpenter.*) *False*

notions of liberty in religion and government destructive of both:—I. STATE THE TRUE NOTION OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY. 1. A freedom from the power and dominion of sin and the devil, and the curse of the moral law. 2. A freedom from the ritual ceremonies of the Mosaic law and the spirit of bondage to fear, abrogated by our Saviour. 3. A free use of all things that are in their nature indifferent; that is, things concerning which the law has made no determination; leaving us at our own choice, either to act or not to act. II. INSTANCE SOME OF THE ABUSES OF THIS LIBERTY, wherein it may be so perverted as to be made a cloak of maliciousness. 1. As to principles. It would be endless to recount all the blasphemies, heresies, and errors maintained under this specious pretence. 2. Secondly, to their practice. Which we shall find to be a true transcript of their principles. For such a free-thinker, if he be consistent with himself, must be a free actor too. He is equally without guide or governor, owes as little allegiance to his prince, as faith to his God; he is a rebel against both; sets up his own will as the supreme measure of his actions, for which he is answerable to nobody but himself. III. PROVE THE ABSURDITY, AS WELL AS WICKEDNESS, OF SUCH ABUSES OF OUR LIBERTY. Upon what bottom would these lawless men found their liberty? By what authority do they these things? Or who gave them this authority? Whence was it? From heaven or of men? They own the authority of neither. But they still insist, it is their natural right, as free-born men; whereby none is subject any further than compact and content obliges him. What do they mean by this so much talked of natural right? Is it essentially, and independently inherent in themselves, or communicated by another? If they say the former, can anything belonging to a dependent being be itself independent? If the latter, who is that other who so communicated this right? Who can communicate a natural right, but the author of nature? To speak strictly, no being has any natural right but God; who by virtue of creation has a natural essential right to the obedience of His creatures. But those creatures themselves have naturally no right to anything, unless it can be proved that they had a natural right to be created. IV. THE HAPPY CONSEQUENCES OF TRUE LIBERTY, AND THE MISERY AND SLAVERY OF THE MISTAKEN NOTIONS ABOUT IT. Having shown the absurdity and wickedness of this false principle in itself, as utterly inconsistent with reason and religion, gospel and law, the contrary position must be irrefragably true, and entirely agreeable to the laws of God and man; and there needs not much argument to prove that the effects must resemble the causes, and that happiness and prosperity, peace, and freedom must be the natural product of subjection to certain laws; and shame and misery, confusion and slavery, of their immunity from all. (*H. Sacheverell, D.D.*) *On freedom of thought*:—1. The great purpose for which the powers and the liberty of thought were bestowed was for the discovery of truth; for the discovery of those speculative truths which conduct us to the love of God, and of those practical truths which enable us to be the ministers of good to man. When, therefore, freedom of thought is employed as a means to these its destined ends, it is a virtuous principle, and he who feels it is acting from some of the most respectable motives of his nature. He is acting, in the first place, in conformity to the laws of his constitution, and has the secret voice of conscience applauding him amid every difficulty of his progress. He is acting, in the second place, with the dignity that belongs to the character of man; and, while the world around him is swayed either by the prejudices of antiquity, or by the idler prejudices of novelty, he stands as the superior to all the prejudices which influence lower minds. 2. When freedom of thought is employed as an end in itself, it is a principle which arises from very different causes, and is productive of very different effects. There is naturally much admiration due to that strength and independence of mind which can detect error, or which can discover truth; and there is accordingly, much sincere admiration paid to it. It is in this admiration that the danger and the snare consist. Because freedom of thought has been the great instrument of the discovery of truth, it is hastily concluded that all this is due to the freedom of thought itself rather than to the effects produced. If you feel that opinions are valuable in your estimation, not because they are free but because they are true, then go on, in the sight of God and of man, to the true honours of your moral and intellectual being. It is in this discipline you can acquire for yourselves permanent fame. But if in the employment of the powers of thought you look only to your own distinction, and care not for the ends for which they were given, pause, I beseech you, before you advance farther. (*A. Alison.*) *Free will*:—Liberty, freedom! The young heart bounds at the thought. It speaks of the unloosing of chains, the free roaming of the uncaged soul, the full freedom of

the will. Man was born, created to be free; full freedom is his original endowment, the condition of his nobility of soul, his distinction from the irrational creatures, the image of God in which he was created. As contrasted with necessity, it is as indestructible as in Almighty God who created it. What then is the freedom which the prophets foretold, which Jesus said that He would give the glorious liberty of the sons of God? Christ freed us from the yoke of sin by the freedom of righteousness: He freed us from the dominion of concupiscence by the freedom of the Spirit and the dominion of love and grace. "Tell me," says Socrates to a disciple, "thinkest thou that freedom is a great and glorious possession alike to a man and a state?" "Most exceedingly." "Whoso then is ruled by bodily pleasures and on account of them cannot do what is best, thinkest thou that he is free?" "Not at all." "For to do what is best seemeth to them to be free; and so then, to have those who should hinder so doing to be unfree?" "Certainly." "The incontinent seem then to you to be unfree?" "Assuredly." "And they seem to you not only to be hindered from doing the best things, but to be constrained to do the foulest?" "Both alike." "But what sort of masters deemest thou those to be, who hinder what is best, constrain to what is worst?" "The worst." "And what slavery thinkest thou the worst?" "That to the worst masters." "The incontinent then are enslaved to the worst slavery?" concludes Socrates. "I think so." You know how with one consent heathen philosophers said, "The wise man alone is free." "He alone is indeed free," says Philo, "who taketh God alone for his commander." "The good man alone is free; for the evil man, though he deny it, is the slave of as many lords as he has vices." "Lust cometh, and saith, 'Thou art mine, for thou covetest the things of the body. In such or such a passion thou soldest thyself to me; I counted down the price for thee.' Avarice cometh and saith, 'Thou art mine; the gold and the silver which thou hast is the price of thy slavery.' Luxury cometh and saith, 'Thou art mine; amid the winecups I purchased thee; amid the feasts I gained thee.' Ambition cometh and said to thee, 'Thou art surely mine. Knowest thou not, that to that end I gave thee command over others, that thou thyself mightest serve me? Knowest thou not, that to that end I bestowed power on thee, that I might bring thee under mine own?' All vices come, and one by one they chant, 'Thou art mine.' He whom so many claim, how vile a slave is he!" From this slavery Christ came to set us free. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." But then are we not still under a law? and, if we are under a law, how have we that freedom which youth especially longs for? Is then lawlessness the only freedom? Men admire what is called "the reign of law," throughout the boundless realms of God's creation. So did they idolise the beauty of the conception, that they are jealous even of Almighty God Himself, and would not have Him, by any higher law of His love, suspend His usual modes of His operation. Law then is some thing beautiful. Even in human things, what in sights and sounds so thrills through us, as when many voices or minds through obedience to a law become as one? What are all these deeds of united heroism, when all lay "with their back to the field and their feet to the foe," or that inscription, "To Lacedæmon tell, that here, obeying her behests, we fell," but the wills of many, obeying, to the death, minds without them whose will they revered? And cannot Almighty God make us love a law, which is the transcript of His perfections, the law of love; a law which responds to the law of our better nature within; which brings our whole being into harmony with itself, with our fellow-beings and with Him. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*)

Liberty, its use and safeguards:—I. LIBERTY. 1. Earliest references. No doubt the reference, in the first place, is to that liberty of the gospel which distinguished it from Judaism or the old Mosaic law. Then came the gospel, that more spiritual and manly dispensation, with its great rush of liberty. Law gave way to principle, pupillage to manhood, contracted interests to world-wide fellowship. But with that freedom came danger: the danger of excess, of self-assertion, of even licence. 2. But this early application and experience was no uncommon or exceptional one. It was an example and an illustration of a very common danger and a very common experience. The early Christians were tempted to excess, not because they had been Jews and had become Christians, but because they were men of like passions with the rest of mankind. (1) There is a great freedom open to man, but a freedom which does not belong to man completely nor at once. Within certain wide limits, man has a great area of freedom. Physically, socially, providentially, man cannot do all he likes, but within a wide area he has a liberty so great that few of us in our daily life are ever brought up sharply by obstacles

and reminded that we are hedged about by hindrances. It is only when we attempt the impossible or the extraordinary. (2) Now, this liberty, great as it is, is not attainable at once; we enter upon it gradually, often slowly. There is childhood turning to manhood, the wider area of liberty becomes at the man's disposal; but this is reached only after the lapse of the years of childhood, and boyhood, and youth. Or again, look at what is called success in life, when the man becomes more and more his own master, and the resources of life become more and more his; but this, too, is gained in the vast majority of cases, after years of toil. Or, once more, take political freedom. But here, too, liberty is gained not so much at once or by leaps and bounds. (3) Thus we have seen that a great freedom is open to man, and that this freedom is not attainable at once, but rather gradually. The question now presents itself as to the extent of that liberty. As regards the individual. He has liberty, even when he treads upon forbidden ground. It is true that sooner or later the violated law will vindicate itself. Nevertheless, he is free to violate these laws. So with regard to the rights and interests of others. Beyond a certain point, his fellow-men will step in and restrain his liberty of action, and by pains and penalties contract his freedom. But up to this point the individual has a wide field for the exercise of even his selfishness. Once more, with regard to God. It is true man cannot thwart the great sweep of God's providence. Yet, right or wrong, good or evil, wisdom or folly: these he can choose. And the great patience of God in allowing man to disregard Him is one of the great solemn facts of life. Man's liberty is great, and the wonder is not at man's lack of freedom; it is rather the other way: how fully and to what an extent he can act as if he were his own master. 3. But with this liberty comes the temptation to misuse it, to abuse it, to make it an occasion of evil rather than of good; and this individually, socially, religiously. Individually, by giving rein to the passions, turning liberty into licence. Socially, by defying the opinions and claims of others. Religiously—or rather, irreligiously—by ignoring God and His claim to our obedience, setting up self as the one great object of worship. And so liberty becomes a cloak of maliciousness and an occasion of evil.

II. THE USE AND SAFEGUARD OF LIBERTY. 1. The conditions of the problem are twofold. There must be respect for freedom and the recognition of liberty on the one hand; and on the other, reckless and malicious use of freedom must be counteracted. These are the two sides of the problem which must be kept in view. Extreme methods violate both these. On the one hand, if mere restraint be adopted, the result must be a reduction of liberty. If, on the other hand, the absence of all restraint be allowed, the result will be the destruction of all true freedom. 2. What, then, is to be done if liberty is to be preserved, and yet not abused? Three conditions must be fulfilled: (1) There must be respect for freedom, not the depreciation of it, if anything the enhancing of it. (2) But that freedom needs to be guided towards noble ends to become a great spontaneous power which of itself will influence the life aright, and direct it towards what is high, and generous, and good. This is the more necessary the more freedom is granted. Side by side with freedom, if it is not to be abused, must be developed the spirit of voluntary acquiescence in what is right and a conscientious desire for what is best. (3) The third condition is the sense of responsibility; that as each gift, power, opportunity has its corresponding responsibility, so has this freedom; that the greater the freedom, the greater will be the responsibility for its use. 3. Now, this is just what Christianity has done. At a critical period in human history, when the old order of tyranny and corruption was crumbling, and the ground was being prepared for the growth of liberty, Christianity came, implanting great principles, awakening the consciousness of wrong, and stirring up the love of what is right, and true, and good. Thus, as the old restraint of the law passed away, the new spirit of personal responsibility, that great spiritual force, came to men; and just because Christianity was this spiritual force, it could do what no other power did. It could do without the old Jewish economy, it could sap the foundations of tyranny, it could be the promoter of liberty. It is this action of Christianity which is illustrated in St. Peter's words. See how naturally, instinctively, and comprehensively he deals with the question of liberty. "As free"—as if he said, "You are free, you have been made free, you have a right to be free. The old bondage of the law is gone, gone for ever, and the freedom which is yours has been brought to you by Christ. It is nothing less than a God-given possession." But every possession has its accompanying responsibility; the free man is not the same as the irresponsible man. In fact, our responsibility

increases with our powers, our possessions, our gifts, our opportunities. What, then, is the great principle and power which is to direct each one in the use of this liberty? It is the great sense that while you are free, you are yet not free. You are to act "as the servants of God." Liberty is recognised, but a service is presented as well; but one which is not enforced, it can be given or refused. But these two, liberty and service, are connected by a sense of responsibility; and that a responsibility which recognises the claims of God upon them. It is just that which imparts dignity, and power, and great gladness to duty, when it is thus seen in the light of the great and glorious service of God. For it is only as we use our liberty and all our powers in obedience to God that we can hope and accomplish much. While we stand, or try to stand, alone, while we reject God as the great end of our service, our powers are feeble, and our acts work little good, great evil, and weariness or dissatisfaction takes the heart out of our labour. But when we bring our liberty and all our powers into the service of God, all we have and all we are and all we do become connected with what is best, and, falling in with the great work of God, we become not only doubly free, but doubly useful and doubly strong. (*A. Boyd Carpenter, M.A.*)

Christian freedom.—Liberty is the essence of Christianity. No one knows what it is to be quite "free" till he is a real Christian. 1. A converted man, by the fact, at once is "free" from his past. It is "cast into the depths of the sea." It is gone "away into a land not inhabited," to be mentioned no more! That is "liberty!" O how large, and how sweet. To know that the entail of the past is all cut off. Therefore the converted man is "free," too, from thousands of chains which bind other men. He is "free" from death. To him death is only a liberator. All it can do is to unshackle his spirit from the thralldom of his body. The grave cannot hold him. Satan himself—the great captivator—is a captive. 2. He is in freedom from his present self. Sin does not rule in him any more; the world no longer fascinates, the flesh no longer drags him down. He has gone up far above those things. He walks his higher path, a path where the whole man can expand itself; a path worthy of his immortality, at large, satisfying, infinite! And beyond all this, that "man in Christ" has now "free" access to God. He can go up any moment, under any circumstances of life, and he can tell his Father. All this must go to make freedom. Who, then, is the "free" man, but he whom the Lord makes free? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Christian liberty.—There is not anything in the world more generally desired than liberty, nor scarce anything more generally abused. The apostles, therefore, especially St. Peter and St. Paul, the two chiefest planters of the Churches, endeavoured early to instruct believers in the true doctrine, and to direct them in the right use of their Christian liberty so often in their several epistles as fit occasion was offered thereunto. And we may further observe concerning these two apostles that St. Paul usually toucheth upon this argument of liberty as it is to be exercised in the case of scandal; but St. Peter oftener, as in the case of obedience. From which words I gather three observations, all concerning our Christian liberty, in that branch of it especially which respecteth human ordinances, and the use of the creatures and of all indifferent things. Either 1. In the existence of it, as free. 2. In the exercise of it, "and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness." 3. In the end of it, "but as the servants of God." The first observation: We must so submit ourselves to superior authority, as that we do not thereby impeach our Christian liberty, "as free." The second this: We must so maintain our liberty, as that we do not under that colour either commit any sin or omit any requisite office, either of charity or duty, "and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness." The third this: In the whole exercise, both of the liberty we have in Christ and of the respect we owe unto men, we must evermore remember ourselves to be, and accordingly behave ourselves as those that are God's servants, "but as the servants of God." The sum of the whole three points in brief this: We must be careful without either infringing or abusing our liberty at all times, and in all things to serve God. Now then to the several points as they lie in the text. "As free." Which words have manifest reference to the exhortation delivered three verses before the text. Submit yourselves to public governors, both supreme and subordinate, be subject to your own particular masters, honour all men with those proper respects that belong to them in their several stations; but look you, do all this, not as slaves but as free, do it without impeachment of the liberty you have in Christ. First, this liberty is purchased for us by the blood of Christ, and is therefore usually called by the name of Christian liberty (John viii. 36; Gal. v. 1). Secondly, is

revealed unto us outwardly in the preaching of the gospel of God and of Christ, which is therefore called the law of liberty (James i. 25; ii. 12). And thirdly, is conveyed unto us inwardly and effectually by the operation of the Spirit of God and of Christ, which is therefore called a free spirit (Psa. li. 12; 2 Cor. iii. 17). Now this liberty, so dearly purchased, so clearly revealed, so firmly conveyed, it is our duty to maintain (Gal. v. 1). A thing whereof it behoveth us to have a special care, and that for weighty respects. First, in regard of the trust reposed in us in this behalf. Every honest man taketh himself bound to discharge with faithfulness the trust reposed in him. Now these two, the Christian faith and the Christian liberty, are of all other the choicest jewels whereof the Lord Jesus Christ hath made His Church the depository. Especially since we cannot so do, secondly, without manifest wrong to Christ; nor, thirdly, without great dishonour to God. Not without wrong to Christ. St. Paul therefore disputeth it as upon a ground of right. "Ye are bought with a price, be ye not the servants of men" (1 Cor. vii. 22). You cannot dispose yourselves in any other service without apparent wrong to Him. Neither only do we injure Christ by making ourselves the servants of men, but we dishonour God also, which is a third reason. For to whom we make ourselves servants him we make our Lord and God. The covetous worldling therefore, by serving mammon, maketh mammon his god. Yea, and our own too, which may stand for a fourth reason. "Ye see your calling, brethren," saith the apostle (1 Cor. i. 26). He would have men take notice of their Christian calling, that so they might walk worthy of it. Now by our calling we are free men (Gal. v. 13). And being so, we infinitely abase ourselves and disparage our calling, when of free men we become slaves. Leo the Emperor, therefore, by special and severe constitution, forbade all free men within the empire sale of their liberties, calling it facinus in those that were so presumptuous as to buy them, and no less than folly, yea, madness in those that were so base as to sell them; not without some indignation at the former laws for suffering such an indignity to be so long practised without either chastisement or restraint. And if he justly censured them as men of abject minds, that would for any consideration in the world willingly forego their civil and Roman liberty, what flatness of spirit possesseth us if we wilfully betray our Christian and spiritual liberty? Whereby, besides the dishonour, we do also, with our own hands, pull upon our own heads a great deal of unnecessary cumber. For whereas we might draw an easy yoke, carry a light burden, observe commandments that are not grievous in the service of God and of Christ, by putting ourselves into the service of men we thrust our necks into a hard yoke of bondage. Besides these, that do it thus by open assault, I would there were not others also that did by secret underminings go about to deprive us of that liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, even then when they most pretend the maintenance of it. We oftentimes betray away our own liberty when we might maintain it, and so become servants unto men, when we both might and ought to keep ourselves free. Which fault we shall be the better able to avoid when we shall know the true causes, whence it springeth; which are evermore one of these two, an unsound head or an unsound heart. Sometimes we esteem too highly of others, so far as either to envassal our judgments to their opinions, or to enthrall our consciences to their precepts, and that is our weakness; there the fault is in the head. Sometimes we apply ourselves to the wills of others, with an eye to our own benefit or satisfaction in some other carnal or worldly respect, and that is our fleshliness; there the fault is in the heart. This latter is the worst, and therefore in the first place to be avoided. The most and worse sort, unconscionable men, do often transgress this way. There is, I confess, much reverence to be given to the writings of the godly ancient fathers, more to the canons and decrees of general and provincial councils, and not a little to the judgment of learned, sober, and godly divines of later and present times. But we may not build our faith upon them as upon a sure foundation. What is Calvin or Luther, nay, what is Paul or Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? That is to say, instruments, but not lords of your belief. To do God and ourselves right, it is necessary we should with our utmost strength maintain the doctrine and power of that liberty wherewith Christ hath endowed His Church, without either usurping the mastery over others, or subjecting ourselves to their servitude, so as to surrender either our judgments or consciences to be wholly disposed according to the opinions or wills of men, though of never so excellent piety or parts. We must so maintain our liberty that we abuse it not, as we shall, if, under the pretence of Christian liberty, we either adventure the doing of some unlawful thing, or omit the performance of any

requisite duty. "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness." The apostle's intention in the whole clause will the better appear when we know what is meant by cloak and what by maliciousness. The Greek word *ἐπικάλυμμα*, which is nowhere else found in the whole New Testament but in this verse only, signifieth properly any covering, as the covering of hadgers' skins that was spread over the tabernacle is in the Septuagint's translation called *ἐπικάλυμμα*. And it is very fitly translated a cloak, in respect of that notion wherein the word in our English tongue is commonly used, to note some fair and colourable pretence, wherewith we conceal from the knowledge of others the dishonesty and faultiness of our intentions in some things practised by us. It is a corruption very common among us; whatsoever we are within, yet we desire to make a fair show outwardly. We are loth to forbear those sins which we are ashamed to profess, and therefore we colour them and cloak them that we may both do the thing we desire and yet miss the shame we deserve. You see what the cloak is; see now what is maliciousness. *Κακία* is the word, which is properly rendered by malice or maliciousness. And as these English words, and the Latin word *malicia* whence these are borrowed, so likewise *κακία* in Greek is many times used to signify one special kind of sin, which is directly opposite to brotherly love and charity, and the word is usually so taken, wheresoever it is either set in opposition to such charity or else ranked with other special sins of the same kind, such as are anger, envy, hatred, and the like. And if we should so understand it here, the sense were good; for it is a very common thing in the world to offend against brotherly charity under the colour of Christian liberty, and doubtless our apostle here intendeth the remedy of that abuse also. Yet I rather conceive that the word maliciousness in this place is to be taken in a larger comprehension for all manner of evil and of naughtiness. To use liberty for an occasion to the flesh, and to use liberty for a cloak of maliciousness is the very same thing, and it is a very great sin. For the proof whereof I shall need to use no other arguments than the words of the text will afford. First, every act of maliciousness is a sin; and, secondly, to cloak it with a fair pretence, maketh it a greater sin; but then, thirdly, to use Christian liberty for the cloak giveth a farther addition to it and maketh it a greater sin. First, it is a sin to do any act of maliciousness. Nor so only, but it is a hurtful thing, and of a noxious and malignant quality, as leaven souring the whole lump of our services to God. But if men will need be hypocrites, and must have a cloak for their maliciousness, they might yet at least bethink themselves of somewhat else of lighter price to make a cloak of, and not to use to so base a purpose so rich a stuff, as is this blessed liberty which the Son of God hath purchased with His most precious blood. As in nature, so in morality, by how much better anything is in the right use of it, by so much is it worse in the abuse. Now we see how great a sin it is thus to abuse our liberty it will be needful in the next place to inquire more particularly wherein this abuse consisteth, that so we may be the better able to avoid it. We are therefore to know that Christian liberty may be abused for a cloak of maliciousness these four ways following: First, we may make it a cloak of maliciousness if we hold ourselves by virtue thereof discharged from our obedience, either to the whole moral law of God or to any part of it. Great offenders this way are the libertines, who quite cancel the whole law of God under the pretence of Christian liberty, as if they that were in Christ were no longer tied to yield obedience to the moral law, which is a pestilent error and of very dangerous consequence. The law considered as a rule can no more be abolished or changed than can the nature of good and evil be abolished or changed. It is our singular comfort then, and the happiest fruit of our Christian liberty, that we are freed by Christ, and through faith in Him from the covenant and curse of the law; but we must know that it is our duty, notwithstanding the liberty that we have in Christ, to frame our lives and conversations according to the rule of the law. The second way whereby our liberty may be used for a cloak of maliciousness is when we stretch it in the use of things that are indeed indifferent beyond the just bounds of sobriety. It belongeth to every sober Christian advisedly to consider, not only what in itself may lawfully be done or left undone, but also what in godly wisdom and discretion is fittest for him to do, or not to do, upon all occasions, as the exigence of present circumstances shall require. He that without such due consideration will do all he may do at all times, under colour of Christian liberty, he shall undoubtedly sometime use his liberty for a cloak of maliciousness. It may be done a third way, and that is by using it uncharitably, which is the case whereon I told you St. Paul beateth so often. When we use our liberty so as to

stumble the weak consciences of our brethren thereby. He that will have his own way in everything he hath a liberty unto, whosoever shall take offence at it maketh his liberty but a cloak of maliciousness by using it uncharitably. The fourth and last way, whereby we may use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness is by using it undutifully, pretending it unto our disobedience to lawful authority. And so I pass to my last observation. The observation was this: In the whole exercise both of the liberty we have in Christ and of those respects we owe unto men, we must evermore remember ourselves to be, and accordingly behave ourselves as those that are God's servants; in these last words, "But as the servants of God," containing our condition and our carriage. For the first, We cannot imagine any consideration, that may be found in any service in the world, to render it desirable, which is not to be found, and that in a far more eminent degree, in this service of God. If justice may provoke us, or necessity enforce us, or easiness hearten us, or honour allure us, or profit draw us to any service, behold here they all concur. First, It is the most just service, whether we look at the title of right on His part or reasons of equity on ours. It is, secondly, the most necessary service. Necessary, first, because we are born to serve. We have not the liberty to choose whether we will serve or no; all the liberty we have is to choose our master. It is necessary, secondly, for our safety and security, lest, if we withdraw our service from him, we perish justly in our rebellion. It is necessary, thirdly, by our own voluntary act, when we bound ourselves by solemn vow and promise in the face of the open congregation at our baptism. It is, thirdly (which at the first hearing may seem a paradox, yet will appear upon further consideration to be a most certain truth), of all other the most easy service, in regard both of the certainty of the employment and of the help we have towards the performance of it. He that serveth many masters, or even but one, if he be a fickle man, he never knoweth the end of his work. It is some ease to know certainly what we must do; but much more to be assured of sufficient help for the doing of it. It is, fourthly, the most honourable service. He goeth for the better man that serveth the better master. It is, fifthly and lastly, the most profitable service. We are indeed unprofitable servants to Him, but sure we have a very profitable service under Him. These things among others the servant of God may certainly reckon upon as the certain benefits of his service wherein his Master will not fail him if he fail not in his service—protection, maintenance, reward. And he that will be God's servant in truth, and not only in title, must perform all these to his heavenly Master. Reverence is the first, which ever ariseth from a deliberate apprehension of some worthiness in another more than in a man's self, and is ever accompanied with a fear to offend and a care to please the person revered; and so it hath three branches, whereof the first is humility. From which fear of offending a care and desire of pleasing cannot be severed. Obedience is the next general duty. Servants be obedient to your masters. We are to show our obedience to our heavenly Master yet further by submitting to His wholesome discipline when at any time He shall see cause to give us correction. The third and last general duty is fidelity. "Who is a faithful and wise servant?" "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," as if the wisdom and goodness of a servant consisted in his faithfulness. The first whereof is heartiness in His service. There are many servants in the world that will work hard and bustle at it lustily for a fit and so long as their master's eye is upon them, but when his back is turned can be content to go on fair and softly and fellow-like. Secondly, We must show our faithfulness to our Master by our zeal in His behalf. A faithful servant will not endure an evil word spoken of his master behind his back, but he will be ready upon every occasion to vindicate his credit and to magnify him unto the opinion of others. He will make much of those that love his master, and set the less by those that care not for him. And as to his credit principally, so he hath an eye also, in the second place, to the profit of his master. Thirdly, If we be His faithful servants, we should let it appear by our diligence in doing His business. No man would willingly entertain an idle servant. We see now what we are to do if we will approve ourselves and our services unto the Lord our heavenly Master. (*Bp. Sanderson.*) **A cloak of maliciousness.**—*Maliciousness*:—The word translated "maliciousness" is a large word. Sometimes it means "cowardice"; sometimes "haseness." It is elsewhere rendered "evil," and (James i. 21) "naughtiness"—which perhaps best conveys the whole sense. "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of anything that is wrong." For instance, there are those who, having found forgiveness, are now walking very carelessly, and do not hold sin in sufficient

abhorrence. Still more, there are those who, because they have escaped from one sin, allow themselves in another. As when a man only changes worldly pride for spiritual pride, or gives up carnal indulgence for some religious selfishness, or, worse still, when a man deliberately commits a sin, with a thought: "God will forgive it, as He has forgiven other of my sins. When I have done it I shall pray, and I shall repent, and hear no more about it." Or, more dreadful yet, "I am elect. It does not matter what I do. God does not see sin in His saints." Awful delusion! Or—if "evil" do not go to such a length as that—it may be your religious freedom has made you very severe in your judgment of others. You are "free," but you are not sympathising with those who are doing the very thing which once bound you. You have still almost a "malicious" pleasure in hearing or speaking of somebody's faults! A "free" one should be always so humble in the recollection of his past bondage that he should be tender and gentle to the sin which he once did! But say you have "liberty," how are you using it? All your powers, privileges, hopes; are you consecrating them to do all the good you can to the Lord's "free" men? That serenity of mind that you have now learnt, that ease of heart, that sense of safety, that peace that God has given you, are they held as talents to use for others? All your former experience of the wickedness of the world, is it now being turned to good account? or are you content with your own exemptions, sitting, as indifferent to what may befall your fellow-creatures? And is not all that "using liberty as a cloak of maliciousness"? Surely every "free" one should be a liberator! (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

As the servants of God.—God's servants:—The good old word servant is going out of fashion. In a mission held lately, some services for domestic servants were advertised, and it was discovered that the notice gave offence. The servants were ashamed of their name. There is nothing to be ashamed of in the fact of being a servant, but there is a great deal to be ashamed of in the fact of being a bad servant. Liberty does not mean licence. We are not free to do wrong. Let us look at ourselves, then, "as free, but as the servants of God," and learn some of the marks of a good servant.

I. A GOOD SERVANT SHOULD BE HUMBLE. There is a great want of humility amongst us. We live in an age of advancement. Education is making gigantic strides, all classes are being put on the same political level, and all this has a tendency to make people less humble.

II. A GOOD SERVANT SHOULD BE INDUSTRIOUS. Dr. Livingstone took as his motto, "Fear God, and work hard." It is a good motto for every Christian now. We are to be workers together with God. He is always working in us, and for us, and we must do our part. You know the Prince of Wales has for his motto—"Ich Dien—I serve."

III. A GOOD SERVANT LOVES HIS MASTER. The best work is always done where the heart goes along with the hands. We shall not find any work too hard, or any self-sacrifice too great, if we love our Master.

IV. A GOOD SERVANT WILL BE GOOD TO HIS FELLOW-SERVANTS. Jesus came to clasp all hands together, and make the whole world kin. We who are working God's work should lend a helping hand to others. In God's great house of this world we have our different stations and labours. Let the strong help the weak; let those who have learnt most of the service of God our Master teach the beginners. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*)

Ver. 17. Honour all men.—*Various political duties:*—**I. PERSONAL COURTESY.** It is our duty to make manners a part of religion. 1. Respect. 2. Consideration. Put yourself in others' ways and plans and difficulties. 3. Kindness. **II. AFFECTIONATE BROTHERHOOD.** It is only reasonable we should "love the brotherhood," for we are—1. Sharers of the same discipline. 2. Heirs of the same blessings. 3. Travellers along the same road. **III. DUTIFUL WORSHIPPERS.** "Fear God." **IV. SANCTIFIED LOYALTY.** "Honour the King." 1. Independently of the ruler's character. 2. Independently of personal distinction. (1) Loyalty is the essential of national well-being. (2) Loyalty is the secret of national happiness. (3) Loyalty is the principle of national prosperity. (*J. J. S. Bird, B.A.*)

Honour all men:—First, the duty, what it is, and then how that duty is either extended or limited in regard of the object. The duties are honour and love. The first, by opening the duty, and what we are to do. The next, by inquiring into the obligation, and why we are so to do. The last, by examining our performance, and whether we do therein as we ought to do or no. And first of the former precept, Honour all men. Honour, properly, is an acknowledgment or testification of some excellency in the person honoured, by some reverence or observance answerable thereunto. Thus we honour God above all as being transcendently excellent, and thus we honour our

parents, our princes, our betters, or superiors in any kind. The word honour in this place imports all that esteem or regard, be it more or less, which is due to any man in respect of his place, person, or condition, according to the eminency, merit, or exigency of any of them respectively, together with the willing performance of such just and charitable offices upon all emergent occasions as in proportion to any of the said respects can be reasonably expected. In which sense it is a possible thing for us to honour, not only our superiors that are over us or above us, but our equals too that are in the same rank with us, yea, even our inferiors also that are below us or under us. And in this latitude you shall find the word honour sometimes used in the Scriptures, though not so frequently as in the proper signification. You have one example of it in the seventh verse of the next chapter, where St. Peter enjoineth husbands to give honour to the wife as to the weaker vessel. It was far from his meaning doubtless that the husband should honour the wife with the honour properly so called, that of reverence or subjection, for that were to invert the right order of things and to pervert God's ordinance. In like manner we are to understand the word honour here in the text, in such a notion as may include all those fitting respects which are to be given to equals and inferiors also, which is a kind of honour too but more improperly so called. And then it falleth in, all one with that of St. Paul (Rom. xiii. 7). "Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." Now we see in the meaning of the words both what duty we are to perform and to whom. It may next be demanded upon what tie we stand thus bound to honour all men? I answer—there lieth a threefold tie upon us, to wit, of justice, of equity, of religion. A tie of justice first, whose most proper office it is to give to every one that which of right appertaineth to him. It is a thing not unworthy the observing that all those words which usually signify honour in the three learned languages do either primarily signify or else are derived from such words as do withal signify either a price or a weight. Now by the rules of commutative justice the price of every commodity ought to be according to the true worth of it. A false weight is abominable, and so is every one that tradeth with it; and certainly that man maketh use of a false beam that setteth light by his brother whom he ought to honour. The next tie is that of equity. "Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." We care not how much honour cometh to ourselves from others, how little goeth from ourselves to others. Let every man therefore in God's name take to himself that portion of honour and respect that is due to him, and good luck may he have with his honour. Provided always that he be withal sure of these two things—first, that he take no more than his due, for this is but just; and then, that he be as willing to give as to take, for that is but equal. He that doth otherwise is partial and unreasonable. And thus we are tied in equity to honour all men. There is yet a third tie, that of religion, in respect of that image of God, which is to be found in man. All honour is in regard of some excellency or other, and there is in man no excellency at all of and from himself, but all the excellency that is in him is such only as God hath been pleased to put upon him. And that excellency is twofold—natural and personal. The natural excellency is that whereby man excelleth other creatures. Personal that whereby one man excelleth another. Of the natural first which ariseth from the image of God stamped upon man in his creation. Besides this natural, God hath put upon man a personal excellency which is an effect of His Providence in the government of the world, as the former was of His power in the creation of it. And here first beginneth the difference that is between one man and another. We have seen hitherto both the duty and obligation of it. What are we to perform, and why? We come now to examine a little how it is performed among us. Slackly and untowardly enough no doubt as all other duties are. Are there not some first, who are so far from honouring all men as the text requireth that they honour no man at all, at least, not as they ought to do? No, not their known superiors? But how much less then their equals or inferiors? There are others, secondly, that may perhaps be persuaded to yield some honour to their betters (that may be but reason) but that they should be bound to honour those that are not so good men as themselves, or at the most but such like as themselves are they see no great reason for that. But there is no remedy; St. Peter here telleth them that must be done too. There is a third sort that corrupt a good text with an ill gloss as thus. The magistrate shall have his tribute, the minister his tithes, and so every other man his due honour, if so be he carry himself worthily and as he ought to do in his place, and so as to deserve it. In good time! But I pray you then, first, who must judge of his carriage and

whether he deserve such honour, yea or no? But, secondly, how durst thou distinguish where the law distinguishes not? Where God commandeth He looketh to be answered with obedience, and dost thou think to come off with subtilities and distinctions? Least of all, thirdly, with such a gloss as the apostle hath already precluded by his own comment in the next verse, where he biddeth servants to be subject to their masters, not only to the good and gentle but to the froward also, and such as would be ready to buffet them when they had done no fault. Such masters sure could challenge no great honour from their servants. But tell me, fourthly, in good earnest, dost thou believe that another man's neglect of his duty can discharge thee from the obligation of thine? Lastly, when thou sayest thou wilt honour him according to his place if he deserve it, dost thou not observe that thou art still unjust by thy own confession? For where place and merit concur there is a double honour due (1 Tim. v. 17). There is one honour due to the place and another to merit. (*Bp. Sanderson.*) *The honour of humanity*:—It has been observed that more attention is commonly given to the specific than to the general precepts of Holy Scripture. Thus, in the verse there is a particular precept, to "honour the king," which has attracted more notice than the wider principle—"honour all men." The reason is this: The vast field of action which opens before us, when contemplating a general precept, is so fatiguing to the imagination, that we are tempted to give up the task of considering it in something like despair. Nor is this the only reason for the practical disadvantages of general, as compared with specific precepts. As morality is too often taught, these general precepts are rested upon considerations too abstract to exert a real influence upon average men. A general precept, like that before us, must be based on an energetic conviction, in order to give it the needful vividness and force. Of this the precept before us is an eminent illustration. We only bring it down from the neglected region of moral proprieties, we only learn its living and working power, and give it a clothing of flesh and blood, when we place it in the light of the great Christian doctrines of which it is the practical and animated expression. What is honour? It is, first of all, a sentiment which prompts us to acknowledge, and to do homage to, some form of truth. It must spring from a sense of merit of some kind in the object which provokes it; and, therefore, it must begin from within. Honour, then, in the first place, is a genuine movement of the soul; but, secondly, it is often a substantial expression of that movement in the outward visible world of sense. Whether it be embodied in a gesture, or in a title, or in a gift of money, it is at bottom an acknowledgment of superior worth, attaching, it may be, to an individual, or to an office, or to an institution. It is a practical expression of the sentiment of honour, quickened into activity by a worthy object. When, then, St. Peter says that we are to "honour all men," he means, no doubt, that if opportunity arises we are to give practical expression to the disposition to honour them. But he means, first of all, that this disposition should itself exist. And it is here that we reach the point at which the need is felt of basing the precept upon a conviction. Why should we thus be disposed to "honour all men"? It is clear that if man is left to himself, he is by no means disposed to "honour all men." Why is he bound to make head against this natural inclination? Is it in deference to a sense of self-interest? to a belief that courtesy is a cheap thing, which if it does not make friends, yet keeps clear of making enemies? No! The honour which the apostle prescribes is not an insincere conventionalism, but a true expression of inward respect. Are we then to honour all men in deference to the mere instinct of race? You say that, at least, in this case man should honour his brother man as a reproduction of himself. Does then one brute, nay, the most intelligent of the brutes, honour other brutes? There is nothing in a second animal, who is a mere reproduction of my animal self, which properly commands this tribute of honour; while there is much in him which might incline me to refuse it. But here comes a teacher who repeats the injunction under a new formula. Humanity is the god of Positivist thinkers; man is the highest being whom the consistent philosophy of experience can consent to recognise. Man in his collective capacity, the organism "humanity," is to be worshipped by each individual man. And from this new cultus, we are told, there is to flow forth a morality, which, in its spirits and its objects, shall be enthusiastically human; against which, as we are further assured, the inferior ethics of Christendom, weighted with the dogmatic teaching of the creeds, will struggle in vain for supremacy in the Europe of the future. But what is the real meaning of this cultus of humanity? Taking humanity as an actual whole, it is to worship that, in which the immoral decidedly preponderates over the moral, the false over the true, the bad over the good. I. WHAT,

THEN, ARE THE MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD LEAD A CHRISTIAN TO HONOUR ALL MEN? 1. The first is, that all men are made in the image of God. "God created man in His own image, after His likeness." This image and likeness consist in the fact that, first of all, man is an intelligent being, conscious of, and able steadily to reflect upon, his own existence; and, next, that his will is free. In each of these respects he is unlike any one of the lower creatures; in each he is like God. All men are endowed with an immortal, conscious, self-determining principle of life. Or rather that principle is each man's true self, around which all else that belongs to him is clustered, and to which it stands in the relation of a property, or it may be of an accident. 2. Our Lord's death upon the Cross is a second reason for honouring all men. His death was indeed a true sacrifice offered to the justice and majesty of God, but it was also an act of homage and honour to the worth of the human spirit. It was to enlighten the conscience of man, it was to purify man's soul from the stains, and to free it from the burden of sin, it was to restore man to his true and native dignity among the firstborn of creation, that our Saviour died. 3. From these two motives a Christian will gather a third, which must lead him to honour all men, both in feeling and in act. I refer to the capacity of every man, be he who or what he may, while in this world, for improvement, for goodness. This generous faith in humanity is a creation of the gospel. The glory, the sinlessness, the ineffable majesty of the ascended Christ is the measure of the hopes of man. And from that throne of His in the highest heavens there descends upon the race which He has ennobled, and which He yearns to glorify and to save, an interest, a radiance in Christian eyes, an inheritance of a title to honour, which has made the precept of the apostle one of the main factors of the moral life of Christendom. II. BUT IS THE PRECEPT TO BE UNDERSTOOD LITERALLY? Does "all men" mean all members, all classes of the human family? Let me ask, in return, Why not? Let us look at some of the barriers which have been raised against man's universal right to honour by the prejudices of man. 1. There is, first of all, and, morally speaking, lowest of all, the barrier of wealth. Wealth honours wealth; income pays respect to income; but it is wont to cherish, in its secret heart, an unmeasured contempt for poverty. To believe that a man with £60 a year is just as much deserving of respect as a man with £6,000, you must be seriously a Christian. 2. A second barrier is the spirit of station or of class, founded whether upon success in life, or upon the circumstances of birth. That an aristocracy has, in God's providential government of society, distinct and great functions to perform, is a position which is not for one moment to be denied; since the experience of history seems to show that society creates a higher class by a natural process, and we in England know how largely such a class may, if it will, serve its country. But when it develops an exclusive spirit, which divides humanity into two sections, those within and those without the imaginary barrier, it comes into collision with the teaching of the gospel. The Divine image, expressed in man's intelligence and freedom; the atoning blood, giving the measure of man's preciousness in the eyes of God; the glorified manhood of Jesus, revealing to man his capacity for glory;—these are the privileges of no class or station; they are the right and the possession of humanity. 3. A third barrier is that of race or country. Patriotism, no doubt, has its providential purpose; and the instinct of race is but an expansion of the instinct of the family. Both are based upon a natural foundation and have a Divine sanction; but in their exaggeration both may foster sentiments which are crimes against humanity. When we hear of the African savage who a few months since floated his canoe in a lake of human blood, that he might fitly observe his father's obsequies, we may for a moment look hard at the precept to honour all men. Yet, all crime being, in the eyes of absolute justice, strictly relative to opportunities, it may well be that this pagan prince stands higher before heaven than do you or I, when we lose our tempers in conversation, or say our prayers without thinking of the solemn work in which we are engaged. 4. The absence of intelligence is often held to constitute a fourth barrier against this honour of man as man. To make intelligence, in the sense of cultivated intellect, the real test of a claim to honour, would secure such honour to Voltaire, and (may we not add?) to Satan, while denying it to the apostles of Christ. To make intelligence, in the sense of the common faculty which is capable of reflecting on self and of knowing God, the ground of that claim, is to own that a debt of honour is due to the whole human family. The precept before us, however, is not adverse to our recognising the specific titles to honour which individuals or classes may possess. It only insists upon a broader basis of such right to honour than that which any of these titles suggest. It is entirely in harmony with the

honourable recognition of moral worth, because moral worth enriches and intensifies what is best in humanity, namely, the freedom and power of man's will. It does not force us to condone either the wilful propagation of error or the guilt of crime. It does not imply indifference to the interests either of truth or virtue. III. THE PRACTICAL BEARINGS OF THIS SUGGESTIVE PRECEPT are so numerous that it will be necessary to confine ourselves to the following, by way of conclusion. 1. "Honour all men" is a fitting motto for the spirit of much of our study. 2. Here is the Christian rule for social intercourse. Honour high station, honour authority, honour genius, honour courage, honour even success, if you will; but do not limit your honour to these things. If you honour the representative men of humanity, those who embody and intensify its great qualities or interests, do not forget that that which you honour in them is shared in a measure by all. 3. Lastly, in this precept we may discover the true spirit of Christian works of mercy. All the plans which Christian charity really devises and sets on foot are based on the principle of respect for man. Christian charity relieves poverty, not as conferring a favour, but as satisfying what is in some sense a right—the right of humanity to live, and to ask in God's name at the hands of property the means of livelihood. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The honour due to all men*:—There is no need of argument to prove the kindness of Christianity, compared with every other system of belief. Its regard for life and its sympathy with human weakness may be seen upon the surface of every Christian land. To this we owe our hospitals and refuges, and all the multitude of charitable institutions which mitigate human suffering. But it is by no means sufficient merely to notice this as a fact. It is of great moment that we search into the principle from which it springs, and that principle is shortly but forcibly brought out in the precept of St. Peter—"Honour all men." Now it is important that we should see why this precept was confined to Christianity. It was so, first, because its teaching made it for the first time possible, truly, and with reason, to fulfil it. Before this, dark shades rested upon the nature of man. Different qualities of man might be honoured, but right reason could scarcely honour man—poor, fallen, wretched, debased man. So it was of old. But so it was not after Christ our Lord had come upon the earth. His incarnation has dispelled this darkness. For it clearly showed that the sin which dwelt in man and mocked him, by pretending to be a part of himself, was no true part of himself. For in that very humanity, the Son of God had tabernacled without spot of sin. But besides this Christianity alone made all men brothers. Its blessed communion makes all equal, not by putting down the distinctions of earth, confounding the ranks of society, but by raising the manhood in each of us to its true worthiness, by teaching the master to treat the servant "not now as a servant" but "above a servant," as a "brother beloved"; by showing all that as "partakers of the benefit," as members of Christ, they have a unity which the petty distinctions of earth cannot dis sever; a true dignity, which its seeming degradations cannot obscure. See, then, how great a part of Christianity is contained in this precept. How growth in its spirit is a necessary and certain accompaniment of growth in true, living, practical religion, as it stands opposed to the sickness of sentimentality. But to see this still more clearly, look at the example of our Master, Christ; see in Him the perfection of this grace. How did He look at man? Who ever saw so far into all the feebleness, uncertainty, and wickedness of those who came around Him, as He did whilst He walked up and down this crowded wilderness? Who ever read the hidden evil of men's hearts as He did? Yet, how did He look upon all? Was there one over whom, as being a man, He did not yearn; was there one sharer of humanity whom, as man, He did not honour—one lost one whom He did not "seek," and was not ready "to save"? And this was the secret of His deep tenderness towards sinners, His unwearied forbearance—His most compassionate love, His sympathy with every one of the fallen but redeemed race. And we, if we would have these graces in our measure, must seek for their spring head—we must strive for this great power of "honouring all men"—of seeing in all the true manhood; seeing in all the true value of life; earnestly believing that in all is that which Christ our Master took unto Himself, and in taking to Himself sanctified and purified and made capable of a true and real worthiness. And if we would make any progress in this high grace, we must not hide from ourselves the difficulties which will surely beset its exercise. For these are many and great and will be too much for us, if without counting the cost, we endeavour to encounter them. First, there is selfishness, that deep root of inner corruption which is the absolute antagonist of such a spirit—for this, which leads every man to "mind his own things," to grasp at everything within his reach, to

rate himself, his own plans, his own pleasures, first, must of necessity rob him of the power of "honouring others." But besides selfishness, there is the whole current of worldly society to be withstood. In spite of the great healing which the gospel of Christ has wrought, its waters are still bitter and turbulent, and they flow for the most part right against the stream of heavenly things. 1. Then let me say, if you would "honour all men," begin by truly honouring yourselves. A true Christian honour of ourselves leads us to feel most deeply the taint and degradation of the sin which dwells in us, which is so unworthy of our redeemed station. Instead of feeling self-sufficient, we see that only in Christ, only as one of the ransomed family, as dwelt in by Him, as justified through Him, can we have hope. And thus we join ourselves to our brethren in Christ; we and they are one in hope, only we know more of our own loss and misery than we can know of theirs: and therefore we are lowly, and honour them in Christ, their God and ours. So also does a Christian honour of ourselves oppose itself to vanity. How to such an one can the ignorant applause of his fellows be anything but a mockery? Again, his reverence for the redeemed manhood in himself makes him fear lest sensuality should cloud it; lest it should be turned into the heaviest curse by separation from Christ. This makes him most tender of the welfare of the souls of others—he yearns over them; he would "eat no meat while the world lasteth," rather than make "a brother to offend." 2. And as honouring ourselves is the first rule that I would give, so the second is—seek to practise yourselves in honouring others. God has so formed us that our spiritual and moral cure is to be wrought by the blessing of His grace upon our practical efforts. We must gain tender, sympathetic hearts, hearts which indeed honour our brethren, not by cultivating abstract sensibilities, but by practising kindly actions. (*Bp. S. Wilberforce.*) *Honour all men*:—"Honour all men. . . Honour the king." It is the same word in both cases. Honour is the thing due to king and to man. But in the Greek the tense is different; honour all men as various occasions arise for it; but in the other three cases the object and the occasion are known; give present love and fear and honour to a visible brotherhood, and a present God, and a known ruler. It is as though the apostle prefaced the special precepts with this more general one. Honour all men everywhere; nothing is to annul this, the charter of the whole redeemed race; but specially love the Christian brotherhood, and fear the God so visibly present among them, and honour the appointed king. 1. Man is honourable among the creatures of God for his knowledge and power of thought. By the light of God that is in him, man sees God in the world of matter and life. The finger-point of the most wise Artificer is upon every part. 2. But that which is at once the glory and the shame of man, is his power to choose, his will. 3. And this power of action is also a power of obedience to the law of God. 4. And, lastly, man is immortal. "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." We are immortal, for the hope of a future life, awakened and fostered by our Lord, cannot be meant to end in a delusion. Honour all men, then; honour those to whom God has given the discerning soul, and the deciding will, and the guiding conscience, and the inheritance of eternal life. (*Abp. Thomson.*) *Honour all*:—This was one of the rules which St. Peter gave to the Christians of his day. They were placed in the midst of Jews and heathens, On every side there were enemies, slanderers, persecutors; they were surrounded by foolish men living in fleshly lusts, froward and hard tempered—and yet with all this they were to honour all men. These were not excluded. It is a common thing for men to say that the rich and the clever despise the poor, ignorant, hard-working classes below them. Often that way of speaking is false. There are many exceptions to it. But often, we must confess with pain, it is true. Younger men among those classes have their favourite words of contempt by which they try to set themselves up above others, and to mark off those who are as much heirs of God's kingdom as they are themselves, as people to be laughed at or insulted. And so they do not honour all men. And this want of the will to honour affects all relations of life. It disturbs the peace and happiness of families. No position of life affords greater opportunities for exercising kindness than that of the master or mistress of servants—the employer of workmen. And yet everywhere we find the duties of that position neglected. Men do not "honour" those who are thus placed, by the providence of God, in dependence on them. Do not think that this commandment is easier for one class of men to perform than for others. Those who look up to most other men as being above them in rank and riches, are just as faulty in this matter as the haughtiest and highest. Many of you must feel in your heart of hearts that all

the time when you have seemed outwardly most respectful, there has been no reality, no truthfulness in it. You have honoured not the man, but his money, or his station, or his opinions, or you have hoped to gain some thing from him, or you have been afraid of his displeasure. And that want of true honour which we note in these instances is seen yet more in the acts and the speech of poor men, too often even towards each other. Go into the streets and courts of any of our great cities; listen to the disputes which are to be met with at every corner, and what strikes one most is the abuse and scorn which men of the same class, who are fellow-workers often, and have a common interest, pour out upon each other. They show no respect, no consideration, no "honour." One step further we must go to reach the worst form of the evil. In all ranks of society you will find men who ought to know better, who pride themselves on reading their Bibles, and keeping out of the sins of their neighbours, and caring for their own souls. They, we might think, will surely "honour all men," and that not with a false show of honour, but in earnest. A man's knowledge of the Bible may serve not to make him truer, better, severer in judging himself, but to give him greater cleverness in picking out texts against his neighbours. He loves to think of himself as chosen, saved from hell, and sometimes seems almost as if he liked to think also of other men as going the wrong way, so that he sees them led captive by the devil without any effort to save them, without doing anything to gain their affection and respect. I do not say that this evil is universal. Can you not imagine what a man would be in whose soul the words, "honour all men—all without exception—the youngest, the poorest, the most sinning," had been traced as with the finger of God, never to be blotted out? Would there not be in such a man an unequalled courtesy, a gentleness and yet openness of speech which would win all men's confidence? I can think of such an one in any station of life, as a man himself to be loved, trusted, honoured. Read St. Paul's Epistles, take that single letter even, which he wrote to Philemon, and tell me if you do not find there precisely such a character as that which I have tried to describe. See how he behaves to governors and kings and centurions, and captains of ships and gaolers and peasants, and everywhere you find the same freedom from all violence and selfishness and rudeness. And this, doubtless, was the secret of the wonderful power which he had over the hearts of other men, winning their respect even in spite of them, gaining affection and love from the roughest hearts which seemed at first dead to all such feelings. But there is a higher example in this matter, even than St. Paul's. Was there not in Jesus of Nazareth one Who was meek and lowly in heart, taking upon Himself the form of a servant that He might save all who were willing to come to Him? Here then, once for all, is an example of the width and depth of this commandment of God. And this which supplies the example furnishes also the motive. Do not think that St. Peter would have enforced the rule of honouring all men on those grounds on which we sometimes try to persuade our children or our dependents to be respectful. It was not because that was the way to lead a quiet life, to get on in the world: to gain the favour of the great, to avoid persecution and ill-will; but much rather because Christ had taught him to think of a Father in heaven, who was inviting all men to become His children; because he believed that Christ had come to redeem all men, to manifest Himself as their brother and their friend. How could he despise those whom the Lord had not despised? How could he refuse to honour one for whom Christ had not refused to suffer and to die? (*Dean Plumptre.*) *No man to be despised*:—No nobler tribute could be paid to a memory than that which was written of the martyred bishop, Pattison, by one of his simple converts in the Southern seas—"He did not despise any one, nor reject any one with scorn, whether it were white man or black man; he thought of them all as one, and he loved them all alike." (*Canon Duckworth.*) *The respect due to human nature*:—Among the many blessings of Christianity, I regard as not the least the new interest which it awakens in us towards everything human, the new importance which it gives to the soul, the new relation which it establishes between man and man. Christianity has as yet but begun its work of reformation. Under its influences a new order of society is advancing, surely though slowly; and this beneficent change it is to accomplish in no small measure by revealing to men their own nature, and teaching them to "honour all" who partake it. The soul is to be regarded with a religious reverence hitherto unfelt. There is nothing of which men know so little as themselves. Men have as yet no just respect for themselves and of consequence no just respect for others. The true bond of society is thus wanting, and accordingly there is a great deficiency of Christian benevolence. It may be said that Christianity has done much to awaken benevolence,

and that it has taught men to call one another brethren. Yes, to call one another so, but has it as yet given the true feeling of brotherhood? Do we feel that there is one Divine life in our own and in all souls? Here is a tie more sacred, more enduring, than all the ties of this earth. Is it felt, and do we in consequence truly honour one another? Sometimes, indeed, we see men giving profound respect to their fellow creatures; but to whom? To great men; to men distinguished by a broad line from the multitude. But this is not to "honour all men," and the homage paid to such is generally unfriendly to that Christian estimate of human beings for which I am now pleading. The great are honoured at the expense of their race. They absorb the world's admiration, and their less gifted fellow beings are thrown by their brightness into a deeper shade, and passed over with a colder contempt. To show the grounds on which the obligation to honour all men rests, I might take a minute survey of that human nature which is common to all, and set forth its claims to reverence. But leaving this wide range, I observe that there is one principle of the soul which makes all men essentially equal, which places all on a level as to means of happiness, which may place in the first rank of human beings those who are the most depressed in worldly condition. I refer to the sense of duty, to the power of discerning and doing right, to the inward monitor which speaks in the name of God, to the capacity of virtue or excellence. This is the great gift of God. We can conceive no greater. Through this the ignorant and the poor may become the greatest of the race; for the greatest is he who is most true to the principle of duty. The idea of right is the primary revelation of God to the human mind, and all outward revelations are founded on and addressed to it. He in whom the conviction of duty is unfolded, becomes subject from that moment to a law, which no power in the universe can abrogate. He forms a new and indissoluble connection with God, that of an accountable being. He begins to stand before an inward tribunal, on the decisions of which his whole happiness rests; he hears a voice, which, if faithfully followed, will guide him to perfection, and in neglecting which he brings upon himself inevitable misery. We little understand the solemnity of the moral principle in every human mind. Did we understand it, we should look with a feeling of reverence on every being to whom it is given. I proceed to observe that, if we look next into Christianity, we shall find this duty enforced by new and still more solemn considerations. This whole religion is a testimony to the worth of man in the sight of God, to the importance of human nature, to the infinite purposes for which we were framed. Men viewed in the light of this religion are beings cared for by God, to whom He has given His Son, on whom He pours forth His Spirit and whom He has created for the highest good in the universe, for participation in His own perfections and happiness. I estimate political revolutions chiefly by their tendency to exalt men's conceptions of their nature, and to inspire them with respect for one another's claims. (*W. E. Channing.*)

Honour all men:—Honour in a narrower sense is not universally due to all, but peculiar to some kinds of persons. Of this the apostle speaks (Rom. xiii. 8). We owe not the same measure of esteem to all. We may, yea, we ought to take notice of the different outward quality or inward graces and gifts of men; nor is it a fault to perceive the shallowness and weakness of men with whom we converse, and to esteem more highly those on whom God hath conferred more of such things as are truly worthy of esteem. But unto the meanest we do owe some measure of esteem, first, negatively. We are not to entertain disdainful thoughts of any, how worthless and mean soever. We are also to observe and respect the smallest good that is in any. Although a Christian be never so base in his outward condition, in body or mind, yet they who know the worth of spiritual things, will esteem the grace of God that is in him, in the midst of all these disadvantages, as a pearl in a rough shell. The Jews would not willingly tread upon the smallest piece of paper in their way, but took it up, for possibly, said they, the name of God may be on it. The name of God may be written upon that soul thou treadest on. It may be a soul that Christ thought so much of, as to give His precious blood for it; therefore despise it not. Wheresoever thou findest the least trait of Christ's image, if thou lovest Him, thou wilt honour it. Or if there be nothing of this to be found in him thou lookest on, yet observe what common gift of any kind God hath bestowed on him, judgment, or memory, or faculty in his calling, or any such thing, for these in their degree are to be esteemed, and the person for them. Or imagine thou canst find nothing else in some men, yet honour thy own nature, esteem humanity in them, especially since humanity is exalted in Christ to be one with the Deity. Account of the individual as a man. The outward behaviour wherein we owe honour to all,

is nothing but a conformity to this inward temper of mind; for he that inwardly despiseth none but esteemeth the good that is in the lowest, or at least esteemeth them in that they are men, will use no outward sign of disdain of any. He will not have a scornful eye nor a reproachful tongue to move at any, not the meanness of his servants, nor the worst of his enemies; but, on the contrary, will acknowledge the good that is in every man, and give unto all that outward respect that is convenient for them and that they are capable of, and will be ready to do them good as he hath opportunity and ability. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

The duty of honouring all men:—All mankind are to be honoured—1. Because all men are the children of one Almighty Father, and were made originally in His glorious image. 2. Because all men were made of one blood. 3. Because all men are gifted with the same common immortality. 4. Because all men have been redeemed by one common Saviour. 5. Because all men are susceptible of the same spiritual and everlasting life. (*H. Stowell, M.A.*)

The honour due to all men:—I. TO DIFFERENT CLASSES. 1. Superiors. (1) In office. (2) In rank and station. (3) In talent and attainments. 2. Equals (Rom. xii. 10). 3. Inferiors. I remember to have heard a friend once say, after passing and noticing a poor man, "When I meet a human being I always wish to consider that I meet a brother." II. TO DIFFERENT CHARACTERS. 1. The good. "Go and do likewise." You cannot honour a good man more than by treading in his steps. 2. The bad. (1) By sincere pity and kind concern. (2) By advice and counsel. (3) By your prayers. (4) By readiness to do them good. III. DIFFERENT AGES. 1. Old age. The ancient Spartans were famous for the respect they paid to the aged; so that it was not unusual to say, "It is a pleasure to grow old in Lacedemon." Let this pleasure be enjoyed by the aged among us. 2. The young are to be honoured by tender and faithful solicitude for their welfare; by a concern for the right formation of their characters, and the fixing of right principles in their minds. And if they are yet under authority, by affectionate care of them, their persons, their morals, their company, their habits, and especially their souls. IV. DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. The afflicted. Bear one another's burdens. Mutual sympathy is mutual honour. 2. The prosperous. You will honour yourself, as well as your neighbour, when you rejoice in his prosperity, and feel your own happiness increased by witnessing his. 3. The perplexed. Feel for and assist them. 4. Relations and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, those who belong to our own party or denomination and those who belong to others, all have some claim upon us. More especially let us honour an upright conscience wherever it exists, although its conclusions may be different from our own. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

The value of man:—Both creation and redemption teem with evidences that God sets a high value on His creature man. All the relations and uses of minerals, plants, and animals have been arranged for man's benefit; for no other creature is capable of observing or turning them to account. But the grandest evidence of the value which God sets on man appears in the mission, ministry, and sacrifice of Christ. So high in heaven was the estimate of even ruined man, that when no other price could buy the captive back the Son of God gave Himself, the just for the unjust. Value highly immortal beings made in their Creator's likeness, and capable yet of living to His praise. We act according to our estimates. Estimate humanity aright in the habit of your hearts, and your conduct will fashion itself naturally accordant, as a river finds its way to the sea. Value the whole man, and not merely a part. In particular, and for obvious practical purposes, value his soul as well as his body, and his body as well as his soul. So did Christ; and therefore so should we. The body's sufferings did not occupy His attention to the neglect of the soul's sins; the soul's sins did not occupy His attention to the neglect of the body's sufferings. (*W. Arnot.*)

Value all men:—There is no respect of persons with God, and there should be none with men. When you fail to value aright any man or class of men, you are fighting against God, and will certainly be hurt. Nothing is gained by a false estimate of the value of any man. The circles of Providence, like the celestial bodies, correct aberrations, and right themselves as they go round. Value the young. How precious these germs are! They will be the men and women of the generation when we become children again. Value the poor and ignorant. In that state Christ valued you, believer. He did not pass you because you were worthless. Value the rich. He is as precious as the poor, and will be as worthy, if he is redeemed, when he walks with his Redeemer in white. Value the vicious. Although they wallow in a deep mire to-day, they have fallen from a high estate, and may yet regain it. That poor staggering drunkard is worth

more than worlds, if he were won. They who hope in Christ should not count any case hopeless. Value yourself. Do not hold yourself cheap, ye who may have Christ for your brother and heaven for your home. (*Ibid.*) *Honour all men*:—1. As made in the image of God. 2. As capable of heaven. 3. As having some special talent to trade with. (*J. Trapp.*) *The poor—two ways of treating*:—Dr. Joseph Parker says there are two ways of accosting a poor man—one which tells him he is a *man*, and another which only tells him he is *poor*. *Dignity of man*:—M. Boudon, an eminent surgeon, was one day sent for by the Cardinal du Bois, prime minister of France, to perform a very serious operation upon him. The cardinal, on seeing him enter the room, said to him, “You must not expect to treat me in the same rough manner you treat your poor miserable wretches at your hospital of the Hôtel Dieu.” “My lord,” replied M. Boudon with great dignity, “every one of those miserable wretches, as your Eminence is pleased to call them, is a prime minister in my eyes.” (*J. Percy.*) *Respect for manhood*:—It is said of Burns the poet, that walking along the streets of Edinburgh with a fashionable acquaintance, he saw a poorly dressed peasant, whom he rushed up to and greeted as a familiar friend. His companion expressed his surprise that he could lower himself by speaking to one in so rustic a garb. “Fool!” said the poet, with flashing eye, “it was not the dress, the peasant’s bonnet and hodden gray, I spoke to, but the man within—the man who beneath that bonnet has a head, and beneath that hodden gray a heart better than a thousand such as yours.” (*J. C. Lees, D.D.*) *Honour all*:—At this time the great majority of human beings was neglected and despised by the wise and learned, as well as dishonoured and oppressed by the rich and powerful and governing classes. With feelings of reverence and awe the traveller gazes, not only on the crumbling shrine and hallowed dust of Iona, but on the ruins, accursed and hopeless though they be, of wicked Nineveh and proud Babylon. But here is a ruin in which God once dwelt, and in which He desires yet again, and eternally, to dwell. Surely it is not for those whom grace, and grace alone, has saved from a like degradation, to exult over the desolation, or even to pass it by with indifference. “Honour all men”—if not for what they have made themselves, at least for what the Creator and Redeemer designed them to be. Honour that kindly thought of God toward them by striving, as best you may, for its realisation. And, when all your efforts seem to prove abortive, still honour it, and the objects of it, by your prayers and tears. (*J. Lillie, D.D.*) **Love the brotherhood.**—*Love the brotherhood*:—As the clouds which soar in the air are to the universal mass of waters, so are the brotherhood of God’s renewed children to the whole human family. Of mankind these brothers are in origin and nature; but they have been drawn out and up from the rest by an unseen omnipotent law. 1. Love to the brotherhood is an instinctive emotion. It is not an accident, but a nature. It springs in renewed hearts, as love of her offspring springs in a mother’s breast. It is the result not of an artificial policy, but of a natural law. The new creature exercises instincts as well as the old. 2. The Lord Jesus was not satisfied with the measure of this affection which existed among His followers during His personal ministry. “That they all may be one,” was His prayer; “Love one another,” was His command. 3. Those who are destitute of this affection themselves are acute enough to observe the want or weakness of it in Christians. 4. Brotherly love among Christians, when it really exists, honours the Lord and propagates the gospel. It has convinced many who resisted harder arguments. 5. It is the most pleasant of all emotions to the person who exercises it. 6. Love of the brotherhood is the command of God, and, consequently, the duty of men; but another thing goes before it to prepare its way. Before you can love the brotherhood, you must be a brother. It is the new creature that experiences this hallowed affection. (*W. Arnot.*) *The brethren and the brotherhood* (with chap. i. 22):—There is a great difference between loving “the brethren” and loving “the brotherhood.” “The brotherhood” is the society of “the brethren”—the Church. Each needs the other. “The love of the brotherhood” divorced from “the love of the brethren” will always lead to superstition, to an undue reverence for form and custom, to some sort of tyranny. “The love of the brethren” separated from “the love of the brotherhood” will always minister to foolish divisions, to confusion of faith, to ecclesiastical anarchy. St. Peter, who said “Love the brotherhood,” said also “Love as brethren.” 1. We ought to love the brethren. Religion is for men. The mission of the Church is to help everybody who needs help. There is constant need of humanising the work of the Church, that is, of emphasising the supreme purpose for which the Church exists—to make the world better. 2. On the other

hand, while we ought to love the brethren, we ought also to love the brotherhood. Christ Himself directs us to "hear the Church." The customs of the ancient society, the ways of the Church, ought not to be readily laid aside. The probability is that the brotherhood is wiser than any of the brethren. (*Bp. Hodges.*) *Love the brotherhood* :—Now of the obligation of this duty there are two main grounds—goodness and nearness. 1. We must love the brotherhood for their goodness. All goodness is lovely. There groweth a love due to every creature of God from this, that every creature of God is good. Some goodness God has communicated to everything to which He gave a being: as a beam of that incomprehensible light, and a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness, which He Himself is. But a greater measure of love is due to man than to other creatures, by how much God hath made him better than them. And to every particular man that hath any special goodness in him there is a special love due. He that hath good natural parts, if he have little in him that is good besides, yet is to be loved even for those parts, because they are good. He that hath but good moralities only, leading a civil life, though without any probable evidences of grace appearing in him, is yet to be loved of us, if but for those moralities, because they also are good. But he that goeth higher, and by the goodness of his conversation showeth forth the graciousness of his heart, deserveth by so much a higher room in our affections than either of the former, by how much grace exceedeth in goodness both nature and morality. Since then there is a special goodness in the brethren in regard of that most holy faith which they possess, and that blessed name of Christ which is called upon them, we are therefore bound to love them with a special affection. The other ground of loving the brotherhood is their nearness. The nearer, the dearer, we say; and there are few relations nearer than that of brotherhood. But no brotherhood in the world is so closely and surely knit together, and with so many and strong ties, as the fraternity of Christians. 1. We are brethren by propagation. Children of the one eternal God, the common Father of us all, and of the one Catholic Church, the common mother of us all. And we have all the same elder brother, Jesus Christ, the firstborn among many brethren. 2. We are brethren by education—foster brethren; as Herod and Manaen were. They that have been nursed and brought up together in their childhood for the most part have their affections so seasoned and settled then that they love one another the better while they live. 3. We are brethren by covenant, sworn brothers at our holy baptism, when we dedicated ourselves to God's service as His soldiers by sacred and solemn vow. Do we not see men that take the same oath pressed to serve in the same wars and under the same captains? 4. We are brethren by cohabitation. We are all of one house and family; not strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Lastly, we are brethren by partnership in our Father's estate. Co-partners in the state of grace; all of us enjoying the same promises, liberties, and privileges whereof we are already possessed in common; and co-heirs in the state of glory, all of us having the same joy, and everlasting bliss in expectancy and reversion. Having all these obligations upon us, and being tied together in one brotherhood by so many bands of unity and affection, I presume we cannot doubt but that it is our bounden duty thus to love the brotherhood. There remaineth now no more to be done but to look to our performances that they be right. Not but that we may make a difference between one brother and another in the measure and degree of our love, according to the different measures and degrees, either of their goodness considered in themselves or of their nearness in relation to us. (*Bp. Sanderson.*) *Love the brotherhood* :—No one will deny that these emphatic words express a great leading principle of the gospel. But in order to respond, in heart and conduct, to this teaching of St. Peter we must understand what the brotherhood is; we must know something of its institution; we must be assured of its continued existence; we must be instructed in the purposes which it has to fulfil, and in the powers and privileges with which it is endowed. On all these points the first Christians had a more perfect, because a more practical, knowledge than Christians in general have now. To them the brotherhood was not an abstract speculation, but a thing of life and reality. They were required to consider it, act towards it; and they did so. But now the case is different. In the present state of the Christian world the generality of Christians have no practical acquaintance with the brotherhood as such; at least they are not conscious of any. It is to them a thing invisible, inaudible, unapproachable; and so indeed they call it. They cannot therefore act towards the brotherhood as a whole, but only towards individuals. When they see a man leading a holy life, sound in the faith, they love him as a brother in the Lord. And they do well.

But it is one thing to love a brother, or a number of brethren, as individuals, and another thing to love the brotherhood itself. And the difference is most important. For on the one hand, though we should love numberless individuals, on account of their personal graces, yet this would never lead us on to the love of the brotherhood as such; whereas if we begin by loving the brotherhood, then our love will manifest itself towards all those who belong to it. But we are to observe another vast difference, in a practical point of view. Consider the many good offices which Christians are encouraged to seek at each other's hands, and of which they stand so greatly in need in their present condition as strangers and pilgrims upon earth—exhortation, admonition, edification in the truth, guidance, governance, consolation, reproof, intercession, co-operation. All these most necessary offices would, if faithfully discharged, keep alive in us a constant sense of mutual dependence, and quicken mutual love. But how lamentably are they neglected. And why are they neglected? We think of each other not as members and representatives of our holy brotherhood, but as individuals. The feelings of love which would lead us to seek whatever help we severally require, are not indeed destroyed in us; but for the most part they now spring from nothing deeper than our own opinion (based on our own limited experience) of each other's character; and therefore one while they are powerless, bearing no fruit at all, and another while they are mischievous and their fruit unwholesome. What, then, is to become of those strong affections which are ever seeking some object whereon to rest in peace and security? He who knows our wants has also abundantly provided for them. He has taught us not to place our hope of guidance and protection in this man or that, or in any number of men; but to seek a nobler alliance, and make a more exalted choice. It is not the might, nor the multitude, nor the wisdom, nor the talents, nor the piety of men, which He hath set before us as the best object of our present love and confidence; but it is communion with Himself our Heavenly Father, and with the holy angels, and with the spirits of the just made perfect, and with all good men on earth, by the Holy Ghost, in the mystical body of Christ. Here is an object worthy of our hearts, and able to satisfy their wants; here is the brotherhood which St. Peter bids us love—the great Christian brotherhood, the communion of saints, the Church of the living God. But this brotherhood being so high and holy a thing, how and where can it be seen on earth? The first Christians loved the brotherhood in its outward and visible parts—in its members, its ministers, its sacraments, its ordinances, and its laws; loved it, I say, and sought it, revered, believed, obeyed it, for the sake of the Awful Presence which they knew to be dwelling in it, and acting by and through it. In its weak, despised, and suffering appearance, they saw the marks of the Lord Jesus, the humiliation of His Cross; in its energy and holiness, its victories and conversions, they beheld the power of His resurrection. Him they beheld in all its ways and works; and therefore all its ways and works were precious in their sight. No wonder that they loved the brotherhood; for in its prayers, its sacraments, its ministry, they heard the prevailing intercession, the pardoning voice, the life-giving truth—they saw the dispensing hand, the protecting arm, the all-judging eye, the gracious yet most awful form of their ascended Saviour. In a word, they saw in it His chosen representative—the Apostolic Church, by which He completes on earth His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. So when those early believers came themselves to be admitted into this glorious brotherhood, though men were the instruments by whom the gate of baptism was opened to them, yet were they well assured that their election was of God. Well might they set themselves in earnest to follow their heavenly profession, knowing the grace to which they had been called, labouring to make their calling and election sure, trembling at the bare imagination of letting slip so great salvation. For truly they found themselves in the midst of heavenly sights and heavenly sounds, which many prophets and kings had desired to see and hear, but had not seen or heard: they found themselves called to the enjoyment of those promises which the saints of old had seen afar off. Such was the Christian brotherhood to the first followers of Christ, when its members were few, its outward condition weak, despised, oppressed. Now it has gone forth into all lands, and gathered into itself many people, and it is oppressed no longer. Is it then to us the same inestimable treasure which it appeared to the first Christians? Alas! far otherwise. The world, in drawing near to it, has too often flung over it the shadow of its own bad principles and unrighteous practices, and thereby has partially obscured its brightness. Many even of its own children regard it rather as a useful instrument of man than as a great unsearchable mystery of God. But still, we humbly trust, the presence of the Lord abideth in it. Still it

has peace and plenteousness for those who will repose in it with calm believing hearts. Only let us have faith to use the light and strength which yet remains—and more may perhaps be given us. Only let us “love the brotherhood” in the day of its humiliation, and show our love by eschewing those things that are contrary to our profession, and following all such things as are agreeable to the same; and then, unworthy as we are, we may even be allowed to contribute something, if it be but a prayer, towards the renewal of its life and vigour. (*R. Ward, M.A.*)

Fear God.—*Fear God*:—There are two principal species of fear, as we may readily perceive by consulting our own emotions—the fear of apprehension, and the fear of respect. The first has for its foundation that evil which he who is feared can inflict; the second arises from the high idea we have of him for whom we entertain this sentiment. The first is exercised towards a being who, we suppose, has the will and the power to hurt us; the second is felt when, apprehending nothing from his anger, we entertain esteem and veneration for him.

1. Let us commence with the fear of respect. This is always felt by the true believer. Can he avoid feeling it, when he views on one hand the splendour of the perfections of God, and on the other his own littleness and baseness?
2. With respect to the fear of apprehension, which has as its foundation the evils which God can inflict on us, it is of two different kinds; we may fear to offend and displease God, and we may fear to be punished for it. When the former is the motive of this fear, it is called filial fear, because it is the sentiment of an affectionate child towards its parent. This fear has as its source love and gratitude.
3. With respect to the other kind of fear of apprehension, that which is founded only on the dread of future punishment, it is (considered absolutely and in itself) neither morally good nor evil. Not morally good, since we see it every day felt by the most wicked, and since the devils themselves tremble under it. Not morally evil, since it is a sentiment that reason would require; since God has used the threatenings of this punishment to deter men from sin. It becomes morally good only when united with filial fear. It is morally evil when accompanied with love of sin, with distrust, and despair. It then acquires the name of servile fear. (*H. Kollock, D.D.*)

The fear of God:—1. There is, first of all, a fear of God which to me appears to be a reproduction, measure, or colour of the national life, different as the nations differ. I believe it to be impossible to bring a Frenchman and a German, or a Scotchman and an Irishman, or any two men that reach back into a radical difference of race, to regard God in the same way.

2. But, in our own nation, where so many nativities centre, the idea of God and the consequent fear of God differ very greatly. The first and lowest form is a fear of God as a gaoler and executioner, who stands and waits until that sure detective, Death, shall hunt the criminal down and bring him into court. The pagan, on this plane of belief, is wiser than the Christian. He says boldly that the doer of this is the evil spirit, and so he tries to be on good terms with him. But wherever such a fear has a real place in the soul of man or woman, African, Indian, or Saxon, in that soul the love of God, or even a true fear of God, is utterly out of the question. It destroys every fair blossom of the soul; it leaves nothing to ripen, nothing beautiful even to live.
3. Then, to the eye of the resolute Christian thinker—who dares not, as Coleridge has said, “love even Christianity better than the truth, lest he shall come to love his own sect better than Christianity, and at last himself better than all”—there is another form of the fear of God, not the best by far, but far better than this utterly slavish fear. I mean that in which God becomes the embodiment of pure bargain, exacting from us to the uttermost penny whatever is due. Here God appears with the guards and sanctities of the law about Him, self-imposed and self-respected. The man need not contract the debt if it does not please him, but if he does contract it he must pay, or another must pay for him. Then the Son of the Great Creditor gives His own body to the knife, and bears the intolerable agony instead of the debtor. Now there is a touch of sublimity in this conception. Yet when we come to question the system it will not stand. The moment you open the idea with the master-key of the Fatherhood of God you begin to see that it cannot be true.
4. But a far higher fear of God is to fear Him as we fear the surgeon who must cut out some dreadful gangrene in order to save the life. Such a fear as this really touches the outskirts of love—it is love and fear blended. When I went to Fort Donelson to nurse our wounded men, it was my good fortune to be the personal attendant of a gentleman whose skill as a surgeon was only equalled by the wonderfully deep, loving tenderness of his heart, as it thrilled in every tone of his voice and every touch of his hand. And it all comes up before me now how he would

come to the men, fearfully mangled as they were, and how the nerve would shrink and creep, and how, with a wise, hard, steady skill he would cut to save life, forcing back tears of pity only that he might keep his eye clear for the delicate duty, speaking low words of cheer in tones heavy with tenderness; then, when all was over, and the poor fellows, fainting with pain, knew that all was done that could be done, and done only with a severity whose touch was love, how they would look after the man as he went away, sending unspoken benedictions to attend him. Now a fear like this is almost the loftiest fear of God that has come to the human soul.

5. Then, finally, there is a fear of God which is more of love than fear—a fear that has no torment. There is an inspiration by which our duties rise up before us, vested in a nobleness like that which touches the landscape for a great painter. The true artist works ever with a touch of fear. He stands at his task, his heart trembling with the great pulses of his conception. He is fearful exactly as he sees the perfection of the thing he is trying to embody. Now, believe me, God hides some ideal in every human soul. At some time in our life we feel a trembling, fearful longing to do some good thing. (*R. Collyer, D.D.*)

Honour the king.—*Good subjects*:—For the coherence of these words with the former, note—1. That the duties to God and our neighbours, the duties of the first and second table, are to accompany one another; they must not be sundered (1 John iv. 21). (1) This rebuketh such as make show of great zeal in the duties to God and of His worship, but in the meantime make no conscience of deceiving, oppression, falsehood, backbiting, idleness, &c. (2) This rebuketh also such as are very civil and just in their dealings, sure of their word, and kind neighbours, and yet make no conscience of the duties of the first table. 2. That the knowledge and fear of God is the fountain of all our duties to men in their several places. None can be a good servant, one to be entrusted with business of weight, with hope of blessing, but such a one as feareth God; so no man can truly honour the king and be an absolute good subject except he fear God. *Uses*: 1. Let all that fear God show it in their several places by the performance of their duties to men, especially of subjection to their governors, that so they may bring the same in esteem, and procure credit thereto. 2. Would any be good subjects, let them begin at the right end, perform their duties in the right manner, even for conscience sake, as being required of God. 3. Magistrates are to trust those most which do most fear God, and accordingly to use them kindly and countenance them as being indeed their most loyal subjects; yea, to further the gospel what in them lies, whereby people may be brought to fear God. (*John Rogers.*)

A royalty free from dispute:—The most unreasonable things in the world become most reasonable because of the unruly lives of men. What is less reasonable than to choose the eldest son of a queen to guide a State? For we do not choose as steersman of a ship that one of the passengers who is of the best family. Such a law would be ridiculous and unjust, but since men are so themselves, and ever will be, it becomes reasonable and just. For would they choose the most virtuous and able, we at once fall to blows, since each asserts that he is the most virtuous and able. Let us then affix this quality to something which cannot be disputed. This is the king's eldest son. That is clear, and there is no dispute. Reason can do no better, for civil war is the worst of evils. (*Blaise Pascal.*)

Vers. 18–25. **Servants, be subject to your masters.**—*Submission enjoined*:—The word here rendered servants means not slaves in the strict sense of the term, but domestic servants—hence the exhortation is the more applicable to our own age and country. I. **THEIR DUTY.** 1. “Servants, be subject to your masters in all fear.” Let not the service you render be constrained and forced, but ready and joyous, remembering that, however humble, it is ennobled by religion. 2. But to what extent are they to submit? Has God placed you under a master who is exacting and ungenerous? act worthily of your profession, and show that master that there is something real in religion. 3. A cogent reason is assigned. “For this is thank-worthy”—literally grace—“if a man for conscientiousness of God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.” II. **THE EXAMPLE OF THE LORD JESUS** is set before us as the ground on which the submission should be practised. (*Thornley Smith.*)

The duty of servants:—I. **THEIR DUTY.** Be subject. Keep your order and station under your masters, and that “with fear” and inward reverence of mind and respect to them, for that is the very life of all obedience. Do faithfully to your utmost that which is entrusted to you and obey all their just commands, and suffer patiently even their unjust severities. But, on the other side, this does not justify nor excuse the unmerciful austerities of masters. It is still a perverseness in them, as the original

word is here, and must have its own name, and shall have its proper reward from the sovereign Master and Lord of all the world. II. THE DUE EXTENT OF THIS DUTY. "To the froward." It is a more deformed thing to have a distorted, crooked mind, or a froward spirit, than any crookedness of the body. How can he that hath servants under him expect their obedience when he cannot command his own passion, but is a slave to it? And unless much conscience of duty possess servants, more than is commonly to be found with them, it cannot but work a master into much disesteem with them when he is of a turbulent spirit, a troubler of his own house. The Christian servant, however, who falls into the hands of a froward master will not be beaten out of his station and duty of obedience by all the hard and wrongful usage he meets with, but will take that as an opportunity of exercising the more obedience and patience, and will be the more cheerfully patient because of his innocence, as the apostle here exhorts. All men desire glory, but they know neither what it is nor how it is to be sought. He is upon the only right bargain of this kind "whose praise is not of men, but of God." If men commend him not he accounts it no loss, nor any gain if they do, for he is bound for a country where that coin goes not, and whither he cannot carry it, and therefore he gathers it not. That which he seeks in all is that he may be approved and accepted of God, whose thanks are no less to the least of those he accepts than a crown of unfading glory. Not a poor servant that fears His name and is obedient and patient for His sake but shall be so rewarded. III. THE PRINCIPLE OF THIS OBEDIENCE AND PATIENCE. "For conscience towards God." This imports, first, the knowledge of God and of His will in some due measure, and then a conscientious respect unto Him and His will so known, taking it for the only rule in doing and suffering. 1. This declares to us the freeness of the grace of God in regard to men's outward quality, that He doth often bestow the riches of His grace upon persons of mean condition. He hath all to choose from, and yet chooses where men would least imagine (Matt. xi. 25; 1 Cor. i. 27). 2. Grace finds a way to exert itself in every estate where it exists, and regulates the soul according to the particular duties of that estate. A skilful engraver makes you a statue indifferently of wood or stone or marble, as they are put into his hand; so grace forms a man to a Christian way of walking in any estate. There is way for him in the meanest condition to glorify God and to adorn the profession of religion; no estate so low as to be shut out from this; and a rightly informed and rightly affected conscience towards God shows a man that way and causes him to walk in it. 3. As a corrupt mind debaseth the best and most excellent callings and actions, so the lowest are raised above themselves and ennobled by a spiritual mind. An eagle may fly high and yet have its eye down upon some carrion on the earth; even so a man may be standing on the earth, and on some low part of it, and yet have his eye upon heaven and be contemplating it. "For conscience." 1. In this there is, first, a reverential compliance with God's disposal, both in allotting to them that condition of life, and in particularly choosing their master for them, though possibly not the mildest and pleasantest, yet the fittest for their good. 2. In this there is, secondly, a religious and observant respect to the rule which God hath set men to walk by in that condition, so that their obedience depends not upon any external inducement, failing when that fails, but flows from an inward impression of the law of God upon the heart. 3. In this there is a tender care of the glory of God and the adornment of religion. 4. There is, lastly, the comfortable persuasion of God's approbation, as is expressed in the following verse, and the hope of that reward He hath promised. "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. iii. 24). (*Abp. Leighton.*) *The conduct of servants*:—I. RELIGION BROUGHT INTO THE LITTLE THINGS OF LIFE. It does not merely include duties unto kings, but duty towards lesser lords. We may learn from this—1. That religion applies to all classes and conditions of men. Each state of life has its own little kingdom, its own little world. 2. That nothing is too insignificant to be brought under the power of Divine direction. II. PRINCIPLE SUPERSEDING COMPULSION. In this verse the apostle establishes one of the most important principles of morality—that our obligations to relative duties are not to be gauged by the character of the person to whom they are performed. 1. It is not utility that should regulate our conduct. The will of the world is to discard that which is not useful or profitable. 2. It is not comfort that is to direct our lives. 3. It is not force that is to drive. 4. It is neither the fear nor the love of man that moves. III. OBEDIENCE INDEPENDENT OF CIRCUMSTANCES. Masters, like kings, differ. Some are reasonable and kind, others are unreasonable and bitter. Is a

servant only to serve them who are fair and kind? By no means. The reason is explained when we come to realise that the present is of very little moment to show who serve Christ. (*J. J. S. Bird.*) **Suffering wrongfully.**—*Endurance of wrong*:—It may be asked whether the advice of St. Peter to submit quietly to wrong does not destroy manliness and force of character if it is acted on? Does it not tend to create a race of effeminate, spiritless men? This question involves another. In what does moral strength consist? It is sometimes taken for granted that moral strength must catch the eye, must inflict itself on the imagination; that it must be something bustling, demonstrative, aggressive; that it must at least have colour, body, muscle, to recommend it. This is not the case. Moral strength, in its very finest forms, may be the reverse of all this; when it makes no show, and is passive, it is often at its best. Many a man who can act with great courage in moments of great personal danger, in a struggle with a brigand, or in a burning house, cannot go through an illness as bravely and patiently as a little girl. The hardest thing often is to do nothing, to await the approach of danger or of death, and yet not to lose nerve and self-possession. No moral strength in the whole history of mankind ever equalled that which was displayed on Calvary, where all that awaited Him was present from the first to the mind of the Divine victim, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (chap. ii. 23). Nothing that has been said will be so greatly misconstrued as to be taken to imply that cruelty, tyranny, oppression, can be agreeable to the mind of God. He permits these things among men from time to time, just as He permits much else that is evil for His own wise ends. He brings good out of them, yet He condemns them. By and by He will punish them. Nowhere is it implied in the Bible that the systems involving the oppression of man by man have vested rights in the moral universe, or that the circumstances which permit it are even tolerable, unless they are perpetuated for very different purposes indeed. The days will come when Englishmen will look back to the abolition of the slave trade by the English Parliament as a greater title to glory than was Trafalgar or Waterloo; as among the very greatest in the course of our history. Wilberforce and Clarkson will rank even before those celebrated commanders, to whose courage and genius, under God, we owe the independence of our country. Among yourselves there are probably some who, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. There are no slaves, thank God, on English soil, but there are multitudes of persons in positions of dependence whose lives can easily be made miserable by the cruel ingenuity of their betters, and too often for no worse crime than that of obeying a higher sense of right. Every rank in society has its petty tyrants and its secret confessorships; to suffer wrongfully for conscience toward God is the monopoly of no one class. Here is a cadet of a noble family who will not consent to a transaction which he knows to be unjust, and he is cut off with a shilling. There is an apprentice or clerk in a large city house who will not abandon the duties or restraints of a Christian life in deference to pressure or abuse or ridicule from his companions, and he has a hard time of it. Yonder is a governess who has learnt a higher estimate of life and duty than her wealthy and ostentatious employer; or a clergyman who feels too keenly the real character of Divine revelation and the tremendous issues of life and death to acquiesce in some popular but shallow misrepresentation of the gospel which makes his people comfortable without bringing them nearer to God. These, and such as these, must, "for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully." Law can do but little for them; the province of law lies outside the spheres of the heart and the conscience; the whole world of motive is beyond it. But religion can do much, or rather everything, by pointing to the crucified and risen Prince of that vast company in all ages who have cared less to avoid discomfort than to be true to known truth and duty; by pointing to the unapproached bitterness of His sorrow, and to the completeness and splendour of His triumph. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The blessings of injustice*:—Where shall we look for an explanation of God's permission of prevalent injustice and wrongful suffering in the world? Some have sought an explanation in the circumstance that all have sinned, and therefore all deserve to suffer. This affirmation is undoubtedly true, yet it offers no kind of solution to the problem. Nor does the promise of the ultimate termination of all evil in the world, or the promise of the future reversal of all present injustices, or the final recompense of the righteous, offer a perfect solution of the mystery of present wrongful suffering. All these promises shed some light of comfort on the mystery; they also help the sufferers

to endure their wrongful sufferings gloriously; but they do not explain why the patient endurance of such wrongful sufferings is permitted by, and especially acceptable unto, God. And perhaps no sufficient explanation is possible in our present darkened and limited condition of existence. And, for anything we know to the contrary, the present exercise of simple faith may be, through all eternity, of such unspeakable value to man that injustice and wrongful suffering may be permitted by God chiefly for the sake of the training and development of simple, victorious faith. There is, however, another blessing of injustice which lies within our ken and is perfectly manifest. It is the splendour of spiritual character, which is engendered by injustice and wrongful suffering; and which, as far as we can see, is never engendered in any other way. As the finest gold is the gold most heated in the furnace, so the finest souls are the souls whose furnace in life has been the hottest. Without burning and welding, human souls inevitably continue gross and feeble. If when we commit a fault and are buffeted for it we take it patiently, there is no glory in patience like that. The finest spiritual glory requires a furnace heated with injustice and wrong to make its splendour and its strength appear. The very injustice which is a curse to the soul of him who commits it is transfigured by patient endurance into a blessing and a glory to the soul of him who suffers it. Not those who merely suffer, but those who suffer wrongfully, have perfect fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. And the patient endurance of such sufferings, because of the strength and glory which it imparts to the souls of His greatest children, is acceptable and well-pleasing unto God. (*Canon Diggle.*) *Gratitude for wrongful suffering*:—The words imply—1. That man has a conscience. 2. That conscience sometimes leads to suffering. 3. That sufferings that spring from the following out of a good conscience are reasons for gratitude. “This is thank-worthy.” I. Because THEY INVOLVE THE HIGHEST MORAL TRIUMPH. It is a triumph—1. Of the spiritual over the material. 2. Of the right over the expedient. 3. Of the Christly over the selfish. II. Because THEY OPEN UP WITHIN THE MAN THE HIGHEST SOURCES OF HAPPINESS. III. Because it IDENTIFIES THE SUFFERER WITH THE ILLUSTRIOUS MEN OF ALL TIMES. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Suffering wrongfully*:—A minister was asked by a Quaker lady, “Dost not thee think that we can walk so carefully, live so correctly, and avoid every fanaticism so perfectly, that every sensible person will say, ‘That’s the kind of religion I believe in’?” He replied, “Sister, if thee had a coat of feathers as white as snow, and a pair of wings as shining as Gabriel’s, somebody would be found somewhere on the footstool with so bad a case of colour blindness as to shoot thee for a blackbird.” (*King’s Highway.*) **Ye take it patiently.**—*Patience*:—Patience is the endurance of any evil, out of the love of God, as the will of God. The offices of patience are as varied as the ills of this life. We have need of it with ourselves and with others; with those below and those above us, and with our own equals; with those who love us and those who love us not; for the greatest things and for the least; against sudden inroads of trouble, and under our daily burdens; disappointments as to the weather or the breaking of the heart; in the weariness of the body or the wearing of the soul; in our own failure of duty or others’ failure towards us; in everyday wants or in the aching of sickness or the decay of age; in disappointment, bereavement, losses, injuries, reproaches; in heaviness of the heart or its sickness amid delayed hopes, or the weight of this body of death, from which we would be free, that we might have no more struggle with sin within or temptation without, but attain to our blessed and everlasting peace in our rest in God. All other virtues and graces have need of patience to perfect or to secure them. Patience interposes herself and receives and stops every dart which the evil one aims at them. “Patience is the root and guardian of all virtue”; impatience is the enemy of all. Impatience disquiets the soul, makes her weary of conflict, ready to lay aside her armour and to leave difficult duty. Impatience, by troubling the smooth mirror of the soul, hinders her from reflecting the face of God; by its din it hinders her from hearing the voice of God. How does it shake faith to be impatient of evils, either in the world or in the Church, or those which befall a person’s own self! How does impatience with others’ defects chill love, or impatience with even our own failings and shortcomings extinguish hope! To be impatient at blame is a blight to humility; at contradiction, destroys meekness; at injuries, quenches longsuffering; at sharp words, mars gentleness; at having one’s own will crossed, obedience. Impatience at doing the same things again and again hinders perseverance; impatience of bodily wants surprises people into intemperance or leads them to deceive, lie, steal. “In patience,” our blessed Lord tells us, “possess ye your

souls." By patience we have the keeping of our own souls; we command ourselves, and our passions are subdued to us; and "commanding ourselves, we begin to possess that which we are." Patience, then, is the guardian of faith, the fence of love, the strength of hope, the parent of peace. Patience protects humility, keeps meekness, is the soul of longsuffering, guides gentleness, strengthens perseverance. Patience makes the soul to be of one mind with God, and sweetens all the ills of life. It casts the light of heaven upon them and transforms them into goods. It makes the bitter waters sweet; the barren and dry land fruitful. Desolation it makes a loneliness with God; the parching of sickness to be the fire of His love; weakness to be His strength; wounds to be health; emptiness of all things to have things from Him; poverty to be true riches; His deserved punishments to be His rainbow of mercy; death to be His life. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*)

Patience under oppression.—Writing, probably from Rome—certainly in one of the closing years of his life—St. Peter saw the great tendency of social and political circumstances around him towards that great outbreak of violence against the worshippers of Christ which is known in history as the first persecution, in which he and St. Paul laid down their lives. He is anxious to prepare the Asiatic Christians for the trials which are before them. Then, as now, there were bad Christians who fell under the just sentence of the criminal law, and St. Peter reminds them that there is no moral glory in suffering that which we have deserved, even though we take our punishment uncomplainingly. "What glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?" But he knows also that aggravated sufferings awaited numbers of inoffensive men and women, whose only crime would be that they were worshippers of the meek and lowly Jesus, and centres of light and goodness in a corrupt and demoralised society. When the storm burst, as it would burst, they might be tempted to think that the government of the world was somehow at fault in this award of bitter punishment to virtuous and benevolent persons, conscious of the integrity of their intentions—conscious of their desire to serve a holy God—to do any good in their power to their fellow-creatures. Accordingly, St. Peter puts their anticipated trials in a light which would not, at first sight, present itself, and which does not lie upon the surface of things. "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." There is a peculiar moral glory in patience under unmerited wrong, if not according to any human, yet certainly according to a Divine, standard. "This is acceptable with God." Now, many men have said, and more, perhaps, have thought, about such teaching as this, that it is a splendid paradox. That a criminal should suffer what he has deserved satisfies the sense of justice. That a good man should suffer what he has not deserved violates the sense of justice; and if he submits uncomplainingly he acquiesces in injustice. Nay, he does more: he forfeits the independence—the glory—of his manhood. The precept to take it patiently is, in a word, objected to as effeminate and anti-social. Now, here it must be remarked, first of all, that for serious Christians this question is really settled by the precepts and example of our Lord Himself. "Even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example," &c. In His public teaching our Lord made much of patient submission to undeserved wrong. He pronounced those men blessed who suffered for righteousness' sake. Not in exemption from suffering, but in truthful endurance, would His true followers find their peace. "In your patience possess ye your souls." Nay, more. Christians, He says, are to welcome such trials. They are to meet the persecutor half-way. They are to do good to them that hate them, to pray for their persecutors, &c. And in perfect harmony with this teaching is His own example. Well, it is this sinless being who is also the first of sufferers. Nothing was wanting, humanly speaking, to make patience impossible. The natural sensitiveness of His tender frame, the ingenious appliances of torture, such as a crown of thorns pressed down upon the head and the temples, the coarse brutality of His executioners, the vivid consciousness of the sufferer sustained from moment to moment, might well have exhausted patience. And what His mental sufferings must have been we may infer distantly from the agony in the garden. But St. Peter directs especial attention to the insults to which our Lord was subject, and which may have tried His patience even more than the great sorrows of His soul or the tortures of His body. "When He was reviled He reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not, but submitted Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." No complaint, properly speaking, escaped Him. Certainly, He asked the soldier who struck Him on the face for the reason of the act. He for a moment broke His majestic silence in His compassion to this poor man's insensi-

bility to natural justice, and perhaps also in order to show that if when suffering more He did not complain, it was not because His feeling was dulled, but only what was due to patience. For Christians, then, I say, the question whether patience under undeserved wrong is right—is a duty—is not an open question. It has been settled by the highest authority—our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. From His teaching there is no appeal. In His example we Christians see the true ideal of human life. “As He is, so are we in this world.” And yet if, for Christians, the question is not an open one, the very authority which settles it enables us to see some reasons for the decision. Indeed, our Lord teaches us by His sufferings more than in any other way. By these He reveals to us the love of God: by these He points to the value of heaven. These sufferings are the measure of the gravity of our sins, of the miseries of hell, of the solemnity of life. But beyond this our Lord gives us lessons about pain. The existence of pain in the world is a fact which has from the earliest ages attracted and perplexed human thought. What is it in itself? It is a certainty both to feeling and to thought, and yet it is beyond analysis; and its inaccessibility to any real examination adds to its mysteriousness with all thoughtful minds, and increases the anxious interest with which it is regarded. It is ubiquitous: it is importunate: it meets us everywhere: it leaves us to-day only that it may return to-morrow. In this vast district of human experience deism sees, however reluctantly, an unexplained libel upon the character of God—atheism a hideous flaw, which, however bound up with the order of nature, impairs and disintegrates it. The Greeks talked much of a Divine Nemesis, a word which has played a great part in human thought; but Nemesis was not merely Divine justice overtaking human crime: it was also a malignant envy which grudged man his power or his good fortune, and which humbled him accordingly. Heathendom saw that there was a connection between pain and conscience. It had very indistinct ideas of the nature of this connection. What it was exactly revelation must say. Accordingly in the Old Testament there is one predominating aspect of the moral use of misfortune and pain. It is the punishment of sin. The righteousness of God is the great feature of the Jewish revelation of God. God is power; God is intelligent; but above all else God is righteousness. And it is in accordance with His righteousness—not, observe you, as the caprice of an arbitrary will, but in deference to the unalterable necessities of our self-existing moral nature—that He inflicts pain and misfortune as punishment for sin. This faith that pain justly follows misdoing, because God who governs all is righteousness and could not have it otherwise, runs through the Old Testament. It dictates the law: it is illustrated again and again in the history: it is the keynote to more than half the Psalms: it supplies the prophets with their greatest inspirations. But although it is true that sin is followed by punishment, because God is righteousness, it does not follow that all human suffering in this life is a punishment for sin. Against this idea the Old Testament itself contains some very emphatic protests. Thus the Book of Job has for its main object to show that Job’s misfortunes are no real measure of his sins. And when Psalmists could say, “It is good for me that I have been in trouble,” or “The Lord hath chastened and corrected me, but He hath not given me over unto death,” or “All Thy waves and storms are gone over me,” it is clear that already a new light was breaking upon the world. But it was by our Lord that the cloud was fully lifted from this great district of human experience, so that we are now able to map it out, and to discover its bearings, and turn it to practical account. Our Lord does not reverse what the old dispensation had taught as to the penal object of a great deal of human pain, but He also rules that much pain is strictly a discipline—a Father’s discipline of His children. Pain may thus be a token of favoured sonship; and, if so, then to pass through life without pain may be anything but an enviable lot. “If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” Pain thus need not be an enemy: it may be a friend in disguise: at least it may become so. Why should it not be welcomed? This is the voice of Christian teaching. Why, like the natural elements, fire and water, should it not be taken in hand and conquered and made the most of? Why should we not get out of it all the disciplinary and purifying virtue that we can, and so turn the scourge into a blessing? And if the question be asked by some anxious soul, “How am I to know? Is this unjust humiliation, or this insult, or this loss of means, or this illness, or this heartache, a punishment for past sin or a tender discipline?” the answer is, “Conscience must itself reply.” Here, then, is the answer to the criticism on St. Peter’s precept, to which I was

referring just now. There may be cases in which the interests of truth and righteousness—the interests of others—may make resistance to oppression a duty. They are rare, indeed. As a rule, trouble and pain are to be taken patiently as coming from God, inflict them who may. The early Christians were men who felt they had nothing to do either with the legal government of the Roman Empire or with the moral government of the universe. All that they knew was that they had to suffer for being what they were, and for believing what they did believe. The only question with them was how to suffer. And as for society, society has been again and again purified, regenerated, saved, by the passive endurance, as distinct from the active struggles, of its very best members. And let me make two remarks in conclusion. In this glad acceptance of undeserved pain we see one of the central forces of the Christian religion by which, as a matter of fact, it made its way among men eighteen centuries ago and ever since. Literature, social prestige, political influence, were all against the Church; but in the long run the old empire was no match for a religion which could teach its sincere votaries, generation after generation, to regard pure suffering as a privilege, as a mark of God's favour, as a pledge of glory. Depend upon it patient, cheerful acceptance of suffering is a great force which achieves more than many active energies that command the attention of mankind. And if this way of taking the troubles which are laid upon us supplies Christianity with its force, so it secures to human life its best consolations. We live in an age of progress. The circumstances under which we pass life are being brought more and more under the control of man; but is there less suffering in the world than there was a hundred years ago? Looking to the present state of the world, is there likely to be? I fear not. Even science, which does so much for us, shifts the scene of suffering, rather than diminishes its area. What is taken away by one hand is returned by the other. If disease is assuaged, life is prolonged under conditions which, in an unscientific age, would have been fatal to it, and which necessarily involve suffering. And human nature does not change. The same principles and passions and dispositions which, needlessly or intentionally, inflict suffering on others are at work now, although their operation is limited by improvements in human society. Some of us may be young and lighthearted, and may not yet know what real trouble and pain mean. We shall know in time. The lesson comes to most men early enough in life, whether inflicted by others or, as more frequently, direct from above. The important point is to be prepared for it when it does come, to see in it the hand of our Father in heaven, to thank Him for treating us thus as children, for punishing, for purifying us here, that He may in His mercy spare us hereafter. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The duty of patience under injuries:—*

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS DUTY. 1. The not entertaining the impression of injuries with acrimony of thought and internal resentment. 2. The not venting any such resentment in virulent vindictive language. **II. WHENCE IT IS THAT THIS DUTY COMES TO BE SO EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT.** 1. From the peculiar provoking quality of ill language. 2. Because nature has deeply planted in every man a strange tenderness of his good name, which, in the rank of worldly enjoyments, the wisest of men has placed before life itself. For, indeed, it is a more enlarged and diffused life, kept up by many more breaths than our own. **III. BY WHAT MEANS A MAN MAY WORK HIMSELF TO SUCH A COMPOSURE AND TEMPER OF SPIRIT, AS TO BE ABLE TO OBSERVE THIS GREAT AND EXCELLENT DUTY.** And here, when we consider what obstructions are to be conquered and removed, we must acknowledge that nothing under an omnipotent grace can subdue the heart to such a frame. To commend this, of returning railing for railing, slander for slander, both to our practice and affection, I shall fasten only upon this one consideration; namely, that it is utterly useless to all rational intents and purposes. 1. The first reason that would induce a man, upon provocation, to do a violent action by way of return, should be to remove the cause of that provocation. But the cause that usually provokes men to revile, are words and speeches; that is, such things as are irrevocable. Such a one vilified me; but can I, by railing, make that which was spoken, not to have been spoken? Are words and talk to be reversed? Or can I make a slander to be forgot, by rubbing up the memory of those that heard it with a reply? 2. Another end, inducing a man to return reviling for reviling, may be by this means to confute the calumny, and to discredit the truth of it. But this course is so far from having such an effect, that it is the only thing that gives it colour and credibility; all people being prone to judge, that a high resentment of a calumny proceeds from concernment, and that from guilt; which makes the sore place tender and untractable. 3. A third end for which a

man may pretend to give himself this liberty is because in so doing he thinks he takes a full and proper revenge of him that first reviled him. But certainly there is no kind of revenge so poor and pitiful; for every dog can bark, and he that rails makes another noise indeed, but not a better. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Of patience*:—The word patience hath in common usage a double meaning, taken from the respect it hath unto two sorts of objects somewhat different. As it respecteth provocations to anger and revenge by injuries or discourtesies, it signifieth a disposition of mind to bear them with charitable meekness; as it relateth to adversities and crosses disposed to us by Providence, it importeth a pious undergoing and sustaining them. That both these kinds of patience may here be understood, we may, consulting and considering the context, easily discern. I. PATIENCE, THEN, IS THAT VIRTUE WHICH QUALIFIETH US TO BEAR ALL CONDITIONS AND ALL EVENTS BY GOD'S DISPOSAL INCIDENT TO US, WITH SUCH APPREHENSIONS AND PERSUASIONS OF MIND, SUCH DISPOSITIONS AND AFFECTIONS OF HEART, SUCH EXTERNAL DEPORTMENTS AND PRACTICES OF LIFE AS GOD REQUIRETH AND GOOD REASON DIRECTETH. Its nature will, I conceive, be understood best by considering the chief acts which it produceth, and wherein especially the practice thereof consisteth; the which briefly are these: 1. A thorough persuasion, that nothing befalleth us by fate, or by chance, or by the mere agency of inferior causes, but that all proceedeth from the dispensation or with the allowance of God. 2. A firm belief that all occurrences, however adverse and cross to our desires, are well consistent with the justice, wisdom, and goodness of God. 3. A full satisfaction of mind that all (even the most bitter and sad accidents) do (according to God's purpose) tend and conduce to our good. 4. An entire submission and resignation of our wills to the will of God, suppressing all rebellious insurrections and grievous resentments of heart against His providence. 5. Bearing adversities calmly, cheerfully, and courageously, so as not to be discomposed with anger or grief; not to be put out of humour, not to be dejected or disheartened; but in our disposition of mind to resemble the primitive saints who "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," who "accounted it all joy when they fell into divers tribulations." 6. A hopeful confidence in God for the removal or easement of our afflictions, and for His gracious aid to support them well; agreeable to those good rules and precepts: "It is good that a man should both hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord"; "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him"; "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." 7. A willingness to continue, during God's pleasure, in our afflicted state, without weariness or irksome longings for alteration. 8. A lowly frame of mind (that is, being sober in our conceits of ourselves, sensible of our manifold defects and miscarriages; being meek and gentle, tender and pliable in our temper and frame of spirit; being deeply affected with reverence and dread toward the awful majesty, mighty power, perfect justice and sanctity of God; all this) wrought by our adversity, effectually, according to its design, softening our hard hearts, mitigating our peevish humours. 9. Restraining our tongues from all discontentful complaints and murmurings, all profane, harsh expressions, importing displeasure or dissatisfaction in God's dealings toward us, arguing desperation or distrust in Him. 10. Blessing and praising God (that is, declaring our hearty satisfaction in God's proceedings with us, acknowledging His wisdom, justice, and goodness therein, expressing a grateful sense thereof, as wholesome and beneficial to us) in conformity to Job, who, on the loss of all his comforts, did thus vent his mind: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." 11. Abstaining from all irregular and unworthy courses toward the removal or redress of our crosses; choosing rather to abide quietly under their pressure, than by any unwarrantable means to relieve or relax ourselves. 12. A fair behaviour toward the instruments and abettors of our affliction; those who brought us into it, or who detain us under it, by keeping off relief, or sparing to yield the succour which we might expect; the forbearing to express any wrath or displeasure, to exercise any revenge, to retain any grudge or enmity toward them; but rather even on that score bearing good-will, and showing kindness unto them. 13. Particularly in regard to those who, by injurious and offensive usage, do provoke us, patience importeth—(1) That we be not hastily, over easily, not immoderately, not pertinaciously incensed with anger toward them. (2) That we do not in our hearts harbour any ill will, or ill wishes, or ill designs toward them, but that we truly desire their good, and purpose to farther it as we shall have ability and occasion. (3) That in effect we do not execute any revenge, or for requital do any mischief to them, either in word or deed; but for their

reproaches exchange blessings (or good words and wishes), for their outrages repay benefits and good turns. 14. In fine, patience doth include and produce a general meekness and kindness of affection, together with an enlarged sweetness and pleasantness in conversation and carriage toward all men; implying that how hard soever our case, how sorry or sad our condition is, we are not therefore angry with the world, because we do not thrive or flourish in it; that we are not dissatisfied or disgusted with the prosperous estate of other men; that we are not become sullen or froward toward any man because his fortune excelleth ours, but that rather we do "rejoice with them that rejoice"; we do find complacency and delight in their good success; we borrow satisfaction and pleasure from their enjoyments.

II. THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD WAS INDEED IN THIS KIND THE MOST REMARKABLE THAT EVER WAS PRESENTED, THE MOST PERFECT THAT CAN BE IMAGINED; He was, above all expression, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; He did undertake, as to perform the best works, so to endure the worst accidents to which human nature is subject; His whole life being no other than one continual exercise of patience and meekness, in all the parts and to the utmost degrees of them. (Isaac Barrow, D.D.)

Patience in tribulation:—I. THE SPECIAL BEAUTY OF CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOUR. "This is the grace or beauty." 1. The disciple of Christ does not act from motives of expediency, but from principle. 2. The disciple of Christ does not pursue pleasure or ease, but duty. II. THE EXCITING MOTIVE WHICH PROMPTS THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS CHARACTER. He will know that he is pleasing God. He will realise that God is the avenger. III. THE NATURAL ARGUMENT TO BE SPECIALLY CONSIDERED. "For what glory is it," &c. This is an urgent and important warning and caution. It urges discrimination and self-examination with regard to our sufferings. (J. J. S. Bird.)

Acceptable with God.—Thanks from God:—"This is acceptable with God." And the Greek might bear such a rendering as this: "God says, Thank you." Yes, so it is. If in some great house some poor servant, or if in a school some persecuted child, will dare, for God's sake, to choke back the passionate outburst of indignation, and to endure grief, suffering wrongfully, there is a thrill of delight started through the very heart of God, and from the throne God stoops to say, "Thank you." The hero-explorer may be thanked by his country and his Queen, but the weakest and obscurest saint may receive the thanks of the Almighty. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.)

Even hereunto were ye called.—God has ordained His people to undergo troubles in this world:—God has ordained that all His shall suffer troubles, therefore we are to look for them, and bear them patiently. Through many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of heaven. God knows how ill we can bear prosperity, but are ready to surfeit thereof, as children do of sweetmeats. Standing waters gather mud. As the Israelites in their journey to Canaan suffered much, so must we in this tabernacle, before we come to heaven; thus is God pleased to exercise us for His own glory and our good. Uses: 1. We must not think the worse of any because of their afflictions, or conclude them to be bad men and hypocrites, which was the fault of Job's friends. 2. We must not think the better of ourselves for prosperity. God can afford the dogs the bones, the things of this world. 3. We must not dislike ourselves for our afflictions. It is an argument of God's love, not of His hatred (Heb. xii. 6). To have afflictions and to profit thereby is the sign of a happy man. 4. We must prepare for afflictions, not dreaming for ease; they are the better borne when looked for. 5. We must bear them patiently, as being of God. 6. We must bear them thankfully, as whereby we are furthered in holiness. 7. We must bear them joyfully, in respect of the eternal happiness and immortal glory we shall be shortly brought to. 8. If the children of God get not to heaven but through many sorrows, what shall then become of the wicked and ungodly (1 Peter iv. 18; Jer. xxv. 29, xlix. 12)? (John Rogers.)

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example.—Christ's sufferings in Gethsemane:—"He suffered for us"; it was during His agony in the garden that our Lord appears to have been most deeply penetrated with the sense of His afflictions. I. THE INTENSITY OF THOSE SUFFERINGS which our Saviour experienced in the garden of Gethsemane; and, II. WHAT HIS CONDUCT UNDER THOSE SUFFERINGS OUGHT TO TEACH US. There is, perhaps, no circumstance of the gospel at which our reason is so inclined to cavil, as the affliction which our Saviour then experienced. We cannot understand how it is possible that the Messiah, who is "one with the Father," should be thus liable to grief, and thus deeply moved at the prospect of His approaching persecutions. Our difficulty here results from our utter inability of forming any notion of the infinite magnitude of the Divine power. We can understand that in the Majesty of the Deity, He

should hold pain and sorrow as His subjects; but we cannot understand His rendering Himself subject to them. We are unable to conceive that exercise of His power by which He manifested Himself as entire a master of His own infinite attributes, and withdrew Himself, as it were, from the sustaining succours of His eternal Godhead, that, as a man, He might suffer for our redemption. Yet this is what our Saviour did. If we were merely to confine ourselves to temporal views, and exclude all consideration of the spiritual cause of our Lord's sufferings, it may even then be with truth affirmed that such an accumulation of woes was never brought to bear at one moment on one man. He knew to a certainty that He had no deliverance to look for; that Judas, His companion, would betray Him; that the princes and rulers would condemn Him; that the people would reject Him and save Barabbas; and that His enemies would heap their persecutions upon Him to the last. In the mere anticipation of what He was about to undergo, our Redeemer had full cause for the agony which He experienced and expressed in the garden of Gethsemane. But, with such aggravations suggested by His own prophetic spirit as no other man ever knew, Jesus was cut off by the very sublimity and holiness of His character, from a source of succour which, under similar circumstances, has often afforded relief to other men. If they do not actually extract the sting of human suffering, they serve to divert the thoughts, and thus to allay the pain of it. But what are those passions? They are either a sullen pride which will not allow the afflicted under any circumstances to confess themselves subdued; or a fierce resentment which induces them to baffle the malice of their enemies by opposing a mask of obstinate insensibility to every attack; or an empty vanity which leads them in the lowest depths of wretchedness, and on the very borders of the grave, to angle for the applauses of the world by putting on a light appearance of unconcern. But whatever support such feelings might afford to others, they could have afforded none to Jesus in the hour of His agony. They are repugnant to the dispositions by which His gentle heart was animated. But it may be conceived that Jesus, under all His troubles, might still have found relief in the consciousness of His innocence. If there are occasions when this reflection may prove a source of secret comfort to the sufferer; there are others when it serves as the severest aggravation to his misery. If an elder brother who had mercifully interposed to save the children of their common parents from destitution, who had succeeded in placing them in a prosperous condition, should, after all, detect them conspiring with his enemies to malign and ruin him, would it be any consolation to reflect that he had not deserved such treatment at their hands? Even so must the consciousness of His innocence have affected the heart of Jesus. It must have been the most galling addition to the weight of those oppressions which were heaped upon Him by His countrymen. The consideration that they, who would be the authors of His oppressions, ought to have been bound together by the remembrance of His loving-kindnesses, as His firm protectors, must have struck far deeper into His heart than ever the soldier's spear-wound in His side could pierce. But not only on His own account: His compassionate nature would grieve for others; for His disciples, whom the profession of the faith in His name should render obnoxious to the enmity of their friends, and expose to persecution. But, as yet, we have only surveyed our Saviour's agony in the garden as resulting from human feelings. We will now proceed to regard it as affected by those views which would have been suggested by the religious aim of His approaching passion. Our Saviour, by His death upon the Cross, was about to pay the price of the transgressions of the whole world. He was about to suffer for our sins; and those sins for which His death was demanded, would naturally engage His contemplations. He would now see before Him the multitude of those offences for which a sacrifice was to be offered; the heinousness of them; the outrage that they were against the majesty of God; the ruin, the destitution which they had spread over the face of the earth; and the weight of the punishment they deserved. The bare idea of any one of those wicked acts which are daily committed by the cruel or the impure, is hateful to every innocent mind. What horror then must necessarily have filled the soul of our Saviour when, not singly, but in their aggregate amount, those mortal offences were brought before His holy view, as He estimated the extent of the ransom which was due, and which He had Himself undertaken to discharge? But our Lord thus "suffered for us," says St. Peter in my text, "leaving us an example that we should follow His steps." The lessons which His sufferings ought to teach us: 1. We should learn from them to submit ourselves in every condition of life with an unreserved obedience to the will of the Almighty. 2. We should learn from our Lord's conduct never to despair of

the loving-kindness of our Heavenly Father, but to rely upon His unfailing goodness; to look to Him for succour and relief; and to feel assured that, if He see not fit to remove our cause of sorrow, He will, in His infinite mercy, answer our prayers for assistance, by vouchsafing to our souls the ability to support it. 3. We should learn humility from the example of our Saviour's sufferings. 4. We should learn from our Lord's example the extent of that Christian love which, as His disciples, we are bound to bear our fellow-creatures. Our Lord suffered for us. He exhibited, in dying for us, the fulness of that brotherly charity with which our hearts should glow towards each other. He condemned every affection which emanates from a selfish and ungenerous source, by His willing immolation of Himself for the sins of the world that had condemned Him. His thus dying for us teaches us not only the value we ought to set upon our own salvation, but the value we ought to set upon the salvation of others. (*W. Harness, M.A.*)

Christ our example:—The first reason for the gift of the Incarnate Son to a perishing world, is that He might be a sacrifice for its sin. The second reason is, that He might be an ensample of godly life to those who believe in Him. We sinners cannot invert the order, and say that He was given, first as our example, and secondly as our sin-offering before God. For we cannot imitate Him until He has redeemed us from the power and guilt of sin; the first need of a sinner is pardon and moral freedom, the second, the ideal of a new life.

I. WHY WE NEED SUCH AN EXAMPLE AT ALL. Let us ask ourselves what it is which makes human nature radically different from that of any of the creatures that surround us. The great characteristic of man is the possession of free will. The growth of the human body indeed is as little within man's control as is that of an animal. But human character, and so much of the bodily life as bears on character, is as much under our control as are the canvas and the colours under that of a painter. Our passions, our inclinations, our thoughts, our sympathies, our antipathies, our habits, are at the disposal of our wills; we are what we have gradually made ourselves. Man, then, is an artist. And as an artist he needs not merely the material out of which to mould some expression of thought, but an example, an ideal, to copy. It may indeed be asked whether it will not do as well to obey a precept as to copy an example. Example, it is said, is vague; precept is explicit. Precept is active; it seeks you out and addresses you. Example is passive; it lets you imitate if you will. Example merely says, "This may be done because it has been done." Precept says, "Do it." No, you especially who, as parents or masters, are responsible for influence on others; assuredly, no. Example goes further than precept. Precept leads us to the foot of a precipitous mountain, and it cries, "Scale that height." But example whispers: "Mark what I do, and then do it; it cannot be hard for you since it is easy for me. Look how I step over that crevice, and rest on this projecting foothold, and tread lightly and quickly along that insecure bit of the path. Watch me; keep close to me. Then all will be well in the end."

II. We do then need an example, and OUR LORD HAS SATISFIED THIS NEED OF OUR NATURE, AND COMPLETELY. In Him we have before us an example which is unique. He passed through life in the humblest circumstances; yet He belongs to the human race. He alone in the world is the universal man; He is the one man who corresponds to that ideal of humanity of which there are traces in the minds of all of us; He is the great example. 1. That which strikes us, first of all, in the example which He has left us, is its faultlessness. We are startled by His own sense of this. He never utters one word to the Father or to man which implies the consciousness of a defect. "I do always those things that please the Father." "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." Was this an illusion, or did it correspond with the fact? He was surrounded by jealous observers. He could reckon on no forbearance, no generosity, no equity, in His opponents. Yet He passed their criticism unscathed. "Which of you," He could say, "convinceth Me of sin?" And there was silence. In this sinlessness He is, although our model, yet beyond our full reach of imitation. The best of men knows that in his best moments he is beset by motives, or thoughts, or inclinations, from which Christ was utterly free. But this does not destroy, it rather enhances, the value of our Lord's example. In all departments of thought and work, the ideal is, strictly speaking, unattainable by man; yet man should never lose sight of it. 2. We are struck by the balance and proportion of excellences in our Lord's human character. As a rule, if a man possesses some one excellence in an unusual degree, he will be found to exhibit some fault or shortcoming in an opposite direction. Our finite and fallen nature exhausts itself by an effort in a single direction; it would almost seem bound to atone for a temporary success by

some compensating failure. Of this want of balance in excellence, of this exaggeration in particular forms of excellence which entails an accompanying defect, there is no trace in our Lord. Read His life over and over again, with this point in view; and nothing will strike you more than its faultless proportions. In so vast a field, take one illustration out of many: the balance which He keeps between severity and tenderness. 3. Consider again a feature which runs through His whole character: its simplicity. In nothing that He says or does can we detect any trace of contrivance or of aiming at effect. He takes the illustrations which come ready to His hand, or which meet His eye: the birds of the air, the rain, the red and lowering sky, the lily, the grain of mustard-seed, the corn, the ruined tower of Siloam. On these He grafts this or that fragment of eternal truth. We cannot enrich His teaching by any additions. Our crude efforts could not but disfigure its incomparable beauty. As with His words, so is it with His actions. He acts with a view to the glory of God the Father, and with a view to nothing else. Hence a directness and transparency in His conduct, which we feel in every detail of it. 4. One further point to be remarked in our Lord's example is the stress which it lays upon those forms of excellence which make no great show, such as patience, humility, meekness, and the like. As we read the gospels, we are led to see that the highest type of human excellence consists less in acting well than in suffering well. It is this side of His example of which St. Peter is thinking as being so useful to the Christian slaves to whom for the moment he is writing (ver 23). Christ had before Him a purpose of infinite beneficence; that of recovering man to God and to endless happiness. Yet in carrying it out He met with scorn, resistance, hatred, persecution. Yet no unkind or impatient word falls from Him. He bears in silence the contradiction of sinners against Himself. He prays, "Father, forgive them." He is obedient unto death. "Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." "Yes," it is said, "it is a beautiful, a transcendental picture; and if Christ were merely man, we might perhaps imitate Him! But then He is God as well as man; and this seems to remove Him from the category of beings whom man can imitate. His theological glory in the fourth gospel is fatal to His moral value as a human model in the first three." The difference between Jesus Christ and ourselves is indeed infinite; it is the difference between the Creator and the creature. And yet He is also truly man; and for the purposes of imitation the truth of His manhood secures all that we require. For the purposes of imitation, He is practically not more out of our reach than is a father of great genius and goodness out of the reach of his child. Certainly we cannot imitate Jesus Christ when He heals the sick, or raises the dead. But we can enter into and cherish the spirit of those high works of mercy. We can do the natural kindnesses which are akin to them. And there are deeds and words of His which we can copy in the letter as well as the spirit. Indeed, the objection has been already solved by the experience of eighteen centuries. The imitation of Christ is the perpetual source of saintly effort in the Church of Christ. Generation follows generation, looking unto Jesus. One man says, I will imitate His patience; and another, I will copy His humility; and a third, I would practise, though afar off, His obedience; and a fourth, His love for men; and another, His simplicity; and another, His benevolence; and another, His perpetual communion with the Father; and another, His renunciation of His Own will. When one point is gained, others follow. Thus, little by little, "Christ is formed," in the characters of His servants. This imitation of our Lord is not a duty which we are free to accept or decline. "The elect," says St. Paul, "are predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son of God." If there is no effort at conformity, there is no true note of predestination. A devoted layman of the Church of England said on his deathbed, that, on reviewing his life, the omission which he chiefly deplored was that he had not made a daily effort to study and imitate Jesus Christ as He is described in the gospels. Is not this a common omission even with serious Christians? Should we not do what we may, while yet we may, thus to follow in the footsteps of the Perfect Man? (*Canon Liddon.*) *The Christian ideal*:—"The Christian is the noblest type of man," says our Christian poet; and, assuredly, if the Christian be, in any extent, a reflection of the spirit of Christ, this language must be true. Whatever the grace we seek to inculcate we may find in Him a perfect illustration. Amid all life's trials, perplexities, temptations, and requirements we can have no law so suited to every occasion as this: "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." I. AN UNCONSCIOUS AND INDIRECT EVIDENCE OF THIS IS THE FREQUENT USE OF THE TERM "CHRISTLIKE" AS AN EPITHET DESCRIPTIVE OF THE NOBLEST TYPE OF HUMAN CHARACTER. II. THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

THE MORALITY WHICH THE WORLD PROFFESSES TO HONOUR AND THAT OF THE GOSPEL, IS TO BE FOUND IN THE ENDEAVOUR OF THE LATTER TO REFLECT THE MIND OF CHRIST AS IT ACTUALLY EXISTS. I do not mean, of course, the morality of pure selfishness—if it be worthy the name of morality at all—which is all that numbers would acknowledge, but that which is cultivated by those who would develop a character higher than the Christian—the morality of the “Religion of Humanity,” and of those who hang on its outskirts, approaching more or less nearly to its ideas. What is it, and how does it differ from that which the Church of Christ commends to the acceptance of men? It is clear that up to a certain point there is no outward difference. The law of truth, righteousness, sobriety is common to both. Further, the morality outside the Church is different from that which was in the world before the gospel, in that it has incorporated with its precept that law of gentleness, mercy, self-forgetfulness which was first set before men in the life of the Lord Jesus. Here, then, is likeness so great, that there are some only too eager to conclude that they are the same. These are the graces for which we seek lofty aims, pure desires, gentle thoughts, loving deeds. What can Christianity do more? Alas! has it not failed even to do as much? Without entering at length into the controversy here, it is at all events clear to those who will look beneath the surface, that this is not Christianity. The characteristic of the Lord was that the zeal of God’s house had eaten Him up. In other words, the central idea of His life was to please God. It would be misleading in the very highest degree to describe a life out of which this ruling idea of the Saviour’s conduct, this inspiration of His whole being, was omitted as Christlike. The difference is an essential one. It goes to the root of the whole being, affects every motive, touches every principle, regulates the whole ambition of the soul.

III. ONE OF THE FIRST AND MOST FREQUENT CHARGES AGAINST THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH IS, THAT IT ENCOURAGES A SELFISH TYPE OF RELIGION. A grave impeachment this, and one which, if sustained, certainly indicates a separation from the spirit of Christ. It is a mere truism to say that there is no feature more prominent in His entire ministry than that of unselfishness. The one ruling thought of His life on earth was the salvation of others, and the sacrifice of Himself for this end. And as with His life, so with His teaching; it was full of emphatic warnings repeated against selfishness. This certainly, is lost sight of in too many of the current representations as to the nature of salvation. How often is the stress of exhortation laid upon happiness, whether here or hereafter, rather than upon holiness as the supreme object of Christian endeavour! Nay, how often is the idea of salvation almost restricted to this one point of deliverance from the wrath of God and the sentence of the law!

IV. IN THE DISTINCTNESS AND PROMINENCE GIVEN TO THE THOUGHT, THAT THE OBJECT OF THE GOSPEL IS TO CHANGE THE CONDITION OF MEN ONLY BY A CHANGE AMOUNTING TO AN ENTIRE RENEWAL OF HEART IN THE MEN THEMSELVES, IS TO BE SOUGHT THE TRUE ANSWER TO THE SUGGESTION THAT THE CHURCH IS ONLY FOSTERING A HIGHER TYPE OF SELFISHNESS. Looked at thus, salvation is the richest blessing which can be conferred upon man. It means salvation from himself—from the evil heart of unbelief which makes him depart from the living God; but which also places him in selfish antagonism to his fellowmen; from the sway of passions which scorn all restraints of right and duty; from the curse of a restless, discontented, repining, ambitious heart. The effect of a work like that can be only to purify and ennoble the character. Its polar star is no longer happiness but duty, and duty defined for it by its understanding of the will of God.

V. THE QUESTION WHICH IS OF GRAVE AND CRITICAL IMPORTANCE, IS WHETHER THE CHURCH IS EARNESTLY WORKING TO THIS IDEAL, AND SEEKING TO ENFORCE IT UPON MEN. It is not to be denied that there are those whose only desire is for safety, and who wish to secure even that at the least possible cost, and that they do very much to awaken the prejudices of men by the representation they give of Christian life. It is, in truth, little better than a ghastly caricature. They are not distinguished from others by nobility of character, generosity of spirit, tenderness of heart, active and sympathetic charity. They are not courageous in their assertion of principle, still less are they foremost in the exposure and condemnation of wrong. They have not keen instincts of justice, still less have they strong impulses of benevolence. If they try to reach the average standard of service, they never exhibit a spirit of self-denying devotion. Yet with all this there may be unctuous words on their lips, and occasionally an apparent spiritual excitement. But the conscience is not sensitive; the heart is not tender; perhaps there is not an intelligent conception of what religion ought to be. If we could probe their principles and motives, we should probably find that they had accepted the selfish conception of religion. They want to be sure for eternity, and they endeavour to obtain

this assurance by a rigid conformity to their ideas of the Divine requirements. It is from professors of this type, who are not so uncommon as we should desire, that unbelievers take their conceptions of the Christian ideal. "These," they would say, "are your saints. In what are they better than those whom they would describe as sinners? They may seek a different kind of happiness, but the one class is as selfish in its views and aims as the other. If this be Christianity, there is in it nothing to awaken our reverence or constrain our faith." The only answer that can be found is the exhibition of a different spirit. It is for us to meet, by publishing the gospel of the kingdom that Christ died, rose, and lives again, that He may be the Lord both of the dead and living; that they only eat of the tree of life who keep His commandments; that the test of discipleship is obedience, conformity to the example He has given, that we may follow in His steps. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*)

The example of Christ:—Christ came to give us a religion—but this is not all. By a wise and beautiful ordination of providence, He was sent to show forth His religion in Himself. Christianity is not a mere code of laws, not an abstract system, such as theologians frame. It is a living, embodied religion. It comes to us in a human form; it offers itself to our eyes as well as ears; it breathes, it moves in our sight. The importance of example who does not understand? The temptation is strong to take, as our standard, the average character of the society in which we live, and to satisfy ourselves with decencies and attainments which secure to us among the multitude the name of respectable men. On the other hand, there is a power in the presence, conversation, and example of a man of strong principle and magnanimity, to lift us, at least for the moment, from our vulgar and tame habits of thought, and to kindle some generous aspirations after the excellence which we were made to attain. I hardly need say to you, that it is impossible to place ourselves under any influence of this nature so quickening as the example of Jesus. This introduces us to the highest order of virtues. This is fitted to awaken the whole mind. There is one cause, which has done much to defeat this good influence of Christ's character and example, and which ought to be exposed. It is this. Multitudes think of Jesus as a being to be admired, rather than approached. I wish to prevent the discouraging influence of the greatness of Jesus Christ, to show that, however exalted, He is not placed beyond the reach of our sympathy and imitation.

1. I begin with the general observation, that real greatness of character, greatness of the highest order, far from being repulsive and discouraging, is singularly accessible and imitable, and, instead of severing a being from others, fits him to be their friend and model. Greatness is not a secret, solitary principle, working by itself and refusing participation, but frank and open-hearted, so large in its views, so liberal in its feelings, so expansive in its purposes, so beneficent in its labours, as naturally and necessarily to attract sympathy and co-operation. It is selfishness that repels men; and true greatness has not a stronger characteristic than its freedom from every selfish taint. A superior mind, enlightened and kindled by just views of God and of the creation, regards its gifts and powers as so many bonds of union with other beings, as given it, not to nourish self-elation, but to be employed for others, and still more to be communicated to others. I know not in history an individual so easily comprehended as Jesus Christ, for nothing is so intelligible as sincere, disinterested love. I know not any being who is so fitted to take hold on all orders of minds; and accordingly He drew after Him the unenlightened, the publican, and the sinner. It is a sad mistake, then, that Jesus Christ is too great to allow us to think of intimacy with Him, and to think of making Him our standard.

2. Let me confirm this truth by another order of reflections. You tell me that Jesus Christ is so high that He cannot be your model; I grant the exaltation of His character. I believe Him to be a more than human being. But on this account He is not less a standard, nor is He to discourage us, but on the contrary to breathe into us a more exhilarating hope; for though so far above us, He is still one of us, and is only an illustration of the capacities which we all possess. This is a great truth. Let me strive to unfold it. Perhaps I cannot better express my views, than by saying that I regard all minds as of one family. When we speak of higher orders of beings, of angels and archangels, we are apt to conceive of distinct kinds or races of beings, separated from us and from each other by impassable barriers. But it is not so. There is no such partition in the spiritual world as you see in the material. All minds are essentially of one origin, one nature, kindled from one Divine flame, and are all tending to one centre, one happiness. I am not only one of the human race; I am one of the great intellectual family of God. There is no spirit so exalted, with which I have not common thoughts and feelings. That con-

ception, which I have gained, of one universal Father, whose love is the fountain and centre of all things, is the dawn of the highest and most magnificent views in the universe; and if I look up to this being with filial love, I have the spring and beginning of the noblest sentiments and joys which are known in the universe. No greatness therefore of a being separates me from Him, or makes Him unapproachable by me. The mind of Jesus Christ and your mind are of one family; nor was there anything in His, of which you have not the principle, the capacity, the promise in yourself. This is the very impression which He intends to give. The relation which He came to establish between Himself and mankind, was not that of master and slave, but that of friends. We read too these remarkable words in His prayer for His disciples, "I have given to them the glory Thou gavest Me"; and I am persuaded that there is not a glory, a virtue, a power, a joy, possessed by Jesus Christ, to which His disciples will not successively rise. In the spirit of these remarks, the apostle says, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ." I have said that, all minds being of one family, the greatness of the mind of Christ is no discouragement to our adoption of Him as our model. I now observe, that there is one attribute of mind, to which I have alluded, that should particularly animate us to propose to ourselves a sublime standard, as sublime as Jesus Christ. I refer to the principle of growth in human nature. Our faculties are germs, and given for an expansion, to which nothing authorises us to set bounds. The soul bears the impress of illimitableness, in the unquenchable thirst, which it brings with it into being, for a power, knowledge, happiness, which it never gains, and which always carry it forward into futurity. When I consider this principle or capacity of the human soul, I cannot restrain the hope which it awakens. The partition-walls which imagination has reared between men and higher orders of beings vanish. I no longer see aught to prevent our becoming whatever was good and great in Jesus on earth. In truth I feel my utter inability to conceive what a mind is to attain which is to advance for ever. To encourage these thoughts and hopes, our Creator has set before us delightful exemplifications, even now, of this principle of growth both in outward nature and in the human mind. We meet them in nature. Suppose you were to carry a man, wholly unacquainted with vegetation, to the most majestic tree in our forests, and, whilst he was admiring its extent and proportions, suppose you should take from the earth at its root a little downy substance, which a breath might blow away, and say to him, that tree was once such a seed as this; it was wrapt up here; it once lived only within these delicate fibres, this narrow compass. With what incredulous wonder would he regard you. Such growth we witness in nature. A nobler hope we Christians are to cherish; and still more striking examples of the growth of mind are set before us in human history. We wonder, indeed, when we are told that one day we shall be as the angels of God. I apprehend that as great a wonder has been realised already on the earth. I apprehend that the distance between the mind of Newton and of a Hottentot may have been as great as between Newton and an angel. There is another view still more striking. This Newton, who lifted his calm, sublime eye to the heavens, and read, among the planets and the stars, the great law of the material universe, was, forty or fifty years before, an infant, without one clear perception, and unable to distinguish his nurse's arm from the pillow on which he slept. Has not man already traversed as wide a space as separates him from angels? And why must he stop? There is no extravagance in the boldest anticipation. We may truly become one with Christ, a partaker of that celestial mind. Let us make Him our constant model. I know not that the doctrine, now laid down, is liable but to one abuse. It may unduly excite susceptible minds, and impel to a vehemence of hope and exertion, unfavourable in the end to the very progress which is proposed. To such I would say, hasten to conform yourselves to Christ, but hasten according to the laws of your nature. As the body cannot, by the concentration of its whole strength into one bound, scale the height of a mountain, neither can the mind free every obstacle and achieve perfection by an agony of the will. Continuous, patient effort, guided by wise deliberation, is the true means of spiritual progress. In religion, as in common life, mere force or vehemence will prove a fallacious substitute for the sobriety of wisdom. 3. The doctrine which I have chiefly laboured to maintain in this discourse, that minds are all of one family, are all brethren, and may be more and more nearly united to God, seems to me to have been felt peculiarly by Jesus Christ; and if I were to point out the distinction of His greatness, I should say it lay in this. He felt His superiority, but He never felt as if it separated Him from mankind. He saw in every human being a mind which might wear His own

brightest glory. I insist on this view of His character, not only to encourage us to aspire after a likeness to Jesus; I consider it as peculiarly fitted to call forth love towards Him. With these views I feel that, though ascended to heaven, He is not gone beyond the reach of our hearts; that He has now the same interest in mankind as when He entered their dwellings; and that there is no being so approachable, none with whom such unreserved intercourse is to be enjoyed in the future world. I exhort you with calmness, but earnestness, to adopt Jesus Christ as your example, with the whole energy of your wills. Let not the false views of Christianity which prevail in the world, seduce you into the belief that Christ can bless you in any other way than by assimilating you to His own virtue, than by breathing into you His own mind. Do not imagine that any faith or love towards Jesus can avail you, but that which quickens you to conform yourselves to His spotless purity and unconquerable rectitude. Settle it as an immovable truth, that neither in this world nor in the next can you be happy, but in proportion to the sanctity and elevation of your characters. (*W. E. Channing.*) *Christ is our example:*—In these words, take notice—

1. Of one end of Christ in suffering: that He might leave us an example. 2. They were remarkable steps that Christ took when He was here in the days of His flesh. And among them all He did not take one wrong one. 3. The steps of Christ are to be followed. Our Lord did whatsoever became Him, and exactly “fulfilled all righteousness” (Matt. iii. 15). 4. Here is a special intimation of a Christian’s duty patiently to bear injuries, and to take up the Cross. 5. The sufferings of Christ and His example being joined together in the text, here is a signification that by His death He has purchased grace to enable us to follow His example.

I. PREMISE SOME THINGS BY WAY OF CAUTION. 1. Think not, as long as you remain in this world, to be altogether free from sin as Christ was. 2. Think not that Christ in all His actions is to be imitated. There are royalties belonging to Him, which none must invade. He alone is judge and lawgiver in Zion. 3. Think not that your obedience can be meritorious, as Christ’s was. 4. Think not that your greatest sufferings for the sake of righteousness are in the least expiatory of sin, as Christ’s were.

II. IN WHAT RESPECTS CHRIST IS AN EXAMPLE TO BE FOLLOWED. 1. In His great self-denials (2 Cor. viii. 9; Rom. xv. 3; John vii. 18). 2. In His patient enduring the world’s hatred, and the slights and contradiction of sinners (John xv. 18, 19; Heb. xii. 2; Matt. v. 44). 3. In His resisting and overcoming the prince of darkness (Matt. iv. 1–11). 4. In His contempt of the world’s glory, and contentment with a mean and low estate in it (Luke iv. 5, 6). 5. In His living a life so very beneficial, doing good being His perpetual business (Acts x. 38; Eph. v. 9; Titus iii. 8). 6. In His most profitable and edifying communication (Psa. xlv. 2; Luke iv. 22; 1 Pet. ii. 22, 23; Matt. xi. 28). 7. In His manner of performing holy duties (Heb. v. 7; Rom. xii. 11). 8. In His great humility and weakness (Matt. xi. 29; Prov. vi. 16, 17). 9. In His love to God, great care to please Him, and fervent zeal for His name and glory (John xiv. 31; viii. 29). 10. In His sufferings and death (Heb. xii. 2).

III. SOME ARGUMENTS TO PERSUADE TO THE IMITATION OF OUR LORD JESUS. 1. Consider the greatness of the person who gives you the example (Rev. xix. 16; Phil. ii. 10). 2. Remember the relation wherein you that are saints do stand unto the Lord Jesus. “You are members of His body” (Eph. v. 30). Therefore you “should grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. iv. 15). 3. Consider that God did foreordain you that are believers to a conformity to the Lord Jesus (Rom. viii. 29). 4. Walking as Christ walked will make it evident that you are indeed in Him (1 John ii. 6; Gal. iv. 19). 5. Your following the example of Christ very much honours Him, and credits Christianity (Col. iii. 1). 6. Christ frequently speaks to you to follow Him, and observes whether and how you do it (Rev. i. 14; ii. 23). 7. Follow Christ’s example, that you may enter into His glory (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12; Rev. iii. 21; Col. iii. 4).

IV. SOME DIRECTIONS HOW YOU MAY BE ABLE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD JESUS. 1. Let your unlikeness to Christ be matter of your great humiliation. 2. Study more the admirable excellency and fairness of the copy which Christ has set you, and how desirable it is still to be growing up more and more into Him in all things. 3. Being sensible of your own impotency, live by faith on the Son of God (Isa. xlv. 24; John xv. 4, 5). 4. Give up yourselves to the conduct of Christ’s own Spirit (Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29). (*N. Vincent, M.A.*)

Christ our example:—I. THE LIFE OF OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR IS A MOST ABSOLUTE AND PERFECT PATTERN OF HOLINESS AND GOODNESS, complete and entire in all its parts, and perfect to the utmost degree, in the following whereof there is no danger of being misguided, whereas all other examples of mortal men are fallible and uncertain guides. II. As the life of our blessed Saviour is a most perfect, so

likewise IT IS A FAMILIAR AND EASY EXAMPLE. The Divine nature is the great pattern of perfection; but that is too remote from us, and above our sight; therefore God hath been pleased to condescend so far to our weakness, as to give us a visible example of those virtues He requires of us in "His own Son, appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh," practised in such instances, and upon such occasions as do frequently happen in human life. III. The life of our blessed Saviour is likewise AN ENCOURAGING EXAMPLE. It cannot but give great life to all good resolutions and endeavours, to see all that which God requires of us performed by one in our nature, by a man like ourselves. IV. IT IS AN UNIVERSAL PATTERN. As the doctrine of our Saviour, so His example was of an universal nature and design, calculated for all times and places. 1. It is a pattern of the greatest and most substantial virtues: piety, obedience, purity and innocence, universal charity. 2. He was a pattern of the most rare and unusual virtues: sincerity, humility, contempt of the world, kindness and benignity. 3. The life of our blessed Saviour is likewise a pattern of such virtues as are most useful and beneficial to others. In His readiness to do good to all persons and all kinds; by instructing their ignorance, and supplying their wants, spiritual and temporal; by resolving their doubts, and comforting them in their sorrows. And then in His seeking opportunities for it, not content with those that offered themselves, and in His unwearied diligence in this work. 4. Our Saviour is likewise a pattern to us of such virtues as are most hard and difficult to be practised, such as are most against the grain of our corrupt nature, and most contrary to flesh and blood. Christ denied His own life, and gave up Himself wholly to the will of God (John v. 33; vi. 38; Matt. xxvi. 39, 42). He denied His own will also in condescension to the prejudices and infirmities of men for their edification and good (Rom. xv. 2, 3). He denied Himself, in the lawful pleasures and satisfactions, in the ease and accommodations of life: He lived meanly, and fared hardly. And He denied Himself likewise in one of the dearest things in the world, to the greatest minds, I mean in point of reputation: "He made Himself of no reputation" (Phil. ii. 7). But that which I shall particularly take notice of, under this head, is His great meekness. 5. Our Saviour is likewise a pattern to us of the most needful virtues, and for the practice whereof there is the greatest and most frequent occasion in human life. (1) The great humanity of His carriage and deportment, of which He gave manifold instances, in His free and familiar conversation with all sorts of people. He did not despise the meanest. (2) Another very needful virtue, and for which our Lord was very eminent, was His disregard of the opinion of men, in comparison of His duty. (3) Another virtue for which there is great occasion in human life, and for which our Lord was very remarkable, was His contentedness in a mean and poor condition; and such was His condition to the very lowest degree. (4) The last virtue I shall instance in, and for the exercise whereof there is very great and frequent occasion in human life, is patience under sufferings, and such a perfect resignation of ourselves to the will of God, that whatever pleaseth Him should please us, how distasteful and grievous soever it be. And of this virtue our blessed Saviour was the greatest example that ever was. V. OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE IS IN THE NATURE OF IT VERY POWERFUL, TO ENGAGE AND OBLIGE ALL MEN TO THE IMITATION OF IT. It is almost equally calculated for persons of all capacities and conditions, for the wise and the weak, for those of high and low degree; for all men are alike concerned to be happy. And the imitation of this example is the most effectual means we can use to compass this great and universal end; nay, it is not only the means, but the end, the best and most essential part of it. To be like our Lord, is to be as good as it is possible for men to be; and goodness is the highest perfection that any being is capable of; and the perfection of every being is its happiness. His life was even and of one tenour, quiet, and without noise and tumult, always employed about the same work, in doing the things which pleased God, and were of greatest benefit and advantage to men. Who would not write after such a copy. This pattern, which our religion proposeth to us, is the example of one whom we ought to reverence, and whom we have reason to love above any person in the world. Yet farther, it is the example of our best friend and greatest benefactor. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *Christ our example*:—1. In the object of His life. 2. In the standard of His practice. 3. In His commerce and connection with the world. 4. In His condition of life. 5. In His sorrows and joys. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *Christ's example* is to be followed—1. Wholly. 2. Openly. 3. Fully. (*Ibid.*) *The necessity of a perfect model*:—1. It is worthy of observation that in the public services of our church we offer petitions for the literal granting of which we can scarcely dare look. We desire of

God, for example, "that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger"; and again, we beseech of Him to "vouchsafe to keep us this day without sin"; but there is not one of us who will presume to say that he ever passes a day without sin. It would argue the want of a real hatred of sin, and would therefore be highly dishonouring to God, to pray to be kept only from a certain degree of transgression, just as though any other degree might be allowed or overlooked. Besides, we cannot be ignorant that humility is at the root of all Christian graces, and that what encourages pride is most injurious to piety. Suppose, then, we were required to imitate a pattern which might be equalled, and is it not certain that as the resemblance seemed to grow, we should feel increasing self-complacency? The fine result of copying an imitable model is, that the vast distance at which we stand from perfection forbids our feeling proud of success. The advance appears nothing, when compared with the space which yet remains to be traversed. Oh! it is practically one of the most splendid things in Christianity, that it fixes our efforts on a model so immeasurably above us, that we have never time to calculate whether or not others are beneath us. We can never repose complacently on what we are; we must always find cause of humiliation in what we are not. 2. We have to go somewhat farther. You may say that whatever the evil consequences of erecting a low standard, there must be much that is disheartening in the copying a model which is confessedly imitable. On the contrary, we argue, in the second place, that there is everything to encourage us in the fact that the standard cannot be reached; for it certainly is not essential to the suitableness of our example, that it is one whose excellence we may hope to overtake. This would be making our power of imitation, and not noble and beautiful qualities, the guide in selecting an example. It will not be questioned that a faultless work of art, if such there could be, can be only the best model for an artist, and yet the artist may not expect to produce what is faultless. Why is there to be introduced any different rule into the nobler science of moral imitation? Encouragement will depend mainly on the probability of improvement; and this probability being greater with a perfect than with an imperfect model, it follows that we have more cause to feel encouraged in imitating Christ, whom we cannot reach, than one of our fellow-men, whom we might perhaps surpass. What the painter seeks is improvement in painting; what the orator seeks is improvement in oratory, and therefore each is anxious to study the prime master in the art. What the Christian seeks is improvement in spiritual graces, and he will gain more from copying Christ, in whom those graces were perfect, than by imitating any saint in whom they were necessarily defective. I know indeed what you may urge in objection to our statement. You may tell us that our illustrations are at fault; that the painter and the orator cherish a secret hope of equalling their models, and that hence they have an encouragement which is not afforded to the Christian. The Christian is not, then, sustained as is the painter or the orator, by the hope, however vague, of reaching, if not exceeding the standard; and the want, you say, of this stimulus, forbids our illustrating the one case by the other. But even if we allow that thorough accuracy of resemblance ought not at least to appear hopeless, we can still plead for the advantageousness of our being set to imitate Christ. Accuracy of resemblance is not hopeless. "Beloved," said St. John, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "As, then, we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." So that as a Christian looks onward to the future he has more to encourage him than the dim possibility which you appeal to as stimulating the painter or the orator. His is the noble, the inspiring certainty, that however slowly, and however painfully goes forward now the imitative work, a day has to dawn, when, fashioned into perfect conformity to the model, he shall be presented unto God "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." He labours, therefore, as one who knows that his labour is "not in vain in the Lord." We exhort you, then, to the imitation of Christ, assuring you, that the more you strive to acquire the resemblance, the more will you make sure of your calling and election, and the more frequent and delightful will be your foretastes of the joys which shall hereafter be awarded to the faithful. It is not indeed by your own skill or by your own energy that you may look to effect conformity to Jesus; but by the Holy Ghost, that Divine Agent whose special office it is to renew man after the lost image of his Maker. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The character of Christ* :—Christ suffered for us, and left us an example. There must be no division of the two. You must not regard the suffering on one hand, and the example on the other. You must not divide

Christ. I love to contemplate the life of Christ as an example, and the death of Christ as an atonement for sin. If He were an atonement without being an example, He would have been no atonement. If He were an example and yet not an atonement, He would be no example. If I preach to you Christ as an atonement, but not an example, my doctrine would be immoral; and if I preach to you the example of Christ, leaving aside the atonement of Christ, my preaching would be worthless. The New Testament always couples the two elements in the life of Christ. The word "example" in the text, is synonymous with the word model, or the idea of design. I do not know of any system, or of any religion, which can place before men a life fit to copy, except that of Jesus Christ. In Him we have the model of a perfect character. In the next verse the apostle changes the figure. Here the apostle, after describing Christ as an example, proceeded to refer to Him as a Shepherd leading His sheep to the green pastures. The sheep followed the Shepherd. They had implicit reliance on Him. And Christ has left us an example which we may with equal certainty follow. It is devotion; it is worship; that is the sentiment which we cherish towards the Lord Jesus. It is not mere sentiment. Christ is not simply a hero—some one to wonder at, and strike men with astonishment. His life is something different, and something greater. His life is an example which all men might follow. No one in his senses would dream of living a life like Christ, so obscure and so self-sacrificing—no one would care to tread in His footsteps and stoop so low unless they looked at the whole plan, as a complete example, at the unity of aim, at the supreme objects to the attainment, by His life and death, of those distinguishing features which made the Lord Jesus Christ what He was. You will now see what the subject of the present discourse is—The Lord Jesus Christ as an example. What is a perfect example? How would you define the perfect man? There are four principal features in such a character. 1. A perfect example must be sinless. Christ is not a mere fragment of a man. Men have peered into the life of Christ, bringing microscopic criticism to bear upon its minutest details, but have failed to discover a single fault. Voltaire tried, and failed; Strauss has tried, and Renan. They have all failed, and many of them were men whose genius was sufficiently creative in its character to discover faults where there were no faults; but in the case of Christ they found no sin. And yet Christ was no recluse. 2. It was not sufficient that the life be a sinless one—difficulties must be overcome; that must be a characteristic of the perfect man, the great example of humanity. Now, there are the angels. An angel is perfect, but has not overcome difficulties. Could any one conceive of any combination of circumstances in which the anguish could be so keen, in which the suffering could be so intense, difficulties so insuperable as those which Christ experienced and overcame? 3. A perfect example must be more than an example: it must hold out pardon for the past. We cannot forgive ourselves. Our past is so sinful that we falter before it. Robertson has said that man can afford to forgive himself if Jesus Christ can afford to forgive him! That is right; that is true. It is possible to break the links connecting the man with the old life and to restart in a heavenly direction by the aid of the Holy Spirit of God. 4. The Christ of the gospel is a living Christ. That is the foundation of the gospel. It would not pay me to preach philosophy to you, if I could do so. I would not preach poetry without a living Christ; I would not preach doctrine to you without a living Christ. The Bible would not be worth anything for the purpose of preaching but that it contains a living Christ. The atonement would be valueless except for a living Christ. (*T. C. Edwards.*)

Christ an example in His sufferings:—I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ARE AN EXAMPLE TO HIS FOLLOWERS, AS THEY WERE AN ILLUSTRATION OF HIS INNOCENCE. II. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ARE AN EXAMPLE TO HIS FOLLOWERS, AS THEY WERE A DISPLAY OF PATIENCE AND MAGNANIMITY. III. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ARE AN EXAMPLE TO HIS FOLLOWERS, AS THEY WERE A DISPLAY OF PIETY. IV. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ARE AN EXAMPLE TO HIS FOLLOWERS, AS THEY WERE A DISPLAY OF GOOD AFFECTIONS. (*G. Hill, D.D.*)

On the example of Christ:—The example of Christ—is it not an effort beyond humanity? Can the example of purity and perfection be urged upon frail creatures, whose passions and infirmities place them for ever beyond the hope of such attainments? In the first place, then, let it be remarked that imitation is not attainment—that our professing to follow an example is a plain confession of our inferiority to what we propose—and that men might be engaged, as they are in science, in a perpetual progress of improvement, useful and consoling, though they can never flatter themselves with the hope of arriving at a point beyond which there is no further improvement. But it may be

said the example of Christ, a model of sinless purity, is unfit for beings who neither possess His nature nor hope for His perfections. Here let us mark the plain distinction between the office of the Divine legislator and the duties of the man: the latter all are called on to fulfil, the former none but He could execute. Even in the most exalted parts of His character—those that seem most remote from human agency—there are many things the spirit of which may be transfused into our conduct, and make “the disciple not unworthy of his Master.” It is not for us to march in triumph to Jerusalem, while those that went before and those that followed cried, saying, “Hosanna”; but it is for us to mark the progress of His grace in our hearts and those of His faithful followers. We cannot, like Him, raise the dead to life, banish the infirmities of nature by a word, and heal disease by a touch; but we can watch in patience by the bed of sickness, and by patience, and gentleness and spiritual consolation turn the visitation into a blessing. But it is not alone to the public character of Christ that we are to look for objects of imitation; they may be found in every part of life, for all the declivities of life He humbled Himself to tread. (*C. R. Maturin.*) *On the example of Christ:*—Let us begin with observing, in general, the great superiority of this to every other example. Here are to be found all the graces and virtues collecting their strongest heat and spreading their brightest lustre, to fire the soul with a virtuous ardour, to enlighten and direct the path of life. It is another obvious advantage of this example that it is calculated to extend its influence to all the world. Christ appeared not in those affluent circumstances in which there may be little opportunity of the exercise of the most substantial and, at the same time, the most difficult graces, or in which the benefit of His pattern would have been confined to the smallest part of the world, but in those more mean and humble scenes of life which constitute the general lot of men, where His example might have the most extensive influence, and suit most effectually the present condition and necessities of human nature. Let us now proceed to select from the numerous graces which adorned the character of our Redeemer a few of the most important. And here it will surely be unnecessary to observe that it is not every branch of that character which we are required to imitate. His supernatural operations were the displays of essential perfection, peculiar to the Deity Himself, incommunicable to His creatures. The great line in which we are to follow the Author and Finisher of our faith is in the practice of those distinguished virtues which adorned His character, and which constituted it the standard of moral excellence.

1. The first feature of this kind which we take notice of is His piety to God. His temper was ever calm and peaceful, such as might naturally be expected within a mind rejoicing in those blessed exercises whose natural effect is not to sour and corrupt the heart, but to improve its most excellent feelings, to mould it to the image and likeness of that God whom we adore, to render it merciful, and generous, and humane, like Him who is the great source of love.
2. Another very capital feature in the character of the Redeemer was His contempt of the pomp and vanities of life. Put on His humility, and it shall clothe thee.
3. Another most important feature in this illustrious character was the ardour of His benevolence. From Him no calamity departed unrelieved, no suppliant who did not receive the requested boon.
4. The last feature of His great character which we take notice of at present was His meekness and patience. If His character is not distinguished by those specious and dazzling qualities which are often most dangerous and detrimental to the world, but which excite the wonder of unthinking men, it exhibits ornaments infinitely more real, and recommends to our imitation qualities more truly great and generous. (*John Main, D.D.*)

The perfect ideal:—I. CHRIST THE PERFECT IDEAL OF SUBMISSION, AMIDST THE MOST APPALLING CONFLICTS OF LIFE. II. CHRIST THE PERFECT IDEAL OF OBEDIENCE TO DUTY, AMIDST THE STRONGEST COUNTER INFLUENCES. III. CHRIST THE PERFECT IDEAL OF UNSELFISH LOVE, AMIDST INTENSEST SELFISHNESS. The mother, pale with incessant vigils by the bedside of a sick child, exhibits unselfish love. Howard, dying of fever caught in dungeons where he was following after his Divine ideal, presents to us a picture of love. But it would be easier to measure the heavens with a span, or weigh the mountains in scales, than to fully portray Christ's love. (*Honilist.*)

The imitation of Christ:—I. MISTAKES MADE CONNECTED WITH IT. Imitating the outward actions only. Failing to see the essential connection between the outward act and the inward principle. What is visible is but a portion of the deed. Some try to imitate Christ to procure a justifying righteousness. Others endeavour to imitate Christ to become like Him. To walk in Christ's steps we must be possessed by Christ's spirit. II. IMITATE HIM IN THE RENUNCIATION OF SELF. III. IMITATE

HIM IN HIS CONSECRATION TO GOD. IV. IMITATE HIM IN HIS DEPENDENCE UPON HIS FATHER. (E. H. Hopkins.) *Christ our copy*:—I. THE TEXT FIXES THE ABSOLUTE STANDARD FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. Christ is the Christian's example. The word translated "example," found nowhere else in the New Testament, means, first of all, a writing-copy such as is given to a child learning to write. The standard for the measurement and aim of the Christian life is therefore—1. Christ, and not the best human life. 2. Christ, and not distorted representations of Him. Christ as revealed in the simple clearness of the Gospels. 3. Christ, and not the high-tide mark of present-day Christianity. A subtle evil, into which all are in danger of falling, is to feel that to be as good as others is to be good enough. II. THE TEXT POINTS OUT THE PRACTICAL MEANING OF CHRIST'S LIFE FOR US. The word "example"—copy—appeals to the universal faculty of imitation. A great factor in all education. Christ did not live for the purpose of winning admiration or applause. To imitate is more than to adore. III. STRENGTH FOR AND PROGRESS IN THIS IMITATION OF CHRIST WILL COME TO THOSE WHO ARE CONSTANTLY IN HIS PRESENCE. Where the child puts its copy before it, there we may put Christ. In His presence we get strength to become like Him. Things in contact assimilate, the stronger predominating. Things in touch are reliant, the weaker on the stronger. (J. D. Thomas.) *Copying but a fragment of the Christ*:—Nothing is more striking to a close observer of human life than the almost infinite variety of character which exists among those who profess to be Christians. No two are alike. Even those who are alike revered for their saintliness show the widest diversity in individual traits, and in the cast and mould of their character. Yet all are sitting before the same model, all are imitators of the same blessed life. There is but one standard of true Christian character—the likeness of Christ. Why, then, is there such variety of character and disposition among those who aim to follow the same example? 1. One reason for this is that God does not bestow upon all His children the same gifts, the same natural qualities. Life is not minted as gold is. Grace does not transform Peter into a John, nor Paul into a Barnabas, nor Luther into a Melancthon. It makes them all like Christ in holiness, but it does not touch those features which give to each his personal identity. You drop twenty different seeds in the same garden-bed, and they spring up into twenty different kinds of plants, from the delicate mignonette to the flaunting sunflower. In like manner each believer grows up into his own peculiar self. Regeneration neither adds to nor takes from our natural gifts. 2. Another reason for this diversity among Christians is because even the best and holiest saints realise but a little of the image of Christ, have only one little fragment of His likeness in their souls. The reason is that the character of Christ is so great, so majestic, that it is impossible to copy all of it into any one little human life; and again, each human character is so imperfect and limited that it cannot reach out in all directions after the infinite character of Christ. It is as if a great company of artists were sent to paint each one a picture of the Alps. Each chooses his own point of observation, and selects the particular feature of the Alps he desires to paint. They all bring back their pictures; but lo! no two of them are alike. The truth is, the Alps as a whole are too varied, too vast, for any one artist to take into his perspective, and paint upon his canvas. The best he can do is to portray some one or two features—the features his eye can see from where he stands. And Christ is too great in His infinite perfection, in the many-sidedness of His beauty, for any one of His finite followers to copy the whole of His image into his own little life. The most that any of us can do is to get into our own soul one little fragment of the wonderful likeness of our Lord. (J. R. Miller, D.D.) *Christ our ideal*:—These are words which betray their authorship. As we read our thoughts fly back to the upper room in Jerusalem, when, on the eve of His approaching sacrifice, during supper our Lord left His place at the head of the table where He was reclining, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself, and, pouring water into a basin, proceeded to wash His disciples' feet, and wiped them with the towel wherewith He was girded. All of them wondered: one of them, Simon Peter, remonstrated with Him, but He would not be stayed in His strange work. And when He had resumed His place, He answered their questioning looks and told them what it meant. "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." Can we wonder that the scene, the words, were cut so indelibly into the memory of St. Peter that years after, just as though it all happened yesterday, he writes, "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow His steps." It is in its adaptation to the necessities of mankind the secret of the power of Christianity consists. This is why it lives on, ever fresh, ever vigorous. It is made for

man as he is, apart from the mere outward circumstances and environment of his life. It is as suited for man to-day in his advanced civilisation as it was in the crude days of past centuries. For it gives man what his higher nature wants to have, it tells man what his spiritual being yearns to know, it meets in man the God-implanted instincts of his inner self, and therefore it claims for itself the admiration and reverence and love of all men. What, then, is the great need which is alluded to here? It is this. Man wants an ideal which shall call forth his enthusiasm and awaken his energies. He must have one. It is a necessity of his being, for every man is made up of two selves—there is the self of the man as he is, and there is the self of the man as he would be or ought to be. All through life this need makes itself felt. As soon as the child's mind begins to open and the little one commences to observe and think for itself, it all unconsciously looks round for an ideal; and if it has a loving mother, it finds what it wants in her. The child becomes the boy, and for a time, at any rate, his father is his ideal of strength and wisdom. The boy goes to school, and some schoolfellow skilled in games, or clever in learning, or born to rule his fellows becomes his ideal. The youth passes into manhood, but even in the full maturity of his developed power, even in the consciousness of his self-reliance, he seeks an ideal still, the embodiment of strength, or wisdom, or industry, or success. Ay, and not only is this ideal a deep necessity, but it is a real force. It moulds the character; it influences the actions; it shapes the life; it fills with enthusiasm. It is a great motive power. And the one man to be despaired of is the man without an ideal. See, then, how Christianity steps in and meets this yearning. It puts before man the only ideal which will satisfy his needs and meet his necessities. For it has to be borne in mind that if an ideal is to be a power it must possess certain characteristics and qualities. 1. An ideal must be definite. Many men mistake an idea for an ideal. And many lives are wasted because they are lived running after ideas which evade their grasp, and slip from their hold, and lack definiteness. 2. An ideal must be universal. This is what humanity craves. An ideal ought to be a bond of union. Alas! too often an ideal separates. Men choose each his own ideal and go their way, too busy to think of, or care for, or help their struggling comrades. 3. An ideal must be perfect. It is in this the danger of ideals consists. The man must have an ideal, and in his haste and lack of right judgment he oftentimes selects that which is unworthy. What is the consequence? It drags down the man. 4. And therefore an ideal, just in proportion as it possesses these qualifications, must be final. The restlessness within the man is calmed down and dies away before such an ideal. And in the Christian ideal all these requirements are found brought together. Is it not so? 1. The Christian ideal is definite. It stands out like a snow-capped mountain against the blue sky, its outline distinctly defined, each peak and crag, each chasm and precipice clearly mapped out. The life of the Christ has been lived before men. It is beautifully portrayed for us in the four Gospels. Each inspired artist has viewed it from a somewhat different aspect; each dwells on that part which comes most closely home to him; each puts the Christ before us as he best knew and understood Him. But there is no contradiction. Christ is a reality, not a fancy, a history, not a fiction, a substance, not a shadow. His deeds are familiar to us; His words are recorded for us. Now it is holiness—"Like as He which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living." Now it is charity—"Walk in love, as Christ also loved you." Now it is patience—"Consider Him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against Himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls." Now it is self-denial—"Let each one of us please his neighbour for that which is good, to edifying, for Christ pleased not Himself." Now it is Forgiveness—"Forbearing one another and forgiving each other, even as Christ forgave you." 2. The Christian's ideal is universal. It is not an esoteric religion, such as is the fashion of the day, whose chief recommendation is that it is unintelligible to the many, suited only to the select few, a small circle; it is for all, not for some. Christ is the ideal of all nations. But no people was ever so strong in this sense of nationality as the Jew. And Jesus was a Jew, born of a Jewish mother, brought up in a Jewish home; His environment all through His life was Jewish. Take the picture out of its Jewish frame, place it in Gentile surroundings, and though the frame is changed, the picture is just as attractive and soul-inspiring. He is the ideal for all. He is the universal pattern as He is the universal Saviour. Christ is the ideal for all men. He lived the ordinary life of ordinary men and women. Christ is the ideal for all sorts and conditions of men. He was rich—yea, who so rich as He? He was poor, for

though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor—yea, He had not where to lay His head. He was learned above the most intellectual of men, for He was the Wisdom of the Father, and they who heard Him were astonished, for He taught as one having authority. He was unlearned, for did they not say of Him, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Christ is the ideal for all men in all circumstances of life. We see Him in solitude, in the home, in society. Christ is the ideal for all ages. The child, the boy, the young man just entering life's arena, the matured in body and mind, all find in Him their ideal. 3. The Christian ideal is perfect. Where else shall we find an ideal that can pretend to lay claim to perfection? Not in the heroes of classic times. Not in Socrates, with his grave moral blemishes, Cicero, with his childish vanity, Seneca, with his miserable avarice and cowardice. We shall not find it among the great and good men of Old Testament times. He is perfect, for all virtues are concentrated in Him. He is perfect. This is the well-nigh universal testimony of men. And therefore the Christian's ideal is final. We cannot sum it up better than in the pithy words of Renan, "After Jesus there is nothing more but to fructify and develop," or, as a great lay writer says of it, "It comprehends all future history. The moral efforts of all ages will be efforts to realise this character and make it actually as it is potentially universal. Humanity as it advances in excellence will only be approximating to the Christian type. Any divergence from that will not be progress, but debasement and corruption." How shall we explain this perfection? What does this character of the Christ mean? Let these men solve the difficulty if they can, who while they bear witness to His perfection refuse to accept His teaching, or else explain away His words. Our answer rings forth in the words of the Nicene Creed, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God," or as we sing, "Perfect God and perfect man." This, then, is the Christian's ideal. It is the Christian's duty and privilege to follow and imitate Christ. It is hard, for no mere external resemblance will suffice. Christ is not a model, but an ideal, as has well been said. If He were a model it might be enough for us to copy its outline; but if He be an ideal we must imitate His spirit. It is hard, for the ideal is perfect, and therefore far above out of our reach. The higher we climb, the further the summit seems to be lost in the clouds of eternal perfection. It is hard, but it is not impossible. We can walk in the steps of our great example. How shall this likeness be ours? Little by little, through patience and perseverance. Little by little, for it is nothing less than the formation of character, and the formation of character is always slow and gradual. It is like the growth of a tree with its hard knots, its twisted branches, its smooth twigs. How gradually it has become what it is! How slow the process by which the twig of one year becomes the branch of next year! How shall this likeness be ours? Answer me another question and I will tell you. What is the lever power of the world? It is love, you say. And has love no place in the Christian's efforts to be like Christ? Surely, yes. Think again of that pale, anxious student. He is copying a lifeless face. From the picture there comes no power to inspirit him in his toil. But we are imitating a living, loving Christ. Gaze on His features. Remember He is our sacrifice as well as our ideal. (*C. J. Ridgeway, M.A.*)

Reviled not again.—*Equanimity under reproach* :—A person expressing to Bengel his sympathy for him at being so virulently written against, he replied, "You will not regret this when I tell you that such very trials teach me only the better how to gather up and strengthen the testimony of my conscience. I have learnt a good method of cheerfully enduring reproach. I think of the reproachings and revilings which the Son of God has been receiving from the Jews for 1,700 years, and of His wonderful long-suffering with them all this while. Thus I learn not to fret at a few relics of the same which may be thrown at me. (*Bengel's Life.*)

Who did no sin, neither was guile found.—*Christ without sin* :—The apostles of our Lord notice with much complacency the individual virtues which dignified or adorned His character, just as the Evangelists have related the actions in which they were displayed, with much unaffected simplicity. But while they mention particular virtues, they do not lose sight of the effect which they may collectively produce in illustrating the merit of Him in whose department they appeared. I. THE MORAL PERFECTION HERE ATTRIBUTED TO CHRIST. Christ "did no sin." This phrase, according to its original conception, means nothing more than harmlessness; and is not understood to comprehend any positive or superior excellence. But as applied to Christ it means a great deal more; and, indeed, it should in every case mean a great deal more, considering what the Divine law prescribes, and what sin is in reference to it. Sin essentially consists in transgressing or refusing obedience

to the Divine law. And the law does not merely prohibit many things which we are accustomed to call sinful, it also enjoins many things which we are accustomed to call holy. The injunctions are as much a part of the law as the prohibitions. He who will not relieve the distress of his neighbour when he has it in his power, is as really a sinner as he who wantonly inflicted the injury which called for this expression of kindness. It is only when a moral agent performs every deed which is commanded as well as abstains from every deed which is forbidden, that he can properly be said to have "done no sin." Now, it is in this strict and elevated sense that Christ "did no sin." All the requirements of the law were fulfilled in His character. Nor can the eye of the most scrutinising observer discover in it one feature of nonconformity, or one act of opposition to the will of Him who ruleth over all. There may be particular virtues, or particular modifications and degrees of virtue, of which His life will afford you no instance. These are wanting, however, only for this reason—that in the execution of His appointed work, and in the peculiar sphere in which He was destined to move, no opportunities occurred for practising them. The path of obedience which was assigned to Him was a long and a rugged one, and He walked in it with undeviating steady fastness, and He walked in it to the very end—manifesting from the very commencement to the very termination of His progress an unreserved acquiescence in the demands of God's law. In speaking with approbation of our fellow-mortals, we are generally necessitated to fix upon some one leading virtue by which they have distinguished themselves; but with regard to Christ we perceive all the virtues adorning His character, and we feel at a loss in determining to which of them we should give the pre-eminence. In speaking with approbation of our fellow-mortals we are frequently obliged to dwell upon the excellence of their external conduct, and to conceal the principles and motives by which they were influenced. But with regard to Christ, so far as they have been developed to us, the principles on which He proceeded were as Divine, and the motives which impelled Him as disinterested and worthy as the actions themselves. In speaking with approbation of our fellow-mortals we must always accompany our eulogium with certain exceptions to their disadvantage—certain shortcomings which detract from the splendour or from the value of the good qualities for which we commend them, or certain vices which counterbalance them and render our commendations less cordial. But with regard to Christ we can discern no such imperfection or demerit. In speaking with approbation of our fellow-mortals we are always supposed, even when our laudatory language is most unbounded, to allow that we wish not to be strictly apprehended, and to leave it to be understood that there is need for that charity which seeks not to detect the failings of humanity, and tries to cover them when they are known: but with regard to Christ this charity has no room to operate. Nor is this moral perfection either an imaginary or an exaggerated attribute of Christ. As certainly as we know that He lived and died, so certainly do we know that in His life and in His death He was without sin. For this we have every degree of evidence of which the case admits, or which can be desired to satisfy our minds. II. LET US NOW MAKE OUR APPLICATION OF THIS TRUTH. It is applicable, as we formerly stated, to various useful purposes. 1. And it serves to confirm our belief in the truth of Christ's mission. This effect is produced in some degree simply by viewing Christ in the light of a person of good principle and of excellent character. He holds Himself out as a witness. It is to the truth of revelation that He gives His testimony, or rather it is His own Divine origin and embassy that He certifies. And therefore in proportion to the confidence that we repose in His general worth will be the credit that we give to what He says respecting Himself, and to the message which He brings from heaven. But the argument comes still closer to us than this. Had the Author of Christianity been an impostor, it is impossible to conceive that He should have been of such holy and unblemished character as we find Him to have been. The depravity of heart which gave birth to such a system of artifice, as in this view He must be supposed to have contrived and published, could not fail to have given birth also to a great variety of crimes and vices. On the supposition that Christ was an impostor, it was no ordinary or harmless deception that He was playing off upon mankind. It was founded on the assumption of Divine power; it pretended to aim at the Divine glory; it affected to promulgate the Divine will; it invoked a solemn and visible manifestation of the Divine presence. And while it thus blasphemed against God, it trifled with the understanding and the affections of man. It called upon him to believe what was not true. Now I ask you if it be possible to reconcile such impiety towards God,

and such unfeelingness towards men, with that reverence for God, and that tender compassion towards men by which our Lord was so eminently characterised in every other instance? I ask you, if such light and such darkness, such righteousness and such unrighteousness, could possibly dwell together, and operate together, in the mind and in the conduct of the same individual? The answer to all these questions must necessarily be in the negative. Christ cannot be a deceiver as to His gospel, and yet in all other respects without sin. You must either give up the one proposition or the other. There is yet another view to be taken of this point. Christ did more than hold Himself out as a Divine messenger—He held Himself out as standing in a peculiar relation to God, as being His only-begotten Son, as having the attributes of Deity, as being one with the Father. With these pretensions His sinfulness, even His commission of one sin, would have been completely inconsistent, and would have rendered them utterly false and groundless. His perfect freedom from sin, therefore, is essential to the proof of His Divine mission. It does not prove that He was God, for He might have been a creature and yet have been preserved from all unrighteousness by God's almighty power. But as He claimed the honour and asserted the possession of supreme Deity, it was necessary that no unrighteousness should cleave to Him. I have still further to observe that the sinlessness of Christ is to be viewed as a miracle, which establishes the truth of His mission as much as any of the miracles which are usually resorted to for this purpose. And it was not possible for Him to be thus sinless, except by the special interposition of heaven. The laws which govern human nature and human condition were here suspended, as it were, for producing that effect. A person wearing the form of fallen humanity exhibited not a vestige of the weakness and the wickedness by which, in every other case, fallen humanity has been characterised.

2. Let us apply the subject for the purpose of encouraging our dependence upon Christ as the foundation of our hope. The law of God has demands upon us that must be fully satisfied before we can obtain His forgiveness and enjoy His favour, and be admitted into His heavenly presence. It demands punishment, and it demands obedience; and we must suffer the one and yield the other, either in our own persons or by a substitute. We are very apt indeed to trust in our own strength for the justification of which as sinners we stand in need. But a little consideration of what our own strength is, and of the achievement to which we propose to apply it, must satisfy us that such a trust is vain. Our only refuge, then, is in a substitute; and it is the great business of the gospel to reveal this substitute as both willing and able to do for us what we are incompetent to do for ourselves. Now, in order that our faith in Him as our surety, who is to redeem us by His vicarious obedience, may be justified, we must have clear demonstrations of His sufficiency for sustaining that important character. It is with this view especially that Christ is represented so distinctly, and declared so frequently, to be without sin. For supposing Him to have been otherwise, then our belief in His adequacy to the undertaking He had engaged in would have been shaken or destroyed. Let this truth be always present to your minds when you think of Christ as the ground of your acceptance; and especially when you look to His death as the sacrifice of atonement which He offered up for your iniquities, and as the finishing act of that obedience which in your stead He rendered to the law of God. Be not faithless but believing. Let not a sense of your unworthiness and guilt fill your souls with desponding fears and apprehensions. But place unlimited confidence in "the holy one and the just." His sacrifice is faultless. His merit is infinite. His work is perfect.

3. Finally, let us apply the subject for our direction in that course of life which we must pursue as candidates for heaven. Though Christ by His unspotted sacrifice and perfect obedience has renewed our title to life and immortality, yet it is still true that without personal holiness we cannot see the Lord. This character is pointed out to us by the precepts and maxims of the gospel. But we have the additional advantage of having it illustrated and enforced by the example of our Saviour. The exhibition of this example was one, though a subordinate, purpose of His incarnation. He has left it upon record expressly and authoritatively, "that we should follow His steps." (*A. Thomson, D.D.*)

Sinless and guileless:—I. HIS CONDUCT. "Did no sin." 1. Though tempted severely and continually. 2. Though surrounded by sinful men. 3. Though exposed to poverty of the deepest kind. 4. Though wearing a body subject to infirmities. II. HIS CONVERSE. "Neither was guile found." 1. He never disguised His abhorrence of falsehood. 2. He did not promise more than He intended to perform. 3. He did not hide from His followers the consequences

of their position. Application:—1. The purity of Jesus in word and deed should be sought by us. 2. Hereafter we shall be as He was and is. 3. This purity can never be congenial to us until our hearts are regenerated. (*R. A. Griffin.*) **Bore our sins in His own body.**—*The sin-bearer*:—This wonderful passage is a part of Peter's address to servants; and in his day nearly all servants were slaves. If we are in a lowly condition of life, we shall find our best comfort in thinking of the lowly Saviour bearing our sins in all patience and submission. If we are called to suffer, as servants often were in the Roman times, we shall be solaced by a vision of our Lord buffeted, scourged, and crucified, yet silent in the majesty of His endurance. We ourselves now know by experience that there is no place for comfort like the Cross. Truly in this case "like cures like." By the suffering of our Lord Jesus our suffering is made light. I. **THE BEARING OF OUR SINS** by our Lord. Jesus did really bear the sins of His people. 1. How literal is the language! Words mean nothing if substitution is not stated here. 2. Note how personal are the terms here employed! "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body." It was not by delegation, but "His own self," and it was not in imagination, but "in His own body." Observe also the personality from our side of the question, He "bare our sins," that is to say, my sins and your sins. As surely as it was Christ's own self that suffered on the Cross, so truly was it our own sins that Jesus bore in His own body on the tree. 3. This sin-bearing on our Lord's part was continual. The passage before us has been forced beyond its teaching by being made to assert that our Lord Jesus bore our sins nowhere but on the Cross, which the words do not say. "The tree" was the place where beyond all other places we see our Lord bearing the chastisement due to our sins; but before this He had felt the weight of the enormous load. The marginal reading, which is perfectly correct, is "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body to the tree." Our Lord carried the burden of our sins up to the tree, and there and then He made an end of it. 4. This sin-bearing is final. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, but He bears them now no more. The sinner and the sinner's Surety are both free, for the law is vindicated, the honour of government is cleared, the substitutionary sacrifice is complete. II. **THE CHANGE IN OUR CONDITION**, which the text describes as coming out of the Lord's bearing of our sins. "That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." 1. We are henceforth legally dead to the punishment of sin. What a wonderful deliverance for us! Bless the Lord, O my soul! 2. But Peter also means to remind us that, by and through the influence of Christ's death upon our hearts, the Holy Ghost has made us now to be actually "dead to sins": that is to say, we no longer love them, and they have ceased to hold dominion over us. The new-born life within us has no dealings with sin; it is dead to sin. The Greek word here used cannot be fully rendered into English—it signifies "being unborn to sins." We were born in sin, but by the death of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit upon us, that birth is undone, "we are unborn to sins." 3. But our Lord's sin-bearing has also brought us into life. Dead to evil according to law, we also live in newness of life in the kingdom of grace. Our Lord's object is "that we should live unto righteousness." Not only are our lives to be righteous, which I trust they are, but we are quickened and made sensitive and vigorous unto righteousness; through our Lord's death we are made quick of eye, and quick of thought, and quick of lip, and quick of heart unto righteousness. Certainly, if the doctrine of His atoning sacrifice does not vivify us, nothing will. III. **THE HEALING OF OUR DISEASES** by this death. We were healed, and we remain so. It is not a thing to be done in the future; it has been wrought. Peter describes our disease in the words which compose ver. 25. What was it, then? 1. First, it was brutishness. "Ye were as sheep." Sin has made us so that we are only fit to be compared to beasts, and to those of the least intelligence. We "were as sheep," but we are now men redeemed unto God. 2. We are cured also of the proneness to wander which is so remarkable in sheep. "Ye were as sheep going astray," always going astray, loving to go astray, delighting in it. We wander still, but not as sheep wander; we now seek the right way, and desire to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. If we wander it is through ignorance or temptation. We can truly say, "My soul followeth hard after Thee." 3. Another disease of ours was inability to return: "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned." Dogs and even swine are more likely to return home than wandering sheep. But now, though we wandered we have returned, and do still return to our Shepherd. Our soul cries, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Thus, by the virtue of our

Lord's death an immortal love is created in us, which leads us to seek His face, and renew our fellowship with Him. 4. Our Lord's death has also cured us of our readiness to follow other leaders. Faith in Jesus creates a sacred independence of mind. We have learned so entire a dependence upon our crucified Lord that we have none to spare for men. 5. Finally, when we were wandering we were like sheep exposed to wolves, but we are delivered from this by being near the Shepherd. We were in danger of death, in danger from the devil, in danger from a thousand temptations, which, like ravenous beasts, prowled around us. Having ended our wandering, we are now in a place of safety. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Death for sin, and death to sin*:—I. OUR LORD'S DEATH FOR SIN. And here, ere we approach to behold the great sight, let us put off our shoes from off our feet, and bow down in lowliest reverence of repenting grief, for, remember, if Jesus had not died for sins, we must have died, and died eternally too. Oh, the bitterness of our souls had we been in such a state! 1. There was a substitution for our sins, and by that substitution believers are saved. It was not merely a transfer of punishment from one to another, but there was a transfer of sin in some deep sense, or else the Scripture speaketh not what it meaneth: "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." 2. Now I want you to pause, having noted the fact of substitution, to consider the substitute. "He His own self bare our sins." And who was "He"? I want you to feel a personal love to our dear Lord and Master. I want your souls at this moment to realise the actual character of His existence and His true personality. Though thus God over all, He became a man like unto ourselves. And He, in that double nature but united person, was Jesus, Son of God and Son of the Virgin; He it was who "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." 3. Here we call to your remembrance the fact stated in the text so positively, that the substitution of Christ was carried out by Him personally, not by proxy. The priest of old brought a substitution, but it was a lamb. He struck the knife and the warm blood flowed adown it, but our Lord Jesus Christ had no substitute for Himself, He "His own self bare our sins in His own body." 4. Notice, also, that the substitution of Christ is described in our text in a way which suggests consciousness, willingness, and great pain. "He His own self bare our sins." They were upon Him, they pressed Him. The Greek word for "bare" suggests the idea of a great weight, "He bare our sins"—stooped under them, as it were; they were a load to Him. 5. And He bore those sins manifestly. I think that is the mind of the Spirit; when He says "in His own body," He means to give vividness to the thought. We are so constituted that we do not think so forcibly of mental and spiritual things as we do of bodily things; but our Lord bare our sins "in His own body." "His visage was more marred than that of any man, and His form more than the sons of men." Remember another text—"Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God." Mark the "tree" or Cross for a moment with much attention. (1) It was the place of pain. No death could be more full of agony than that of crucifixion. Blessed be Thy love, O Jesus, that Thou couldst bear pain and death for us. (2) But the Cross was not the place of pain merely; it was the place of scorn. To be fastened to the Cross! Why, they would not put the meanest Roman thereon, though he committed murder; it was a death for slaves and menials. To be laughed at when you suffer is to suffer sevenfold. (3) But more, it was the place of the curse, for "cursed is every one that hangeth on the tree," and the Word has told us that "He was made a curse for us." (4) Last of all, it was the place of death. II. OUR DEATH TO SIN. "That we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." Now, observe right well that we are dead to the condemning power of sin. Henceforth I have nothing to do but to live as a righteous man, accepted in the Beloved, to live by His righteousness and rejoice in it, blessing and magnifying His holy name. As many of you as have looked to Jesus Christ bearing your sins in His own body on the tree, are dead to sin as to its reigning power. 1. Dead, first, because we have seen its detestable nature. It had its charms, but now we have perceived its hypocrisies. The false prophet Mokanna, who wore the silver veil upon his brow, deceived many, for he said that should that veil be lifted, the light which would gleam from under it would strike men blind, the glory was so great; but when one had once perceived that the man was leprous, and that on his brow instead of brightness there were the white scales of a leper, nobody would become his disciple; and so, O sin, at the Cross I see thy silver veil removed, and I mark the desperate leprosy that is on thee. I cannot harbour thee in my heart. 2. We are dead to sin, again, because another passion has absorbed all the forces of our life. 3. And yet again, sin appears to us now to be too mean and trivial a

thing for us to care about. We have lost now, by God's grace, the faculty which once was gratified with these things. They tell us we deny ourselves many pleasures. Oh, there is a sense in which a Christian lives a self-denying life, but there is another sense in which he practises no self-denial at all, for he only denies himself what he does not want, what he would not have if he could. If you could force it upon him it would be misery to him, his views and tastes are now so changed. Let these eyes be for ever sightless as the eyes of night, and let these ears be for ever deaf as silence, rather than sin should have a charm for me, or anything should take up my spirit save the Lord of love, who bled Himself to death that He might redeem me unto Himself. This is the royal road to sanctification. (*Ibid.*)

Burden-bearers :—"I don't like this idea of somebody else bearing my burden," said an objector to the atonement recently. The reply was, "Friend, somebody else has been bearing your burden ever since you came into the world." So is it with us all. Our mothers bore the burden of our infancy. The sailor bears the burden that brings us good news from afar. The miner bears the burden that warms our dwelling, and the reaper bears the burden that gives us bread.

That we, being dead to sins.—*Dead to sin by Christ's death* :—Faith looks so steadfastly on its suffering Saviour that it makes the soul like Him, assimilates and conforms it to His death, as the apostle speaks. That which Papists fabulously say of some of their saints, that they received the impression of the wounds of Christ in their body, is true in a spiritual sense of the soul of every one that is indeed a saint and a believer ; it takes the very print of His death by beholding Him and dies to sin, and then takes that of His rising again, and lives to righteousness. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

Dead to sin : living to righteousness :—A legend of the Jews relates that the Prophet Ezekiel once raised a number of his countrymen from the dead, but the miracle was so far imperfect that the resuscitated men ever after retained the complexion of corpses, and their garments the smell of the sepulchre. Some believe it is after this fashion that the Lord Jesus raises us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. So far, at least, as this world is concerned, we must expect to retain the blemishes and scent of moral corruption. We have not so learned Christ. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

By whose stripes ye were healed.—*On the diseases and health of the soul* :—

I. CONSIDER SIN AS DESTROYING THE HEALTH OF THE SOUL.

1. Bodily distempers are very often conveyed by descent from others. So the sin of our first parents has spread a fatal corruption through the whole human race. Man is not only liable to many bodily distempers from inheritance, he brings many upon himself by imprudence and by sinful gratifications. In like manner, besides what is called original sin, we are chargeable with many actual transgressions.
2. Having spoken of the origin of sin, let us now trace the manner of its progress. (1) Vices, like diseases, steal upon us by slow degrees. Their first attack is often imperceptible. (2) As bodily distempers are frequently most dangerous when the patient is least sensible of them, so it is a bad symptom of the soul when it has not a just sense of the evil of iniquity. 3. Having considered sin as to its source and progress, we shall also take a view of its effects. (1) Sickness weakens the body, debilitates the nerves, and unfits mankind so long as it continues for enjoying and discharging the affairs of human life. Sin also enfeebles the mind by curbing and confusing the reasoning powers. (2) Nor is this the only effect ; for as sickness often brings much pain, so sin also is accompanied, or will be followed, by sorrow and sufferings. (3) As diseases produce the death of the body, so sin, if unpardoned and unremoved, will destroy the soul.

II. THE NATURE OF THE REMEDIES PRESCRIBED, AND THE CAPACITY OF THE PHYSICIAN WHO DIRECTS AND ALSO APPLIES THEM.

1. Jesus Christ is the Physician, and the means prescribed are His Word, His ordinances, and His providences, made effectual by the Spirit. (1) His Word is medicinal. A text of the Bible, well applied and directed to the heart by the Holy Spirit, has produced very valuable effects. (2) The ordinances of Christ, under which are included all acts of worship, prayer, praise, and the Lord's Supper, are designed to increase our hatred of sin and love for holiness. (3) All events are in the hand of God. Providential dispensations are employed to reclaim and reform sinners. Sometimes more awful, sometimes more mild exertions are requisite. (4) The office of the Holy Spirit is another of the means promised and prescribed by the mercy of God for the recovery of the health of souls. He is the Divine Agent who gives efficacy to the other means.
2. The character and capacity of Jesus Christ, our glorious Physician, shall now be a little considered. (1) His knowledge and capacity are infinitely great. (2) Our blessed Saviour is not only able and skilful, He is also friendly and compassionate.

(3) Our blessed Redeemer is very humble and condescending. (4) The Son of God is a Physician to whom you may have access in all places and at all times. Application: 1. As we derive by our birth a weak and depraved nature, and are daily increasing the number of our offences, what strong reasons are these, not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly! 2. The progress of vice, as above considered, should excite in us the greatest jealousy and circumspection. 3. The effects of sin, formerly mentioned, show that vice is, of all evils, the most formidable to mankind. 4. It is our duty to follow exactly the prescriptions for spiritual health which Jesus Christ has been pleased to direct. 5. Remember that it is by a believing reliance on the blood of Jesus Christ that the remedies in the gospel prove means of spiritual health. (*Robert Foote.*) *The stripes of Jesus*:—There is much that is mysterious about disease, and probably much that will always remain so, even after human industry and skill have done their best to fathom its secrets. But in ancient times, when medical science was almost, if not altogether unknown, the causes that produced it seemed to be impene- trable. Its progress was fitful and capricious. In the same way the process of healing was equally uncertain. A few simple remedies were used for simple ailments, and if these were futile, men were helpless. Their pharmacy was exhausted. Nothing was left but to submit to the inevitable. And we can well understand how in such circumstances disease was felt to be an appropriate symbol of moral evil which was enveloped in similar mystery, and seemed to be as little amenable to control. But the fact that disease was recognised as so appropriate a symbol of moral evil rested on something more than external resemblance. In some cases it was known to be the penalty of a moral offence. Sin produces and is succeeded by suffering in obedience to the same law by which the fruit is developed from the blossom, or the organism from the germ. And hence, when Scripture speaks of us as needing healing, this is not merely a figure, it is a reality. Sin contains suffering, as an essential element in itself. We have, then, to consider what this conception of sin as a disease is intended to teach, and the aspect under which its cure is presented by the apostle. I. First, THIS CONCEPTION OF SIN REMINDS US THAT IT IS SOMETHING ABNORMAL OR UNNATURAL. It is an infliction that has disturbed the harmony of our nature and thrown it out of gear. In the case of disease this is shown by the fact that we invariably protest against it, and endeavour to throw it off. When we fail to do this, it is either owing to our being unconscious of its presence, or to its having reached such an advanced stage in its development that it has paralysed our powers of resistance. It is the same also with sin. The religions of the world, with their crude and often revolting methods of sacrifice, bear pathetic witness to the unrest of conscience, and the conviction that something is wrong between man and the powers above him. And wherever the instincts of human nature have been healthiest, and the moral sense has been most widely awake, the efforts made to pacify the offended Deity have been most earnest and sustained. And there are the same attempts to avert a menacing future, not, it may be, by the offering of sacrifice, but by more refined and subtle efforts at atonement—the religion of many dissolving itself into a mere lifelong effort to put themselves right with God. And how are we to explain this dislocation? What has been its cause? What, but that we have all violated the eternal law of righteousness, and placed ourselves at variance with God? And no one can break that law and remain unreconciled to Him without suffering. It would be infinitely worse for us if we could. II. Secondly, DISEASE DISABLES US BY IMPAIRING OUR STRENGTH. What we can undertake in health we cannot undertake when health has failed. Some things we must give up entirely; others we can only do partially, if we do them at all. Perhaps we hardly realise the enormous waste for which sin is responsible, and how far short humanity falls of its possible attainments. Our proudest and most brilliant achievements, what are they but solitary and occasional flowers which show what the wilderness might have been? III. In the third place, we KNOW THAT THE NATURAL END OF DISEASE IS DEATH. It can be checked. Its violence can be reduced. It may be entirely overcome. But treat it as though it did not exist, and allow it to take its way, then, however trifling its beginnings and fitful its progress, it will set up a trouble and disturbance in the whole system that will certainly lead to its ultimate destruction. So the wages of sin is death. There can be no doubt about this. The connection between the two is invariable. And as every sickness can be most easily cured in its initial stage, or, at least, before neglect has complicated the symptoms, so it is with sin. Trifle with it, indulge it, let it go on, and it will rivet its hold, and infect your moral nature till the will is hopelessly enslaved

and the only termination is death. And what is the death that comes as sin's terrible wages? Is it the death of the body? Is it exhausted and done with when the last debt of nature has been paid? No. For sin is not resident in the body, so that we can lay it aside when we shuffle off this mortal coil. It is a spiritual act, the result of a certain spiritual condition. And this spiritual condition is not changed by the mere fact of physical death. That, indeed, separates the soul from the body, and hands over the latter to the powers of dissolution. But the former remains as it was. And if it has not renounced its sin, and been quickened by the life that wages a perpetual warfare against it, death will not sever it from its ruinous ally. It will simply introduce it to that final and hopeless separation from God which is the essence of spiritual death. For it will no longer be surrounded by what here alleviates and conceals the awfulness of such a state. We have now to consider the aspect under which the removal of sin is here presented. It is described as a healing or making whole, and it is effected by the stripes of Christ. "By His stripes we are healed." That is, by what Christ suffered our sufferings are brought to an end; their source or fountain is stanching. But how are we to understand this? It is true in a sense that all suffering, when it becomes severe, can only be cured by the suffering of others. It imposes this penalty to some extent on those who undertake to relieve it. The strength and skill of the physician are often heavily taxed to save his patient. And the same remark is true in a still higher degree in the treatment of moral evil. To check even venial faults, so as to help the defaulter to renounce them, requires a patient tact and affection which are rarely found combined. There can be no doubt that in dealing with us Jesus suffers in this way infinitely more acutely than we do, in proportion to His deeper hatred of sin and deeper love of holiness. But however great the sufferings of Christ in this sense may have been and still are, it is not to such the apostle here refers. He is thinking not of what Christ may still endure from the perversity and faithlessness of men, but of something which He endured once, and endures no longer. The very word he uses leads us in this direction. It neither suggests the suffering involved in the doing of good, nor the strain which a loving sympathy has to bear in sharing the sorrows of its fellows. Stripes are imposed by some one else. They indicate the infliction of a pain which is not the direct consequence of our own action, but to which we are subjected by the action of others. Moreover, they necessarily suggest the idea of punishment. They are a chastisement, and mark the man who receives them as obnoxious to justice and dealt with accordingly. Now, it is by the sufferings of Christ so understood the apostle says we are healed. They were stripes. And they were stripes, not for His own sin, because He had none, but for ours. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin." "By His stripes we are healed." Yes, by His stripes. For all sin is due to our separation from God. It marks the ebb of life, the lowering of vital force, the feverishness that ensues from this fatal severance. And what hinders the healing of the breach is just the fact that this sin is the violation of a righteous law which refuses to be at peace with us till its claims are satisfied. And these claims are met by the sacrifice of Christ. "God was in Him, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." The streams of life have begun to flow into its wasted framework, and wherever they reach the ravages of sin are checked. Peace comes in place of restlessness, content for dissatisfaction, hope for despair, and the spectre of fear is banished. Slowly but surely the love of goodness is developed. And Christ's healing relieves from a pain and apprehension that can scarcely be uttered. It triumphs over an unworthiness that is deeper than words. It brings a hope and gladness that transfigures life, and opens a fountain of new inspiration. What labour is then too great, what enterprise too forlorn, when His grace has healed us, and bound up our painful wounds? There was no foe which could not be conquered, no misery which could not be relieved. The tide had turned. The watchword was, "Forward!"—"forgetting the things that are behind." Messengers of peace and goodwill hastened abroad. Right struggled to subordinate the power of might, and has never given up the fight. Philanthropy arose, and the echo of her footsteps was heard in the waste and desolate places of the earth. And what is our magnificent array of modern charities, our agencies of help that reach out a hand of succour to every soul depressed below the general level of comfort or advantage? What are the labours of the economist, the statesman, the physician, as they push their way into the problems before them with a sure triumphant conviction of ultimate victory, but the fruits of that great healing of Christ that has turned darkness into light, and the dull wretchedness of despair into bright and keen-eyed hope?

“By His stripes we are healed.” Have you received this healing of Christ? (*C. Moinet, M.A.*) *Healed by Christ's stripes* :—The slaves whom the apostle was addressing understood full well the meaning of “stripes.” The Greek word means the weal left by a stripe. From the grave the Saviour came, bearing the weals of many stripes, wound-marks in hands and feet and side; but those bruises and wounds tell a story which makes our hearts leap with joy. When the Great Shepherd, raised through the blood of the everlasting covenant, met His timid followers in the upper room, He bade them behold the print of the nails and the scar in His side. “Then were the disciples glad.” And as we consider the Lamb, “as it had been slain,” and discern those precious memorials of His finished work on our behalf, we too may break forth into new songs, like those in heaven. Those stripes are the price of our redemption, the evidence of our purchase, the sign-manual of pardon. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Salvation, what it cost* :—“Mamma,” said a little child to her mother when she was being put to bed at night—“mamma, what makes your hand so scarred and twisted, and unlike other people's hands?” “Well,” said the mother, “my child, when you were younger than you are now, years ago, one night, after I had put you to bed, I heard a cry, a shriek, upstairs. I came up, and found the bed was on fire, and you were on fire; and I took hold of you, and I tore off the burning garments, and while I was tearing them off and trying to get you away I burned my hand, and it has been scarred and twisted ever since, and hardly looks any more like a hand; but I got that, my child, in trying to save you.” I wish to-day I could show you the burned hand of Christ—burned in plucking you out of the fire; burned in snatching you away from the flame. Aye, also the burned foot, and the burned brow, and the burned heart—burned for you. “By His stripes we are healed.” (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) **Ye were as sheep going astray.**—*The former and present state of believers contrasted* :—I. Let me, then, call upon believers in Christ SERIOUSLY TO REVIEW THEIR FORMER CONDITION, when they, as well as others, were as sheep going astray. The fitness of this similitude to exhibit the natural state of mankind may justly be inferred from the frequent use that is made of it in the sacred writings. Thus a sheep that has forsaken the good pasture and strayed into the barren wilderness presents to us, in the most affecting light, an emblem of indigence, perplexity, and disappointment. Again, this figurative representation denotes a state of danger as well as of indigence and dissatisfaction. Few animals are beset with more enemies than sheep; and perhaps none are possessed of less cunning to elude or of less courage to resist them. With what awful precision doth this part of the similitude exhibit to us the state of unconverted sinners! Their spiritual enemies are both numerous and mighty. Once more: though sheep are not the only creatures that are prone to wander, yet they of all others discover least sagacity in finding the way back to the place from whence they strayed; so that in them we likewise behold a most descriptive emblem of man's helpless state by nature, and of his utter inability by any efforts of his own to regain his primeval happiness and glory. But still there remains one other ingredient in man's apostasy from God to which the similitude, comprehensive as it is, cannot be extended; the fatal ingredient I mean is guilt. A sheep gone astray is an object of pity rather than of blame. Man's apostasy was the effect not of weakness, but of wilfulness; the guilt that lieth upon us is nothing less than proud and obstinate rebellion—rebellion blackened with the vilest ingratitude. II. “YE ARE NOW RETURNED UNTO THE SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF YOUR SOULS.” Ye are returned to Him who came from heaven to earth “to seek and to save that which was lost”; who, though infinitely offended by your criminal apostasy, hath Himself made atonement for your past wanderings, and expiated your guilt with His own precious blood. Ye are returned to Him who will henceforth watch over you with peculiar care, and guard you as His property which He purchased with His blood. Ye are returned to Him who hath not only almighty power to guard you against danger, but infinite compassion likewise to sympathise with you in all your distresses, and to comfort you in all your sorrows. III. What they were by nature, and what they are by grace may suffice to DIRECT US TO THAT TEMPER OF HEART WITH WHICH WE OUGHT TO APPROACH THE TABLE OF THE LORD. And it is obvious—1. That we should do it with the deepest humility. Are we sanctified? once we were impure. Are we found? once we were lost. Are we made alive? lately we were dead; it was God who quickened us, and not we ourselves. Surely, then, pride was not made for man. 2. We should perform this service with the warmest emotions of gratitude and love, giving thanks to the Father who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him to be a sacrifice and sin-offering for us. 3. Godly

sorrow for past offences, and holy purposes to offend no more, should likewise attend us to the table of the Lord. 4. These purposes must ever be accompanied with a sense of our own weakness, and of our absolute need of aid from above. Even after we are returned to the Bishop of our souls, if left to ourselves we should quickly stumble and fall. 5. This diffidence of ourselves ought always to be qualified with a steadfast trust, an unsuspecting confidence in the power and faithfulness of our great Redeemer. (*R. Walker.*) *Men as sheep*:—Amongst all the varied tribes of nature there could not be selected a more perfect type of a life liable to wander. The passage bird is never lost. High over the waves of the Atlantic it strikes a right path to its home a thousand leagues away. With unerring certainty the creature of the forest finds a right path to its cave; but the sheep has no such sure accuracy of self-direction; it is in its nature a helpless and dependent thing, and but for its shepherd would lose its path to the final shelter. Just as helpless and dependent is your soul. If you travel in the right path it is not because you have an unerring instinct, or an unerring reason, or an unerring sense of right, but because you have an unerring Leader. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) **Are now returned.**—*The new life*:—The Israelites were a pastoral people. For although in the time of the apostle the pastoral life had largely given way to the agricultural, yet all their history, all those elements which excited their imagination and rejoiced their patriotism, were of the pastoral character. It went into their poetry, and the agricultural and pastoral figures exceed in number, and certainly equal in exquisite beauty, any others that are to be found in the whole range of not only the Bible, but of universal literature. This is eminently seen in the Old Testament, but the New Testament is not without a trace of such a feeling. Here we are called wanderers. Men that are converted are the men that have wandered away from the right ideals of life, and have been brought back again; they were wanderers. We are represented as going astray from right dispositions, and from right actions, and from right directions. Our aims, our conduct, and our character are malformed. Religion in the soul is what the right use of the organs is to the body. When all the organs of a man's body are carried on according to the laws of nature you have health. So when a man has gone astray, he has lost nothing, except the right use of himself. He has not lost will-power; he has not lost intellectual power. And when a man is recalled from wandering, and it is said he is born again, we mean that from his wrong use of himself he turns toward the right use of himself. He is brought to recognise a higher standard of living, body, mind, and soul, and enters upon that better understanding. Then we say he has been recalled by his shepherd; he has returned. Every organ of the body is, according to the design of God in nature, good. It is wrong use that produces evil. Every faculty of the human mind and soul is right and needful to the body and soul, to social relations and universal truth. But the wrong use of right things is sinfulness. It may be in a single act, or in a continuity of acts until they become habit; then it is character; and character is nothing but an automatic practice of wrong uses induced by individual acts of sin. Now, on the other hand, when a man is called of God, here is the one grand ideal: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." He who carries his whole nature obediently to the grand law of love and all its interpretations in God's Word, that man has been restored to himself, and in so far to his God. Conversion, then, is the beginning, under inspiration's teaching, an example of the reconstruction of a man's voluntary life. It is the beginning of rebuilding character and conduct, on the basis of love. It is the beginning. It is no more than the beginning. The Church is not, then, an assembly of saints. It is a school with all manner of instruments that are designed to help men. Merely being in the Church does not save men. It is an assembly of men beginning, mostly, and certainly the incoming into any Church is of men that have been lost, wandered, gone out of pasture, gone away, and they are called back again. A man coming into the Christian Church is coming into right conditions in which he may learn how to rectify the aberrations of his conduct, and, so far as his nature has been positively made morbid, rectify his nature. A man has found out that the way of his life, the way of selfishness, of pride and evil passions is the bad way; it is contrary to God and nature—the best nature—contrary to the welfare of society, of the family, and of the individual. He is so convinced of it that in covenant, in his secret thought with God he says, "If Thou wilt help me, I will from this hour undertake to re-educate myself into the Christ spirit." If you want to know whether you are sinful or not, just take any of these great characteristic commands of Jesus Christ; take any point of example in Himself, any conduct, anywhere, and

try it on. How shall a man know whether his clothes fit or not? He goes into a store and says to his tailor, "Look here, how do I know what size I want?" He looks at him a moment, then takes a boy's coat and says, "Try that on, if you please." He gets one arm half-way down, and he can't find any armhole on the other side. "Oh, that is a world too small for me. I can't get into that." Try moral qualities in the same way. You have one text that leads to this very analogy or figure, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," as a garment. Put it on your conscience. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ as an element of love. Put on the saving and helping of men, instead of hating men. Try on each one of these Christian graces, and see whether they fit you, or whether you can get them on. A person should come into the Church of Christ joyfully, yet not so much on account of attainment, but because he has put himself now in the way of attaining, and may hope to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ unto the end. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The return of the flock*:—It is well to look back sometimes. I. ESTRANGEMENT. "For ye were as sheep going astray." "All we like sheep have gone astray." There is a depth of meaning in the expression "going astray" which very fittingly represents the condition of man with regard to Divine things. It implies—1. A state of dissatisfaction. Neither men nor animals, as a rule, leave that which gives them satisfaction and enjoyment. With regard to man and God the word very far from expresses the real state. Man is more than dissatisfied. He abhors the necessities which the Divine fold entails. He hates the restraint, the associations, the duties. 2. A state of unrest. It is a constant wandering; a going hither and thither without a settled purpose; a drifting on the sea without an aim; going whither chance or the whim of the moment may lead. 3. A state of danger. II. RECONCILIATION. "But are now returned." There is something very pleasant in the word "return." It speaks of old associations renewed, severed connections reunited. It means something so different to a new breaking of the ground. The reunion with old familiar places, persons, or things has a charm which has in itself the spirit of poetry and the reality of prose. The sheep returning to the fold goes back to the familiar ways, familiar surroundings, and the familiar voice of the shepherd. And so the soul going to God is only returning to its normal condition. Don't let us forget that the coming to the fold of Christ is a return. An important point concerning this return is that it is not natural. It is not easy or pleasant to retrace our steps, to acknowledge our folly. III. SAFETY. "Return to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Here is ample protection, security, and supply. (*Homilist.*) *The Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*.—*The Shepherd and Bishop of souls*:—There is no symbol upon which the early Church seems to have dwelt with more delight than that of Christ as the Good Shepherd, bringing home to the fold the lost sheep. It was engraved on gems; it furnished the legends of seals; it gives to-day an almost fabulous value to fragments of broken glass; it was painted upon the chalice of the Holy Communion, it was carved upon the tomb of martyrs in the catacombs. In the text there is presented to us a twofold truth. I. The first is THE ASPECT OF INFINITE LOVE, AS REVEALED IN THE OFFICE AND FUNCTION OF A SHEPHERD; and the second is THE WEAKNESS AND HELPLESSNESS OF HUMAN SOULS, AS REVEALED IN THE FIGURE OF A FLOCK. And these are expanded by the additional idea of our Lord's episcopate as the Bishop of souls, and the implied necessity of a fold where there is a flock. And then, as the shadow of sin must ever rest upon our brightest hope, and the wail of penitence mingle with our highest song of praise, there is the reminder of the fact, that from the care of this eternal Shepherd, and the safety of this Divine fold, there are those who are going astray. What, then, does this word teach us of Christ's care for His people? Now, the vocation of a shepherd has always been the symbol of the most tender and vigilant watchfulness. The ruling idea of the shepherd's vocation was that he was the appointed defender of his flock, and their safety was committed to him. When the lion and the bear came upon the flock which the youthful David was tending, he slew them both, and delivered the lamb, even at the peril of his own life. And yet, bold as the shepherd was to all that would assail his flock, to the flock itself he was the embodiment of tenderness and care. His authority was the power of love. His only emblem of authority was the pastoral crook; the well-known tones of his voice were the guiding power; and, going before his flock, he led them through green pastures, calling them all by their names, and carrying the lambs in his bosom. In this day of intenser activities, we can hardly appreciate all that is meant by such a metaphor. But these are the hints which the symbol gives us, of the tender watch-care of the great Shepherd of souls over His flock, as He

first rescues them from the devil going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and then folds them safely within the sacred enclosure of His Church, and then watches over them in every pathway of their daily life. The symbol of a flock suggests the complementary truth, and teaches us the lesson of trust and reciprocal duty. For it defines our relation to Him, and the obligations involved in that relation. Within the fold of Christ we are not compared to cattle, to be driven by force or fear; we are not as swine, to wallow in the mire and filth of sin; but we are sheep, to follow a Divine Shepherd's voice. If the tenderness and love of Christ be not a sufficient power to make us obedient, He will use no force. If the constraining power of the Cross fails to guide our wayward feet, then we will not be guided by Him at all. And the severest penalty of our disobedience will be our own going astray; our self-exclusion from the fold of Christ; our loss of His watchful care, and our exposure to the power of the adversary. And then, as if to interpret for all time the fulness of this office of our Lord, another word is added, whose meaning was destined to be permanently fresh in every age. The pastoral life of Oriental lands might lose its meaning when transplanted to other lands and centuries; but the office and function of a bishop is preserved for ever from oblivion by its inherent position in the organisation of the Church. And this word the apostle places side by side with the other word of local significance, that both might go down the ages together, and each interpret the meaning of the other. And so the Good Shepherd is also the Bishop of souls. The title, in its comprehensive significance, lifts our thoughts to that Divine episcopate whose cathedral is the temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; whose diocese is the universe of souls, and whose affairs are administered to-day from the right hand of the Majesty on high. The collective pastorate of the Church on earth, acting in His name, is but the representative of the infinite care and omniscient watchfulness of the great Shepherd above. (*W. A. Snively, D.D.*) *The Guardian of souls* :—

I. THAT MEN HAVE SOULS. First, the fact is the most demonstrable fact to man. 1. All the evidence that we have both for the existence of matter and mind is derived from phenomena. The essence of both is hidden. 2. The essence whose phenomena come most powerfully under consciousness is most demonstrated. 3. The phenomena of mind come far more powerfully under consciousness than that of matter. Thought, feeling, volition, we are conscious of these. Secondly, the fact is the most important fact to man. Consider the capacities, relations, influence, deathlessness of a soul. Thirdly, the fact is the most practically disbelieved fact by man. Most men profess to believe it, but few men really do so. II. THAT MEN'S SOULS REQUIRE A GUARDIAN; an *ἐπίσκοπος*, an overseer. This is clear from three things. First, from the natural fallibility of souls. No finite intelligence, however holy and exalted, can do without a guardian. Secondly, from the fallen condition of souls. They "have gone astray." Look at the mistakes they make about the chief good, worship, &c. Thirdly, from the natural instincts of souls. Souls through all ages have been crying out for guardians. III. THAT CHRIST IS THE ONE GUARDIAN OF HUMAN SOULS. He is the Bishop. What should be the qualification of him who can take care of human souls? He that would do so should at least have four things. First, immense knowledge. He should know the nature of souls, the moral situation of souls, the right way of influencing souls. Secondly, unbounded love and forbearance. The waywardness, the insults, the rebellion of souls would soon exhaust any finite amount of love and patience. Thirdly, ever increasing charms. Souls are to be drawn, not driven. Fourthly, inexhaustible power. Power to extricate from present difficulties, to guard against future, and to lead on through interminable ages. Christ has all these qualifications, and more. Let Him, then, be my overseer. (*Homilist.*) *The great Shepherd* :—I. THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL HAS A SHEPHERD WHO KNOWS IT AND CARES FOR IT. II. THE SINFUL SOUL HAS A SHEPHERD WHO SEEKS ITS RESCUE EVEN BY HIS OWN DEATH. III. THE RESTORED SOUL HAS A SHEPHERD WHO IS FILLED WITH DIVINE SATISFACTION AT ITS RECOVERY. IV. THE LONELY SOUL HAS A SHEPHERD WHO WILL MEET ALL THE NECESSITIES OF ITS NATURE. V. THE LOYAL SOUL HAS A SHEPHERD WHO WILL PROVIDE FOR ALL ITS WANTS. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Wandering sheep* :—In these words we have a brief and yet clear representation of the wretchedness of natural conditions and of our happiness in Christ. It imports indeed the loss of a better condition, the loss of the safety and happiness of the soul, of that good which is proper to it, as the suitable good of the brute creature here named is safe amid good pasture. That we may know there is no one exempt in nature from the guiltiness and misery of this wandering, the prophet is express as to the universality of it: "All we like sheep have gone astray." Yea, the prophet

adds, "We have turned every one to his own way." We agree in this, that we all wander, though we differ in several ways. Truth is but one; error endless and interminable. Thy tongue, it may be, wanders not in the common path-road of oaths and curses, yet it wanders in secret calumnies, in defaming of others, or, if thou speak them not, yet thou art pleased to hear them. It wanders in trifling away the precious hours of irrecoverable time, with vain unprofitable babblings in thy converse; or, if thou art much alone, or in company much silent, yet is not thy foolish mind still hunting vanity, following this self-pleasing design or the other, and seldom and very slightly, if at all, conversant with God and the things of heaven, which, although they alone have the truest and the highest pleasure in them, yet to thy carnal mind are tasteless and unsavoury? Men account little of the wandering of their hearts, and yet truly that is most of all to be considered. It is the heart that hath forgotten God, and is roving after vanity: this causes all the errors of men's words and actions. A wandering heart makes wandering eyes, feet, and tongue: it is the leading wanderer that misleads all the rest. "But are now returned." Whatsoever are the several ways of our straying, all our wandering originates in the aversion of the heart from God, whence of necessity follows a continual unsettledness and disquiet. The mind tumbles from one sin and vanity to another, and finds no rest; or as a sick person tosses from one part of his bed to another, and perhaps changes his bed in hope of ease, but still it is further off, thus is the soul in all its wanderings. But shift and change as it will, no rest shall it find until it come to this returning. But is not that God in whom we expect rest incensed against us for our wandering? and is He not, being offended, a consuming fire? True; but this is the way to find acceptance, and peace, and satisfying comforts in returning: come first to this Shepherd of souls, Jesus Christ, and by Him come unto the Father. There be three things necessary to restore us to our happiness, whence we have departed in our wanderings. 1. To take away the guiltiness of those former wanderings. 2. To reduce us into the way again. 3. To keep and lead us in it. Now all these are performable only by this great Shepherd. 1. He did satisfy for the offence of our wanderings, and so remove our guiltiness. 2. He brings them back into the way of life—"Ye are returned." But think not it is by their own knowledge and skill that they discover their error and find out the right path, or that by their own strength they return into it. Men may have confused thoughts of returning, but to know the way and to come, unless they be sought out, they are unable. This is David's suit, though acquainted with the fold, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Lord, seek Thy servant." 3. He keeps and leads us on in that way into which He hath restored us. He leaves us not again to try our own skill, whether we can walk to heaven alone, being set into the path of it, but He still conducts us in it by His own hand, and that is the cause of our persisting in it and attaining the blessed end of it (Psa. xxiii. 3). Are we led in the paths of righteousness? Do we delight ourselves in Him and in His ways? Can we discern His voice, and does it draw our hearts so that we follow it? "The Shepherd and the Bishop." It was the style of kings to be called shepherds, and is the dignity of the ministers of the gospel to have both these names. But this great Shepherd and Bishop is peculiarly worthy of these names as supreme. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1-7. Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection.—*Wifely subjection*:—Here is required of wives subjection towards their husbands; though God made them in many things equal, yet in wisdom He thought meet to make some little inequality, and appointed the husband to be the superior and head, and so to rule, and the wife to be subject to him; yet not so but that he hath his rules to bound his rule, that it exceed not (1 Cor. xi. 8, 9; 1 Tim. ii. 13). Neither is this without reason; for if all were equals in the commonwealth there would be confusion; and if all bells were of a bigness, and all the strings of an instrument of one size, there would be a harsh sound, and no melody: so, were there not some small inequality between husbands and wives, there could not but be contention. It is God's order that wives be subject, as it is His order the sun should shine, the earth bear fruit, the heavens cover us. Accordingly, God hath provided to make man the stronger, woman the weaker

vessel, that he might be the fitter to rule, and she (feeling her own weakness) the more willing to be ruled. (*John Rogers.*) *A quarrelsome wife* :—There were times when the Rev. Andrew Fuller could be exceedingly severe. He was once spending a few days in a family where the husband and wife were not very happy together, chiefly, I believe, owing to her tyrannical spirit, fostered by perverted views of Divine truth, making her by no means remarkable for kindness to her husband. One evening, having heard Mr. Fuller preach, according to the fashion of the school to which she belonged she remarked: "Ah, sir, we are poor creatures and can do nothing." "You are quite mistaken, madam," replied Mr. Fuller, "you can do a great deal." "Why, what can I do?" asked the lady, somewhat excited. "Why, madam," replied he, with a tone and manner which can only be imagined by those who knew him, "you can quarrel with your husband." The lady said no more. (*Baptist Messenger.*)

If any obey not . . . they also may . . . be won.—*Wives must be subject even unto bad husbands* :—Not only must wives be subject that have good husbands, but even they which hath infidel husbands, unkind, irreligious; for they are their husbands, whom they have chosen, and are now in covenant to God withal, and which God hath laid out for them as a blessing or cross. If any shall say, This is very hard, let such know, that Christians must do difficult things. Every bungler can make good work of good, straight timber, but he that can make good work of that which is crooked and knotty is worthy commendation. (*John Rogers.*)

Unconscious influence :—The case supposed is one that would occur again and again while Christianity was making its way among the pagan nations. A Christian woman would find it very difficult to win over her pagan husband by direct efforts; she would be thrown back upon the silent influence of her chaste, holy, unselfish conduct and conversation; and the apostle intimates that she should expect this to be a sanctified energy which God would use to accomplish the desire of her heart. A fable is told of a mountain-island of loadstone that stood up in mid-ocean, and attracted on every side the ships that sailed over the seas. As soon as ever they came within the line of its influence they were insensibly seized, gradually at first, then ever more swiftly they were drawn, until at last they dashed to destruction on the rocky coast. The Christian should be an influence for Christ on every side of his nature, seizing every barque that sails by on the ocean of life; seizing it by the power of Christian character and Christian consistency, and drawing it into the harbour of God's love and service. I. It may be well to illustrate WHAT IS MEANT BY OUR UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE, and to exhibit its importance and value. As we meet together in society, how distinctly tone is recognised and felt! Beyond the influence we can exert on each other by our actions, there is the power of our very presence, an atmosphere around us which we carry with us wherever we may be. You can be a growing power, more decidedly and wholly influencing others for good, as by watchfulness and earnest culture you grow in personal religious worth. II. Consider the SPHERE IN WHICH THE POWER OF THIS OUR UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE WILL BE MOST FELT. It will be felt everywhere. It is a necessity of our being that we should exert it. It belongs to us, and flows forth from us as freely as the fragrance of the violet wherever the violet is found. Yet such influence is most felt *at home*. Much ought to be done by the young Christian's direct efforts for the happiness and salvation of the household; but the very freeness of life in the home makes such labour difficult, and often there are circumstances which make it impossible to speak the word. So, in your first religious sphere, you may be thrown back upon the importance of the influence silently exerted by your character. In a home some will be dependent on you, whatever your place may be; the children, younger children, or the servants. These will be very easily affected by the tone and spirit of your life; and they will be very keen to watch for the spirit they know is in harmony with the professions you make. In another way those on whom you depend in the home will be reached by you. On the side of your submissions and obediences you will win power over them. Holy, loving children have been honoured as the means of winning their parents for Christ. And home life includes a circle of friendships; you are not called by your Christian profession to separate yourselves from such circles; but you should carry into such society a fragrance of Christian purities and charities that may ever flow out to bless those with whom you meet. III. ON WHAT THE EFFICIENCY OF THIS INFLUENCE WILL DEPEND. 1. It will depend on our cultivation of Christian graces, and that work includes the repression of all our constitutional infirmities, whether of temper or spirit, and the mastery of all habits that are relics of our sinful states. 2. It will depend on the consistency of our Christian conduct. 3. It will depend on constancy in religious duties. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*)

The attractive power of Christian character :—We adopt the opinion that “the Word” is used in two distinct senses, and we read the passage thus : If any obey not the gospel, they also may without preaching be won by the character and conduct of the wives. The subject before us is this : The gospel reproduced in character and conduct, a means of saving sinners from the error of their ways. In discussing this subject, however, let me guard against even the appearance of underrating the written and the preached Word. Without “the Word,” what revolutions would this void create ! The “Word” withdrawn from Christendom would rend the finest pictures, and pull down the most splendid buildings, and take the salt from the best literature, and bury in oblivion the highest science, and darken the brightest homes, and devastate the fairest countries, and undermine all righteous thrones, and send back some civilised nations to barbarism, and bring a huge shadow of death over the whole world. Without “the Word” mankind are without gospel, without light and life. I. “THE WORD” RECEIVED PRODUCES A DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER IN HIM WHO ACCEPTS IT. This is alike its object and tendency. “The Word” reveals the one living and true God—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—as the redeeming God, and shows that God is reconciling the world unto Himself. Now, the man who receives “the Word” is translated from darkness to light, he is transplanted from an ungenial to a friendly soil, and he admits to his nature elements which, combining with whatever is Divine within him, will produce a new man and effect a new creation. II. THE CHARACTER WHICH “THE WORD” PRODUCES IS OF A NATURE TO ATTRACT AND WIN. The character begotten by “the Word” is—1. Strong. It has in it all the constituents of complete spiritual power, intelligence touching the highest subjects, faith in God, hope of the greatest and most enduring good, love of the purest and most fervent flame, immutable and everlasting principles of action. 2. The character formed by “the Word” is also genial. There is in it the attractiveness of beauty and of pleasantness, as well as of power. The basis of that which is genial in the Christian character is love. 3. This strong and loving character is also reasonable, it is conformed in all points to rational principles. It has within it none of the elements which constitute the fanatic or visionary. Imagination creates not this character, but faith in a Divine revelation ; and that revelation presents nothing contrary to reason. III. THE INFLUENCE OF THIS GOSPEL-FORMED CHARACTER IS FELT MOST WHERE ASSOCIATION IS MOST FREQUENT AND CONTACT MOST CLOSE. The text points to a home as the sphere of Christian influence, but it also directs our attention to woman as influential there, and it leads our thoughts to the presence of unbelief in the family. This suggests two things : firstly, that there is often evangelistic work to be done in families of which Christians are part ; and secondly, that this work may be extensively wrought by Christian women. Christian men and women, whatever your hands may find to do beyond, neglect not the home. IV. BELIEVERS OF THE WORD MAY ACCOMPLISH THE END OF PREACHING BY BEING DOERS OF THE WORD IN THE FACE OF UNBELIEVERS. The great want of the world at the present time, is the Christianity of the New Testament translated into action. The demand for Christians is more urgent than the demand for churches. Men would see works that they may believe our words. (*S. Martin.*) *Won by behaviour* :—A high-born, cultured lady was converted during one of the London missions, and it was a genuine conversion. Immediately she separated herself from the world, revolutionised her household, altered her gay attire ; and instead of the theatre or concert or ballroom night after night she was found at the mission service, the prayer-meeting, or Bible reading. At first it embittered and angered her worldly husband, but eventually he yielded to what he termed “a new caprice.” When he found out that his beautiful wife was really in earnest, he persecuted her, and stung her with bitter reproaches, which, unfortunately, too frequently aroused her passionate temper, or occasioned an angry retort. One day God used her husband’s bitter words to teach her a great lesson. “When your Christ can do something more for you, Isabel,” he said, “I may let Him try to do something for me—not before.” “Wherein do I fail most ?” she asked. “In your temper and tongue, which are sourer than when I first knew you.” “Is this really so ?” she asked herself when alone. “If so, O God, forgive me” was the sob which burst from her lips. “What ! is it possible that my hastiness may perhaps be keeping my husband from God ? Away with it, Lord ! Give me, I pray Thee, victory over all sin.” God answered her prayer, but the testing time had yet to come. When her husband found persecution no longer irritated her, he let jealousy get the better of him—jealousy of the little delicate lad, their only child, who monopolised so much of his mother’s time, and filled a large place in her loving heart. One evening when Mr. N— returned

home irritable and morose—perhaps the worse for wine—she was singing softly, “There’s a beautiful land on high,” and the patient little sufferer had just said, “I’d like to be there, mother, if I could take you with me,” when Mr. N— entered the nursery, and said, irritably, “Put that child down, Isabel; Norton has come home with me to dine.” “Our little laddie is worse, Edgar,” she said. “May I not stay with him?” “No,” and taking him roughly from her knee he handed the child to the nurse. “All nonsense about his being worse.” But, as he spoke, a loud moan escaped the little lad’s lips. His father had caught his head accidentally against the corner of the table, and he cried out to go back to his mother again. “The child is not hurt much, Isabel; leave him at once, and come and attend to my guest.” With an aching heart, Mrs. N— obeyed, trembling lest the blow might prove serious. Before dinner, however, was over, she was summoned to the nursery. The child was worse. Both the doctor and physician had been sent for, and they shook their heads at his condition. In the midst of the confusion and excitement, Mr. N— went out with his friend, heedless of the message which had been sent to him from the nursery. He did not return until long after midnight. But about midnight his little child died. Isabel N— was childless. There she knelt alone by the bedside of her little darling’s lifeless form. Would it be possible to describe her feelings or to understand the conflict through which she was passing? The Refiner was looking on—watching intently to see the effect of the fire through which He was causing His child to pass. Would it burn up the dross? Would it subdue the will? A few minutes later her husband’s step was heard in the hall, and Mrs. N— knew the butler would tell his master all that had happened. The grief-stricken woman listened for him to come to her at once, but she heard him enter the library and shut the door; and, in the stillness which followed, she cried unto the Lord for guidance and strength. Pride said, “Let him come to you—he has wronged both you and the child”; but love said, “Go to him—be the first to forgive.” Love conquered, thanks be to God. Mr. N— was sitting by the table, his head buried in his hands, when he heard the library door open, and in another moment felt his wife’s soft warm arms encircling his neck, and her lips pressed to his heated brow, while a voice of gentle sweetness said, “Jesus has taken our darling to be with Him, Edgar; but I will love you more, dear.” No stinging reproaches—no hard hasty words—not even a tender rebuke. The man could hardly believe he heard aright. What a miracle! What wonderful love! Yes, and the love broke his heart. “Come upstairs and see our boy, Edgar.” Without speaking he followed her; and while the two knelt alone in that still room and her tremulous voice pleaded that the sorrow might be sanctified, and that one day they too might join their little one in the Better Land, the proud, stubborn man yielded his heart to his God. When he arose he said, calmly, “Isabel, Christ has done so much for you, dear, that I mean to ask Him to do as much for me. There is something in Christianity after all.” (*Mrs. Walter Searle.*) **Chaste conversation coupled with fear.**—*Christian womanhood*:—The “chaste conversation coupled with fear” seems to signify purity in an atmosphere of fear, the tremulous grace which is “afraid of the very shadow of wrong.” The “beholding” is in the original a remarkable word. It seems to point at “initiation” into a world of goodness before unknown to the husband. The selfish rhetorician Libanius, who had some Christian acquaintances, is said to have exclaimed: “What wiveth those Christians have!” A missionary to China has heard Christian women say: “Until we became Christians we never really knew that we were women.” (*Bp. Wm. Alexander.*) *The Christian woman*:—Let our thoughts be guided by this twofold proposition:—1. For the unfolding of woman’s character, and the balancing of her spirit, Christianity supplies the only sufficient impulse and guide. 2. Christianity exhibits no more perfect illustration or achievement than in the completed proportions of her spiritual life. The first epoch of trial in woman’s life begins when the period of education ceases. It is a period of dependence, in the first place, with most women—dependence on parents—but still not the less irksome for that, if the woman, with a consciousness of strength, sees the parent worn and anxious with excess of labour; or if, with willingness for effort which her position or social prejudice forbids, she sees her every want met only by reluctant and grudging supplies. It is a period of uncertainty; for it looks straight out upon all those contingencies that determine her future lot—a lot for which she is not so much to lead or choose as to wait and weigh the perils of being chosen, or to learn the calm fortitude that conquers neglect with dignity. It is a period of highly wrought sensibility. The emotions have swelled, from the babbling brook that kept its quiet way within the

banks of youth, into the rushing river of impetuous passion. It is a period of comparative irresponsibility; and who shall say that irresponsibility is a blessing, when we know so well how occupation dispels morbid introspections, and how daily strain upon the muscles fortifies timid and tremulous nerves? It is not true, I think, of any other condition of human discipline, more than this one, that nothing short of a personal acquaintance with Christian trust can satisfy its wants. Two other and different resources, indeed, the young woman has: and we need not wander far to search for proofs how often she tries their value. They are her womanly pride, and the excitements of society. What will Christianity do? It concentrates the aimless and restless purposes of woman on the one grand object of a personal acceptance with God. It takes off the load, which no human spirit can bear and be cheerful, by its promise of forgiveness for what is lacking, and by its encouraging assurance that when once the life is consecrated to God no single act or thought of good can fail of fruit in the spiritual harvests of eternity. It offers her what the mind of youth more than anything else craves—a friendship at once unchangeable and trustworthy as the heavens; and so it opens the gates of the city of God straight into her closet of prayer, and, when the world looks most inhospitable, shows her friendly angels ascending with her supplications, and descending with counsel and compassion, between her Bethel and her Father. It not only quickens her to a new fidelity in all the homely ministrations of the house where she lives, towards brothers and sisters, parents and servants; it opens to her the lowly door of poverty; it draws her, by cords stronger than steel, to the unclad orphan and the bedside of sick wretchedness; it stimulates her invention, it exhausts her economy, it plies her fingers, it inspires her intercessions for the instruction of poor children's ignorance, and the redemption of their despair. Another task still Christianity solemnly charges upon woman in her youth. It bids her by every separate obligation of her discipleship be true to immaculate virtue in her intercourse with companions, and in the bestowment of her favour. Would to God that some angel from His own right hand would reveal to her the power she controls for the redemption of those horrible vices that defile and intoxicate the land! for then she might take up her benignant ministry as an apostle of holiness, persuading the tempted by her unbending principle, as well as bearing her own profession incorruptibly. It is time to advance to a later stage of the Christian woman's experience. If her moral power is so decisive at the time when life has devolved upon her the fewest responsibilities, and neither age nor station has vested in her any adventitious authority, it is only more commanding yet when she has taken up the complicated relations of marriage, and assumed the spiritual governance of that lesser church, that sacred seminary—the family. The chief enemies to her Christian simplicity—and thus to the symmetry of her own character, as well as the integrity of her influence—are social ambition, an appetite for admiration, the passion for indiscriminate excitement, and, in other constitutions, a dull servitude to the routine of mechanical tasks. 1. By social ambition I mean the vulgar appetite for those external distinctions which are even more dangerous to woman than to man, because of the inherent natural aristocracy of her nature. A wife or mother who suffers it to be her supreme exertion to rise in the public consideration has already parted with that artless sincerity which is the chief grace of her womanhood. 2. Appetite for admiration. Could some searching census register the number of those who are kept aloof from the love of God by this foolish vanity alone, should we dare to look into the swelling catalogue? Could some magic reflection be added to mirrors, so that, while they show back the adjustment of garments, they should also reveal the emptiness of soul, what dismal disclosures would startle the sleeping conscience! 3. Passion for indiscriminate excitement. What hold has religion taken of that mind which never rests in its insatiable craving for some public spectacle—is never satisfied except when it is preparing for some scene of social display, or exulting over its conquests? There is no noble type of womanhood that does not wear serenity upon its forehead. 4. On the other hand, in constitutions of an opposite inclination, female life is apt to degenerate, if not inspired by religion, into a tame routine of narrow domestic cares, dwarfing the spirit to its own contracted limitations. The very nature of woman requires animation for its health. Religion, with its infinite mysteries, its deep and stirring experience, its boundless duties, offers that needed stimulus—offers it to the obscurest and the lowliest. The Christian wife and mother is a Christian in the spirit by which she orders her household and nurtures her offspring. Too many mothers make their first request for their sons that of the mother of Zebedee's children—that they may sit on thrones of

wealth and power. What wonder if those sons are worldlings, are hypocrites, are criminals? Too many train up their daughters with no loftier aim than to be beautiful brides, or the centres of meretricious observation at summer watering-places, or to value a husband by his income, or not to be over-nice in their judgment of men, because they are not expected to be virtuous like women. Infamous effrontery towards God! And thus I have come, finally, to what may be briefly established—that Christianity exhibits no more perfect achievement than in the completed character of a spiritual womanhood; for, passing on one stage later yet, we find the united result of a life's discipline and a heavenly faith in the Christian woman's old age. Providence has not withheld that confirmation of the power and beauty of religion from our eyes. We feel new confidence and truth, new love for goodness, new zeal for duty, new trust in God, new gratitude to Christ, when we look on her ripened holiness; and, as her strength faints before the power of decay, behold the crown of immortality descending almost visibly upon her head! I cannot so well finish this account of a Christian woman as by repeating the following touching, simple memorial of his wife written by one of the statesmen of England—Sir James Mackintosh—in a private letter to a friend: “She was a woman,” he writes, “who, by the tender management of my weaknesses, gradually corrected the most pernicious of them. She became prudent from affection; and, though of the most generous nature, she was taught frugality and economy by her love for me. During the most critical period of my life she preserved order in my affairs, from the care of which she relieved me. She gently reclaimed me from dissipation, she propped my weak and irresolute nature, she urged my indolence to all the exertions that have been useful or creditable to me, and she was perpetually at hand to admonish my heedlessness and improvidence. To her I owe whatever I am—to her whatever I shall be. In her solicitude for my interest, she never for a moment forgot my character. Her feelings were warm and impetuous; but she was placable, tender, and constant. Such was she whom I have lost; and I have lost her when a knowledge of her worth had refined my youthful love into friendship, before age had deprived it of much of its original ardour. I seek relief, and I find it in the consolatory opinion that a benevolent Wisdom inflicts the chastisement as well as bestows the enjoyment of human life; that superintending goodness will one day enliven the darkness which surrounds our nature, and hangs over our prospects; that this dreary and wretched life is not the whole of man; that a being capable of such proficiency in science and virtue is not like the beasts that perish; that there is a dwelling-place prepared for the spirits of the just; that the ways of God will yet be vindicated to man.” (*Bp. Huntington.*)

Let it not be that outward adorning.—*The influence of Christianity on dress:*—To lay down rules for the regulation of dress, applicable to all circumstances, all ranks, all ages, is impossible. To fix the cut of the coat, the shape of the bonnet, were a hopeless and, indeed, ridiculous task. All that we can do is to lay down certain principles, distinctly asserted in, or clearly deducible from, the gospel.

I. CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES FORBID ALL DRESS WHICH IS NOT HONESTLY PROCURED. That dress is dishonestly procured for which you know you cannot pay, or the payment of which is effected by dishonourable means, by falsehood, by embezzlement, or fraud. It is not in the higher circles only that temptations to obtain dress by dishonest methods occur. The servant maid must ape her mistress; but the wages she receives are not equal to the demands of her pride. But even if every tradesman's bill is punctually paid, still you are guilty of dishonesty if the money thus expended be drawn from other channels in which, in justice to yourselves, or to your families, it ought to flow. You are unjust to yourself if you starve either the body or the mind to decorate the person.

II. CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES FORBID THAT DRESS WHICH IS IMMODEST. The author of my text, in another Epistle, charges the women that they adorn themselves in “modest apparel.” “A prudent woman,” says Mr. Jay, “will avoid whatever would appear light and wanton. The apparel of a woman professing godliness should not be the attire of a woman of the world, much less the attire of a harlot. Females sometimes wear a label on which indecency and indelicacy are written, and then appear to be offended because observers can read. I would not always infer too much from these outward hints; but, in the name of a blush, on what principle can we explain the invention and adoption of certain modes? I describe nothing.” Intimately connected with modesty in dress is health; and when it is considered how many thoughtless females have fallen the untimely victims of disease introduced into the frame by the general scantiness, or the partial distribution of their attire, I am persuaded the allusion will not be deemed improper.

III. CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES FORBID THAT DRESS

WHICH IS UNBECOMING YOUR STATION. It is obvious, by a comparison of the text and parallel passages with the general scope of Scripture, that costly attire is not forbidden where the ability of the person is fully equal to its purchase, without injury to any other claims. The virtuous woman is highly commended in the Proverbs, who, through her industry, clothed all her household in scarlet, and herself with silk and purple. Moreover, the good of society requires persons to dress, in some degree, according to their rank and station. But it is excess that the apostle censures. IV. CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES FORBID THAT DRESS WHICH REQUIRES AN UNDUE CONSUMPTION OF TIME. I will not recount the days and years of valuable time which some females spend in cutting, adjusting, adorning, altering, and improving the articles of their dress, till the world of novelties is ransacked and the invention at a stand: I will not number up the hours, or tell the years the aggregate would make, devoted to the toilette, with peevishness and impatience, till every ringlet is properly adjusted, every plait suitably apportioned, and every gem placed to the best advantage at the expense of religion and humanity, and to the ruin of both body and soul! V. CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES FORBID THAT DRESS WHICH, BY ITS SINGULARITY OR EXTRAVAGANCE ATTRACTS PECULIAR ATTENTION. The desire to court observation—the ambition to be singular—the hope of being admired, is the essence of pride, and in this vice both the extremes of finery and of plainness will be found to meet. “Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God.” Surely, look well to thy attire is included in this injunction. VI. THAT DRESS IS FORBIDDEN BY CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES WHICH SERIOUSLY OCCUPIES AND ABSORBS THE POWERS OF THE MIND. And yet how many females are there the range of whose information is bounded by these limits—the topics of whose discourse are derived from this subject—who understand no science but that of shapes and colours—are acquainted with no art but that of decoration and display—and are conversant in no history but that of modes and fashions. It yet remains that I should produce some considerations by which the observance of them may be enforced. VII. THESE PRINCIPLES SHOULD BE ENFORCED—1. By a consideration of the sources whence your dress proceeds. As clothes cannot impart moral qualities or mental endowments to the wearer, so they are little to be gloried in on another account: they are derived from the lowest sources, and composed of the meanest materials. Nay, more than this, is not the dress on which you pride yourself the memorial of your shame? But for sin it had never encumbered the limbs, nor occupied for a moment's space the care of the unspotted mind. 2. By a comparative view of its intrinsic worth. In a time of universal famine how many jewels would you give for a single loaf of bread? In a raging fever how many diamonds would you sacrifice for a moment's ease? In a parched desert how many embroidered robes would you exchange for a cooling draught? Why, then, should such enormous sums be expended in glimmering pebbles and sparkling dust? Compare them with your books—your Bibles—your souls—all neglected for their sake! Arise to correcter sentiments and nobler aims. Make the Bible your looking-glass, the graces of the Spirit your jewels, the temper of Jesus your attire. 3. Consider the estimation in which dress is held by the wise and good. With them it always occupies its proper place, which is an inferior one; and wherever it rises to excess and glare, indicating the vanity and pride of its possessor, it excites their pity and contempt. 4. The estimation in which you will hold dress in the hour of death and in an eternal world. (*T. Raftles, D.D.*) *Dress*.—St. Peter does not prohibit absolutely the plaiting of the hair, the wearing of gold, and the putting on of apparel; but he desires that the precedence be given to higher and better things. I. Let us not hesitate to say that THERE IS NOTHING IN CHRISTIANITY, RIGHTLY UNDERSTOOD, WHICH PROHIBITS A WOMAN FROM ENDEAVOURING TO DRESS WELL AND TO LOOK WELL. There is no religion in a mean, unattractive garb. Years ago there lived two Greek philosophers, Diogenes and Plato. Plato, who was a man of wealth and taste, had handsome carpets. Diogenes preferred living in a tub, and saying disagreeable things, under the impression that he was “faithful.” One day he came, in an ill temper, into his brother philosopher's drawing-room; and stamping on the carpets, cried out, “I trample on the pride of Plato!” “Yes,” said Plato, quietly,—“and with greater pride.” Is there not something of this pride in “unworldly” dressing? Cannot a woman show her Christianity without making herself conspicuous by singularity? But we will take a step farther. We have said that Christianity does not prohibit attention to dress. We will now say that Christianity requires of a Christian woman to make the best of herself. God the Creator delights in beauty—beauty of form and hue and outline and arrangement; and surely He would have us, His creatures, delight in

beauty also; and surely any one who shows a marked inattention to the comeliness of outward things, shows himself, so far, out of harmony with the Divine mind.

II. THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN WILL ALWAYS SUBORDINATE THE OUTWARD TO THE INWARD. But she will want rules to guide herself by. She will not be extravagant in the money she spends upon her dress. If her personal appearance be a talent, so also is her money; and both have to be considered. Another talent, which a Christian woman will think much of, is her time. The highest praise as to dress, which a right-minded woman would desire, would be to have it said of her by the passers-by, "I did not notice her dress; but I noticed herself; and she seemed an unaffected, modest, genuine Christian lady." (*G. Calthrop, M.A.*) *Female adornment*:—

I. THE CAPACITY OF WOMAN FOR ADORNMENT. 1. We say that the female form is adapted for adornment. 2. We say that the female nature is adapted for adornment. Can kindness, gentleness, meekness sit with so good a grace on a man as on a woman? Is not sweetness of temper reflected in every look, and does it not beautify and glorify every feature? II. THE DIRECTIONS FOR WOMEN'S ADORNMENT. (*J. J. S. Bird, B.A.*) *Female adorning*:—Here, in the Word of life, we have fallen upon a text that deals with female attire, condemning one style of adorning, and commending another. God loves beauty of every kind, both the beauty of nature and the beauty of holiness. How do we know that? Because everything that He makes is beautiful. The works of nature are beautiful on all sides, and on all sides alike beautiful. It is not a bright exterior, and a rough ungainly interior; it is not a polished side to the public road, and a slovenly rubble wall on the shaded side. Nor is the most elaborate design or the most exquisite colour reserved for the most enduring objects. The snow crystals, and the frosted tracery on the windows, are as perfect in design and execution as the monarchs of the forest that outlast fifty human generations. Man is the chief of God's works, and enjoys most of His care. He was made most beautiful, but has disfigured himself by sin. When His best work was damaged, the Creator did not give it up, and give it over. He framed a plan to restore. He desires to have His own image renewed. A man of feeble intellect, in the north of Scotland, was wont, like most of his class, to be very slovenly in his appearance. To this weakling the gospel of Christ came in power. He accepted God's covenant love, and found himself a child of the family. Soon after this change the minister met him on a Sabbath morning, and was struck with his unwonted cleanness, and the efforts he had made in his own fashion to ornament his person. Accosting him kindly, the minister said, "You are braw to-day, Sandy." "He was braw Himsel' the day," replied Sandy reverently; meaning that Jesus, when He rose from the grave on the first day of the week, was arrayed in the Divine glory and the beauty of holiness. The Lord on high, who rejoices to receive the little ones, would, methinks, be pleased to see Sandy's Sunday clothes, and to hear Sandy's simple answer. Peter in this text undertakes to tell how the uncomely may be rendered beautiful. Here is the true adorning; and it is for us, for all. Still deeper goes the apostle's thought when he arrives at the details of the recommended ornaments. "Not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel"—what then? "Let it be the hidden man of the heart." There is a whole Christ in every disciple who lives up to his privileges, as there is a whole sun in the cup of every flower that opens to his shining. When this ornament is worn in the heart within, its beauty is seen on the outward life. In general, a likeness of Christ is in the life of a Christian; and, in particular, "a meek and quiet spirit." When, in the processes of art, a new and beautiful colour is about to be transferred to a fabric, the hardest portion of the task sometimes is to discharge the dyes that are already there. A terrible process of scalding must be applied to take out the old ere you can successfully impart the new. In like manner, the anger and pride and selfishness that have first possession present the greatest obstacle to the infusion of a meek and gentle spirit into a man. If there be a royal, there is certainly no easy, road to this consummation. It is a striking, bold, and original conception, to propose that an ornament should be hidden in the heart. Ordinarily, we understand that an ornament, from its very nature, must be worn in a conspicuous position. When it is hidden, how useful and valuable soever it may be, it ceases to be an adorning. But in the spiritual sphere the law is reversed. Meekness is spoiled when it is set up for show. This ornament, moreover, is incorruptible. This epithet is peculiarly relevant. With the exception of the metals and minerals, ornaments are, for the most part, perishable commodities. Rain soils them; the sun burns their beauty out. In the accidents of life they are worn or torn, or stolen

or lost. The rose and lily that bloom on the cheek are not perennial; the wrinkles of age are creeping on to drive them off and take their place. All these adornings are corruptible. This text recommends one that will never fade. Age makes it mellow, but not less sweet. As it is not a colour of the decaying body, but a grace of the immortal spirit, it will pass unharmed through the dark valley, and bloom in greater beauty on the other side. It will make the ransomed from among men very comely in the eyes of angels, when they stand together round the throne, and serve their common Lord. One grand concern with buyers is to obtain garments that will last—garments whose fabric will not waste, and whose colours will not fade. Yet another quality is noticed of the recommended adorning—it is costly. In the sight of God, and of the godly, it is “of great price.” In the market of the world, alas! we, like inexperienced children, are often cheated. We pay a great price for that which is of no value. We are often caught by the glitter, and accept a base metal for gold. He who counts this ornament precious knows its worth. The righteousness of the saints is dear to God in a double sense. It is both beloved and costly. (*W. Arnot.*) *Woman's dress*:—Common sense, sustained by Christian principle, will ever reveal what your dress ought to be. The coarse dress is not necessarily the fulfilment of the admonition of the apostle Peter. A young woman is not to affect the repulsive robe of the nun, as if that were religion; nor to dress in the drab of the Society of Friends, as if that were humility; she is to dress as becomes her station, and her rank, and her position. We may depend upon it, it is far more conducive to the universal welfare that the highest classes should dress as becomes them, than that they should lay it all aside, and dress like the Society of Friends. What would become of all the lace, silks, and warehouses in the City of London, and in Manchester, and Nottingham, and Glasgow, and other places; what would become of all the mills that are employed; if men were to try to form, what cannot be formed in character, in wealth, or in industry—a universal dead level? All that Peter insists upon, and all that we require is, that the young woman shall dress as becomes her position in life; good taste, which is always a quiet, never a gaudy thing; and Christian principle regulating her in this: and that the aged woman shall be sober, autumn never trying to deck itself in the flowers of summer, nor cold and dreary winter putting on what is not natural—all the splendours and the glories of June; and young and old recollecting this beautiful thought, “Behold the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” (*J. Cumming.*) **The hidden man of the heart.**—*Soul clothing*:—To clothe the foot in costly apparel, and the upper part with rags, were absurd; so to bestow cost in clothing the body, but none on the soul. The soul is immortal, must live for ever; it was created according to God's image, and now the soul is most deformed with sin, and so hath need of clothing, especially seeing God, who is of pure eyes, cannot behold it but with detestation. The Church is all glorious within, and such as would be indeed members of Christ, and heirs of heaven, must look for inward sanctity. This is the most costly apparel that can be, of God's own making, and which none but His children wear. This is apparel for all sexes, ages, degrees, and callings, whatsoever, and which doth well become and fit each of them. This is never out of season, never out of fashion; it fits in youth, in age, in life, in death, and is to be worn by night as well as by day, in sickness as in health, yea, is then in great account, when other apparel is laid aside, and not regarded; yea, this apparel we carry with us out of this world, when we leave our gay robes behind us; and this apparel lasts ever, being the better for the wearing. (*John Rogers.*) *Latent goodness and latent evil*:—If we translate this into modern language, we might say, “The latent good and evil in man.” The heart stands for the source, back of all else, from which our life flows. What we love most, that we are. Wherever our deepest longing goes, there we are going. But this profound tendency of the soul is often a hidden tendency. It is “the hidden man of the heart.” There is in every man a great deal more of good and of evil than we see. Inside of the visible man, whose face and form we see, there is an invisible man of veins and arteries, and another invisible man of nerves, and a third invisible man of bones; and from the co-operation of these proceed the actions of the visible man. What we see in nature is only the visible outcome of what we do not see. So, in the processes of the human soul, what we know proceeds from hidden sources which we do not know. What do I mean by the formation of Christian character? I mean that a man may deliberately choose to be pure, honest, truthful, generous, religious, and that he can turn this choice at last into a habit, so that it shall be natural to him to do right,

rather than to do wrong. What he did at first by an effort, and with difficulty, he now does without any conscious effort, and easily. Now, all these instincts, whether original or acquired, are wholly hidden from our knowledge. They are latent until they are called out by some occasion; then they show themselves spontaneously. Some are near the surface, and appear on all occasions; others are deep down, and appear only on special occasions. The moral cowardice in the apostle Peter, which could make him deny his Master, was latent, and Peter could not believe it possible that he should act thus. Circumstances develop latent goodness as well as evil. You are living among neighbours whom you do not know very well. But they seem to you commonplace, or perhaps worldly. But some calamity befalls you. This event brings out the goodness which was lying latent in your neighbours' hearts; latent because nothing appealed to it. How kind they are now! how self-sacrificing! But the sickness of your child was not the cause of this sympathy, but merely the occasion of its manifesting itself and becoming developed. It did not make, it only revealed, these kindly thoughts of many hearts. Just so the great calamities and dangers of a nation arouse as by an electric touch the heroism and self-sacrifice that there may be in the people. Cincinnatus steps from behind his plough; William Tell from his mountain home; Washington from his comforts; to serve his country in council or battle. But "the times which try men's souls" do not make Washingtons and Tells—they only test them and call out their latent virtue. Woe to the nation, woe to the man who is not equal to the test when it comes! If the test does not cause them to rise, it makes them fall. How many examples there are to prove the existence of this latent evil! We have seen a young man go from the pure home of his childhood, from the holy influences of a Christian community. He leaves his home and comes to the city to engage in business. He trusts in his own heart, in his own virtuous habits. But there is latent evil in his heart, there is a secret selfishness, a hidden and undeveloped sensualism, which is ready to break out under the influences which will now surround him. He becomes a lover of pleasure; he acquires a taste for play, wine and excitement. In a year or two, how far has he gone from the innocent hopes and tastes of his childhood! The latent evil that was in him has come out under the test of these new circumstances. Meantime, another young man, apparently no better than he, has, under the same circumstances, developed the seeds of virtuous and holy purposes, and has become a man of unshaken integrity and virtue. Why this difference? You cannot trace it to education, for their education was similar, you cannot account for it by the influence of circumstances, example and outward temptations; for these were the same in both cases. The difference was in the latent character of the two boys. One in the depths of his soul was then a sensualist; was then a worldly and selfish boy. The other, with no better outward habits, had in reality an inward principle of goodness. And circumstances merely developed the latent good and evil of the two. The fact of latent goodness is as true and important as that of latent evil. If our inmost purposes are right; if we have kept our heart with all diligence; if we have habitually trusted our souls to God, then we have a stock of latent goodness, ready and equal for any occasion which may come to call for it. We need not fear, then, that we shall not be able to meet any emergencies. An unsuspected strength will then manifest itself, a courage and faith for which we dared not hope will triumphantly reveal itself. What, then, is the practical conclusion from these facts? It is that we should both distrust ourselves and trust ourselves; that we should pray. "Lead us not into temptation," yet "count it all joy when we fall into temptation." If we are already conscious of our weakness, we may not need the trial which is sent to show us our weakness. But if, nevertheless, God sends the trial, then it was necessary that we should be tried, and let us count it all joy that it has come. If it brings out an amount of latent evil of which we were not aware, then it is well that we should become thus acquainted with our own depths of sinfulness. The disease must be brought out before it can be cured. But if the temptation, on the other hand, reveals and quickens powers of inward virtue and resolution, then let us bless God for this latent goodness which He shows us. (*Jas. Freeman Clarke.*) *The hidden man*:—The point is, that one should not expend the whole of life on making the outside beautiful, but that one should see to it that the inside is adorned also. You are not to cheat the soul of all its gems and virtues for the sake of making yourself attractive exteriorly by adornments of that kind. It is not for that general subject, however, that I have selected the passage, but for this phrase, "the hidden man." You will have been struck in reading, how much this dual life is insisted upon in the New Testament, especially

how much use the apostle Paul makes of it. There are two elements running side by side in his philosophy; one the outward, another the inward. The outward man perishes day by day, the inward man is renewed day by day, says the apostle; and he dwells in various phrase on that duality, the inward life, and the outward or physical life. Everywhere there is this reciprocal action, the world on the mind, and the mind on the world. The sense, the physical body, is the instrument by which the world acts upon our hidden man, and by which the hidden man acts back again upon the world. Through the exterior world the soul is thus the recipient of treasures. The soul is like a prince who receives embassies from all the provinces round about; presents and tribute come to him from the uttermost parts of the earth. The air, the storms, all human occupations, all governments, individual men and combinations of men, pleasures—all bring influence to this potentate, the hidden man of the soul. Then, in turn, the soul sends forth energy, speech, will; and as the tide that swells and fills the harbour, then reflows and seeks again the great ocean, so the flux and reflux of force between mind and the physical world is a greater though an invisible and silent tide. The laws of the physical world are almost sterile until they are touched by the human will. Natural laws could give us metals in their foaming, bubbling states, but they never made a knife or a sword. Nature made trees, but never made a house. Nature has made germs, man has made the harvest. All the great laws that make summer and winter and the intermediate seasons, all the laws that are called natural, all the laws that spring from political economy, all those laws which are said, in one respect, to be natural laws, are not natural laws until some human spirit sits astride upon them and directs them. Now, the relative proportion between this receiving and the outgoing power determines character. It is the critical line both as respects quantity and quality. Those who live by their senses, controlled by objects to be seen or heard or felt from without, live animal lives. They are savages. Then come those who, receiving much, only give forth the energy of their passions—not intellectual energy, not moral, not æsthetic. They give forth simply the energy of selfishness, of pride, of vanity, of ambition, of avarice, combativeness, or destructiveness. It is the lower tier of the human, and the upper tier of the animal that is affected in them, and that gives forth some voice or fruit. Then come those who give action, the men who have industries, that dig, that hew, that build, converting impressions and the result of knowledge from without into energies by which they give the fruit of physical combinations and constructions. This includes the vast mass of the respectable people of the globe to-day. They are constructors and workers. Then there are those who are over and above all this activity, for the upper always owns the lower. He who gives thoughts can also give construction, though he who gives only construction cannot give thought. The upper always carries within it the privileges and the fruit of the inferior, or of all that is below it. So that the next rank are those who give forth thought and emotion, that have it in their power to thrill their time, or to augment it, to build it up, to defend it; men who live in the higher range of their faculties, and give the fruit reaped from these higher fields, higher and richer. Then come those who, over and above all activities, in physics and even in intellect, have a reserved life which has never had expression except through hymns and psalms, the voice of the teacher and the inspirations of the poet—the utterances of those who have given to knowledge a higher character and a winged form. They are sensitive, open to the subtle inspirations that move in the higher realms, and are men who live by faith or by the higher forms of imagination, not by sight nor by the physical fruitfulness of the human body. In regard to this relative activity of different classes, what they receive and what they give forth, it may be said that it determines, not simply individual rank or life, but it determines also the philosophy or the character of different religions. Take, for instance, the contrast between Judaism and Christianity. Judaism was a recipient religion; Christianity is a projecting religion. The Oriental mind generally receives; the Occidental mind gives forth. A word as to the relative productiveness of these two elements. The productiveness of the mind is generally in increasing ratio from the lowest to the highest; the effectiveness of its outgo is generally in the inverse relation or ratio. Man can more easily turn that which is inspired in his animal range and nature into an external influence and substance, than he can that which belongs to his highest nature. How much of thought there is in cultivated men! How much of thought that goes forth in language! But how much more thought that never rides in the chariot of language! How much men think day by day that is only thinking! In my

orchards to-day there are, I think, on single cherry-trees more than a million blossoms; and probably all but about a hundred thousand of those will drop without a cherry having formed under them. Men are like such trees. They breed thoughts by the millions, that result in action only in the scores and the hundreds. Waves of feeling rise, roll through the mind, and leave no more effect behind them than the waves of unknown seas that have rolled solitary for centuries by day and by night. How much there is of purpose that is blighted and barren! How much there is in goodness, how much in sweetness, how much in love, that runs the circuits and touches all the shores of human possibility, but never comes out nor shows itself! How many there are doomed by necessity, like fragrant trees in the great tropical wildernesses—fragrant for ages, but neither brute, beast, nor man ever smells their sweetness! How many there are that live in society who are capable of issuing sweetness that should be of influence, and that should make a very summer round about them, but there is no channel, and they die without opportunity! The great hidden soul had no tongue, nor possibility of using it if it had one. This hidden man, then, may be called in respect to those things that are the highest and the best in this life, the silent man; for we can say least of the things most worthy to be expressed; and this great silence may be said to determine character and condition very largely. They that know how to repress the lower and the evil that is generated within, are on the platform of morality ascending towards spirituality; and those that ascend to the highest forms can express but little. Yet they have, as it were, a palace within themselves, out of which in days of trouble or trial come forth inexhaustible stores of strength and of consolation. It is the hidden man which is at once the glory and the shame of mankind—the rich of thought and pure of purpose whose life perhaps can bring forth but little outward fruit, but who store up for the eternities grand knowledges, impulses, and actions; and, on the other side, the men who maintain an external decorum, but are full of all uncleanness. This hidden man is more beautiful than any of you think, and more horrible. The saint dwells in many a bosom, not far removed from the very angels of the throne itself. Devils inhabit the heart of many and many a “respectable” man. Oh! bring out your silent man, make him speak, unroll what is written in his thought. How many men could hold up their faces then? And how many men who have produced nothing for the market, not much for the neighbourhood, little for the uses that are common on earth; that have neither the pen of the ready writer, nor the tongue of the orator, nor the wings of the poet, are rich unto God! They dwell in their meditations, and their imaginations remain untranslated into human language or into human conditions, but they are rich towards God. This is a subject that is full of practical meaning; we ought so to co-ordinate the receiving to the giving—the income to the outgo that we shall strengthen and make better both of them. So ought men to organise their lives that they shall be fertile without, and fruitful and rich and abundant also within. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

The hidden man.—I. IT REMINDS US THAT IT IS THE INWARD LIFE THAT MAKES THE MAN. The “hidden man” is not what first meets the eye that constitutes a person’s individuality. It is what his will—led, taught yet ignorant, prejudiced yet biassed, free yet trammelled, great yet little—determines. II. WE ARE REMINDED THAT THIS INWARD MAN FAR EXCEEDS THAT WHICH IS OUTWARD AND VISIBLE. 1. It exceeds it in value. A man would not take the kingdom for his body. Youth or age, beauty or vileness, do not alter the intrinsic nature of the man. Often indeed do we see the noblest spirits inhabit the most unseemly bodies, while those who possess outward beauty are infamous in their lives. As to the stupendous contrast, in value, of the soul over the body, it is impossible to define any just description. A priceless jewel wrapped in a worthless piece of paper is only a faint representation of the contrast which exists between them. 2. The inner man again is the responsible part of our human nature. The body is but the agent. 3. Compare again for one moment the elements of which they are severally composed. The outward, visible man is dust. The soul or living essence is the breath of the living God. Its influence at once exalts the body to the highest step of material creation. III. WE MAY CONSIDER THAT THIS INWARD LIFE IS AS THE TEXT DESCRIBES IT—A “HIDDEN” LIFE. No human eyes can penetrate the veil which hides it from view. It is in our own hearts we live, in our souls we exist, and in our own hearts we must die. It would be a mockery to bring the outside world into our inside existence. It would be bad for us, and bad for the world, if we did not live in a hidden world. Thank God that even our sins are hid. IV. WE WOULD WARN YOU THAT THIS HIDDEN LIFE IS NO SECRET FROM GOD. V. THAT THIS INNER MAN DESERVES AND DEMANDS MORE CAREFUL

CULTIVATION THAN IT GENERALLY RECEIVES. Now, in order to effectually cultivate the heart, there must be—1. A continuous course of introspection. 2. There must be self-communion. 3. There must be the admission of Christ as a guest. It is in the heart that Christ must dwell. (*Homilist.*) *Religion an inward principle* :—When religion is styled “the hidden man of the heart” this language cannot imply that it is totally concealed from the observation of the world. Effects may be visible, while the principle whence they proceed is removed from our view. A beautiful river, which highly adorns the country through which it flows, will not fail to engage the eyes of every beholder. Yet the source of it may not be the object of our sight. In like manner the fruits of pious dispositions can be witnessed by all. But the dispositions themselves fall not within our notice. The words convey this idea, that genuine religion consists in the inward temper. From this view of it some instructive lessons may be deduced. 1. Religion does not so essentially depend upon any particular mode of faith or worship as some may suppose. 2. This subject teaches us that it is highly unbecoming and presumptuous in men to decide with rashness on the religious character and state of their neighbours. Fallible as we are we cannot read the motives of individuals; and much goodness may exist, which, from various causes, has few or no opportunities of being witnessed by the eye of man. 3. If religion be “the hidden man of the heart” it cannot exist, and still less can it flourish without the agency of God accompanying our diligence, watchfulness, and self-denial. 4. Religion, being “the hidden man of the heart,” cannot easily be in danger from causes altogether external; nor is it amenable to human laws, nor dependent on human patronage. 5. Since religion is a principle, the inseparable alliance between the possession of its spirit and our happiness, both present and future, is placed in a new and striking light. The happiness of man cannot be independent on the mind. The purest happiness of the mind will be the happiness of heaven, and the degree of it will be greatest in the cases of those whose religion is most eminently “the hidden man of the heart.” (*J. Kentish.*) *The best clothing* :—It is Tertullian’s counsel to young women: “Clothe yourselves with the silk of piety, with the satin of sanctity, with the purple of modesty; so shall you have God Himself to be your suitor.” (*J. Trapp.*) *Meekness* :—A garment that will never be the worse for wearing, but the better. (*Ibid.*) *Beauty beneath ugliness* :—A woman, famous as one of the most kindly among leaders of the best American society, once said: “If I have been able to accomplish anything in life it is due to the words spoken to me in the right season when I was a child by an old teacher. I was the only homely, awkward girl in a class of exceptionally pretty ones, and being also dull at my books, became the butt of the school. I fell into a morose, despairing state, gave up study, withdrew into myself, and grew daily more bitter and vindictive. One day the French teacher, a grey-haired old woman, with keen eyes and a kind smile, found me crying. ‘Qu’ as-tu, ma fille?’ she asked. ‘Oh, madame, I am so ugly!’ I sobbed out. She soothed me, but did not contradict me. Presently she took me to her room, and after amusing me for some time, said, ‘I have a present for you,’ handing me a scaly, coarse lump, covered with earth. ‘It is round and brown as you. ‘Ugly,’ did you say? Very well, we will call it by your name, then. It is you! Now, you shall plant it, and water it, and give it sun for a week or two.’ I planted it and watched it carefully; the green leaves came first, and at last the golden Japanese lily, the first I had ever seen. Madame came to share my delight. ‘Ah,’ she said, significantly, ‘who would believe so much beauty and fragrance were shut up in that little, rough, ugly thing? But it took heart and came into the sun.’ It was the first time that it ever occurred to me that, in spite of my ugly face, I, too, might be able to win friends, and to make myself beloved in the world.” (*Great Thoughts.*) *The hidden man* :—“Why do you not wear richer apparel?” once asked a familiar friend of Edward I. “Because,” said the sensible king, “I cannot be more estimable in fine than I am in simple clothing.” *Exterior adornment insufficient* :—Those who adorn only the exterior, but neglect the inner man, are like the Egyptian temples, which present every kind of decoration upon the outside, but contain within, in place of a deity, a cat, a crocodile, or some other vile animal. (*Clement of Alexandria.*) *Inner attractiveness the most desirable* :—Plain women, far from underrating beauty, are apt to place too high a value upon it. Their own lack of comeliness is their life-long sorrow. They do not realise that the women who are most ardently and lastingly loved by men are seldom very beautiful. Prettiness wins admiration; something much deeper and more subtle inspires and retains affection. No woman need be ugly. If there is a soul in her body it has but to begin betimes to show through.

From her earliest girlhood the thought she thinks, the feelings to which she gives way, the tones she utters, the wishes she indulges, are sculpturing lines in her face that are capable of making a beauty all her own—lines whose writing will remain when bloom fades and sparkle falls. It is in the beginning of manhood and in the beginning of old age that a man is captivated simply by a pretty woman, and is in breathless haste to make her charms his own possession. The maturer man is far less subject to a mistaken infatuation. He looks for something less ephemeral than a glowing cheek and melting eye. "As a rule I prefer plain women to pretty ones," said one of these discriminating persons. "They are less self-conscious and have more regard for the rights of others. When my wife sends me shopping, as sometimes happens, I always select a plain girl to serve me. You see she knows her lack of personal attractions, and that she has nothing to depend on but the excellency of her services. Therefore she takes infinite pains with her customers. She pays strict attention to her business. There is nothing surer in the world than if you go into a store and select a plain girl to wait on you you will be well served. The pretty girl, on the other hand, knows that she is pretty. It is usually very apparent that she knows it. She trades upon her prettiness. She uses the time and thought she ought to devote to serving you in trying to make you understand and appreciate that she is pretty. And this principle underlies beauty's conduct in other walks of life. I admire lovely women—most men do—but unless they possess more solid attractions than charms of person they are soon outrivalled by their plain and tasteful sisters." (*Daily Paper.*) *A reminder of heaven*:—"To look upon her face," says Walworth of his mother, "was to feel heaven near. It was within her."

A meek and quiet spirit.—*Quietude*:—I. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GRACE. 1. Its leading characteristic is the beautiful. Not so much "the true," "the good," is in his mind as "the beautiful." First-rate Christian excellence assumes lovely forms. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God." 2. The grace is distinctively feminine. The apostle is speaking to women, commending to them their distinctive glory. Here we come on a mystery of nature. All things are set over against each other in pairs, complementary. 3. But may, ought, to be assumed by all. There is a modification of the principle just laid down as to complementary beings and to complementary excellences. The one side may and must appropriate some characteristics of the other, e.g., a pillar all strength would be ugly; all garlands of flowers must fall. So a man all power would be dreadful; a woman all amiability could not carry the structure of life. 4. It is a grace of the interior life. "A meek and quiet spirit." II. THE GRACE ITSELF. The grace commended is that of quietness of soul; but on its two sides, not disturbing, not disturbed. 1. The soul-quietness that is not disturbed. The soul is like a ship on storm-beaten ocean—ever liable to tempest. (1) Causes and occasions of disturbance. It may spring from conditions of body, mind, estate, in the church, in the world. (2) Means of quietude. Quietude a decoration, but also a need. How? (a) Some hints, along the common level of things. (i) Live so as to have a cool brain and a clear mind. (ii) Guard against one's special temperament. (iii) Face facts, and be not content without evidence. (iv) Guard against demoniac might of the imagination. (v) Do not morbidly underrate the kindness of fellow-men, or overrate their antagonism. (b) But rise higher. We need—(i) Strong and growing dependence on God. (ii) To be filled with the Spirit, i.e., to be filled with such thoughts and feelings, that storm shall break in regions below the serenities in which we dwell. (iii) Keep ever in view the quietude of Christ. "See if there be any sorrow," &c., if there be any patience like to His. 2. The soul-quietness that is not disturbing. It is the restless that disturb the peace of others. Ourselves quiet, we shall not fill others with wild alarm. III. OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GRACE. Some characteristics were mentioned to prepare us to look upon the grace itself; these now are separately and finally pointed out to induce in us the cultivation of this grace also. 1. The soul-decoration is most valuable. One knows its worth. "In the sight of God" it is "of great price." 2. Imperishable. (*Henry T. Roljohns, B.A.*) *Of meekness and quietness of spirit*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN A MEEK AND QUIET SPIRIT. 1. A calm submission under the merely natural evils and calamities which we meet with in the world. 2. A moderation of our anger and resentment upon occasion of moral wrongs or injuries. 3. A sincere desire of the harmony and happiness of society, and a disposition to cultivate peace and friendship with all about us. II. WHY WE SHOULD ACQUIRE AND CULTIVATE THIS TEMPER. 1. The intrinsic dignity and value of a meek and quiet temper, which is of great price in the sight of God. 2. The importance of a meek and peaceable spirit in religion, and its necessity for our

obtaining the mercy and forgiveness of God. 3. Another argument may be brought from the great examples of God's clemency and patience, and our Saviour's meek, gentle, and peaceable behaviour while He was in this world. 4. We should cultivate a meek and quiet spirit from a regard to the peace of mankind and the happiness of the particular persons with whom we have any intercourse. 5. We should cultivate a meek and peaceable spirit for our own interest and satisfaction. There is hardly anything that can be more prejudicial to a man than a wrathful and turbulent temper.

III. THE METHODS OF FORMING AND RAISING A SPIRIT OF MEEKNESS AND QUIETNESS IN US. 1. For attaining to that part of it, which consists in a patient submission to the purely natural evils which befall us in the world, the great rule is to impress our minds with a deep conviction of the wisdom, equity, and goodness of Providence, by the direction or permission of which all such evils come upon us. 2. As the most difficult part of meekness and quietness of spirit consists in the due government of our resentment with respect to the authors of moral injuries, we must take care to represent such persons in the most favourable light that we justly can to ourselves. 3. When we feel our angry passions beginning to move in us let us carefully guard against their rising to any criminal or unbecoming height in us. 4. Let us observe the direction which our Lord has given us, to express a meek and peaceable spirit when we exercise our devotion and offer up our prayers to Almighty God. From what has been said we may see that the notions which so commonly prevail in the world, concerning the honour, courage, and magnanimity of men are extremely ill-founded. (*J. Orr.*)

Hidden ornaments :—Who is not fond of ornaments? Even those people who pretend to care only for "the useful" are not really quite indifferent to "the ornamental." We not only have some things simply for ornament, but things which are made for use we like to look as nice as possible. We do not bind books, nor make furniture, nor build houses and churches for the sake of ornament, yet we all admire a pretty book, handsome furniture, a fine house, and beautiful churches. You may remember, in reading your Histories of England, how the early Britons, in their savage state, like many of the heathen still, used to paint their bodies, thinking it improved them. Now, this desire for ornament is laid deep down in our nature, like one of the foundation-stones of a house, and, therefore, it is quite right, so long as it is guided properly. St. Peter is certainly not speaking against all ornament. How could it be wrong, when our earth is full of it? But, certainly, St. Peter does not mean we are not to think at all of our appearance. It is not right to be untidy and slovenly in dress. What, then, you ask, is wrong? To make one's outward appearance the chief thing. Some people give you the impression that they are always thinking of what they have on; they seem to have just come away from the looking-glass, for they are so "got up," as we say, and look more like dressed dolls than like real men and women. But there are other persons who always look nice without seeming to be conscious that they have on, and who never strike you as having spent much time over their toilet, or as if it had cost them much trouble. These are the truest gentlemen and ladies. Now St. Peter tells us what part of ourselves we should be most anxious to make beautiful, and what ornament we should seek for it. And what is the part to be adorned? He calls it "the hidden man of the heart." It reminds me of the Psalm which says, "The king's daughter is all glorious within." But, you say, who ever heard of wearing ornaments inside, where no one can see them? It must, surely, be silly to adorn something that is "hidden." But no! it is not. For any one can see the difference between a heart that is adorned and one that is not, though you cannot see either the heart or the ornament itself. For look at the adornment which St. Peter recommends. It is "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." Let us try to think of some persons mentioned in the Bible who wore this ornament. Did not Isaac, when he took that long and tiring journey with his father Abraham, carrying the wood for the sacrifice, quietly obeying and meekly submitting without any explanation from his father? Did not Samuel, when he got up that night three times and went to Eli, thinking Eli wanted him, and saying meekly, "Here am I"? Did not David, when he bore meekly his elder brother's taunts, reproaching him for neglecting the sheep to come and see the battle; and afterwards in bearing so patiently with Saul's fickleness and bad temper? Above all, did not Jesus wear this inner ornament all through His earthly life? And how can you tell if you have this "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit"? Answer some questions to yourselves, and you will know. Are you rude and rough, or gentle and polite? Are you wayward and wilful, as if you knew better than those who are older and wiser than you are; or do you at once and cheerfully obey your

parents and your teachers? Now, people generally keep their best things for Sundays and "special occasions," when there are strangers or visitors to see them. At other times some persons do not seem to care how they look or what they have; but this "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" is meant to be worn always, out-of-doors and indoors, at work and at play, at church, at school, and at home. And I think you will agree with me that we ought to seek first that kind of adorning which will best commend us to those with whom we live. Whenever you have on "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" they cannot fail to notice it, for, like a lustrous jewel, it will glance out at every turn through a pure, transparent life, and it will make you very dear to all your friends. Yes, this ornament is the most beautiful of all. But again, this "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" is most precious. The apostle Peter says it is "of great price." It is precious, truly, in the sense of being scarce, like rare flowers and ferns and precious stones; for one person who possesses it, you may find a thousand without it, yet who have plenty of the commoner and cheaper kinds of ornament. But this one is so precious chiefly because it is an ornament of God's own making. There is yet another reason why it is so precious. Do you not think the more of a thing if it has cost your parents much money and trouble to get? Well, God made a real and very great sacrifice that we might have this ornament, giving up His Son to show it us in all its loveliness, and to enable us to get it. Then, too, this adorning is most lasting. (*C. S. Slater, M.A.*)

Meekness.—I. To show WHAT THIS MEEKNESS AND QUIETNESS OF SPIRIT IS. 1. There is meekness toward God, and it is the easy and quiet submission of the soul to His whole will, according as He is pleased to make it known, whether by His word or by His providence. (1) It is the silent submission of the soul to the Word of God: the understanding bowed to every Divine truth, and the will to every Divine precept; and both without murmuring and disputing. (2) It is the silent submission of the soul to the providence of God, for that also is the will of God concerning us. (a) When the events of Providence are grievous and afflictive. (b) When the methods of Providence are dark and intricate, and we are quite at a loss what God is about to do with us. 2. There is meekness toward our brethren, toward all men (Tit. iii. 2), and so we take it here. (1) Meekness teaches us prudently to govern our own anger, whenever anything occurs that is provoking. (a) The work of meekness is to calm the spirit, so as that the inward peace may not be disturbed by any outward provocation. (b) Meekness will curb the tongue, and keep the mouth as with a bridle when the heart is hot (Psa. xxxix. 1-3). (c) Meekness will cool the heat of passion quickly, and not suffer it to continue. As it keeps us from being soon angry, so it teaches us, when we are angry, to be soon pacified. (2) Meekness teaches and enables us patiently to bear the anger of others, which property of meekness we have especially occasion for, in reference to our superiors and equals. And here meekness is of use, either to enjoin silence, or indite a soft answer. We must be of a quiet spirit. Quietness is the evenness, the composure, and the rest of the soul, which speaks both the nature and the excellency of the grace of meekness. The greatest comfort and happiness of man is sometimes set forth by quietness (Isa. xxxii. 17, 18). In a word, quietness of spirit is the soul's stillness, and silence, from intending provocation to, or resenting provocation from, any with whom we have to do. The word has something in it of a metaphor, which we would not choose but fairly prosecute, for the illustration of the grace of meekness. 1. We must be quiet as the air is quiet from winds. Disorderly passions are like stormy winds in the soul; they toss and hurry it, and often overset it (Isa. vii. 2), and is an apt emblem of a man in passion. Now meekness restrains these winds, says to them, "Peace, be still," and so preserves a calm in the soul. It is not well to lie wind-bound in dulness and indifferency; but tempests are perilous. What manner of grace is this, that even the winds and the sea obey it? If we will but use the authority God has given us over our own hearts, we may keep the winds of passion under the command of religion and reason, and then the soul is quiet, the sun shines, all is pleasant, serene, and smiling, and the man sleeps sweetly and safely on the lee-side. We make our voyage among rocks and quicksands, but if the weather be calm, we can the better steer so as to avoid them. 2. We must be quiet as the sea is quiet from waves. Now meekness is the grace of the Spirit, that moves upon the face of the waters, and quiets them. It casts forth none of the mire and dirt of passion. This calmness and evenness of spirit makes our passage over the sea of this world safe and pleasant, and speedy towards the desired harbour, and is exemplary in the eyes of others. 3. We must be quiet as the land is quiet from war. It was the observable felicity of Asa's reign, that in his days "the land was

quiet" (2 Chron. xiv. 15). Such a quietness there should be in the soul, and such a quietness there will be where meekness sways the sceptre. A soul inflamed with wrath and passion upon all occasions, is like a kingdom embroiled in war. 4. We must be quiet as the child is quiet after the weaning. How easy its days! How quiet its nights! If put into a little pet now and then, how soon it is over! II. THE EXCELLENCY OF MEEKNESS AND QUIETNESS OF SPIRIT. 1. Consider how creditable a meek and quiet spirit is. (1) There is in it the credit of a victory. Meekness is a victory over ourselves and the rebellious lusts in our own bosoms; it is a quieting of intestine broils, the stilling of an insurrection at home which is oftentimes more hard to do than to resist a foreign invasion. It is an effectual victory over those that injure us. 2. There is in it the credit of beauty. The beauty of a thing consists in the symmetry, harmony, and agreeableness of all the parts: now what is meekness, but the soul's agreement with itself? Exorbitant passion is a discord in the soul; it is like a tumour in the face, which spoils the beauty of it. 3. There is in it the credit of an ornament. The text speaks of it as an adorning much more excellent and valuable than gold or pearls. 4. There is in it the credit of true courage. Meekness is commonly despised and run down by the grandees of the age as a piece of cowardice. He that can deny the brutal lust of anger and revenge, rather than violate the royal law of love and charity (however contrary the sentiments of the world may be), is truly resolute and courageous; the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. Fretting and vexing is the fruit of the weakness of women and children, but much below the strength of a man, especially of the new man, that is born from above. 5. The credit of a conformity to the best patterns. The resemblance of those that are confessedly excellent and glorious, has in it an excellence and glory. To be meek, is to be like the greatest saints. Let the true honour that attends this grace of meekness recommend it to us: it is one of those things that are honest, and pure, and lovely, and of good report; a virtue that has a praise attending it (Phil. iv. 8). A praise, not, perhaps, of men, but of God (Rom. ii. 29). Consider how comfortable a meek and quiet spirit is. Inward comfort is a desirable good, which has more in it of reality. What is true comfort and pleasure but a quietness in our own bosom? Those are most easy to themselves who are so to all about them. A meek and quiet Christian must needs live very comfortably, for—1. He enjoys himself. Meekness is very nearly allied to that patience which our Lord Jesus prescribes to us as necessary to the keeping possession of our own souls (Luke xxi. 19). How calm are the thoughts, how serene are the affections, how rational the prospects, and how even and composed are all the resolves of the meek and quiet soul! It is spoken of as the happiness of the meek that they "delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psa. xxxvii. 11). Others may delight themselves in the abundance of wealth. 2. He enjoys his friends: and that is a thing in which lies much of the comfort of human life. Man was intended to be a sociable creature, and a Christian much more so. But the angry man is unfit to be so that takes fire at every provocation. 3. He enjoys his God; and that is most comfortable of all. It is the quintessence of all happiness. 4. It is not in the power of his enemies to disturb and interrupt him in these enjoyments. His peace is not only sweet, but safe; as far as he acts under the law of meekness, it is above the assaults of those that wish ill to it. Consider how profitable a meek and quiet spirit is. Meekness is gainful and profitable. 1. As it is the condition of the promise. The meek are therefore blessed, "for they shall inherit the earth" (Psa. xxxvii. 11). 2. As it has in its own nature a direct tendency to our present benefit and advantage. He that is thus wise is wise for himself, even in this world, and effectually consults his own interest. (1) Meekness has a good influence upon our health. If envy be the "rotteness of the bones" (Prov. xiv. 30), meekness is the preservation of them. (2) It has a good influence upon our wealth, the preservation and increase of it. As in kingdoms, so in families and neighbourhoods, war begets poverty. (3) It has a good influence upon our safety. Consider what a preparative it is for something further. 1. It makes us fit for duty. It puts the soul in frame, and keeps it so, for all religious exercises. 2. It makes us fit for any relation which God in His providence may call us into. Those who are quiet themselves cannot but be easy to all that are about them; and the nearer any are to us in relation and converse, the more desirable it is that we should be easy to them. 3. It makes us fit for any condition, according as the wise God shall please to dispose of us. Those that through grace are enabled to quiet themselves are fit to live in this world where we meet with so much every day to disquiet us. In general, whether the outward condition

be prosperous or adverse, a meek and quiet spirit is neither lifted up with the one, nor cast down with the other, but still in the same poise; in prosperity humble, the estate rising but the mind not rising with it; in adversity encouraged and cheered up; in both even, like a dye, throw in which way you will, it lights on a square side. 4. It makes us fit for a day of persecution. 5. It makes us fit for death and eternity. The meek and quiet soul is at death let into that rest which it has been so much labouring after; and how welcome must that needs be! III. THE APPLICATION. I. And now, have we not reason to lament the want of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit among those that profess religion, and especially in our own bosoms? It is the manifest design of our holy religion to soften and sweeten our tempers, and to work off the ruggedness of them. 1. Superiors are commonly very apt to chide, and that is for want of meekness. 2. Inferiors are commonly very apt to complain. If everything be not just to their mind, they are fretting and vexing. 3. Equals are commonly very apt to clash and contend. It is for want of meekness that there are in the Church so many pulpit and paper-quarrels. II. Have we not reason to endeavour, since there is such a virtue, to attain these things? For your direction in this endeavour I shall briefly lay before you—1. Some Scripture-precepts concerning meekness. (1) That we must seek meekness (Zeph. ii. 3). (2) We must put on meekness (Col. iii. 12). (3) We must follow after meekness (1 Tim. vi. 11). (4) We must show all meekness unto all men (Titus iii. 2). 2. Some Scripture patterns of meekness and quietness of spirit. (1) Abraham was a pattern of meekness, and he was "the father of the faithful" (Gen. xiii. 8). (2) Moses was a pattern of meekness (Numb. xii. 3). (3) David was a pattern of meekness, and it is promised (Zech. xii. 8). When his enemies reproached him, he was not at all disturbed at it (Psa. xxxviii. 13). (4) St. Paul was a pattern of meekness. "He became all things to all men." (5) Our Lord Jesus was the great pattern of meekness and quietness of spirit: all the rest had their spots, the fairest marbles had their flaws, but here is a copy without a blot. (a) He was very meek towards God His Father, cheerfully submitting to His whole will, and standing complete in it. (b) He was very meek towards His friends that loved and followed Him. First, in His bearing with their weaknesses and infirmities. Secondly, in His forgiving and passing by their unkindnesses and disrespects to Himself. (c) He was very meek toward His enemies that hated and persecuted Him. 3. Some particular instances wherein the exercise of meekness is in a special manner required. The rule is general; we must show all meekness: it will be of use to observe some special cases to which the Scripture applies this general rule. (1) We must give reproofs with meekness. It is the apostle's direction (Gal. vi. 1). (2) We must receive reproofs with meekness. (3) We must instruct gainsayers with meekness (2 Tim. ii. 24, 25). (4) We must make profession of the hope that is in us with meekness (chap. iii. 15). (5) We must bear reproaches with meekness. 4. Some good principles or considerations which tend to make us meek and quiet. (1) That he has the sweetest and surest peace who is the most master of his own passions. (2) That in many things we all offend. (3) That there is no provocation given us at any time but, if it be skilfully and graciously improved, there is good to be gotten by it. (4) That what is said and done in haste is likely to be a matter for deliberate repentance. (5) That that is truly best for us which is most pleasing and acceptable to God, and that a meek and quiet spirit is so. 5. Some rules of direction. (1) Sit loose to the world, and to everything in it. The more the world is crucified to us, the more our corrupt passions will be crucified in us. (2) Be often repenting of your sinful passion, and renewing your covenants against it. (3) Keep out of the way of provocation, and stand upon your guard against it. (4) Learn to pause. It is a good rule, as in our communion with God, so in our converse with men (Eccles. v. 2). (5) Pray to God by His Spirit to work in you this excellent grace of meekness and quietness of spirit. It is a part of that comeliness which He puts upon the soul, and He must be sought unto for it. (6) Be often examining your growth and proficiency in this grace. Inquire what ground you have got of your passion, and what improvements you have made in meekness. (7) Delight in the company of meek and quiet persons (Prov. xxii. 24, 25). (8) Study the Cross of our Lord Jesus. (9) Converse much in your thoughts with the dark and silent grave. (*Matthew Henry.*) **In the sight of God of great price.**—*In God's sight*:—Everything, you know, is in God's sight. Not the tiniest atom in the heart of the earth, nor the faintest twinkle of the farthest star, not a passing smile or frown on your face, or a secret thought in your mind, can be hidden from God. But more than this is meant when a thing is said to be precious in God's sight. It means that He takes notice of it, is pleased with it, and

wishes us to count it precious. Things often look very different to us from what they really are. Coloured glass may look like precious stones. Gilded wood may look like a bar of gold. But God sees things as they really are. This, you see, is beauty of mind, or, as we sometimes say, beauty of character. A statesman had once been a poor lad, but had raised himself by his talents and industry. A rich but vulgar man said to him very rudely, "I remember when you blacked my father's boots!" Instead of losing his temper, he simply said, "And did I not black them well?" This was a beautiful reply—it was the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." (*British Weekly Pulpit.*)

The holy women.—*Holiness the best commendation* :—Note that he saith not wealthy women, fair women, but holy women; here is the ground of his commendation. A little holiness is better than a great deal of riches and beauty. Beauty fades with sickness, wealth hath many ways to take it away, but grace holds ever to life eternal, and commends before God, angels, and good men. (*John Rogers.*)

Whose daughters ye are.—*Sarah and her daughters* :—

1. To begin with, note what a happy circumstance it is when a godly, gracious man has an equally godly and gracious wife. 2. We notice next, as we look to Sarah, that God does not forget the lesser lights. 3. Next notice that it would be well for us to imitate God in this: in not forgetting the lesser lights. I do not know that great men are often good examples. Learn not from the great but from the good: be not dazzled by success, but follow the safer light of truth and right. 4. Furthermore, another reflection arises, namely, that faith reveals itself in various ways. Faith makes one person this, and another that. Sarah does not become Abraham, nor does Abraham become Sarah. 5. We are led by our text to look at the fruit of faith in Sarah. I. It is said of her that SHE DID WELL, "whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well." 1. She did well as a wife. All the duties that were incumbent upon her as the queen of that travelling company were performed admirably. 2. She did well as a hostess. Though she was truly a princess, yet she kneaded the dough and prepared the bread for her husband's guests. 3. She did well also as a mother. We are sure she did, because we find that her son Isaac was so excellent a man; and you may say what you will, but in the hand of God the mother forms the boy's character. 4. She did well, also, as a believer, and that is no mean point. As a believer when Abraham was called to separate himself from his kindred, Sarah went with him. She continued with him, believing in God with perseverance. II. She proved her faith by a second evidence—SHE WAS "NOT AFRAID WITH ANY AMAZEMENT." She was calm, and was not put in fear by any terror. There were several occasions in which she might have been much disquieted. The first was in the breaking-up of her house life. An unbelieving woman would have said, "A call from God? Nonsense! Fanaticism! I do not believe in it," and when she saw that her husband would go she would have been afraid with great amazement. Then, though we do not hear much about her, we know that all those years she had to live in a tent. It is a very trying life for a housewife. Sarah travelled from day to day, and what with the constant moving of the tent, as the cattle had to be taken to fresh pastures, it must have been a life of terrible discomfort; yet Sarah never said a word about it. Remember, they were dwelling in tents as pilgrims and strangers, not for one day, or two, nor for a few days in a year, but for scores of years at a stretch. It was bravely done by this good woman that she was not afraid with any amazement. Now, this is a point in which Christian women, and, for the matter of that, Christian men also, should seek to imitate Sarah: we should not let our hearts be troubled, but rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. 1. What is this virtue? It is a calm, quiet trusting in God. 2. When is this virtue to be exercised by us? Well, it should be exercised at all times. If we are not self-composed when we are happy we are not likely to be calm when we are sad. 3. You inquire, Who are to exercise this virtue? We are all to do so; but the text is specially directed to the sisterhood. I suppose women are exhorted to it, because some of them are rather excitable, a little hysterical, and apt to be fearfully depressed and utterly carried away. 4. But this virtue especially serves in time of trouble, when a very serious trial threatens us. Then the Christian is not to say, "What shall I do now? I can never endure it. I shall die of a broken heart." No. Do not talk so. Try in patience to lift up your head, and remember Sarah, "whose daughters ye are if ye are not afraid with any amazement." 5. And so must it be in times of personal sickness. A Christian woman should not be afraid with any amazement either in adversity or in sickness, but her holy patience should prove her to be a true daughter of Sarah and Abraham. 6. Christian women in Peter's day were subject to persecution as much as their husbands. 7. And so if you should be

called to some stern duty, if you should be bound to do what you feel you cannot do, recollect that anybody can do what he can do. Be not afraid, then, of any duty, but believe that you will be able to do it, for grace will be sufficient for you. 8. At last, in the prospect of death, may you not be afraid with any amazement! Where others show their fear, and sometimes their terror, there should the believer show his peacefulness and his happy expectancy, not afraid with any amazement, whatever the form of death may be. Now, what is the excellence of this virtue? I answer by saying it is due to God that we should not be afraid with any amazement. Such a God as we have ought to be trusted. He worships best who is most calm in evil times. Moreover, the excellence of this virtue is that it is most impressive to men. Nor is the usefulness confined to others. It is most useful to ourselves; for he who can be calm in time of trouble will be most likely to make his way through it. Calmness of mind is the mother of prudence and discretion; it gives the firm foothold which is needful for the warrior when he is about to deal a victorious blow. Those who cannot be amazed by fear shall live to be amazed with mercy. "How," says one, "can we obtain it?" Recollect, it is an outgrowth of faith, and you will have it in proportion as you have faith. Have faith in God and you will not be afraid with any amazement. This holy calm comes, also, from walking with God. No spot is so serene as the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High. When you accept every affliction as a love-token, then will your fear be ended. Next, remember the faithfulness of God to His promise, and the fact that there is a promise for your particular position. Search it out, and then grasp it, and say, "He must keep it; He cannot break His word." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Likewise ye husbands.—*The duties of husbands*.—I. THE FOUNDATION OF DOMESTIC LIFE. "Dwell with your wives according to knowledge"—in accord with the light of reason, sense, humanity, and especially revelation. The very attitude and demeanour of life require to be matters of study and thought. II. THE COURTESY OF DOMESTIC LIFE. "Giving honour to the wife as being the weaker vessel." This consists in a nameless deference, an unflinching regard, a constant forbearance, a remembrance of her bodily weakness, as well as of her subordinate position. III. THE SANCTIFICATION OF DOMESTIC LIFE. "As being heirs together of the grace that is given unto you." (*J. J. S. Bird, B.A.*)

The weaker vessel.—*The weaker vessel*.—Women are weaker in body than men, weaker also in mind, timorous, soon discouraged, soon provoked, quickly take hurt. Yet are not wives so weak but God hath given them competent ability of body and mind to go through with their duties, and as they be the weaker, so they have the weaker works than men, theirs being for the most part within doors. 1. Hereupon let wives submit themselves the more willingly, and the weaker they find themselves, let them trust the more on God, that they may be strong in Him. 2. For husbands, let them use their wives kindly. They must not grieve them, nor disquiet them to their undoing. They be good, costly, and very profitable vessels, for excellent use, but easily cracked; therefore had we more need have the more care of them, as we have of some choice glass. 3. This rebukes those that use their wives ruggedly, sometimes railing at them. A Venice glass well used and looked to may last long, so may a good wife, but some vex and grieve their wives, that they pine away with sorrow.

What an account have these to make! (*John Rogers.*) **Heirs together of the grace of life.**—*The blessedness of Christian connections*.—I. THE VIEW HERE GIVEN OF FUTURE BLESSEDNESS. "The grace of life." 1. He calls it "life" in an eminent sense. Now, it is limited. Then the great ends of life will be supremely answered. Its duration will justify the appellation "life." 2. He calls it "the grace of life" because it is the gift of grace, bestowed in a very gracious way. II. THE ENDEARING AND DELIGHTFUL WAY IN WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE PUT IN POSSESSION OF THIS BLESSEDNESS IN CONNECTION WITH ONE ANOTHER. "As being heirs together." 1. It gratifies our generosity and benevolence. 2. It adds meekness to the intercourse of friendship. 3. Providence has so ordered it that Christians should be not only fellow-heirs but fellow-helpers to eternal life. 4. It provides such a cordial when friends come to part. Lessons: 1. How richly and graciously has God ordered it, that the salvation of Christians should be linked together. 2. How anxious should those who are united by natural affection be, to become heirs together of such a life. 3. How important it is that those who are heirs together of such a life should cultivate the dispositions most suited to it. 4. How desirable it is to have reference to these views in time of need. 5. How terrible is the sentiment of the text reversed. (*T. N. Toller.*) *Duties of husbands and wives*.—1. The first duty which he enjoins is subjection (ver. 1). 2. The second duty

enjoined on Christian wives is "chaste conversation"; in other words, a deportment governed by principles of modest decorum and unblemished purity. 3. The apostle's third direction respects fear. "A chaste conversation, coupled with fear," by which I understand, with Dr. Doddridge, the fear of God, a holy principle of reverence for the Supreme Being, consistent with love and springing greatly from it. 4. The fourth direction to Christian females respects indifference to external ornaments of dress (ver. 3). 5. The fifth advice is on the cultivation of the mind (ver. 4). "Whose adorning," &c. 6. A sixth precept, and the last which he urges on his female friends, is the union of decision and cheerfulness (ver. 6). Doing well is practical decision. The absence of fear with amazement, or of a perturbed dissatisfaction of mind, implies cheerfulness. The apostle suggests three motives to enforce these directions. 1. The first is the probable influence of the deportment of the pious female in affecting the conversion of an unbelieving husband (vers. 1, 2). 2. The second motive urged by the apostle is the approbation of God (ver. 4). 3. The third motive arises from example (vers. 5, 6). But let me request attention to the exhortation which is given to Christian husbands (ver. 7). The duty of Christian men united in marriage is here represented to consist chiefly in three articles. 1. The first is domestic attachment—"Dwell with them." 2. The second duty enjoined on Christian husbands is conduct governed by "knowledge." "Dwell with them according to knowledge." 3. The third duty which is here inculcated on believing husbands, in reference to their wives, is that of respectful as well as affectionate attention, which the apostle calls giving them honour. Dr. Doddridge supposes this to intend a suitable and, as far as may be, a liberal maintenance. Certainly this is included; but the precept appears to go much further. It is a guard against the abuse of that domestic authority which Providence has lodged in the hands of the husband. For how can despotic power reign in his breast, who honours the wife of his bosom? Various considerations to enforce these duties arise out of the apostle's statement of the wife as "the weaker vessel." (*The Evangelist.*)

Heirs of the grace of life:—I. LET US ATTEND TO THEIR JOINT PRIVILEGE. They are "heirs together of the grace of life." The happiness of the marriage relation is generally dependent on the resemblance of the persons entering into it. The significant expression used by the sacred writer implies—1. That both are partakers of "grace"; in other words, that they are real Christians. It is not always so. 2. That they are not in present possession of all the happiness designed for them—"the grace of life." This inheritance, in its largest extent, they do not possess; they are "the heirs." They have many toilsome steps to take in the journey of their present existence before they reach their heavenly inheritance. Uncertainty hangs over every event. 3. They have glorious prospects in futurity. The heirs of God are joint heirs with Christ. II. THE INFLUENCE OF THIS PRIVILEGE ON THE GENERAL DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIANS UNITED IN MARRIAGE. 1. In the promotion of personal religion. Marriage should be improved to form and refine the individual character, but the duties of the individual character can never be annihilated by the social bond. Being heirs together of the grace of life, each of you is bound to be uniformly, decidedly, eminently devoted to God and the Redeemer. The same consideration should operate. 2. On the mutual advancement of piety in each other's hearts. The converted wife or the converted husband is never to be regarded by the other party as one standing in need of no helps to the advancement of the highest interests of the soul. 3. In the engagements of domestic worship and discipline. Wherever Christians pitch their tents, they should without delay erect an altar. 4. On resolutions made before God with regard to relations not yet in existence. Such relations, young people entering into the bonds of marriage ought to anticipate. "We may hereafter be parents" is a consideration which forces itself on their minds. 5. On the general conduct. Married people, feeling reciprocally the influence of religion, will practically recommend it to the approbation of all who behold them. III. THE CONNECTION OF THE PERFORMANCE OR THE NEGLECT OF THE DUTIES OF THE MARRIAGE RELATION, WITH THE ACCEPTANCE AND USEFULNESS, OR WITH THE HINDRANCE, OF PRAYER. "That your prayers be not hindered." 1. To a deep sense of the necessity of prayer, which will be encouraged in the one case, and wretchedly hindered in the other. 2. To the constant exercise of the external duty of prayer. 3. To the cultivation or the neglect of the spirit of prayer. 4. To the experience, and to the diminution of the advantages of prayer. Prayer, if an acceptable, is an operative service. (*Ibid.*)

Marriage:—I. MARRIAGE IS A DIVINE INSTITUTION, AND OUGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY. 1. The original institution might alone

suffice to satisfy our minds of this. It is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency. 2. Nor can it have escaped your notice that marriage was at all times treated as a religious ceremony. 3. Moreover, I cannot conceive of any one possessed of godly feeling within him who can contemplate a rite so instituted of God as otherwise than religious. 4. And next I ask, How can that be a mere civil contract which we are so plainly taught in the Bible is distinctly figurative of Christ's love for His spouse the Church. II. MARRIAGE WAS INTENDED TO BE INDISSOLUBLE, AND THE REVERSAL OF THIS IS A PROOF OF OUR DEGRADATION BY SIN. 1. The original appointment implies nothing less than this. 2. Christ distinctly said that marriage was intended to be indissoluble (Matt. xix. 3-9). 3. The figure of the spiritual union betwixt Christ and His Church wholly fails if marriage was not intended to be indissoluble. 4. But if so, the question arises, "How comes a law of divorce in God's Word, or in our own laws?" To the former question the answer is simply in the words of Christ, "It was not so from the beginning, but Moses, for the hardness of your hearts, suffered this law to be given." "And this," says the Fulfiller of all righteous law, "is the one only cause of divorce being ever permitted among you: it was not so from the beginning."

III. ATTENTION TO THE TEXT WOULD DO MUCH TO RENDER MARRIAGE WHAT IT WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO BE. 1. St. Peter tells you to regard yourselves as "heirs together of the grace of life." Marriage is for this life, and in heaven they "neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God." And yet St. Peter introduces this reference to eternal life in connection with it; and it would be hard to say why he does so, unless it be that a right fulfilment of that condition is a great help in Christianity between man and wife. But this becomes quite certain, if only you will observe one word in the text. St. Peter does not call you "heirs of the grace of life," but "heirs together of the grace of life." This plainly asserts that in religious matters husband and wife are intended to be help-meet for one another—but who will think of this that recognises marriage as a legal ceremony?—that they are not to live a life through with, perhaps, much confiding love and esteem in other matters, but without any care and interest whatsoever in each other's future state. 2. One other remark here must suffice; it is on the importance of praying together. How many unhappy wives and miserable husbands would be rendered blessed if only they prayed together as "heirs together of the grace of life"! Who could rise to quarrel that knelt to pray? (*G. Venables.*)

Matrimonial affinity:—There are some husbands and wives whose conduct to each other depends entirely upon surrounding circumstances. When there is plenty of money at the bank, and prosperity is shining upon the homestead, their affinity and love for each other is intense. But in the gloom of adversity, and under sombre influences, they have no mutual attraction whatsoever, and their affections are kept in isolation. This type of the matrimonial life may be called the chlorine-hydrogen type. Chlorine and hydrogen are gases having a powerful affinity for each other—that is to say, they will unite when brought together in the daylight; but if we change the conditions, if we bring them together in the dark, their affinity is never manifested; and thus, while in the sunlight they rush together with even explosive force, they will remain quiescent in the darkness, and there for all eternity would form no combination whatever. (*Scientific Illustrations.*)

That your prayers be not hindered.—*Unfit for prayer*:—The breach of conjugal love, the contentions of husband and wife, do, out of doubt, so embitter their spirits, that they are exceedingly unfit for prayer, which is the sweet harmony of the soul in God's ears; and when the soul is so far out of tune as those distempers make it, He cannot but perceive it whose ear is the most exact of all, for He made and tuned the ear, and is the fountain of harmony. It cuts the sinews and strength of prayer, makes breaches and gaps, as wounds at which the spirits fly out. When the soul is calm and composed it may behold the face of God shining on it. And those who pray together should not only have hearts in tune within themselves, in their own frame, but tuned together; especially husband and wife, who are one, they should have hearts consorted and sweetly tuned to each other for prayer. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

Hindrances to prayer:—I. First, there is such a thing as being HINDERED FROM PRAYER. 1. That may be done by falling into a generally lax, lukewarm condition in reference to the things of God. When a sick man is in a decline his lungs suffer and his voice; and so when a Christian is in a spiritual decline the breath of prayer is affected, and the cry of supplication becomes weak. 2. Prayers may be hindered by having too much to do. In this age this is a very common occurrence. We may have too much business for ourselves. The rich man in the parable had no

time for prayer, for he was busy in planning new barns, but he had to find time for dying when the Lord said, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." We may even have too much to do in God's house, and so hinder our prayers, by being like Martha, cumbered with much serving. I never heard of any one who was cumbered with much praying. 3. There can be no doubt, also, that prayer is hindered by having too little to do. A very large proportion of Christians do too little. God has given them enough wealth to be able to retire from business; they have time upon their hands, and they have even to invent ways of spending that time. I wish that all could say with one of the Lord's saints, "Prayer is my business and praise is my pleasure"; but I am sure they never will till the zeal of the Lord's house shall more fully consume them. 4. Some people hinder their prayers, again, by a want of order. They get up a little too late, and they have to chase their work all the day and never overtake it, but are always in a flurry, one duty tripping up the heels of another. II. Secondly, we must watch that we be not HINDERED IN PRAYER, when we are really engaged in that holy work. 1. Let us note that some are hindered in prayer by selecting an unfit time and place. There are times when you may expect a knock at your own door, do not just then knock at God's door. There are times that are demanded of you by the necessities of the household and your lawful calling; these are already the Lord's in another way, let them be used for their own purpose. Give to God and prayer those suitable times in which you can reasonably expect to be alone. A pious lad who had no place at home to pray in, went to the stable and climbed up into the hayloft; but very soon some one came up the ladder and interrupted him: the next time he took care to pull the ladder up after him, a very useful hint for us. Select the fittest time and place, that your prayers be not hindered. 2. Worldly cares are frequent and most mischievous hindrances to prayer. A Christian man should be the most careful man in the world, and yet without carefulness. Oh, for more grace and less worry! More praying and less hoarding! More intercession and less speculating! As it is, prayers are sadly hindered. 3. Earthly pleasures, especially of a dubious kind, are the worst of hindrances. How can you come home from frivolity and sin and then look into the face of Jesus? How can the fashions of the world be followed, and communion with God be maintained? 4. Further, prayers may be hindered equally much by worldly sorrow. It is right to be sorrowful, for God intends that affliction should be grievous, and not joyous; but when sorrow is right it will drive us to prayer, and not drive us from it; and when we find our grief at the loss of some dear child, or at the decay of our property, hinders our prayers, I think we should say to ourselves, "Now I must pray; for it must be wrong for me to be so rebellious against my Father as to refuse to ask anything at His hands." 5. There are cases in which prayer is very greatly hindered by bad temper. We cannot pray for forgiveness unless we forgive the trespasses of others against us. Prayer can be very terribly hindered in three ways: if we dishonour the Father to whom we pray, or the Son through whom we pray, or the Holy Ghost by whom we pray. III. We may be HINDERED IN THE SPEEDING OF OUR PRAYERS. We may pray, but yet the prayer may not be heard. 1. First, there must be holy living in a believer if his prayers are greatly to succeed with God. If you do not do Christ's will He will not do your will. 2. In addition to obedience there must be faith. The prayer which avails most with God is the prayer of one who believes that God will hear him, and who therefore asks with confidence. 3. Thirdly, there must be holy desires, or else prayer will be a failure; and those desires must be founded on a promise. There is no use in asking money of a banker without a cheque: at the counter they do not know you; they know the promise to pay, and if you present that you will get the amount, but not else. 4. Furthermore; if prayer is to speed, there must be fervour and importunity. The arrow must be put on the bowstring, and the bow must be drawn with all our might. 5. There must be, next, a desire for God's glory—for that is the white of the target—and if we do not shoot towards that, the arrow will avail nothing. 6. We must also have holy expectancy, or we shall hinder prayer. The man who shoots must look to see where his arrow goes. We must direct our prayer unto God, and look up. Presumption in prayer shoots with the bow of self-confidence, not for God's glory, but for the gratification of itself, and therefore it fails. Some have the idea that, ask what they like of God, they are sure to have it: but I would ask them, first, "Who are you?" secondly, "What is it you are going to ask?" and, thirdly, "What right have you to expect it?" These inquiries must be clearly answered, otherwise prayer may be an insult to God. Straightforward transactions you may pray about, but do not mix up the

Lord with your financing. I am requested to pray for a young man who has lost his situation, through a defalcation, that he may get another place, but instead of doing so I suggest that he should himself pray to be made honest. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 8, 9. **Finally, be ye all of one mind.**—*Christian unity*:—I. WHAT UNITY IS. 1. It is a mutual agreement. 2. It is a mutual care of the common interest. If there be ever so much agreement in opinion and judgment, yet if the interests are divided it is not unity. 3. The terms of union and all the means of it must be lawful. Otherwise it is not unity, but conspiracy. II. THE ADVANTAGES OF UNITY. 1. It is the safety of all societies. 2. Unity best serves the purposes of religion. I need not say that dissensions destroy the beauty and charity of religion, that thereby God is dishonoured. 3. It is the perfection of all political virtues, and for the most part of the Christian virtues also. Good government, wholesome laws, mutual security, arts and sciences, trade and commerce, are all the children of union. And as unity is the perfection of political, so it is for the most part of Christian virtues also. The apostle tells us that love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. xiii. 10). And then for these other Christian virtues, peace, humility, forgiveness, patience, contentment, charity, these do all as naturally flow from unity as a stream does from its fountain. III. THE RELATION THAT IS BETWEEN UNITY AND CHARITY. I cannot express this better than in St. Augustine's similitude. If there be a thorn in the foot, the back bends, the eyes search, the hands are ready, and all parts are quick and active to relieve the member that is grieved. And this is the just resemblance of that charity that arises from unity. The whole body feels the smart and needs of a suffering member. IV. SOME CONSIDERATIONS THAT MAY ENGAGE US TO THE LOVE AND PRACTICE OF UNITY AND CHARITY. 1. The practice of these virtues recommends our religion to the world; that is, it gives people occasion to respect it, and speak well of it, and the least of it is that it gives them no just occasion to speak ill of it. 2. The practice of these virtues makes us like God. 3. It is the state of heaven. Unity and charity are immortal graces; they live at God's right hand, and are part of the employment and the happiness of the other world. (*Thos. Wagstaffe.*)

Unity between Christian people:—I. WHEREIN DOES UNITY BETWEEN CHRISTIAN PEOPLE CONSIST? Leighton suggests that St. Peter here describes five graces, of which love is the root or stalk, having two on either side: on the one side, like-mindedness and compassionateness, on the other side, tender-heartedness and humble-mindedness. II. HOW IS UNITY BETWEEN CHRISTIAN PEOPLE MANIFESTED? III. WHAT IS THE METHOD FOR ATTAINING THIS UNITY? 1. There is a direction as to detail of speech. Refrain from—(1) The malicious. (2) The false. 2. There is a deep and wide precept applying to the whole of life. IV. WHAT ARE THE MOTIVES FOR BEING ALL AND DOING ALL THAT WILL INSURE THIS UNITY. 1. The Christian man is called to inherit blessing. 2. The cultivation of the spirit that promoted social unity ensures the *summum bonum* of the individual life. 3. Relationship to God is the great determining condition and motive in all that leads to true Christian unity. (1) God knows what we are doing. (2) God cares for what we are doing. (*U. R. Thomas.*)

Christian unity:—Not that he would have these Jews to be of one mind with the idolatrous and profane Gentiles amongst whom they lived; but that, being believing Jews, they would all agree together in the matters of faith and religion of Christ, that they would all embrace the Lord Jesus, the only Foundation; and that some only should not look for salvation by Him, some by the law, and some by both, but that all should seek unto Him alone. And as they were thus to agree in matters of faith, so also in their civil affairs, avoiding contention and strife. (*John Rogers.*)

Avoiding divisions:—Beware of two extremes that often cause divisions. 1. Captivity to custom. 2. Affectation of novelty. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

The social ideal:—All of one mind, cemented into a holy unity by a common sympathy. Ministering to the saints. Pitiful to the weak, erring, and poor. Courteous to equals. Calm and forgiving under abuse and injury. Seeking peace. Living under the smile of God. Where in all the world can we discover such a community of Christians? It were a fair vision, worth going far to see. An oasis in the desert. A snatch of celestial harmony amid the jarring discords of human selfishness. The New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven. Yet nothing less than this is the Christian ideal, as it is also that which our Lord died to secure. And it would well become us, if, without waiting for others, each one would adopt the injunctions of these verses as the binding rule of daily life. This would be our worthiest contribution to the convinc-

ing of the world, and to the coming of the kingdom of our Lord. And it would spread. And does not the apostle's use of the word "finally" teach us that all Christian doctrine is intended to lead up to and inaugurate that life of love, the bold outlines of which are sketched in these words? (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Oneness of mind*:—This oneness of mind does not demand the monotony of similarity, but unity in variety. Not the oneness of a hop-pole, or of a pile of hop-poles; but of the plant which, with tendrils, leaf, and fruit, rears itself aloft in the summer air. Not the oneness of a brick, or of a pile of bricks; but of the house, in which so many different materials and contrivances combine to shelter human life. Not the oneness of a child; but of a family of children who differ in age, character, temperament, and chosen pursuits, but are one in love and tender sympathy. (*Ibid.*) **Having compassion one of another.**—*Sympathy*:—We have got into a strange way of thinking about that word "compassion." It seems to imply a sense of superiority in the person who experiences the emotion for which it stands. We talk about sympathising with people in misfortune; but how do we set about it? I am afraid the usual way is to go to some one in distress and say something like this: "You poor thing; I am so sorry for you." And then, if it is a kind of distress that appeals to our superior power for help, we give a little alms, or we do some little act of kindness before we go away, and dismiss the subject from our thoughts. But if it is grief that excites our sympathy, we too often make matters worse by offering consolations in which we do not half believe, such as saying it is all for the best, or time will wear it out. It is easy enough to say that other people's misfortunes are all for the best. But is it always true? Should we like to be told so in a case of our own? Everything that happens is for the best in the wise counsels of our Father in heaven. But it is for us to turn it to the best account. The true sympathy is to enter into the feeling one's self, and share it with the one to whom it properly belongs. And if we believe in the structure of Christ's body, of which we call ourselves members, we must know that what belongs to one belongs to all—"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it," &c. The sympathy suggested by St. Peter's word is a comprehensive feeling. It is not limited to any one kind of experience, such as grief or pain. It must diffuse itself throughout the whole capacity of loving hearts. Let it once but take possession of us all and see how all jangling discords will subside before its gentle touch. There will be no more room for envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness. Let us seek this precious stream of harmony at the fountain-head. Let the love of Christ constrain us to be of one heart and one soul. And now, as to the thoroughness of this sympathy, it must be a partaking of the results of every impression made upon each other. There is nothing truer than the common saying that habit is a sort of second nature, and we all know that we have it in our power to contract very much such habits as we wish. This fact is at the bottom of all our plans for bringing up our children, that is to say, if we try to bring them up after any sensible plan at all. Some of us are naturally more disposed to personal affection than others. And these take more kindly, as the saying is, to the exercise of a general sympathy with humanity at large. It is well for such persons if they do not rest satisfied with the emotion alone and pride themselves on being holier than their hard-hearted brethren. But the fact of being less disposed to feel for other people is no excuse for not trying to do it. We may cultivate it like any other habit, only far more effectually by the grace of God, till it almost seems natural to us to have compassion one of another. I remember urging this once upon a man, hard and unloving by nature, who had trouble in his family, and his answer struck me very forcibly. "I see," he said, "you want me to force sympathy in a hotbed." And that is just one of the ways in which it may be done, and as a tender plant it will repay the greatest care. But, perhaps, all this while, you have no very clear idea what I mean by sympathy. It seems to me that it is another way of expressing a very common idea—that of doing as you would be done by. It is the putting of one's self into the person of another—so far as it is possible or right to do so. That is to say, so far as it comes within our province as brethren, members of the same family of God—nay, more than that, of the same body of Christ—to care for each other's concerns. Think of it when your friends are cross and you are tempted to answer them back—think of it when they are tired and you would worry them into your activity, or when they are cheerful and eager for some enjoyment and you would depress them with your selfish cares. Think of it again when you are judging of other people's conduct under trials to which you have never been exposed, and when words of thoughtless censure or bitter scorn are welling to your

lips. (*H. C. Atwool, M.D.*) *Christlike compassion*:—A good many years ago there lay in the streets of Richmond a man dead drunk, his face exposed to the blistering noonday sun. A Christian woman passed along, looked at him, and said, "Poor fellow!" She took her handkerchief and spread it over his face, and passed on. The man roused himself up from his debauch, and began to look at the handkerchief, and lo! on it was the name of a highly respectable Christian woman of the city of Richmond. He went to her, he thanked her for her kindness, and that one little deed saved him for this life, and saved him for the life that is to come. He was afterwards Attorney-General of the United States; but higher than all, he became the consecrated disciple of Jesus Christ. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) **Love as brethren.**—*Brotherly love*:—I. SOME QUALITIES OF BROTHERLY LOVE. 1. It is a peculiar and Divine principle. 2. It is comprehensive and universal. 3. It should be sincere and fervent. 4. It must be constant and permanent. II. THE WAY IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE MANIFESTED. 1. It will produce unanimity. 2. It will lead to the exercise of compassion and sympathy. 3. It will be regulated by Christian courtesy. 4. It should be manifested by Christians in their uniting in social exercises of devotion, and in the public worship of God. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

Pity:—Notwithstanding the many clear marks of wisdom and goodness which are found in creation, it must be confessed that the present world abounds with misery. How few can be found whose welfare is not more or less dependent on the will or humour of others; considering how much easier it is to injure than to promote human happiness, who can believe that the common Parent of all would have so little tenderness for His offspring as to leave them in a world thus constituted, without some better defence and stronger security than that of reason. But observe how admirably both the accidental and the necessary defects of reason are supplied by the active, uniform, instinctive principle of pity. For by giving to all men this principle, and placing them in a state of mutual dependency, God hath plainly constituted them the guardians of each other's welfare. This tender affection is accordingly found so essential an ingredient in the composition of our nature, that the absence of it is termed inhumanity—a word which carries with it the deepest infamy. For it marks the outrage which nature suffers before it can take place. Interest or passion may put men upon acts of cruelty, and these acts by degrees may be formed into habits. And it were well if certain nations, among the most civilised in other respects, were more sensible of this danger. Nor is it any excuse to say that, for the safety of society, actions must be punished with severity. For though all this be true, yet is any one so much a member of the community as to forget that he is a man? Or does sound policy require that the celestial justice should be transformed into an infernal fury, and employed in a Christian country in torturing malefactors by arts and inventions which are truly diabolical? As errors and corruptions in religion and government may account for these instances of national cruelty, so those of education may generate in particulars the same barbarous spirit. The veriest cavalier must admit, unless he is stout enough to combat conviction, that benevolence and pity are qualities as proper to the whole species as modesty and chastity are peculiar to the one-half of it. When God was pleased to place us in this state of trial, to render it the more supportable He gave men social and benevolent affections. And when He is pleased to admonish them by the mouth of His inspired apostle to be pitiful or compassionate, it is only referring them to those very feelings with which He has impressed, to those very faculties with which He has endowed them. (*J. Mainwrigg, B.D.*) **Be courteous.**

—*Christian courtesy*:—The apostles are not only careful to lay the foundation, but to build up. How comprehensive this whole verse, "Cherish fervent charity," and discover it in acts of pity or courtesy, according to circumstances. By courtesy we are to understand "a considerate regard to the feelings and accommodations of others, resulting from a principle of Divine love, and discovering itself by a corresponding behaviour in all the various circumstances of our ordinary intercourse with mankind." I. SIMPLICITY AND GODLY SINCERITY. The courtesy of the world is an imposing form, a delusive shadow, an artificial mode or fashion which persons acquire under the discipline of their dancing-master. II. DISINTERESTEDNESS. The courtesy of the world is selfishness disguised. III. UNIFORMITY. The courtesy of the carnal mind is a sickly, humorsome, capricious thing, altogether incapable of persevering exertion. IV. IT IS INVARIABLY ASSOCIATED WITH HUMILITY. In honour preferring one another. The men of the world do this in appearance. It is not the habit which properly belongs to them; it is the costume of a better country than that which claims them for its own; a foreign dress, which, like the traveller

in his journey, they find it convenient to assume; a mere cloak worn in public to cover the deformity of their natural disposition. The courtesy of those who follow Jesus is the unaffected expression of a poor and contrite spirit. V. To this may be added **VIOLANCE**. It watches for opportunities of exertion, yet is not troublesome—not officious. It originates in a certain kindness of heart which may be called the wakefulness of love. Lessons: 1. Courtesy is a duty of more than human obligation. A breach of good manners is therefore not merely a departure from an arbitrary rule imposed by the fashion of the world, but a breach of charity. It is a violation of the law of love. 2. Courtesy to man is perfectly consistent with faithfulness to God. A good soldier of Jesus Christ must bear his testimony against sin; but our subject prescribes the manner only of so doing. 3. Man cannot practice Christian courtesy till he has renounced the world; for the world is not the school in which true politeness can be acquired. To be kind to the evil and to the unthankful is a lesson of heavenly wisdom. (*J. Summerfield, M.A.*)

Minor morals:—When the writer was a boy, there was in his neighbourhood a stable where a troublesome horse was kept. This horse had a most inveterate habit of kicking. His owner, however, took care always to explain that though his horse was a furious kicker, “it did not mean anything.” Poor consolation certainly to anybody who received a kick—that the horse had no particular ill-will to him! It was just a way it had! Since we grew up to manhood, we have discovered that the quadruped in question was the type of many bipeds. Some Christians have a genial disposition which falls like sunshine on all around them. Such a man was Wilberforce; we wish there were more of this class—“Gentle unto all men, apt to teach; patient.” “He is a good man at bottom, but has a troublesome temper,” is a character which has many representatives in the Church. And for such the apology is usually made that “it is just their way!” Their way, forsooth! and is that all that grace is doing in them? There is certainly much to annoy in this world of ours. We are engaged, for instance, in some matter of business which requires concentration of thought, when we are interrupted by a visitor whose errand is of the most commonplace description. We feel a rising irritation at the unreasonable intrusion, but the text, “Be pitiful, be courteous,” forces us into complacency, and we are the better for the lesson. Or we are enjoying that very pleasant thing, a busy leisure, say on some quiet Saturday evening, when some acquaintance for whom we have no particular esteem looks in, “just to pass an hour or two, knowing that we were not likely to be engaged.” This is a little provoking, no doubt, and we are apt to give our visitor a very cold shake of the hand, till, “Be pitiful, be courteous,” sounds in our conscience, and we perhaps discover at the close of the evening that we have had a valuable opportunity both for giving and getting advice. Did either of those visitors intend to annoy us? No, by no means. The inconvenience in both cases arose from ourselves, and not from our visitors. How very unreasonable, therefore, would it have been in us to get angry at them, and send them away smarting under some cutting words, in all likelihood to be our enemies for ever after! One advice we would give; it is the result of experience. If you really are so engaged that you cannot afford a visitor a few minutes’ conversation, tell him so. Do it plainly, frankly, politely; and you may be sure that he will be thankful to you for preventing him intruding unreasonably on your time. We pass, however, to another class of cases. We remember hearing it said of the manager of a bank, who died many years ago, that he could say “no” with a better grace than most men could say “yes.” He spoke what was painful in the least painful manner possible. How much does usefulness in the world depend on manner! Often have we seen a harsh manner destroy much good. And living examples there are everywhere of Christian men who would have done much good but for that abominable manner of theirs. No doubt there is an opposite extreme—a silky, whining, namby-pambyism, which in the eyes of all sensible people is despised as silly and suspicious. This, however, is much rarer than the bad manner—the icy coldness, or suspecting distance, or rudeness of the rough Christian. Some years ago a friend of ours was in an omnibus passing from the heart of our city to one of the suburbs. The omnibus stopped to pick up a passenger, who, from being welcomed by the others, was evidently well known and esteemed. Our friend admired the hearty old man, who had a kind word for everybody; and his kind words were evidently considered compliments, though spoken in broad Scotch. From some words that dropped from him, he was evidently a man of unusual talent, and a Christian. Our friend wondered who he could be, and all the more as the unknown, with the most polite attention, gave a poor servant girl some

information which she desired about a house she had been told to call at. Who could this lovable yet mysterious stranger be? It was Dr. Chalmers. The genial old man had room in his large heart for sympathy and kindness to all. If we are to do good to all as we have opportunity, we must abound in kind words. Passing along the street a few days ago, we saw a little child who had tripped his foot, and fallen down. He was crying over his distress. We lifted him up, instinctively saying, "Poor little fellow!" These little words of sympathy were very cheap, but they brushed away his tears, and spread sunshine over his face again. The poorest on earth can say a kind word to his struggling brother or sister; and who can tell the good that may be done by a single kind word? It may cheer an inquiring sinner; it may send a faint believer on his way rejoicing. (*D. Dickson.*)

Christian courtesy :—The words "courtesy" and "courteousness" are derived from the term "court," and are used, in their primitive sense, to describe that refinement of manners which prevails in the palaces of princes and distinguishes the intercourse of the great; and because, from the corruption of courts, those who move in them have often used the manner and phraseology of respect when feelings directly the reverse have been rankling in the heart, the terms themselves have been associated in many minds with all that belongs to flattery, insincerity, and falsehood. Courtesy unquestionably refers to all that belongs to affability of manner in intercourse with one another; but Christian courtesy involves along with it the internal principle from which that affability should proceed. All true courtesy presupposes the principle of benevolence, or goodwill towards men; a desire to promote, and complacency in, the happiness of others. It has been called "benevolence in trifles"—a care in little things, in words and manner and acts, by minute attention, to guard the feelings and to consult the comfort and happiness of others. It comprehends a readiness to conform to their tastes and habits in matters of indifference, an obvious preference of their accommodation to our own; a solicitude to avoid whatever may give pain, when no principle forbids; and, in short, a constant endeavour to prevent pain and impart pleasure. I. Let us, then, examine SOME DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF COURTESY. Towards superiors it is respect and deference; towards inferiors it is condescension and civility; towards equals it is bland and affable attention. Or we shall see better what it is by looking at its opposites. Christian courtesy stands opposed to gross defects and errors in the behaviour. In relation, for instance, to superiors, it is opposed not only to impertinence and presumption, but to obsequiousness. In relation to inferiors it stands opposed to coldness, to neglect, to pride, to positive contempt of them altogether, or a disregard of their feelings. In relation to equals it stands opposed to moroseness, or an unwillingness to be conciliated; to sullenness, or a kind of settled gloom of countenance and carriage; to impertinence of remark and rudeness of reply; to inattention—inattention of two kinds, inattention either positive or negative—that is, either to do something for others, or kindly to receive what is done for us. It stands opposed to whatever is eccentric, or the indulgence of what is not tolerated by the general usages of society. It stands opposed to fretfulness—that is, the art of determining never to be pleased, and the want of disposition even to appreciate the sacrifices made for the very purpose of promoting their pleasure. Finally, it stands opposed to pride—to pride of family, to pride of intellect, to pride of money, to pride of accomplishments, and to the worst of all pride—the pride of spiritual pretensions. It is to be observed that the possession of this virtue in full play implies two things. It implies that benevolence exists in the mind of the individual as a principle; not merely as a fluctuating feeling, according to the flow of the spirits and the circumstances of the day, but as a principle—that is, the steady purpose of the reason, based upon the remembrance of the relation of man and man, and a just regard to the will of God. It implies, secondly, that it is so regular as to be habitual; that an occasion of failure from a sudden irruption of what remains, either of un sanctified or incurable depravity, is felt and lamented; that an endeavour to repair the injury accompanies the neglect; and that the principle is re-established in the moment of the judgment regaining the ascendancy. Let us now observe more particularly the sphere in which this virtue is to act and to display itself; of course, this is commensurate with our social relations, but we may mention some a little more particularly. 1. It should be seen in the family, and should regulate the intercourse of kindred. Here it is the mode of manifesting love, properly so called; and it preserves and purifies affection, by requiring that its expression be respectful and delicate; it keeps it from being disordered and debased by vulgar familiarity; it prompts to little ingenious devices, by which it is sustained. 2. But, further, the virtue to which I

refer should be seen in the Church. As far as the present condition of society allows, it will promote among the members of a church the expression of interest and sympathy. 3. Again, it should accompany the Christian into the world. In the transaction of business a Christian should be distinguished by a readiness to oblige, and a carefulness to observe whatever may diffuse pleasure and give satisfaction. In social and familiar intercourse it requires to be often and habitually observed. But I remark, more particularly, that in argumentative conversation courtesy is eminently required. It should make us fair in argument, just to objections, calm in reply, capable of combining affability of manner with firmness of opinion, and respect for conscience with opposition to mistake. It should lead us to despise a spirit of personality. But two observations still remain. (1) I wish it, then, not to be supposed that Christian courtesy extinguishes all strong feeling, and forbids the excited and powerful expressions of benevolence. Goodwill towards man implies no approval of his vices; love to humanity does not destroy distinctions of character. (2) Neither is it to be supposed that courtesy to others involves a forgetfulness of what we owe to ourselves, or a just sense of what others owe to us. There are two extreme opposites to which the man whose courtesy is Christian and conscientious cannot go; and, therefore, his character may sometimes be mistaken. He cannot give, as is said in Scripture, "flattering words"—that is one extreme. And he cannot return "railing for railing"—that is another. In this descriptive account of courtesy it may not be amiss to make a remark, suggested by our Lord's conduct. It is to be distinctly noticed that in all His allusions to publicans and sinners He never uttered anything against them like the language He employed towards the Pharisees; it was their profession of religion, in connection with their vices, which called forth His terrible rebuke. Now, from this circumstance we learn that in the exercise of courtesy a greater degree of it may be expressed towards decidedly worldly characters than towards inconsistent professors of religion.

II. THE OBLIGATIONS under which we lie to the cultivation of this Christian grace. 1. In the first place, it rests upon the very same authority with every other part of the Divine law. God has expressly enjoined it; and we are thus, at once, in possession of the most infallible of all arguments to vindicate its propriety. 2. Secondly, to Divine authority we join Divine example. Our Lord during His incarnation exemplified this virtue. 3. In the third place, to the example of our Divine Master we add some of the examples of eminent saints. Abraham, when he stood up before his dead and "bowed himself to the people of the land"; Solomon's bearing towards the Queen of Sheba, rising and paying her distinguished regard; many of the prophets, from their department to the kings, though armed with messages to which the monarchs had to bow; but, above all, Paul—Paul, the most distinguished for zeal as an apostle, was the most remarkable for courtesy as a man. 4. I conclude this part of the subject by simply repeating a few passages of Scripture, which either especially inculcate or obviously involve the exercise of the duty. I merely enumerate them: "Be gentle towards all men." "Let all wrath, and anger, and clamour, and malice, and evil speaking, be put away from you; and be ye kind one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"; that is, avoid selfishness, and cultivate courteousness and reciprocal sympathy. "Let each man please his neighbour to his good for edification." "Let your speech be always with grace." "Give honour to whom honour is due." "Honour the king." "Honour all men; love the brotherhood." "Give none offence to any man, neither to Jew nor Gentile, nor to the Church of God." "Let love be without dissimulation." **III. INDUCEMENTS** to the exercise. 1. Now, in the first place, in relation to this virtue of courteousness, we may begin with the very lowest by remarking that an inducement to the cultivation of courtesy towards others arises from the pleasure we experience when it is exercised towards ourselves. We cannot help being conciliated by attention when it seems to be sincere. It prepossesses us in favour of a person. It removes prejudices which we entertain. 2. Secondly, the consciousness of the power should lead us to reflect that others may be acutely pained by little omissions and acts of which it is possible we were not aware at the moment, and by which we meant no evil. 3. In the third place, another inducement, equally worthy the attention of persons professing godliness, arises from the effect which a courteous or an opposite behaviour may have upon men of the world. "Let not your good," says the apostle, "be evil spoken of." This want of courtesy often has the effect of destroying the influence of distinguished excellence. 4. Lastly, in looking at a character distinguished by

this virtue in its real principle, as well as in its manifestation, we cannot but be impressed with the worth to which it conducts and the dignity it confers. It supposes—in its higher state and more perfect exercises—it supposes a very great degree of self-government, a noble superiority to little weaknesses, by which many are characterised. 5. In fine, we should discover an inducement to this duty in the charm with which, when sincere, it embellishes existence. If all mankind were perfect in the principle and expression of courtesy, the world would be the scene of perfect and exalted felicity. (*T. Binney.*) *True courtesy, and how to attain to it*:—I have sometimes seen in the neighbourhood of large towns streets of houses half-built; the foundations have been laid, the walls run up, the roof put on; but the mere shell is there, with no window-frames, no flooring laid on the joists, no paper on the walls, &c. It seems to me that there are many men and women whose lives have been built up by religion about as far as these unfinished houses. They have sterling goodness, they are sober, the foundation is there; but oh! for a little paper and furniture to add comfort and softness, some of the graces of life, and especially the grace of Christian courtesy. I. DISTINGUISH TRUE COURTESY FROM FALSE IMITATIONS OF IT. 1. We must distinguish true Christian courtesy from snobbishness. Many people think that to be courteous means to bow down to a man who has a longer purse, a better coat, or bluer blood than they have. 2. Again, we must not mix up this grace with the mere observance of certain elaborate and artificial rules of etiquette, which men who are occupied all day long with hard work, and who are naturally simple and direct in their way of life, dislike. 3. Courtesy is the natural result of grasping the second great principle of the Christian religion, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Grasp the thought that your neighbour has as much claim to your respectful consideration as you have yourself, and you will become courteous. This consideration will be tempered by a further feeling, produced by the actual position of the person towards whom it is extended. Towards woman the consideration is tempered with tenderness, and becomes chivalry. Towards great leaders in state, religion, literature, art, it is qualified by respect. II. POINT OUT PLAINLY OUR DEFICIENCIES IN IT. Are husbands always courteous towards their wives? There is a neglect, it is to be feared, of this virtue sometimes among Christian Churches. Nonconformists and Church people are not always courteous to one another. Then there is often discourtesy in politics. But why should we impute wrong motives to political opponents? Lastly, is there not room for more courtesy between class and class? Is there not something of an aggressive tone in the "I-am-as-good-as-you" manner of some of us towards those who are richer than ourselves? Of course, you are as good, if by "good" you mean that your soul and your rights are as precious in God's sight. But why needlessly flaunt this in the face of those who have no desire to question it? Those who are poor need not be servile nor blunt. "Be courteous." III. HOW SHALL WE ATTAIN TO THIS SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN COURTESY? The only true way of attaining to it is by living in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (*C. H. Irwin, M.A.*) *Christian courtesy*:—The precept of the text does not, indeed, belong to the highest order of Christian precepts. It does not rank with self-denial, purity of heart, patience, forgiveness of injuries, love of the brethren, love to Christ Himself, and heavenly-mindedness; yet it enjoins a duty of very great importance, and of everyday use. The demands for courtesy are continually occurring. Every person with whom we have intercourse may give an occasion for the observance or neglect of it. It is, moreover a duty which every man has it in his power to perform. It costs nothing. I. THE NATURE OF COURTESY AS A CHRISTIAN DUTY. II. ITS BENEFICIAL EFFECTS ON SOCIETY. III. THE STRENGTH WHICH IT ADDS TO CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE. Courtesy, as a Christian duty, is, in fact, nothing more or less than a particular exercise of Christian love. It is one of the outward acts wherein is manifested that disposition of heart which the new commandment of Jesus Christ inculcates. Yet, as courtesy is but the outward expression of that inward excellence, it may be shown by those in whose hearts the grace of love does not dwell. The very same things to which love would prompt may be done on lower grounds, and from inferior motives. Indeed, the perfection of good breeding is simply this, that it makes a man seem to be what love causes him to be indeed. But then, where the principle of Christian love is wanting, the courtesy which springs from mere good breeding is very partial and very irregular—sometimes it falls short of the mark, at other times it goes beyond it; towards inferiors it is often scanty in its attentions; towards superiors, excessive. "The poor," says Solomon, "useth entreaties, but the rich answereth roughly." This is but too true where the intercourse between these two grand

classes of mankind is regulated by no higher law than the law of politeness. But it is the character of Christian love in no case to behave itself unseemly. Shall I answer such a one roughly because he wears a coarser garment or feeds on meaner fare? Politeness may not forbid it; but Christian love surely will. There is another irregularity in the courtesies of politeness which is not found in those of love. It is one main office of courtesy to keep in check those petulant tempers which, wherever they are not checked, create uneasiness and give offence. Now, if there is any place where it is peculiarly important that a man should restrain these tempers, it is at home. Yet good breeding, which leads a man to curb his sullen humours when he is abroad, by a strange contradiction suffers him to let them loose at home. And here I would observe that the good which is done by Christian courtesy is also done by the imitation of it. The counterfeit, when well executed, passes current, and produces the same effect as the sterling coin. It is here just the same as in the case of almsgiving; the alms which are given from ostentation do the same good as those which are given from love. It makes a great difference to the giver, but none at all to the receiver. Take courtesy on the very lowest ground: suppose there to be nothing of Christian love in it, yet think what it prevents that is contrary to love. Many a quarrel has arisen, and many a deadly feud been caused by the mere absence of courtesy. Where courtesy prevails, no affronts are offered, no feelings are wounded; nothing is said or done which can provoke to wrath. And the benefits hence arising are incalculable. But the most important view of courtesy is that which we proceed, in the third place, to consider, viz., the strength which it gives to Christian principle. Here, however, I must premise that it must be a Christian principle itself before such a principle can be strengthened by its exercise. It must proceed from love, or it cannot strengthen love. And in making this inquiry we may observe that where courtesy is not there is reason to suspect that love is wanting also. It is true some minds are cast in a rough mould, and cover much substantial kindness under a rough exterior. It is a pity it ever should be so; and when it is so, the reality of Christian love appearing in so questionable a shape is not lightly to be taken for granted. Is the grace of God to do nothing for a man? These are considerations well worth being weighed by those who would excuse their want of courtesy upon the plea of a naturally rugged temper. It behoves such to examine themselves whether they be in the faith. Courtesy alone is not sufficient to prove a man a true Christian. 1. In the first place, then, is your courtesy irrespective of persons, shown to the poor as well as to the rich? 2. Does not your courtesy sometimes go beyond the mark, as well as fall short of it? Does it not sometimes degenerate into flattery or a hypocritical gentleness? If, on fairly considering these questions, you have good reason to conclude that the spirit of Christian love does indeed dwell in you, be thankful for so excellent a gift, and let it exercise itself in truthful courtesy as much as possible. By every such exercise the principle of love itself is strengthened. Such is the very law of our nature. And though this courtesy does not of itself take so high a rank as the other graces which have been mentioned, though it is a very familiar, and may be thought trivial thing, yet it has this advantage, that the opportunities which it affords for the increase of love are far more numerous than those which can be obtained from any other source. They are continually occurring. But two things are to be remembered. It has been already shown that love must be formed in the heart before it can be exercised. From what source, then, does love proceed? It springs from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and from nothing else. But though I say this, I would observe, in the last place, that I do not mean by so speaking to shut out the continued agency of the Holy Spirit in strengthening the principle of love, nor the necessity of prayer for the supply of that Spirit. (*J. Fawcett, M.A.*) *Christian politeness*.—1. There is a reciprocal action between an outward department and the radical condition of the heart. Religion is real refinement. It is not surface work, but begins within, with the motives of the heart. It acts outward, and then re-acts inward, as the root shoots upward into the branch, and then, by pruning the branches, the life of the root in turn is improved. As Demosthenes said of oratory, so may we say of religion—action is of the first and last importance. 2. A great deal of Christian kindness is pent up by solid stiffness of life, and so inoperative. Therefore, manners should be studied. A spring of pure water may be obstructed by leaves and twigs, and so is the stream of inward affection clogged by outward hindrances in its manifestation. 3. Considerateness is an essential element of Christian politeness. "Be pitiful, be courteous." It is because your neighbour is weaker and ready to halt that you

“make straight paths,” &c. (Heb. xii. 13). (*Hugh S. Carpenter, D.D.*) *True courtesy* :—General Lee was in the cars going to Richmond one day, and was seated at the end farthest from the door. The other seats were filled with officers and soldiers. An old woman, poorly dressed, entered at one of the stations, and, finding no seat, and none having been offered to her, approached the end where the general was seated. He immediately rose and gave her his seat. Instantly there was a general rising, each one offering his seat to the general. But he calmly said, “No, gentlemen, if there was no seat for the infirm old woman, there can be none for me.” The effect was remarkable. One after another got out of the car. The seats seemed to be too hot for them. The general and the old lady soon had the car to themselves. The Hon. Daniel Webster was walking with a friend in Washington, when a coloured man passing by bowed very low to him. Mr. Webster returned as deep an obeisance. “Do you bow in that way to a darkey?” asked his friend. “Would you have me outdone in politeness by a negro?” replied the great statesman. And in his reply there is great wisdom. None of us can afford to be outdone in this by one of either a poorer or richer position.

Good manners :—There has been for many years now in England a depreciation of the courtesies of manners as old-fashioned and out of place. We agree with Locke, “Good manners are the blossoms of good sense, and, it may be added, of good feeling too.” Up-right and down-straight people need not diminish these excellent qualities, but they might often remember that politeness is not all French polish. (*W. M. Statham.*)

The reward of courtesy :—A few years ago, a couple of gentlemen, one of whom was a foreigner, visited the various locomotive workshops of Philadelphia. They called at the most prominent one first, stated their wishes to look through the establishment, and made some inquiries of a specific character. They were shown through the premises in a very indifferent manner; and no special pains were taken to give them any information beyond what their own inquiries drew forth. The same results followed their visits to the several large establishments. By some means they were induced to call at one of a third or fourth-rate character. The owner was himself a workman of limited means; but, on the application of the strangers, his natural urbanity of manner prompted him not only to show all he had, but to enter into detailed explanation of the working of his establishment. The gentleman left him not only favourably impressed towards him, but with a feeling that he thoroughly understood his business. Within a year, he was surprised with an invitation to visit St. Petersburg. The result was, his locomotive establishment was removed there bodily. It was an agent of the Czar who had called on him. He has recently returned, having accumulated a princely fortune, and still receives from his Russian workshops a hundred thousand dollars a year, and has laid the foundation of the largest fortune in this country: and all are the results of civility to a couple of strangers. When Zachariah Fox, the great merchant of Liverpool, was asked by what means he contrived to realise so large a fortune as he possessed, his reply was, “Friend, by one article alone, in which thou mayest deal too, if thou pleasest—civility.”

Politeness :—During the American War of Independence an old lady, who had a store in Philadelphia, used to say that the most profitable thing she kept in her shop was politeness, it drew the very children to her even better than sweeties. What was it that gave Miss Nightingale such powerful control over the soldiers and seamen in the hospitals during the Crimean war, so that they would have done anything for her in their power; and in her presence they would not have uttered a single coarse, vulgar, profane, or improper word. It was, no doubt, largely owing to her refined, cultured, polite manner, dominated by a truly Christian spirit.

The true gentleman does not inflict pain :—It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say that he is one who never inflicts pain. He is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him, and he concurs with their movements rather than takes the initiative himself. He carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast—all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absent. He guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate. He has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*)

True politeness :—Here is an illustration of true politeness exhibited by both classes of society. One day, in hastily turning the corner of a crooked street in the city of London, a young lady

ran with great force against a ragged little beggar boy, and almost knocked him down. Stopping as soon as she could, she turned round and said, very kindly, to the boy, "I beg your pardon, my little fellow; I am very sorry that I ran against you." The poor boy was astonished. He looked at her for a moment in surprise, and then, taking off about three-quarters of a cap, he made a low bow and said, while a broad, pleasant smile spread itself all over his face, "You can have my parding, miss, and welcome; and the next time you run agin me, you may knock me clean down, and I won't say a word." After the lady had passed on he returned to his companion and said, "I say, Jim, it's the first time I ever had anybody ask my parding, and it's kind o' took me off my feet." (*E. J. Hardy, M.A.*) *Politeness* is the oiled key that will open many a rusty lock. (*J. C. Lees, D.D.*) *Small courtesies not overlooked*.—When the Duke of Wellington was ill, the last thing he took was a little tea. On his servant's handing it to him in a saucer, and asking him if he would have it, the Duke replied, "Yes, if you please." These words were his last words. How much kindness and courtesy are expressed by them! He who had commanded the greatest armies in Europe did not despise or overlook the small courtesies of life. How many boys do! What a rude tone of command they often use to their little brothers and sisters, and sometimes to their mothers! This is ill-bred, and shows a coarse nature and a hard heart. In all your home talk remember "if you please." Among your playmates don't forget "if you please." To all who wait upon you and serve you, believe that "if you please" will make you better served than all the cross or ordering words in the whole dictionary. Don't forget three little words—"if you please." *Politeness and its place*.—Sir Arthur Helps had the happy faculty of putting expressions of wisdom into a few words. It was he who said, "Familiarity should not swallow up courtesy." Probably one-half of the rudeness of youths of this day, that later in life will develop into brutality, is due to the failure of parents to enforce in the family circle the rules of courtesy. The son or daughter who is discourteous to members of the family because of familiarity with them is very likely to prove rude and overbearing to others, and very certain to be a tyrant in the household over which he or she may be called on to preside. There is at this day undeniably among the rising generation a lack of courteous demeanour in the family. Of all places in the world, let the boy understand home is the place where he should speak the gentlest and be the most kindly, and there is the place above all where courteous demeanour should prevail. The lad who is rude to his sister, impertinent to his mother, and vulgar in the house, will prove a sad husband for a suffering wife, and a cruel father to unfortunate children. The place for politeness, as Helps puts it, is where we mostly think it superfluous. *Goodness spoilt by rudeness*.—Goodness with rude manners is in fact like a coquette; or a beautiful river that dives into dark coves and reappears; or a star with two faces; or an instrument that plays sweet and angry tunes by turns. (*Good Words*.) *Not rendering evil for evil*.—*Do not retaliate*.—The old law of an eye for an eye is repealed, in favour of that nobler legislation which bids us do good to those that hate us, and pray for them who despitefully use and persecute us. Let us be like the rock on the wilderness march, which when smitten yielded water to the thirsty hosts. (*F. B. Meyer*.) *Railing for railing*.—To render railing for railing is to think to wash off dirt with dirt. (*J. Trapp*.) *Fire does not extinguish fire*.—Fire is not extinguished with fire, but with water; likewise wrong and hatred, not with retaliation, but with gentleness, humility, and kindness. (*Chrysostom*.) *Good for evil*.—While George Wishart in 1512 was descending the steps of Cowgate, Dundee, from preaching to the plague-stricken people, one of the priests, who determined to get rid of him, stood ready to strike him. George knew he meant no good. "Friend, what would you?" and quick as thought wrested the dagger from the would-be murderer's hand, and flung it on the ground. The bystanders now cried with indignation, "Kill him, kill him, the murderer, the assassin!" and, drawing their dirks, they rushed on the priest. "Stay, friends, harm him not." And George Wishart bravely stood between the angry men and the scowling priest, who slunk against the wall, saved by the one he had sought to kill, whilst the reluctant citizens allowed him to get away unhurt. **Called, that ye should inherit a blessing**.—*The work and wages of the Christian worker*.—I. TO BLESS IS THE CHRISTIAN'S WORK, FOR THEREUNTO IS HE CALLED. 1. The first thing to be noted with regard to this blessing is the calling of the Christian is that it is conceived of not as a mere matter of words and form, but as something real and effective. In order to bless we must not only have goodwill, but we must also have sufficient power and suitable means at our command. Whom the Lord blesses he

is blessed. And the manner of our blessing must be as His. Whom we bless must receive from us the blessing, and to do this we must bless him from the house of the Lord, with the Lord's blessing. 2. Again, to bless is to do something more than to bestow a gift. The multitude which pressed around Jesus and received from Him abundant food out of the five loaves and two fishes had obtained a precious gift, but it was a blessing in the true sense only to those who afterwards confessed before Jesus: Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. The gift may be merely material; the blessing must be spiritual. The Lord blesses that man in whose soul He reveals His Son. These, then, are the leading characteristics of the blessings of the Lord—it is real and effective, and it is spiritual. Our Lord's life on earth from first to last was one continuous act of blessing as thus understood. And now as He is, so are we in this world. As Christ was called to bless, and has, in the fulfilment of His calling, blessed us, so we are called to follow in His steps, and bring to others the blessing which we ourselves enjoy. To continue Christ's work in the world, to be Christ's representatives upon the earth, this is at once the highest and the most comprehensive description of the Christian's rank and position. Seeing, then, that this is our heavenly calling, we ought to consider it, so that we may accomplish our calling, and by word and deed bless as we have been blessed. "Our calling"—the phrase is well understood in the affairs of everyday life. Whatsoever a man's calling may be, upon that he is expected to concentrate his attention. The slave of Satan is diligent in doing his master's will, he yields his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. Surely we must show a like diligence in our heavenly calling by yielding ourselves to God and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Our calling is to bless, and this calling we realise just in the measure in which we surrender ourselves to God, and put all our powers at His disposal, to be used by Him as instruments in His work of grace and salvation. II. We are called to bless, and we are ENCOURAGED TO LABOUR ON IN OUR CALLING BY THE ASSURANCE THAT WE SHALL NOT MISS THE INHERITANCE. We are called to bless that we may inherit a blessing. In the keeping of God's commandments there is a great reward. Simply to be called of God is to receive a blessing. But for the encouragement of the worker in the presence of those who render him evil and rail upon him, so that in his mission of blessing he may not become weary in well doing, the apostle assures him that even over and above the blessedness of being called to bless, there is blessing in store for him—an inheritance of blessing of which he shall have certain foretastes here and full experience in the bliss of heaven's rest. What is the blessing which those who bless inherit here and now? 1. There is, first of all, the joy that comes from the assurance that we are obeying the command of Christ and realising His expressed desire. 2. Then, again, there is the joyful experience of a growing likeness to Christ. It is the truest joy of the disciple's heart to know that he is being conformed unto the image of the Saviour who is so dear to him. 3. And now, finally: What is the blessing which those who bless hope yet to enjoy amid the bliss of heaven? The fulness of the inheritance is entered upon only when all differences between us and the Heir have ceased. And in order that this consummation may be attained unto, we must go on prosecuting our calling, which is to bless as He blessed, who went about doing good, yearning over the unthankful and the evil whom He had come to seek and to save. (*John Macpherson, M.A.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **He that will love life.**—*The true life worth living*:—The text is a quotation from a psalm (Psa. xxxiv. 12). The quotation in the original is slightly varied in the old Greek translation, and by St. Peter. One is tempted to wish that the R.V., instead of adopting "he that would love life," had just added a few letters to the Authorised translation. We should then read, "he that *willeth to love life*," that is, "he whose deliberate will it is to love life; he who sets himself to love a life, which is true life." Let us, then, address ourselves to the question now so often asked, "Is life worth living?" I. WHAT IS MEANT BY LIFE? There are two words in the New Testament which, from the necessities of our language, are alike rendered "life." One of these words, *βίος*, signifies the principle of animal life, the things by which that life is preserved or gladdened, and the span of time through which it is continued. The other word belongs to a higher sphere, *ζωή*. It is the new life; which may be stunted or strengthened, as grace is used or abused; and which, after the resurrection, is to be clothed upon with a fitting framework. The question, then, for us as Christians really is, not whether *life*, in the New Testament sense of the word, *ζωή*, is worth living, but whether *existence*, *βίος*, under mere animal or external conditions, is worth living? The last, no doubt, is an intricate

question, and much may be said in favour of a reply in the negative. We may be reminded of the transitoriness of human existence. The vanity of our expectations may be appealed to, the compression of the successive objects of hope in the iron grasp of the coarse hand of necessity. The loss of those we love is a condition of advancing years. And this is accompanied by the protracted humiliation of the breaking up of the machine, by the sure martyrdom of gout, or of some other bodily torture. With this comes weariness of life. Much, very much, may of course be justly urged in mitigation of this pessimism. "Life rightly used," exclaimed a great statesman, "has happiness for each of its ages." The sweetnesses of domestic love; the pleasures of human society and friendship; the overplus of health over sickness and pain; activities, expectations, little surprises that come to the weariest lot; the air, the sky, the sunshine;—these, and a thousand like things, are woven into a contexture of no funereal tint. "We bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life." II. BUT ABOUT THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, IS EXISTENCE ELEVATED INTO LIFE WORTH LIVING? WE AS CHRISTIANS CAN MAKE NO DOUBT. 1. Present acceptance makes life worth living. "A tranquil God tranquilises all things, and to see His peacefulness is to be at peace." 2. There are times of exquisite pleasure in communion with God. These compensate for the languor of old age and for the slow "martyrdom of life." 3. Nor must we forget the pleasure which there is in work for God. The study of Scripture is a perpetual delight for those who pursue it. The Church's sacramental life is full of joy. The teaching of the young, the ministry to the sick, the gathering in of the fallen, the adornment, the quickening, the elevation of service and worship, have pleasures of their own which give animation and variety to life. But what is to be said of one form of sorrow inseparable from true religion—the sorrow of repentance? "That kind of sorrow is its own consolation"; "He has given a new kind of tears upon earth, which make those happy who shed them." "Oh that we could understand that the mystery of grace gives blessedness with tears!" 4. That life is worth living is, above all, proved by the view which Jesus took of it. Does He not say of Himself, "My delights were with the sons of men"? He is in some measure (if we may reverently say it) like a great artist, when, after the preparatory toil and thought, his idea stands out before him in its definite unity and beauty, and he cannot rest for joy until it smiles before him in marble, or is fixed in the music of deathless lines. No doubt human life is tragic and pathetic, yet there is a magic smile on the face of the drama after all. (*Bp. Alexander.*) *The way to secure good days*.—I. A REASONABLE DESIRE. We have, in common with the beasts the intense desire to preserve our lives, a natural shrinking from death; and it would be easy to show you the important place of this universal sentiment in the Divine economy. It is indeed the basis of society; the secret of man's right relations with his brother. For his jealousy in guarding the treasure of his own life makes him careful to preserve the treasure of life for his brother. But it may be thought that the supreme interest which the Christian has in the life to come should make him indifferent to the continuance of this life. But that notion belongs to extravagant sentiment, and has no countenance from Bible teachings. It is only morbid feeling that leads to ill-speaking of present scenes and opportunities. But St. Peter uses another expression for the befitting Christian desire. A man should hope for "good days": days filled up with goodness, in the sense of good doings, and consequent good enjoyings. Ours cannot be "good days" unless we enjoy a fair measure of health, have useful occupation, and the pleasure of loving friendships. II. THIS REASONABLE DESIRE ATTAINED. The apostle lays down three conditions, and they are all thoroughly practical. 1. He who would see good days will have to rule his speech: "let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." If we would see how this "ruling of our speech" stands related to "seeing good days," let us think how many of the misunderstandings and separations and troubles of our lives have come out of hasty, unwise, unkind, impure speeches. 2. He will have to order his conduct. And that involves work of two kinds, each closely related to the other. As soon as we take our life into our hands, and resolve to get it into fair shape, we find there is much to cut off. The attaining of good ever goes along with the clearing out of evil. And this makes the moral conflict of our lives. We must be doing good, seeking good, filling up our lives with good, that evil cannot even squeeze in edgeways. Activity in goodness is our safeguard. Temptation gains its effective power upon the idlers. 3. He will have to tone his relations. "Let him seek peace, and ensue it." By peace we must understand peaceableness, the spirit of the peacemaker, gentle, considerate, charitable. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*)

Let him refrain his tongue from evil.—*The words of our lips*:—Most important among Christian duties is control of the tongue, and yet it is much neglected. Many who would hesitate to do a foolish or wicked thing do not scruple to say what is both unwise and wrong. I. Let us guard against the UNKIND word of every class. II. Another which we must guard against is THE DISCONTENTED word. Count up God's mercies and blessings every day, and you cannot murmur. III. Let us guard against THE UNTRUTHFUL word of every kind. A lie is no less a lie because it is printed in a prospectus, or written up in a shop window. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *The evil of the tongue*:—"From evil." This is a large field, the evil of the tongue; but I give it too narrow a name: we have good warrant to give it a much larger—a whole universe, a world of iniquity; a vast bulk of evils, and great variety of them, as of countries on the earth or creatures in the world. There be in the daily discourses of the greatest part of men many things that belong to this world of evil, and yet pass unsuspected, so that we do not think them to be within its compass, not using due diligence and exactness in our discoveries of the several parts of it, although it is all within ourselves, yea, within a small part of ourselves, our tongues. 1. Profane speech, that which is grossly and manifestly wicked; and in this part lie impious speeches, which directly reflect upon the glory and name of God; blasphemies and oaths and cursings, of which there is so great, so lamentable abundance amongst us; and to these join scoffs and mockings at religion, also impure or filthy speaking, which either pollutes or offends the hearers, and is the noisome breath of a rotten, polluted heart. 2. Consider next, as another grand part of the tongue, uncharitable speeches, tending to the defaming and disgrace of others; and these are likewise of two sorts—open railings and reproaches, secret slander and detraction. The former is unjust and cruel, but it is somewhat the less dangerous because open. It is a fight in plain field; but truly it is no piece of a Christian's warfare to encounter it in the same way. But the other kind, detraction, is more universal amongst all sorts, as being a far easier way of mischief. The former are the arrows that fly by day, but this is the pestilence that walketh in darkness; it spreads and infects secretly and insensibly, is not felt but in the effects of it; and it works either by calumnies altogether forged and untrue, of which malice is inventive, or by the advantage of real faults, of which it is very discerning, and these are stretched and aggravated to the utmost. 3. Vain, fruitless speeches are an evil of the tongue. Not only those they call harmless lies, which some people take a pleasure in and trade much in, light buffoneries and foolish jestings, but the greatest part of those discourses which men account the blameless entertainments one of another, come within the compass of this evil; frothy, unsavoury stuff, tending to no purpose nor good at all. 4. Doubtless and guile; so great a part, that it is here particularly named a part, though the evil of it is less known and discerned; and so there is in it, as I may say, much *terra incognita*; yet it is of a very large compass, as large, we may confidently say, as all the other three together. What of men's speech is not manifestly evil in any of the other kinds is the most of it naught this way; speech good to appearance, plausible and fair, but not upright; not silver, but silver dross, as Solomon calls it (*Prov. xxvi. 23*); each, some way or other, speaking falsehood and deceit to his neighbour; and daring to act thus falsely with God in His services; religious speeches abused by some in hypocrisy, as holy vestments, for a mask or disguise; doing nothing but compassing him about with lies, deceiving indeed ourselves, while we think to deceive Him who cannot be deceived and will not be mocked. But to add something for remedy of these evils in some part discovered—for to vanquish this world of evils is a great conquest—it must begin at the heart, otherwise it will be but a mountebank cure, a false, imagined conquest. The weights and wheels are there, and the clock strikes according to their motion. A guileful heart makes guileful tongue and lips. It is the work-house, where is the forge of deceptions and slanders and other evil speakings; and the tongue is only the outer shop where they are vended, and the lips of the door of it; so then such ware as is made within, such and no other, can be set out. In like manner, a purified heart will unteach the tongue all fithy, impure speeches, and will give it a holy strain; and the spirit of charity and humility will banish that mischievous humour, which sets so deep in the most, of reproaching and disgracing others in any way, either openly or secretly; for it is wicked self-love and pride of heart whence these do spring, searching and disclosing the failings of others, on which love will rather cast a mantle to hide them. Be choice in your society, sit not with vain persons, whose tongues have nothing else to utter but impurity or malice or folly. But frequent the company

of grave and godly persons, in whose hearts and lips piety and love and wisdom are set, and it is the way to learn their language. Use a little of the bridle in the quantity of speech. Incline a little rather to sparing than lavishing, for "in many words there wants not sin." In the use of the tongue, when thou dost speak, divert it from evil and guile by a habit of and delight in profitable and gracious discourse. Thus St. Paul makes the opposition (Eph. iv. 29): Let there be no corrupt or rotten communication; and yet he urges not total silence, but enjoins such speech as "may edify and minister grace unto the hearers." And are not such discourses much more worthy the choosing than the base trash we usually fill one another's ears with? An excellent task for the tongue is that which David chooseth, "And my tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness, and of Thy praise all the day long." Were the day ten days long, no vacant room for any unholty or offensive or feigned speech! And they lose not who love to speak praise to Him! for He loves to speak peace to them; and instead of the world's vain tongue-liberty, to have such intercourse and discourse is no sad, melancholy life, as the world mistakes it. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

Speak no guile.—*Veracity*:—One of the attributes by which the Most High specially desires Himself to be known by His intelligent universe is absolute and unchanging veracity. Whatever He reveals to us He would have us receive as the pure and simple verity. Whatever He has promised, though heaven and earth should pass away, He will assuredly perform. In this attribute of inviolable truth God commands us to be imitators of Him. He wills us never to utter anything but the exact verity. In the commandment given to our race by Moses it is written, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." In the text, as in other places, He has promised His special favour to those that speak no guile. Our Lord Himself has declared that liars are the children of the devil; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. It is manifest that these teachings have not been without effect wherever the Bible has been openly and plainly spread before the people. Wherever the Word of God is freely circulated, and generally read, a barefaced and habitual liar is rarely to be met with among men who lay any claim to the respect of their fellow-citizens. While, however, such cases are rare, I fear that indirect, and what are termed minor variations from strict veracity, are by no means uncommon. The law of absolute veracity would require that we should utter nothing but the perfect verity. We are, however, limited in comprehension, and imperfect in knowledge. To this our imperfection the law of God has respect, and it requires of us no more than our nature can perform. But some one may ask, Are we obliged to tell every one whom we meet all that we know and all that we are thinking about? Do we violate the law of veracity because we do not make a confidant of every companion, or reveal all our thoughts even to our most intimate friends? We may ask ourselves, and it would be well if we asked ourselves much oftener, whether it is or is not our duty to speak. If we decide, either from moral or prudential reasons, that it is our duty to be silent, it is clear that the law of veracity has no command to utter. If we, on the other hand, decide that it is our duty to speak, then the law pronounces its decision, and forbids us to speak anything but the truth. But the inquiry may arise, Are we always obliged, when we speak, to speak the whole truth? If we intend to convey the impression that what we say is the whole truth, when we know that it is only a part, we violate the law of veracity. If we have no such intention, but merely relate the fact as a fact, without any design to create any other impression, then we are innocent. The same law applies to promises. A promise is the expression of our intention to do something, with the design of creating in another the expectation that it will be done. Simply to express an intention is not to make a promise. If, in the course of ordinary conversation, I happen to mention my purpose to leave town to-morrow, this is not a promise, for I did not intend to create an expectation. If I not only say that I am going, but enter into an engagement with another to accompany him, this constitutes a promise. We are morally bound to fulfil the expectation which we have voluntarily created. If a moral obligation exists, it must be fulfilled. If a doubt remains, we must decide against ourselves, or leave the question to the decision of others. In no other manner can we retain our love of veracity unimpaired. By the habit of deciding doubtful cases in our own favour, selfishness gains the victory over our love of truth, and, before we are aware of it, we become reckless of our obligations and regardless of the sanctity of our word. And here, again, it may be asked—for questions on this subject seem to be almost innumerable—Are we bound to fulfil to the letter every promise which we make, even when it is without any condition? I would not say even so much as this. The very object for which the promise was made may have

become unattainable, and of course the whole engagement falls to the ground. But if I break an engagement from idleness, or because I prefer at the moment to read some book which happens to interest me, I am guilty. It is of no avail to say my friend will excuse it: this may be, but it alters not the fact that I have trifled with my conscience, degraded my moral nature, and sinned against God. All this should plainly teach us several important lessons. In the first place, a promise should always, if possible, be definite, and distinctly understood by both parties. Again, if there be from a necessity a contingency, this contingency should be as accurately defined as the promise itself. And, lastly, when we are in doubt respecting the validity of any obligation—that is, when there is a conflict in our minds between the claims of veracity and those of interest and convenience—it is always safe to decide in favour of veracity. This may, it is true, cost us trouble, and sometimes apparently useless trouble, but it will confirm our virtue and teach us practical wisdom. Such, then, is the law of God, revealed to us in the Scriptures. But, let us ask, Is this law obeyed? Let us glance at a few of the occasions which give rise to the violation of the precept, and we shall see how easily men are seduced into disobedience to the law of God.

1. The inordinate love of wealth gives occasion to frequent violations of the plainest precepts of veracity. When large profits can be secured by falsehood, I am told that, in our large commercial centres, lying and even false swearing are matters of daily occurrence. The common adulteration of articles of traffic comes under the same condemnation. Men take every means to give to a worthless compound the appearance of a general product, and then solemnly declare it to be what they know it is not. Or we may come to facts which transpire every day, in every city and village in our land. The seller represents his goods as of the very best quality, and offers them to the buyer at a price which he declares to be scarcely above cost. The buyer, on the other hand, considers the quality inferior, the price unreasonable, and, at most, is willing to purchase only on a very long credit. The bargain is at length concluded, the goods are delivered, and the parties separate. All at once the language of these men is suddenly transformed. The seller is rejoicing that he has disposed of his merchandise at so handsome an advance, the buyer that he has received so good an article at so low a price.

2. Idle curiosity gives occasion to a large amount of false speaking. Many persons have an insatiable desire to know all the affairs of their neighbours, their likes and dislikes, their domestic arrangements, their opinions on all matters and of all persons, and thus to worm themselves into the most secret recesses of their confidence. This is commonly done from no malicious design—for such persons are commonly good-natured—but from mere childish inquisitiveness. To accomplish our purpose, however, not a little management is necessary, and we are obliged to pretend to know already much of which we are entirely ignorant. This is the first departure from truth. We obtained our knowledge under the injunction of secrecy. But a secret which does not belong to us is not easily kept, for this intense desire to know is always accompanied by an equally intense desire to tell. We must reveal it to our intimate friends; and here is departure from truth the second. Or, again, we may meet with another person as inquisitive as ourselves, in whom we dare not confide, and whose prying curiosity we can elude in no other way than by falsehood or prevarication; here is departure the third. Thus the habit grows upon us.

3. Another frequent occasion for falsehood is found in the fear of speaking or acting at variance with received conventionalities. We express joy when we feel none. We counterfeit sadness when we suffer no sorrow. We use the expressions that are in vogue without any regard to the truthfulness of their application, but merely because we hear them used by others. Many a family has become habitual liars by the daily repetition of these conventional falsehoods. Children know that such language is false, and they must have more than usual virtue if they are not fatally corrupted. But some one will say, To do as you advise, and avoid the errors against which you have cautioned us, would require great care and intense watchfulness in all our conversation. We should be obliged to think before we speak, abandon many of the ordinary topics of discourse, and be content to improve men rather than amuse them. Be it so. In this we shall only follow the examples of better and wiser men. It was the prayer of David, "Set a watch, O Lord, over my mouth; keep the door of my lips." But you will say, To obey these precepts with strictness, to speak nothing but the simple verity, and utter only what God will approve, would render us very peculiar. The world lieth in wickedness, and how can a child of God live in it, and not be peculiar? Wicked men imitate the example of the father of lies; and can we be imitators of the God of truth without being

peculiar? Was there ever a being on earth so peculiar as Jesus of Nazareth, the Author and Finisher of our faith? Unless the teachings of Christ exert their effect on our intercourse with our fellow-men, what do we more than others? and how shall the world be the better or the wiser for our having lived in it? But, you will say, this is a lesson most difficult to be learned. It requires that we should be always on our guard, watching over ourselves with a vigilance such as we had never imagined. The gospel of Christ has provided for us all needful assistance. The cure must be performed in the inmost spirit, and the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. (*F. Wayland.*)

Eschew evil.—*The evil of sin*:—This we must eschew, as the bullet shot out of a gun, or to be stricken with a sharp sword; we must abhor it, as a toad or poison; we must abhor it with a deadly, an utter hatred, and accordingly avoid it most carefully. (*John Rogers.*)

Why sin must be avoided:—1. God is thereby dishonoured (1 Sam. xv. 23). 2. God's wrath is provoked, and that must needs be dangerous (Psa. cvi. 29; Jer. vii. 17). 3. God hates it and such as commit it (Psa. v. 4; Deut. xxviii. 15; Lev. xxvi. 14.) 4. It brought misery into the world, with shame and confusion upon all, and hath always been the cause of all evils. 5. It bringeth eternal destruction both of body and soul. (*Ibid.*)

All sins to be eschewed:—1. We are to eschew all evil, even the least. 2. All persons are to eschew the same, not the greatest excepted; God's law binds them, be they princes, magistrates, ministers, &c. They should eschew it most, for by their example they do most hurt. 3. At all times. Some things be in season at one time, some at another, but sin is never in season. 4. In all places. God is the God of all places, neither can any place change the nature of sin. Thou must eschew sin as well abroad as at home; in thy house, chamber, shop, as well as at church. 5. All kinds of sin are also to be avoided. Error in judgment and wickedness in conversation, evil against God, our neighbours, or ourselves. 6. We must also avoid evil under what colour or pretence soever it comes. (*Ibid.*)

Dangers in life to be avoided:—I think we ought to buoy for ourselves in our course, as we buoy a harbour. Off this shoal a black buoy floats, and says to those who sail by, as plainly as if it spoke in all languages, "Keep to the right here"; and over against it floats another, and says, "Keep to the left here." Now, in life's ocean, wherever we know the quicksands are, wherever we have once been stranded, let us sink the buoy and anchor of memory, and keep to the right or the left, as the shoal may be. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Eschew evil and do good:—In an old English work entitled, "Warwick's Spare Moments," we find the following excellent remarks: "When I plant a choyse flower in a fertile soyle, I see nature presently to thrust up with it the stinging nettle, the stinking hemlocks, the drowzie poppie, and many noysome weeds, which will either choake my plant with excluding the sunne, or divert its nourishment to themselves; but if I weed but these at first, my flower thrives to its goodnesse and glory. This is also my case when I endeavour to plant grace in the fertile soyle of a good wit; for luxurious nature thrusts up with it either stinging wrath, or stinking wantonnesse, or drowzie sloath, or some other vices, which robb my plant of its desired flourishing, but these being pluckt up, the good wit produceth, in its time, the faire flower of virtue. I will not, therefore, think the best wits, as they are wits, fittest to make the best men, but as they are the purged best wits. The ground of their goodnesse is, not the goodnesse of their wit's ground, the good weeding and cleansing it. I must first eschew the evill ere I can doe good; supplant vices, ere I can implant virtue."

And do good.—*Christians must be doers of good*:—1. It is good and amiable of itself, as the Lord is. 2. God commands it, who is our Sovereign Lord and King. 3. All promises in Scripture of good things, here and hereafter, are made to well-doing (Lev. xxvi.; Deut. xxviii.). 4. This brings us peace of conscience in this world. 5. This brings us to eternal happiness in the world to come (Matt. vii. 21; John v. 29; Rom. ii. 10). 6. It is the glory of a man when he is dead. (*John Rogers.*)

The extent of well-doing required:—1. We must do all good that we can, and our places require, having respect unto all God's commandments (Psa. cxix. 6; Luke i. 6; 2 Kings xxiii. 25). 2. We must do good at all times. Acquish fits of goodness, as before the Communion, or in afflictions, &c., God cares not for; He will have us to be ever doing some good. 3. We must do good in all places; not in the church only, but everywhere. 4. So in all companies we must do good, or take good; if we cannot do what we would, we must do what we can; it is some good to keep away evil. 5. We must do good to all persons, all duties towards God—publicly, privately, on His Sabbaths, on other days; so towards our families, neighbours, friends, superiors, inferiors, equals. We must do good as occasion offers

itself, yea, towards our enemies. 6. We must do good in our general calling as Christians, by a holy conversation agreeable to our profession, and by our counsels, exhortations, admonitions, reproofs, prayers. We must do good also in our particular callings, as magistrates, ministers, husbands, wives, parents, masters, &c. 7. We must do good also, though it be hard and difficult so to do. If one way will not serve the turn, whereby to bring to pass our religious purposes, we must set upon another, as Luke v. 18. 8. We must do good, though we have no thanks for our labour, yea, though we have ill-will and hard measure. 9. We must do good also, though we have few encouragements and small company (Josh. xxiv. 15). 10. We must do good while we may, while life and means last, yea and constantly. 11. We must also do the same in a particular faith, and in uprightness of heart, declaring the same by the reformation of our lives; and this must be in obedience to God, aiming at His glory, and not seeking ourselves, either in our profit, pleasure, or credit, &c., all which must be done willingly. (*Ibid.*) *Do good*:—All are doing good or evil. Men are sowing to the flesh or to the spirit. Every man is working iniquity or righteousness. To do good is Godlike. The Most High has never left Himself without witness, in that “He did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” We ought to be like God. Because God is holy, and perfect, and beneficent, we ought to be pure, and upright, and useful. To live for the good of others makes us like Christ. He went about doing good. He is our Pattern as well as our Redeemer. Then we are often commanded to be doing good. Here are a few words of Scripture: “Trust in the Lord, and do good”; “Depart from evil, and do good”; “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you”; “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men”; “To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”; “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” Our redemption by Christ was to this very end (Titus ii. 14). It is well to have some rules for doing good. Here are some: 1. Set your heart on doing good. Be instant in season and out of season. Be in dead earnest. 2. Begin at once. The opportunity is never wanting. 3. Study how to do good. Read God’s Word and the lives of good men and see how others did good. Ingeniously find out right ways, the best ways, of working. 4. Pray for Divine direction. God is all-wise. Beseech Him to use you for His glory and the good of men. 5. Never despise the day of small things. I have been at the heads of some of our noble rivers, and a barrel would have held all the waters they sent forth in an hour. One grain of wheat has in a few years been so multiplied as to produce millions of bushels in a year. 6. Be not afraid of trials. They are sure to come, but go on. Expect opposition, but do not needlessly provoke it. 7. Aim high. Earnestly covet the best gifts and the largest success. He who strives to do but little will commonly do less. Plan great things. 8. Keep your heart with all diligence. Watch against pride, and vanity, and self-seeking. 9. While you love God supremely, love all men fervently. Cherish the purest and most kindly feelings. 10. Give no just cause of offence. Be not morose or censorious. Meddle not. Be not a critic, nor a judge, nor a busybody; but be the servant of all men for their good. 11. Never discourage others in their good works. 12. Not only work yourself, but set others to doing good according to their ability. “He who makes a king is greater than a king.” He who incites another to a life of usefulness, doubles his own. 13. Be prepared for delays, disappointments, and discouragements. God may design to cure your hot haste and rashness by subjecting you to many hindrances. 14. Be diligent. Be always at it. He that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Blessed are they that sow by all watercourses. 15. Cheerfully and trustfully leave all issues with God. Duty is yours. Results are the Lord’s. 16. Always do the best you can under the circumstances. If you cannot run, walk; if you cannot walk, crawl; if you cannot crawl, your strength is to sit still. But let nothing fail through your inadvertence, or unbelief, or vanity, or cowardice, or prayerlessness. 17. Waste no time on unwise plans and impracticable schemes. Be sure you are right, then go ahead. Prove all things. Learn to discriminate. All is not gold that glitters. 18. Beware of all superstition. God has no pleasure in fools. We cannot honour Him in things whereof we ought to be ashamed. Follow divinely sanctioned methods of doing good. 19. Guard against fanaticism. God has no use for our delusions. Mild enthusiasm is a great foe to better piety. Like a fire in a forest, it burns up all the tender plants of righteousness. 20. But never confound pure, humble, intelligent zeal with

its counterfeits. Superstition and fanaticism are from beneath, holy zeal is from above. Be keenly alive and ready to every good work. 21. Count nothing of much value in comparison of the soul. 22. Obtain and retain a deep sense of the great price put into your hand to do good and to lay up treasure in heaven. In the great gospel harvest, he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal. 23. Put a high estimate on the value of time and opportunity. "I have lost a day" ought to be a dreadful sound in the ears of any mortal. Be on the alert. 24. Keep your eye on the person and grace of Christ. Without Him you can do nothing. He is our wisdom and strength and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. None ever followed Him too closely nor relied upon Him too exclusively. (*W. S. Plumer, D.D.*) **Seek peace, and ensue it.**—*On seeking peace*:—I. WHAT WE ARE OBLIGED TO DO. 1. To reform our hearts and lives. We must subdue our lusts and bridle our passions, and govern our tongues, and conduct ourselves by the holy laws of our religion. 2. To obey our superiors as far as lawfully we can. 3. In those things in which we dissent from others we are to judge for ourselves only, and not for others. 4. That we be very diligent in the search after truth, as well as sincere lovers of it. 5. That we preserve in our minds a difference between the great things of religion and the smaller things relating to it, and let them have a proportionable regard and esteem. 6. That we endeavour to be exemplary in all those things in which we are all agreed. 7. We must put as favourable a construction upon things and judge as charitably of all men as they are capable of. 8. We must be careful that we give no offence to our weak brother in things that are indifferent. 9. Let us often consider how great mercies we enjoy, and with all thankfulness bless the holy name of God. This method will divert our complaints into praises, and greatly tend to the peace of the Church. 10. Let us put up our fervent prayers to God for the peace of the Church and State: to God, who maketh men to be of one mind: to God, who is the God of peace and unity and love. II. SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES OF PEACE AND UNITY, AND ITS TENDENCY TOWARDS OUR HAPPINESS. Peace and unity hath given us the advantage of waiting upon God without distraction; it strengthens us against a common enemy and commends our holy religion to those who are strangers to it. It abates from the care and burden of our superiors and secures our rights and properties. It is at once our glory and our defence, and the summary of all the blessings of this lower world. It encourages all worthy and useful undertakings, and makes us formidable to those who wish us evil. Applications—1. It is evident from what hath been said that our irregular heats and disputes are to be imputed to our lusts. 2. This may serve for the reproof of those among us who by their profligate lives and their intemperate speeches, their rash censuring and notorious uncharitableness, lay a foundation for new quarrels and contentions. These are the men that trouble the world. 3. Let me exhort you all to comply with my text. But what words shall I make use of to persuade you to unity and concord? (1) I cannot forbear to tell you that it is your interest as well as your duty to seek peace and ensue it. (2) I might exhort you to it for your brethren's sake also. (3) I pray and beseech you for the Lord's sake also: for His sake who hath commanded it; for His sake who came to restore it to the world, who is the great Mediator, and came to reconcile us to God, and to one another. (*Bp. Kidder.*) *How we must seek peace*:—1. By living innocently and harmlessly with our neighbours. 2. By living helpfully, and doing good in our places. 3. By passing by such small wrongs as are done unto us. 4. By parting with some of our right to have peace. Herein we must not stand upon terms, though haply it were fit an adversary should come to us, as being younger, inferior in place, or who first gave the cause of offence. (*John Rogers.*) *Why we must seek peace*:—1. Because it is so pleasing to God. He is the God of peace; He gave His Son to make peace; and He loves that we should live in peace, and therefore gives us the gospel of peace and spirit of peace; yea, He so likes it that He pronounces them blessed that help it forward. 2. This shall be a sign that we are taught of God, and whereby our prayers will become the more acceptable (1 Tim. ii. 8). 3. This is most comely (Psa. cxxxiii. 3). 4. Great is the profit hereof. 5. If we live in peace, we are fit to do good to one another; else we can do no good, but evil. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 12.—**The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous.**—*God's different regards to saints and sinners*:—I. THE TWO SORTS OF PERSONS HERE SPOKEN OF. 1. The righteous. They have a true love to all God's commandments, and will not allow themselves in anything which they know to be contrary to the will of God. 2. Those

that do evil. Good men sometimes may do evil, through ignorance, or the power of temptation; but this is not the bent of their minds: when sensible of it, they are sorry for it. The persons here spoken of are of a different spirit; they are evil-doers in the strict sense of the word. Iniquity is their practice and delight.

II. HOW THE LORD STANDS AFFECTED BOTH TO THE ONE AND TO THE OTHER. 1. His eyes are over the righteous; which implies—(1) His knowledge of them, their condition and circumstances (Psa. cxxxix. 2, 3). (2) His affection to them. The eye of human creatures is apt to be very much where the heart is (Psa. cxlvi. 8; xi. 7). (3) His providential care of them. He acts for their benefit—to guide, guard, and deliver. 2. His ears also are open to their prayer. This implies—(1) That prayer is the common practice of the righteous (Eph. vi. 18). (2) That this their practice is pleasing to God. (3) That it is a wise and reasonable practice, as it hitherto has been the practice of all good men. 3. His face is against him that doeth evil. This signifies, in general, that He is displeased with such persons (Psa. vii. 11). This implies—(1) That He observes them and their actions; therefore, His face is against them, because He sees and knows them to be evil-doers. (2) That their conduct is highly offensive to Him. (3) That He will certainly treat them as enemies, if they do not repent and reform (Prov. xxviii. 9). Conclude with some reflections. 1. We may see that happiness is the certain consequence of holiness, and misery as certainly the fruit of sin. 2. We may hence take occasion to reflect on the folly of sin, and the wisdom of being religious. 3. This shows us that good men have a great deal of reason to hope in the most threatening external circumstances; and that bad men have much to fear, even in the most prosperous circumstances. 4. Consider seriously what is said in the words of our text, and let it influence your choice and conduct. (*T. Hannam.*) *The Divine attentiveness to the righteous*:—Let us consider, first, who are the persons spoken of as “righteous”; secondly, what is the consolation and the assistance which they expect from heaven. You might say, if the eyes of the Lord are over only the righteous, who shall presume to hope for His favourable regard? But you well know that the term “righteous” in Holy Scripture is not always used to signify a faultless perfection. They who love and fear God, who strive earnestly to obey and please Him, are frequently denominated righteous. Their righteousness, indeed, is ever very defective; but they are called righteous, because it is their prevailing quality to be so. These, St. Peter assures us, are the objects of God’s paternal regard. With regard to the eyes of the Lord spoken of in the text, we may observe that Scripture mentions them in three different ways. 1. First, an eye of knowledge, which extends to all things without exception. This is over not only the righteous, but the wicked also, and over all creatures. 2. God looketh with an eye of displeasure (Amos ix. 4, 8; Ezek. ix. 10). The eyes of the Lord are over the wicked, observing all their evil doings, and preparing for them the correction which they deserved. 3. There is another aspect of the Deity contrary to that last mentioned; namely, of love and favour, with which He regards His faithful servants (Deut. xi. 12; 1 Kings ix. 3). Great indeed must be the blessedness of being thus looked upon by the eyes of God. It is not a mere contemplative view, but infinitely powerful in operation. The sun in the firmament is a faint resemblance of it; when He enlightens, warms, animates all earthly things on which his rays descend. But here I must acknowledge that sometimes the outward circumstances of the righteous are calamitous; as if God did not look upon them, as if He had forgotten them. The eyes of the Lord may be over the righteous, whatever be their condition. St. Peter adds, “And His ears are open unto their prayers” (Psa. l. 15; Matt. vii. 7, 11). But God does not always answer the prayers of the righteous in their own time and manner, and this sometimes tempts them to imagine that He is averse to their prayers. If God do not at present grant your requests, it does not follow that He hears them not, or that He is not inclined to do you good. But it may not be the fit time; or, lastly, because He reserves His blessings as the recompense of assiduity and perseverance in praying. But another objection may be urged; Do we not find several examples in Scripture of God refusing to the most holy persons the fulfilment of their prayers (Deut. iii. 26; 2 Cor. xii. 8)? There are two different ways in which God hears our prayers. One is, according to our wishes; the other, according to our real and final good. We are in adversity and affliction, and we cry unto God for deliverance, which He does not vouchsafe to us. But by this trial He awakens our slumbering zeal, He revives our fainting piety. Has not God, then, done better than their prayers desired? But let us carefully remember that this merciful kindness of the Lord is not promised to all men without

regard to their fitness for it. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers," "but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." "God heareth not sinners." (*S. Partridge, M.A.*)

Ver. 13. **And who is he that will harm you?**—*The harmed and the unharmed*:—The primary sense of these words is this: A man's best safeguard is benevolence; if we are ourselves inoffensive in our behaviour, others will be less likely to injure us; in proportion as we are anxious to do good, we shall be less likely to suffer evil. It is true, indeed, that the main scope of the argument is to show the manifold blessings which even in this world attend on the righteous. We are taught that he who will love life, and see good days, is to refrain his tongue from evil, &c. We are taught to eschew evil and do good: to seek peace and ensue it. And why? Because God's favour is thus secured to us, and man's enmity in a great measure disarmed. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous," &c. The believers were to suffer; but they could take no harm. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Wonderful question! in its very calmness and simplicity. Who shall harm you? What, when the whole world was leagued in a malignant confederacy against them! "Who shall harm you?" What, when there was every thing to harm them! Ignominy, torture, famine, the sword, dishonoured life or violent death. Neither, again, did they affect insensibility under their sufferings. How, then, were they sustained? They were sustained by God's holy Spirit, and by a reliance on their Master's infallible promises, and by an undoubting confidence in the life to come. Such is the application of the text with reference to the time at which it was written, and the circumstances of the first promulgators of the blessed gospel of Christ Jesus. With respect, again, to ourselves, it is far more directly true that no one "will harm us, if we be followers of that which is good." I do not mean that there no longer remains any opposition whatever between the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of the world. But I believe that these adversaries, be they who they may, will not be able to do him any essential injury. I believe, also, that a steady and consistent godliness will go far ultimately to convert enemies into approvers, and rob all opposition of its sting. But, again, if we may trace an intimate connection between holiness and happiness, between physical and spiritual advantage—not invariably, perhaps, as to outward circumstances, because such a law, if altogether universal, might foster mistaken notions of God's providence, while it would be incompatible with a state of probation—the converse proposition, or the inseparable union of vice and wretchedness, of impiety and fatal damage both to body and soul, must be still more obvious to every man. We might well alter the text, and ask, "Who is he that can do us any benefit, if we be not followers of that which is good?" If you are followers of that which is evil, you harm yourselves to the uttermost, and render even your temporal felicity an impossible thing. You may possess all the elements of felicity; but you so vitiate them that they become powerful only for your destruction. The noblest gifts of nature and of fortune you turn absolutely into curses for yourselves. For, take any endowment which God's loving-kindness may bestow, and see what becomes of it in the hands of the wicked. Is it health, and a vigorous constitution, and the prospect of long life? These advantages are transmuted into instruments of perdition, by inducing a more entire neglect of the concerns of eternity. Is it strength of will, energy, and decision of character? That decision only plunges men into crime with a more headlong zeal, with a more desperate recklessness. Is it acuteness of perception and an abundant measure of intellectual capacity? Alas, this superiority of understanding serves to make men more subtle in confounding truth and falsehood, in perverting right and wrong, in beguiling and destroying themselves with their own frightful sophistries. Is it beauty of person? Yet, ah! who has not had opportunity of seeing that personal beauty without religious principle is the most dreadful of all snares, the most terribly fatal of all possessions? Is it wealth, and station, and influence? Yet these things without holiness only enable men to spread mischief and profligacy around them, and dig for their own souls a deeper place in the pit of hell. The scorpion-lash is made of our own vices. That which harms us is sin; they who harm us are those who would debauch our principles, and corrupt our moral feelings, and teach us to take right for wrong and wrong for right, good for evil and evil for good. Finally, then, as to all others, if you pretend to care for the happiness of mankind, labour strenuously for their spiritual improvement. As to your family and those about you, aim not so much to make them clever or accomplished, as to make them religious and upright. (*J. S. Boone, M.A.*) *The safety of the righteous man*

from injury and harm :—I. THE FOLLOWING OF THAT WHICH IS GOOD IS THE READY WAY TO PRESERVE US FROM VIOLENCE AND HURT, BECAUSE THIS INOFFENSIVE AND RELIGIOUS DEPORTMENT COMMANDS THE RESPECT AND LOVE OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT ENEMIES TO PIETY AND VIRTUE. II. The following of that which is good, the habitual practice of religion and charity, will shelter us against harm and wrong, BECAUSE IT ENTITLES TO THOSE PROMISES, WHEREBY GOD HAS ASSURED HIS SERVANTS, THAT SO FAR AS SHALL BE SUITABLE TO HIS GLORIOUS DESIGNS IN GOVERNING THE WORLD, AND GRACIOUS PURPOSES TOWARDS THEM, HE WILL PROTECT THEM AGAINST THE MALICE OF THOSE WHO INTEND OR ATTEMPT THEIR HURT (2 Chron. xvi. 9; Psa. xci. 1-4, cxxi. 5-7; Isa. xxv. 1, 4, liv. 14, 17; Prov. xvi. 7). 1. God sometimes accomplishes His promises of protection to His servants by changing the hearts and dispositions of their bitterest enemies, so that they become favourers and friends (Prov. xxi. 1). Esau (Gen. xxxii. 7, 11); Egyptians (Exod. xi. 3). 2. God preserves the honest followers of that which is good from harm, by so chaining up and overawing the malice of their enemies, that however their inward hatred remain, yet they do not manifest it by outward injuries (Gen. xxxi. 42; Exod. xxxiv. 24). 3. As the enemies of the righteous are often constrained to conceal their malice; so, when God thinks it fit to interpose His power, He screens the righteous from the most furious assaults of their open hatred and wrath. Red Sea; Saul and David; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Mordecai. III. The following of that which is good, though it does not always mollify the hearers, nor manacle the hands of men, yet it does that which is much better, viz., IT TURNS THE GREATEST INJURIES OF THEIR MOST DEADLY ENEMIES TO THEIR PROFIT AND ADVANTAGE. This effect it produces sometimes in their temporal, but always in their spiritual and eternal interests (Rom. viii. 28). Conclusion: 1. We are informed from the truth already cleared, of the most certain, the most innocent method of securing ourselves and our interests against oppression and wrong, viz., the sincere following of that which is good (Isa. xxxii. 17, 18, xxxiii. 16; Prov. xviii. 10). 2. Seeing God has taken the followers of that which is good under His protection, this should fill their hearts with joy and courage, and banish from them sinful and disquieting sadness and fear, even when their enemies are most powerful (Isa. xxvi. 1; Psa. v. 11, 12, xxvii. 1-3). 3. The consolation which this doctrine yields to the sincerely good is much enhanced while he considers that the greatest injuries are turned by the sovereign providence and grace of God to their benefit, sometimes in their temporal, and always in their spiritual and eternal interests. 4. Since the safety of our persons and interests from oppression lies chiefly in the following of that which is good, it should endear unto us religion and virtue, and powerfully dissuade us from ungodliness and vice. 5. Since the harming of those who are the followers of that which is good is so unreasonable in itself, and such a perfect contradiction unto God, who is the great Patron of holiness, this should make men both ashamed and afraid to be guilty thereof. 6. Though they who, after serious examination of their ways, see their own uprightnes, need not suspect the same because of those evils they meet with from the world, yet persecution, as all other afflictions do, fairly invites us to search and try our heart and behaviour, that so we may know, whether or not by our turning aside from that which is good, we have provoked God to expose us to the spite and violence of men. (*David Ranken.*) *The godly protected* :—It may justly be asked whether this is consistent either with experience or with other passages of Scripture, seeing that piety appears to have practically no power in subduing enmity or destroying its injuriousness. We cannot deny that in a great variety of cases, religion, so far from disarming hostility and securing good-will, exposes a man to insult and persecution. The man may not be altogether a follower of that which is good; there is much even in the best which requires to be amended, and which must be disapproved of by a heart-searching God. Now you will have gathered from these observations, with regard to the apparent non-fulfilment of the promise of our text, that it is attributable to a defective performance. In the question before us St. Peter unequivocally intimates that where such is the experience there must have been some deviation from the strict path of duty. And we would therefore contend for the literal truth of the words of our text, notwithstanding all which may elsewhere be said of the persecutions attendant on righteousness. And first we observe, that it is in the power of God, without visible interference with the fixed order of things, to bring about such results as seem good to His wisdom. It is not needful that He should suspend any known laws or work by any strange processes. He can effect whatsoever He wishes to accomplish by touching some secret spring, or putting some hidden force into action, while all along there shall be nothing apparent but the ordinary operations of effects and causes. This may be specially

true with regard to the human heart; on which, beyond all doubt, God can mysteriously work, and yet give no outward signs of supernatural agency. If God have the human heart thus entirely at His disposal, He may evidently cause it to lay aside lust, and may turn its affections into a different channel, without anything of violence, and without open restraint to its designs and its desires. The wicked man may not be converted to righteousness; there may not pass on him that great spiritual change which would necessarily lead him to give friendship where before he had given hatred; and nevertheless there may be a soothing of the irritated feelings, a dethronement of his anger, and even a substitution of something like favour for dislike, of which perhaps he cannot himself give account. The cases are far from uncommon, in which God thus secretly diverts or disarms enmity. It is just the same with countries or communities as with individuals. In the case of the Israelites, their history is little more than a practical demonstration of the truth of our text. At any point of their history, if you find the nation endangered by enemies, you infer at once that there has been disobedience and idolatry; whilst, on the other hand, if you find them living in conformity with God's laws, you may conclude, without further examination, that the national condition was prosperous and flourishing. We would not indeed overlook the peculiarities of the Jewish Dispensation; therefore we do not take what happened to the Israelites as precisely the model of what may be expected by ourselves. But we know that God acts on general principles, and we therefore believe that the high road to national prosperity, under one dispensation, must, in the main, be also the high road to it under any other. Let the laws of a nation be laws framed in the spirit of the Bible; laws which discountenance vice in its every form and patronise piety; let the upholding of Christianity be proposed by rulers and pursued by people as the great end to which all others should be postponed; let there be at all times a public recognition of the supremacy of God, and the paramount importance of obedience to His statutes, and of His inalienable right to the homage, the love, and the services of His creatures, and we may affirm of this nation that it is a "follower of that which is good," just as might any one be a follower who is "adorning in all things the doctrines of the Saviour." Yea, and if a nation did this, we believe that it would as much insure itself prosperity as did the Jews when obeying the laws which were given to them by Moses. May it not be that the enmity of the world is allowed to injure and harm the righteous man, just because he has been remiss in the duties of righteousness; because there has been some portion of conformity to the present evil world, or some undue attachment to a perishable good? And let it, too, be learned, from the words under review, that there cannot be a greater delusion than the thinking to produce or preserve peace with men by means which must hazard the favour of God. Think not to avert danger except by braving it. Do all you can to please men, except by displeasing God. And be sure that the attempt to secure human favour at the expense of Divine will always issue in the loss of both. The traitor to his God becomes, sooner or later, the scorn of his fellow men. Remember, for your consolation, that in this, as in every other respect, God hath made your interest at one with your duty, so that Divine favour shall be the best security for human. And there are more hurtful enemies than angry relations and unprincipled opponents. A man's foes may be those of his own household—ay! of his own heart—the lusts, the passions, the desires of corrupt nature. These are the enemies with which the Christian has the hardest struggle, and through which he is exposed to the greatest danger. But if he be a "follower of that which is good"; if he be sincere in his wishes and earnest in his efforts to be "holy even as God is holy," he will gradually be enabled to keep those enemies in check, and find that grace has the mastery of nature. Those who speak most of the strength of their passions are often those who take least pains to resist them. In fact they make that strength an excuse for submission, whereas God would put bands on that strength if they were honest and desired to overcome. There approaches another enemy—one emphatically described as "the last enemy—death." Can this enemy be stayed from doing harm to the Christian? Why, it is beautiful to observe how Christians, who have felt a dread of death, have found their anxiety depart as the foe drew nigh. They have been "followers of that which is good," striving to cast all their care upon God, believing that He careth for them. Therefore, as death approached it appeared less harmful, and they who feared him most, but whom the fear only made more fervent in prayer, are enabled to look him calmly in the face, and even cheerfully resign themselves to his embrace as to that of a friend. (*H. McVill, B.D.*) *The advantage of imitating the good*:—There is something in a meek and holy carriage that is apt, in part, to free a man

from many mischiefs which the ungodly are exposed to. It will be somewhat strange to rage against the innocent. I. THE CARRIAGE, "followers of that which is good"; the Greek word is imitators. The Word of God contains our copy in its perfection, and so the imitation of good, in the complete rule of it, is the regulating of our ways by the word. But even there we find, besides general rules, the particular tracks of life of divers eminently holy persons, that we may know holiness not to be an idle imaginary thing, but that men have really been holy; though not altogether sinless, yet holy and spiritual in some good measure; have shined as lights amidst a perverse generation. Why may we not then aspire to be holy as they were, and attain to it? Would you advance in all grace? Study Christ much, and you will find not only the pattern in Him, but strength and skill from Him to follow it. II. THE ADVANTAGE, "Who is he that will harm you?" In the life of a godly man, taken together in the whole frame of it, there is a grave beauty or comeliness, which oftentimes forces some kind of reverence and respect to it even in ungodly minds. Though a natural man cannot love them spiritually, as graces of the Spirit of God, yet he may have and usually hath a natural esteem of some kind of virtues which are in a Christian, and are not, in their right nature, to be found in any other, though a moralist may have somewhat like them. Meekness, and patience, and charity, and fidelity—these and other suchlike graces do make a Christian life so inoffensive and calm, that, except where the matter of their God or religion is made the crime, malice itself can scarcely tell where to fasten its teeth or lay its hold; it hath nothing to pull by, though it would; yea, oftentimes, for want of work or occasions, it will fall asleep for a while. Whereas ungodliness and iniquity, sometimes by breaking out into notorious crimes, draws out the sword of civil justice, and where it rises not so high, yet it involves men in frequent contentions and quarrels. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *Doing good, as security against injuries from men.*—I. THE QUALIFICATION SUPPOSED is, that we be "followers of that which is good." But what is that? The apostle does not go about to define it, but appeals to every man's conscience to tell him what it is. It is not anything that is controverted, which some men call good and others evil, but that which is universally approved by heathens as well as Christians, that which is substantially good, and that which is unquestionably so. It is not zeal for lesser things, about the ritual and ceremonial part of religion, and a great strictness about the external parts of it, but a pursuit of the weightier things of the law, a care of the great duties of religion, mercy, and justice, and fidelity; those things wherein the kingdom of God consists—righteousness and peace. II. THE BENEFIT AND ADVANTAGE which may reasonably be expected from it, and that is, security from the injuries of men: "Who is he that will harm you?" &c. The apostle doth not absolutely say none will do it, but he speaks of it as a thing so very unreasonable and so unlikely that it will not often happen. And this will appear—1. If we consider the nature of virtue and goodness, which is apt to gain upon the affections of men, and secretly to win their love and esteem. True goodness is inwardly esteemed by bad men; it carries an awe and majesty with it, so that bad men are very often restrained from harming the good by that secret reverence which they bear to goodness. 2. If we consider the nature of man, even when it is very much depraved and corrupted. There is something that is apt to restrain bad men from injuring those that are remarkably good—a reverence for goodness, the fear of God, and of bringing down His vengeance upon their heads; and many times the fear of men, who, though they be not good themselves, cannot endure to see them oppressed, especially if they have found the real effects of their goodness in good offices done by them to themselves. 3. If we consider the providence of God, which is particularly concerned for the protection of innocency and goodness. III. AND YET WE ARE NOT TO UNDERSTAND THIS SAYING OF THE APOSTLE, AS DECLARING TO US THE CONSTANT AND CERTAIN EVENT OF THINGS WITHOUT ANY EXCEPTION. For good men are sometimes exposed to great injuries of which I shall give you an account in these following particulars—1. Some that seem to be good are not sincerely so, and when they, by the just judgment of God, are punished for their hypocrisy, in the opinion of many goodness seems to suffer. 2. Some that are really good are very imperfectly so, have many flaws which do very much obscure their goodness; they are "followers of that which is good," but they have an equal zeal for things which have no goodness in them, or so little that it is not worth all that bustle which they make about them, and will contend as earnestly for a doubtful opinion as for the articles of "the faith which was once delivered to the saints," and will oppose a little ceremony with as much heat as the greatest immorality. In these cases it is not men's goodness which raiseth enmity against them, but their imprudent zeal and other infirmities which attend it. 3. The

enmity of some men against goodness is so violent and implacable that no innocence can restrain their malice. Against these the providence of God is our best safeguard. 4. The last and chief exception is that of the cross, when the sufferings and persecutions of good men are necessary for the great ends of God's glory, for the advancement of religion, and the example and salvation of others. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *The practice of virtue the greatest security against our enemies*:—I. If a man be a follower of that which is good, 'tis probable NO MAN WILL HAVE ANY DESIRE TO HARM HIM. II. If we be followers of that which is good, 'tis certain NO MAN, WHATSOEVER HIS WILL BE, SHALL HAVE ANY POWER TO DO US ANY REAL HARM. 1. The providence of God does in a peculiar manner watch over the righteous, to preserve them under all events. 2. The enemies of a righteous man cannot do him any real harm, because they cannot take from him anything wherein his true and proper happiness consists. 3. Whatever loss a good man sustains in the world upon the account of his concern for truth and virtue, shall be abundantly made good to him in that which is to come; and consequently 'tis so far from doing any real harm, that it ought rather to be accounted a gain than a loss. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *The protection of God*:—So long ago as the time of William Penn the efficacy of arbitration was demonstrated. He proposed to come to America without any weapons, and treat with the worst savages. Charles II. scoffed at him and said, "What: venture yourselves among the savages of North America! Why, man, what security have you that you will not be in their war-kettle within two hours after setting your foot on their shores?" "The best security in the world," said William Penn. "I doubt that, friend William," said the king. "I have no idea of any security against these American cannibals but a regiment of good soldiers with their bayonets and muskets: and I tell you beforehand, with all my goodwill for you and your family, to whom I am under obligations, I will not send a single soldier with you." "I want none of your soldiers," said William Penn. "I depend upon something better." "On what?" asked the king. William Penn answered, "On the Indians themselves, and their moral sense, and the protection of the Almighty God." And it is a fact in American history that for seventy years the red men kept that treaty, and it was not broken until the white men broke it. *Good still left unharmed*:—I have fallen into the hands of the publicans and sequestrators, and they have taken all from me. What now? let me look about me. They have left me the sun and moon, fire and water, a loving wife, and many friends to pity me, and some to relieve me, and I can still discourse; and, unless I list, they have not taken away my merry countenance, and my cheerful spirit, and a good conscience: they still have left me the providence of God, and all the promises of the gospel, and my religion, and my hopes of heaven, and my charity to them too: and still I sleep and digest; I eat and drink; I read and meditate; I can walk in my neighbour's pleasant fields, and see the varieties of natural beauties, and delight in all that in which God delights, that is, in virtue and wisdom, in the whole creation, and in God Himself. (*Ep. Jeremy Taylor.*) *Followers of that which is good*.—*Personal goodness*:—I. ITS PROSPECTIVENESS. 1. A desire for future good. 2. An expectation of future good. II. ITS SOCIALITY. It has a community of—1. Paramount interest. 2. Leading aims. III. ITS REASONABLENESS. 1. Our nature was made for goodness. 2. Christ came into the world to give us goodness. 3. God works to make us good. 4. The great struggle of our nature is to be good. IV. ITS REVERENCE. Genuine religion is modest, devout, meek. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 14–17. *But if ye suffer for righteousness' sake*.—*The sufferings of Christians*:—I. WHY CHRISTIANS MUST EXPECT TO MEET WITH PERSECUTION OR SUFFERING IN THE WORLD. II. REAL CHRISTIANS ARE HAPPY EVEN IN THE MIDST OF THEIR PRESENT SUFFERINGS. This will appear, if we consider the object, the nature, and the foundation of the Christian's happiness. 1. His happiness is placed beyond the reach of accident, and the fear of change: a God reconciled through Jesus Christ is the supreme object of his happiness and desire. 2. As the object, so is also the nature of the Christian's happiness, such as to justify the assertion that he is happy in the midst of external sufferings. Did the ultimate happiness or salvation of believers depend on any temporary frame or feeling, many of the most eminent saints might often be pronounced miserable. No! the Christian's happiness is founded on the eternal purposes and love of God; and this constiutes at once its security and perfection. (*Thomas Ross, LL.D.*) *Suffering for righteousness*:—I. SUFFERING IS SUPPOSED, NOTWITHSTANDING RIGHTEOUSNESS, yea, for righteousness; and that, not as a rare accident, but as the frequent lot of Christians. Think not

that any prudence will lead you by all oppositions and malice of an ungodly world. Many winter blasts will meet you in the most inoffensive way of religion, if you keep straight to it. Look about you, and see if there be any state of man or course of life exempted from troubles. The greatest are usually subject to the greatest vexations, as the largest bodies have the largest shadows attending them. Take what way you will, there is no place or condition so fenced but public calamities or personal griefs find a way to reach us. Seeing then we must suffer whatever course we take, to suffer for righteousness is far the best. What Julius Cæsar said ill of doing ill, we may well say of suffering ill, "If it must be, it is best to be for a kingdom." But I shall prosecute this suffering for righteousness only with relation to the apostle's present reasoning. His conclusion he establishes. 1. From the favour or protection of God. The eyes of the Lord being over the righteous for their good, and His ear open to their prayer. 2. For the other argument, that the following of good would preserve them from harm, it speaks truly the nature of the thing, what it is apt to do, and what, in some measure, it often doth; but considering the nature of the world, its enmity against God and religion, it is not strange that it often proves otherwise. But if thou knowest who it is whom thou hast trusted, and whom thou lovest, this is a small matter. What though it were deeper and sharper sufferings, yet still, if ye suffer for righteousness, happy are ye.

II. THAT A CHRISTIAN UNDER THE HEAVIEST LOAD OF SUFFERINGS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS IS YET HAPPY, AND THAT HE IS HAPPIER EVEN BY THOSE SUFFERINGS. 1. All the sufferings of this world are not able to destroy the happiness of a Christian, nor to diminish it; yea, they cannot at all touch it; it is out of their reach. If all friends be shut out, yet the visits of the Comforter may be frequent, bringing glad tidings from heaven, and communing with him of the love of Christ and solacing him with that. Banishment he fears not, for his country is above; nor death, for that sends him home into that country. 2. But if in other sufferings, even the worst, the believer is still a happy man, then more especially in those that are of the best kind, sufferings for righteousness. Not only do they not detract from his happiness, but they give accession to it; he is happy even by suffering. (1) It is the happiness of a Christian, until he attain perfection, to be advancing towards it; to be daily refining from sin, and growing richer and stronger in the graces that make up a Christian, a new creature; to attain a higher degree of patience, and meekness, and humility; to have the heart more weaned from the earth and fixed on heaven. Now as other afflictions of the saints do help them in these things, their sufferings for righteousness, the unrighteous and injurious dealings of the world with them, have a particular fitness for this purpose. (2) Persecuted Christians are happy in their conformity with Christ, which is love's ambition. A believer would take it as an affront that the world should be kind to him, that was so cruel to his beloved Lord and Master.

(3) Suffering Christians are happy in the rich supplies of spiritual comfort and joy, which in times of suffering are usual; so that as "their sufferings for Christ do abound, their consolations in Him abound much more." (4) If those sufferings be so small that they are weighed down even by present comforts, and so the Christian is happy in them, how much more doth the weight of glory that follows surpass these sufferings! Now these sufferings are happy, because they are the way to this happiness and the pledges of it. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *The wrongful suffering of good men* :—I. THE FACT THAT GOOD MEN OFTEN SUFFER FOR THEIR GOODNESS FROM THEIR FELLOW-MEN. Peter uses the phrase "but and if," not because the suffering he describes is infrequent, but because it may not be absolutely universal, and because the reflections on which he is dwelling might seem to have made such suffering impossible. For—(1) It might seem as though the promised guardianship of God would have ensured security to good men. But, no. Or (2) It might seem that an upright, benevolent life would have won the gratitude and kindness of one's fellows. But, no. "If you would follow the Church in her history, it will be by the track of her blood; if you would see her, it is by the light of the fires in which her martyrs have been burned."

II. THE INSPIRED DIRECTION FOR MEN IN SUCH WRONGFUL SUFFERING. 1. Fearlessness. 2. Consecration to Christ. 3. Intelligent conviction. 4. Conscientiousness. 5. True triumph. "All may not be able to wield the sharp sword of argument, but all can wear the silver shield of innocent lives." III. THE LOWLY PRIVILEGE OF THOSE WHO SUFFER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE. 1. They are blessed. 2. Their suffering is better than that of those who suffer for wrong doing. 3. Their suffering brings them into intimate fellowship with the Man of Sorrows. IV. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF MEN WHO IN THIS SPIRIT SUFFER WRONGFULLY BEING REALLY INJURED. To all wrongful treatment by the mean, envious, or malicious, the true Christian can

say, "You may embarrass my circumstances, undermine my health, filch my reputation, shorten my mortal life, but you cannot 'harm' me." (*U. R. Thomas.*) *The causes of the world's hatred of Christians*:—They are many and obvious. 1. For instance: The man of God should be an embodied conscience. The one endeavour of ungodly men is to drown the remonstrances of conscience. For this they plunge into gaiety, or business, or exploration; for this they hurry from scene to scene; for this they studiously avoid all that savours of God or His claims. But in a holy life they meet with a devout and constant recognition of those claims, coupled with a faithful endeavour to fulfil them. There is an embodiment of righteousness without them, which arouses into instant and unwelcome activity those convictions of their duty which they have done their best to quell. 2. The pride of heart which resents superiority in another. The envy which grudges the influence that goodness always attracts. The malice which broods over the contrast that purity presents to impurity, until the fact of its doing so bulks as a positive injury. All these strong passions of the unrenewed heart, like Pilate and Herod of old, become friends in their common antagonism to the saintliness which intrudes upon their privacy and menaces their peace. 3. Besides, there is always an aggressiveness in true Christianity which arouses strong resistance. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **Happy are ye.**—*The blessedness of those who suffer for righteousness*.—I. THE PATIENT SUFFERING for righteousness' sake is the giving obedience to one of the commandments of Jesus Christ, and that upon the doing thereof depends the truth of their Christianity in this life, and their salvation in the next (Matt. x. 37, 38, xvi. 21–25; Mark viii. 31–38). II. THE CHEERFUL ENDURANCE of those evils which befall the Christian in professing the truths of God and obeying His commandments, is an instance of the most heroic virtue, and a happy proof of the sincerity of his piety and faith. It is the most glorious victory over ourselves, our own passions and fears, and that natural inclination which prompts us to secure our life and the conveniences thereof. III. The Christian's being engaged in the state of persecution, and his valiant endurance of the same, is a HAPPY INDICATION OF GOD'S SPECIAL FAVOUR TO HIM, AND ESTEEM OF HIS FORTITUDE AND UPRIGHTNESS (Acts ix. 15, 16; 1 Pet. iv. 16; Phil. i. 28, 29; Acts v. 40, 41). IV. As God lovingly calls true Christians to the honour of suffering for His name, so HE GRACIOUSLY RECKONS HIMSELF TO BE HONOURED BY THEIR RELIGIOUS COURAGE AND FIDELITY IN THE DOING THEREOF (John xxi. 18, 19; 1 Pet. iv. 14). V. The constant integrity of the good man, under all his sufferings for righteousness, CREATES IN HIM THAT INWARD PLEASURE AND PEACE OF MIND WHICH IS THE CONSTANT AND GENUINE EFFECT OF HOLINESS and virtue, and of the soul's being conscious to itself of its own innocence. And it likewise obtains for him these supernatural joys and assistances, which in the hour of temptation flow in from the Holy Ghost (2 Cor. i. 3–5, xii. 9, 10; 1 Pet. iv. 14). VI. That which is a very considerable proof of the blessedness of those who endure in the spirit of patience and penitence, those sufferings which meet them in the way of their duty; THEY POWERFULLY CONTRIBUTE TO PURIFY THEIR SOULS FROM REMAINING CORRUPTION, and to perfect them into the highest degrees of holiness (Isa. xxvii. 9; Heb. xii. 10, 11; 2 Cor. iv. 16). VII. That which, without the possibility of a reasonable contradiction, clears and completes the evidence for the truth of the happiness of these pious ones, who suffer for righteousness' sake, is: THAT THEY ARE SECURED OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEAVEN, that though it be future, yet with respect to it St. Peter might very well say in the present tense, "Ye are happy" (Matt. v. 10, xix. 29; James i. 12). Conclusion: 1. From the truth of the fore-said doctrine, viz., the happiness of those who suffer for righteousness' sake, we see the lamentable ignorance and error of carnal and worldly-minded men. 2. We learn from the evidence of this great truth, that it is our wisdom, as well as duty, to adhere unto righteousness and truth, even in the time of the most terrible threatenings and persecution. 3. The suffering Christian is taught hereby, that instead of repining against the Divine Providence on account of his sufferings, he ought rather to magnify God, that He graciously affords him the blessed opportunity and means of knowing his own sincerity, of promoting the Divine glory, of partaking of unspeakable spiritual joys, and of being advanced to the most eminent holiness in this life, and happiness in the next. 4. Serious reflection on the felicity of those who suffer for righteousness' sake would be very useful to mitigate the sorrow of those whose dearest friends may at any time be involved in persecution for their keeping the faith and a good conscience. 5. The belief of this truth should stifle our revenge against our most malicious persecutors; seeing we know that, however evil their intention may be, yet the persecution itself, through God's

grace, turns about in the end to our inexpressible advantage. 6. It is comfortable to observe that the happiness asserted of the sufferers for righteousness is not restricted to any particular instance either of righteousness or suffering. 7. The happiness of those who suffer for righteousness' sake affords a very powerful motive and encouragement to patience and constancy, in the time of the hottest persecution. (*David Ranken.*) **Be not afraid of their terror.**—This is commonly explained as the terror which their menaces might excite; but considering the undoubted reference to Isa. viii. 12, 13, it seems probable that St. Peter means such terror as dismays those who do not fear God supremely. (*Canon F. C. Cook.*) *Unnecessary terror*:—The earth-worm meets threatened danger in a most unphilosophic way. Directly it feels a slight shock in the earth it will hasten to the surface, because it attributes that to the proximity of its enemy the mole. The knowledge that the worm can easily be panic-stricken has been acquired by the lapwings (*Vanellus*), and these birds use it for their own advantage and the destruction of their victim. The lapwings settle down on fields recently ploughed, where they can find an ample supply of worms, and striking against the ground with their feet, induce the worms to come to the surface under fear that the shock is caused by the mole. As fast as the worms come in fear to the surface they are snapped up by the lapwings. Thus by endeavouring to escape an imaginary danger, the worm encounters a real one. There are many creatures, far higher in intelligence than the poor worm, who follow exactly the same panic-stricken policy in the supposed presence of danger. All weak natures, in fact, are naturally impelled to adopt it. Hence amongst mankind, for want of self-control and discretion, half our miseries, and often our doom, may be traced to acts caused by the dread of a danger which has existed only in our fears. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Be not afraid of their terror*:—I. CHRISTIAN COURAGE IN NOT BEING SINFULLY AFRAID OF THOSE EVILS WHICH MEN MAY THREATEN US WITH, FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE, IS A DUTY FREQUENTLY RECOMMENDED TO US IN SCRIPTURE, and timidity or irregular fear forbidden (Isa. viii. 11, 12; Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 5; Phil. i. 27, 28; Jer. i. 5-7; Ezek. ii. 6; Rev. ii. 10, xxi. 7, 8). II. THE BEING SINFULLY AFRAID OF PERSECUTION, OR THE WRATH OF MAN, IS EXTREMELY UNWORTHY OF A CHRISTIAN. 1. A Christian is the sworn soldier of Jesus, and Jesus has expressly obliged him by an unalterable statute to take up his Cross and follow Him through the most terrible dangers and inconveniences. 2. The Christian professes to believe in an Almighty God, the best friend and sorest enemy; and in Jesus Christ who cheerfully suffered the greatest evils for his sake; and that there is an everlasting life both of happiness and misery, to be bestowed upon men, according to their final constancy or apostasy. 3. The Christian may continually look upon the glorious example of Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; and upon the great cloud of witnesses or martyrs, who feared not the wrath of man, nor loved their lives unto the death. III. HOLY FEARLESSNESS AND MAGNANIMITY IS, UNDER GOD, A STRONG GUARD TO THE CHRISTIAN'S UPRIGHTNESS AND PIETY; whereas fearfulness and pusillanimity do wofully endanger and betray them (Dan. iii. 16-18; Acts xx. 24, xxi. 13; Prov. xxix. 25; John xii. 42). IV. The enemies of the Church of God are so entirely subjected to His providence, and the Church, upon the other hand, is so watchfully regarded by the same providence, THAT THE CHURCH'S ENEMIES CANNOT INJURE IT WITHOUT THE DIVINE PERMISSION, or extend their persecutions against the righteous beyond the limits which God has fixed (Psa. xxxvii. 32, 33; John xix. 10, 11, vii. 30; Luke xxii. 52, 53). V. The highest pitch to which the malice of the most implacable and powerful adversaries of truth and piety can arrive is, to molest and ruin the faithful professors and friends of the same, IN THEIR OUTWARD, BODILY AND TRANSITORY STATE (Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 4). Conclusion: 1. That we may attain to Christian fortitude and intrepidity in the time of persecution, it will be necessary for us with a humble importunity to make our addresses to God, that He would be graciously pleased to endue us therewith (Col. i. 11). 2. If we would not be afraid of men, let us use our utmost endeavours to get our hearts possessed with the awful and holy fear of God; and then we will find by happy experience that the latter fear drives away the former. 3. They whose hearts are inflamed with the love of God, are strongly fortified against the impressions of sinful fear and cowardice, when wrathful persecutors either threaten or attack them (Cant. viii. 6, 7). 4. The exercising a lively faith about the glory and happiness which is provided in the world to come for those righteous persons, who valiantly endure all these persecutions, would inspire the Christian with invincible fortitude, fill his soul with a noble contempt of men's terror, and carry him forward triumphantly in the way of his duty, notwith-

standing the fiercest opposition of enraged and powerful men (Heb. xi.). 5. They who would not be sinfully afraid of human terror, who would not for the fear of it deny any known truth, or neglect any known duty: let them entertain just sentiments concerning the good and evil things of this present world, the advantages and disadvantages, the honour and dishonour, the pleasures and pains thereof; taking care that they do not overrate them, and that they do not place their happiness in the enjoyment of the former, nor their misery in suffering the latter. 6. It would be very useful to the Christian, for preserving him from cowardice, that he had continually before his eyes the most glorious example of Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, and the heroic bravery and patience of the saints. For then he would be ashamed basely and sinfully to turn his back upon these dangers, which not only his Lord and General, but also his fellow-soldiers did boldly encounter and overcome. (*David Ranken.*) *One fear drives out another*:—There seems here a reminiscence on Peter's part of words heard long before: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." How may we obtain this lion heart, which knows no fear in the presence of our foes? There is but one answer possible. Expel fear by fear. Drive out the fear of man by the fear of God. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." How often we see fear expel fear. The fear of being burnt will nerve a woman to let herself down by a water-pipe from the upper storeys of a house in flames. The fear of losing her young will inspire the timid bird to throw herself before the steps of man, attracting his notice from them to herself. The fear of the whip will expel the horse's dread of the object at which it has taken fright. Oh for that Divine habit of soul which so conceives of the majesty, and power, and love of God, that it dares not sin against Him, but would rather brave a world in arms than bring a shadow over His face. "So did not I," said a sincere and noble man, "because of the fear of God." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Neither be troubled.—*Deliverance from trouble*:—1. The ordinary causes of astonishment and perplexity of spirit in the time of adversity are these—(1) When the evil a person lies under was wholly unexpected. (2) When a man in his calamity is quite forlorn and destitute, has no friend to condole his misery, nor to support him under it. (3) When the evil is lasting and invincible, such as the miserable patient can reasonably propose to himself no deliverance from. 2. These grounds of perturbation are not to be found in those afflictions which the righteous meet with for righteousness sake. (1) Persecution of one kind or other is what the true Christian may expect, and so forearm himself (Luke ix. 2; John xv. 20, xvi. 20, 33; Mark x. 29, 30; Acts xiv. 22; 2 Tim. iii. 12). (2) The righteous, in the extremest heat of persecution, are not entirely forsaken; but even then they have a great and faithful friend, viz., the Almighty God, who commiserates their distress, bears the heaviest end of the burden, and encourages them under all their troubles (Psa. xci. 15; Isa. xliii. 2, xlix. 13–16; 2 Cor. iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 5). (3) The calamity with which the righteous are afflicted for righteousness' sake is not past hope and remedy. No; they are fully assured of deliverance from it, if not after the manner which they desire, yet in the way which is best for them (Psa. xxxiv. 19, xci. 14–16; 2 Chron. i. 9, 10; 2 Tim. iv. 16–18).

I. GOD CAN DELIVER HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE WHILE THEY ARE IN THE EXTREMEST DANGERS AND DIFFICULTIES (2 Pet. ii. 9).

II. IN SUCH CASES HE HATH VERY OFTEN DELIVERED THEM.

1. Some of these deliverances were accomplished, not by prodigious and amazing strokes of Divine power in suspending or transcending the force and course of natural causes, but by gentle and ordinary means, gloriously conducted by the wise providence of God (Exod. ii.; 1 Sam. xxiii.; Esther vi.). 2. Whereas it is said that we are no more to look for miracles, I answer that it is presumptuous to limit the Holy One of Israel, peremptorily to set bounds to the infinitely wise and powerful God where He has not expressly set them to Himself. 3. Let this matter be as it may, yet I hope it will be granted that God is still the God of salvation; that "His hand is not shortened that it cannot save," &c.; that He even is the Lover and Protector of truth and righteousness and the Helper of the helpless; that He can abate the pride, assuage the malice, and confound the devices of the Church's enemies; and, finally, that He can raise up deliverers to the persecuted when and where it was least expected.

III. THERE ARE THE STRONGEST REASONS FOR THEIR BELIEVING THAT AT LENGTH GOD WILL DELIVER THEM ONE WAY OR OTHER.

1. He will deliver them by a temporal deliverance, if that be most agreeable to His wise counsels, to the methods of His providence in governing the world and His Church, and to their

true and greatest welfare. 2. If He think it not proper to remove sufferings from them, He will remove them from suffering. IV. BY HEARKENING TO THIS COUNSEL OF ST. PETER THE CHRISTIAN WILL EXCEEDINGLY CONSULT THE PEACE OF HIS OWN MIND.

1. Excessive and irregular sorrow is of itself a very great calamity; it enfeebles the soul; at once it increases a man's affliction and disables him from bearing the same (Prov. xv. 13; xviii. 14). 2. As for anxiety of mind, it distracts and disquiets those who are under its dominion after a most miserable manner. 3. Who can express the misery of those who, in the time of persecution, give way to anger, revenge, impatience, and murmuring? By their blustering passions they raise a perpetual storm within, and are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. 4. Whereas, if they who are persecuted for righteousness sake do wisely follow this direction; if, instead of abandoning themselves to immoderate grief and to pernicious impatience, they maintain a holy cheerfulness of spirit, patience, and contentedness of mind, and cast all their care upon God; then they will find, to their unspeakable comfort, that the blessed fruits of this prudent and religious practice are these: a reviving and supporting cordial to their hearts; an admirable and sweet repose within, while there is nothing but storm without; and that vigour of soul which will enable them bravely to bear up under the heaviest load of adversity. V. SPECIAL MOTIVES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR WHICH THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD AVOID ANY OF THOSE PARTICULAR INWARD TROUBLES OR DISORDERS OF MIND TO WHICH HE IS LIABLE IN THE STATE OF PERSECUTION, IF HE BE NOT UPON HIS GUARD AND CONTINUALLY SUPPORTED BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

1. Anxious and disquieting thoughtfulness and sorrow are very expressly forbidden the Christians (Matt. vi. 25, &c.; John xiv. 1, 27, xvi. 33; Phil. iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 7). 2. An undisturbed, well-grounded, and governed quietness and alacrity of spirit under sufferings is the highest pitch of faith, and a signal honour done to the attributes and promises of God. Whereas dejecting sorrow and anxious perplexity of mind is too great a proof of the want or weakness of faith, and a tacit reproach to God. 3. This holy cheerfulness and tranquillity of mind does exceedingly become the servants of God, especially in the time of persecution, and the opposite temper of irregular sorrow and anxiety is extremely unsuitable. 4. The Christian will entertain a horror at immoderate sorrow and anxiety of mind when he seriously considers the dreadful spiritual inconveniences and evils which may follow thereupon, if they be not prevented by the singular goodness of God. (1) Excessive sorrow and anxiety are apt to create in those over whom they prevail an indisposition to the exercise of several graces and duties, the exercise whereof is nevertheless highly necessary in the conjuncture of persecution and distress, viz., faith and dependence on God, resignation, prayer, thanksgiving, &c. (2) Though the persecuted and afflicted Christian has much need of Divine consolations from the Word of God and the immediate influences of His Spirit, yet excessive sorrow and anxiety do exceedingly stand in the way of his partaking of these consolations. (3) Immoderate sorrow and anxiety expose those over whom they prevail to many other dangerous evils and inconveniences. These sinful infirmities incline men to be weary and faint under the cross, to be over-desirous of shaking it off, and to hearken to sinful overtures for that effect. (*David Ranken.*)

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.—*God sanctified in the heart:*—"Sanctifying the Lord God" means, not making Him holy, for He is already most holy, but regarding Him as holy, treating Him, the idea of Him, and all that is His, sacredly, and in a manner different from that in which we regard all other things and ideas. Then, further, it means treating Him as thus holy, not only in our outward deeds or words, but in our secret hearts, where men do not see us nor know what passes in us. And we must remember, moreover, that when the Apostle says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," he does not only give us a negative rule, as though he said, "Think of God no otherwise than reverently," but he gives us a plain affirmative one, "Ever have the thought of Him before your pure minds, and take care that it be a holy, reverent, and most sacred thought." To sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, therefore, is to keep up by every means in our power a holy regard of Him. And again, sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts must surely, as a Christian precept, have a more specific meaning, for not only do we believe that the great God is, from the very force and meaning of His Being and omnipotency, present always and everywhere, but we believe that the Deity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are in some more signal and more mysterious way present and indwelling in the hearts of those who have been made children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. This sanctifying of the Lord God in our hearts forms, as it

were, the real safeguard and sanctification of our imaginations. It will serve to keep holy much within us which is very apt to run wild. For consider what a large portion of our lives there is of which we take little or no account at all, which we think little of as it passes, nor remember when it is past. Consider, for instance, in any day for what a small proportion of the hours we can give an account or recall the true and real occupation of our imaginations and feelings. It is in this respect, then, that the "sanctifying of the Lord God in our hearts" becomes so signally important. This we may maintain always. In activity and repose, by night and by day, in all seasons and circumstances, the sacred thought of God before us, God with us, will abash every thought and feeling which is at variance with His will. Is it of fear of men and their ill-treatment of us? How can such fear remain or be effectual with us if we habitually remember who and what He is, who is all-powerful and all-present? Is it a thought of unholiness or impurity? How can it stand and not perish from our minds if they are accustomed by constant effort to represent to themselves hourly the sanctity of God, who dwelleth in them? Is it a thought of unkindness, ill-opinion, disrespect? How, again, can it live in a heart which is continually recalling itself to remember that the Lord God, who is infinitely great and infinitely good, dwells within it? Is it a feeling of vexation or impatience when things do not go exactly as we would have them, or when bodily pain or distress assails us? How soon will that heart check and calm its impatience, which is habitually taking pains to keep the sacred thought of God before it—God in His sanctity, His majesty, God who dwelleth in our hearts! (*Bp. Moberly.*) *God revered in the heart*:—I. SANCTIFY THE LORD GOD. He is holy, the fountain of holiness. It is He alone who powerfully sanctifies us, and then, and not till then, we sanctify Him. We sanctify Him by acknowledging His greatness and power and goodness, and, which is here more particularly intended, we do this by a holy fear of Him and faith in Him. II. IN YOUR HEARTS. We are to be sanctified in our words and actions, but primarily in our hearts, as the root and principle of the rest. He sanctifies His own people throughout, makes their language and their lives holy, but first and most of all their hearts. It fears, and loves, and trusts in Him, which properly the outward man cannot do, though it does follow and is acted on by these affections, and so shares in them according to its capacity. III. THIS SANCTIFYING OF GOD IN THE HEART COMPOSES THE HEART AND FREES IT FROM FEARS. 1. The fear of God overtops and nullifies all lesser fears: the heart possessed with this fear hath no room for any other. It resolves the heart, in point of duty, that it must not offend God by any means; yea, rather to choose the universal and highest displeasure of the world for ever than His smallest discountenance for a moment. 2. Faith in God clears the mind and dispels carnal fears. It is the most sure help. "What time I am afraid," says David, "I will trust in Thee." It resolves the mind concerning the event, and scatters the multitude of perplexing thoughts which arise about that: What shall become of this and that? What if such an enemy prevail? No matter, says faith, though all fail, I know of one thing that will not; I have a refuge which all the strength of nature and art cannot break in upon or demolish, a high defence, my Rock in whom I trust. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *Sanctifying the Lord in the heart*:—What is meant by "sanctifying the Lord"? The phrase occurs elsewhere (Isa. xxix. 23; Lev. x. 3; Numb. xx. 12; Ezek. xxxvi. 23). They sanctify Him who give Him His due, who treat His claims as real and absolute, who look away from all other powers, from all imagined resources or grounds of confidence, to Him as the origin and centre of their existence. 1. St. Peter was thinking immediately of apprehended suffering, and this at the hands of men, unconsciously acting as the instruments of a Master who saw fit thus to "prove" the patience and fidelity of His servants. But a great deal of actual suffering, apprehended or really imminent, comes apart from such instrumentality, or, at any rate, is only indirectly connected with human wills. For instance, suppose we learn that a severe outbreak of disease, infectious and perilous to life, is among us. Should we be likely then to be scared by the terror of such a prospect? or should we have faith enough to sanctify in our hearts, as Sovereign and Lord of all things, the Redeemer who healed sickness in others and accepted crucifixion for Himself? Could we suppress unworthy agitations, adopt all reasonable precautions, and make daily acts of faith in the spirit of *Psa. xci. 1, 6*? But again, we know that very often our fears enormously exaggerate real evils, and very often we are haunted by fears which are altogether imaginary. Why not simply take the Lord at His own word, and put aside faithless "anxiety about the morrow"? 2. Remem-

ber, further, that the drama of spiritual life and death can be performed on a humbler stage, under conditions devoid of any impressive brilliancy. A youth, let us say, goes out from some quiet country home into an area which presents new tests to his moral and religious fidelity; the scene may be a college or a workshop, a messroom or house of business—it matters not; suppose he falls in with a bad set; suppose he is mercilessly laughed at if found to persevere in religious habits; suppose that he is accused of self-righteousness, or even of self-interest; suppose that, whether in rough or in polished phrase, the creed of his boyhood is called an obsolete delusion, fit only for those who are content to be tutored by the clergy; is there nothing here like a fiery trial? How will he stand it? Will he begin the downward course by “assuming a vice although he has it not,” affecting an indifference to religion beyond what he really feels? Suppose that, on the contrary, he retains that holy fear of God, and perseveres in his duty, just “as he did aforetime” (Dan. vi. 10): what will be said of him above? That, young as he is, he is playing the man; that he is responding to grace, and “witnessing a good confession”; that he is “sanctifying Christ in his heart as Lord.” 3. And once more: when we are depressed and anxious as to the prospects of the Church and of the faith; when unbelief is increasingly aggressive, confident of speedy success; when prejudices against that truth of which the Church is the pillar and ground-work reappear in all their old force, unallayed by explanations or by conferences; when large masses of European society seem possessed with a spirit of revolutionary lawlessness, which fears God as little as it regards man; then the problem appears too hard, the task too onerous, the promised success past hoping for. But the history of the Church may remind us that as we certainly are “not better than our fathers,” so we are not undergoing trials from which they were wholly exempt. But as they could and did fall back, so must we fall back on the invincible conviction that the cause is God’s after all. Let the Most High look to it. (*W. Bright, D.D.*)

Be ready always to give an answer.—*The true Christian apologist*:—Some thirty years after this letter was written to the Christians, amongst others, of Bithynia, another letter was written about them from the Roman governor of Bithynia to his imperial master at Rome. The answer to that letter is also preserved. The magistrate asks advice, and the emperor gives it, as to the treatment of these Christians. Such questions as these were presenting themselves: Is the name itself of Christian to be a crime apart from any proof of accompanying offences? Is recantation to be accepted in exemption from punishment? Hitherto his practice has been to give time to reply to the interrogation. He has brought out the images, the emperor’s image among them; and if the accused would repeat after him a form of adoration of the heathen gods, and if he would add execration upon the name of Jesus Christ, he has dismissed them; if not he has ordered them for execution. Trajan replies that he entirely approves the course adopted. No search had better be made for Christians; if accused and convicted they must still be allowed the alternative of recanting, but in default of thus purging their crime they must take the consequences. Anonymous informations, he adds, as it were in a postscript, are not to be attended to; they are a bad precedent and quite out of date. I make no apology for recalling these few well-known particulars of a famous letter, as giving great reality to the position of Christians in the age and even in the very region in which St. Peter here writes. It is quite plain that the account which St. Peter speaks of as likely to be demanded of them is a judicial proceeding, and that the answer which he bids them to have ready is the plea of guilty or not guilty when they are asked—and know too well what it means—“How say you, are you Christians or not Christians?” There are persons in this London to whom the straightforward dealing, creditable to them on the whole, of Pliny and Trajan with those Christians of Bithynia would have presented an alternative of intolerable embarrassment. Such direct demands for a “Yes” or a “No,” to the inquiry, “Christian or no Christian?” are out of date; they would make no allowance for the intellectual difficulties of the nineteenth century; they are too rough and peremptory for us; we are balancing, we are waiting to settle a hundred things ere we get to this. Of course we do not worship images, of course we shall utter no anathema of Jesus Christ, but to go to the stake for Him, to be sent to Rome to be executed for Him—no, no. You must not suppose us indifferent to the difficulties of the age; you must not suppose any one undervalues the difficulties of believing or exaggerates the satisfactoriness of the evidence. It is not so. But neither can we consent to throw back or to throw forward the whole question of Christian or not Christian, as though we might live and die without settling it for ourselves either way. Be very

glad that we do not incur the sharper alternative of the great first struggle between Heathenism and Christianity, that we find ourselves in days of public toleration and mutual civility imposing no condition of faith or speech upon those who would buy or sell in the market-place or eat and drink at the banquet-tables of the world. We will look into this; and we are struck before all else with the title given to our Christian possession. The account demanded of one of those Christians of the first age in Bithynia was not of their opinions, not of their doctrines, not even of their beliefs, it was of their hope. St. Peter, wishing to animate these Bithynians into a readiness to make answer at the bar of some emperor or proconsul, "I am a Christian," goes to the root of the matter by calling their Christianity a hope. He says to them in that word, "Remember Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light by His gospel. Keep Him and you have a sure, a blessed hope through Him who loved you; part with Him, and you are thrown back at the very best upon the one guess among many of a heathen philosophy." That hope which was the secret of courage in days when to be a Christian was to be in danger of being a criminal under a capital charge is no less the one thing needful when the answer must be given with no penal consequences in the counting-houses and drawing-rooms of Christendom. It is the hope which attracts; it is the hope which animates; it is the hope which convinces and which persuades. It may be doubted whether hope occupies quite the place it ought to have in the Christianity of this generation. We hear much of duty, much of effort, much of work, much of charity, and something of self-denial; but these things are often found in almost absolute isolation from peace and joy in the "good hope through grace"; much time is given to controversial or speculative theology, little to the actual anticipating and foretasting of the powers and glories of a world to come. And this silence springs from the secret or half-avowed thought, it is out of date; it was the privilege, or it was the fancy of days gone by. These things ought not so to be. If a man would settle it with himself quite in the early days of his believing that he means to look for the life of the world to come on the definite ground of the atonement and promise of his Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, and if he would have out this treasure every morning, handling, admiring, cherishing it, so that it should never be out of his thought or out of his heart and soul, and so that he should positively intend to carry it with him to and through the grave and gate of death, then there would beam in his very countenance such a light of hope as would make young men and old take knowledge of him that he knew Jesus Christ and was on his way to Him; ready always, such would be the result, to make his defence to every one that put him on his trial concerning the hope that is in him. Oh! be able to tell these unsatisfied questioners that you have a hope—a hope that serves as your anchor, a hope that keeps you steady amidst the swelling and surging waves of circumstance; a hope that makes you happy; a hope that quickens and concentrates energy; a hope which enters within that veil, which hangs and must hang here between the visible and the invisible! Be able to say and to mean this, and then you will be Christian apologists in the best of senses, not excusing the inquirer, which would be a fatal indulgence, one iota of definiteness which we feel regarding the personality and regarding the inspiration of the Saviour, but making him feel that there is a ready access and a joyous welcome for him "to enter with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus Christ." We end with the two words with which St. Peter ends this verse. Ready, he says, to defend your hope "with meekness," to defend your hope "with fear." Oh! what mischief has arisen to the acceptance of the gospel, and so to the salvation of souls, by the neglect of these two rules on the part of Christian apologists! Make answer, but let it be for a hope which is first in you, and let it be also with "the meekness" of one who knows himself dust and ashes, and with the reverence of one who feels God near, and sees in the man opposite to him a soul for which Christ died. (Dean Vaughan.)

A reason of the hope that is in you.—*The nature and reason of the Christian's hope*:—I. WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE? Hope is the desire of some attainment, attended with expectation or conviction that the object of desire is attainable. It is, therefore, an operation of the mind, which involves the action of reason and judgment. It is a mental state in contrast to despair, where all expectation of success is extinguished. But the Christian's hope is distinguished from all other by its object and end. The object of the Christian's hope is heaven, as a state of holiness and communion with God. II. WHAT IS THE REASON OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE? 1. He has felt himself to be a lost sinner. Christ came to seek and to save them that were lost. Not against their will, but by their own consent. Therefore we see that provision is

made for enlightening the mind, so that it may be led to an intelligent choice. 2. He feels that he has fled to Christ for salvation. He is a Saviour, and is embraced and loved and honoured as such. 3. The true Christian finds a third reason to encourage a hope that he is personally interested in the gospel plan of salvation, in the effects of this faith on his life. (*R. H. Bailey.*) *The true Christian defence* :—

I. THE NEED OF A DEFENCE OR APOLOGY. Religion is always the thing in the world that hath the greatest calumnies cast upon it, and this engages those who love it to endeavour to clear it of them. This they do chiefly by the course of their lives; yet sometimes it is expedient, yea, necessary, to add verbal defences, and to vindicate not so much themselves as their Lord and His truth, as suffering in the reproaches cast upon them. Christian prudence goes a great way in the regulating of this; for holy things are not to be cast to dogs. But we are to answer every one that asks a reason or an account, which supposes something receptive of it. We ought to judge ourselves engaged to give it, be it an enemy, if he will hear; if it gain him not, it may in part convince and cool him; much more should he be one who ingenuously inquires for satisfaction, and possibly inclines to receive the truth, but is prejudiced against it by false misrepresentations of it. II. ALL THAT WE ARE TO GIVE ACCOUNT OF is comprised here under this—"the hope that is in you." Many rich and excellent things do the saints receive, even in their despised condition here; but their hope is rather mentioned as the subject they may speak and give account of with most advantage, both because all they receive at present is but as nothing compared to what they hope for, and because, such as it is, it cannot be made known at all to a natural man, being so clouded with their afflictions and sorrows. And, indeed, this hope carries its own apology in it, both for itself and for religion. What can more pertinently answer all exceptions against the way of godliness than this, to represent what hopes the saints have who walk in that way? If you ask, Whither tends all this your preciseness and singularity? Why cannot you live as your neighbours and the rest of the world about you? Truly, the reason is this—we have somewhat farther to look to than our present condition, and somewhat far more considerable than anything here; we have a hope of blessedness after time, a hope to dwell in the presence of God, where our Lord Christ is gone before us; and we know that as many as have this hope must purify themselves even as He is pure. The city we tend to is holy, and no unclean thing shall enter into it. The hopes we have cannot subsist in the way of the ungodly world; they cannot breathe in that air, but are choked and stifled with it; and therefore we must take another way, unless we will forego our hopes and ruin ourselves for the sake of company. III. THE MANNER OF THIS. It is to be done with meekness and fear; meekness towards men and reverential fear towards God. "With meekness." A Christian is not to be blustering and flying out into invectives because he hath the better of it against any man that questions him touching this hope; as some think themselves certainly authorised to rough speech, because they plead for truth and are on its side. On the contrary, so much the rather study meekness for the glory and advantage of the truth. "And fear." Divine things are never to be spoken of in a light way, but with a reverent grave temper of spirit; and for this reason some choice is to be made both of time and persons. The soul that hath the deepest sense of spiritual things and the truest knowledge of God is most afraid to miscarry in speaking of Him, most tender and wary how to acquit itself when engaged to speak of and for God. IV. THE FACULTY FOR THIS APOLOGY. "Be ready." In this are implied knowledge and affection and courage. As for knowledge, it is not required of every Christian to be able to prosecute subtleties and encounter the sophistry of adversaries, especially in obscure points; but all are bound to know so much as to be able to aver that hope that is in them, the main doctrine of grace and salvation, wherein the most of men are lamentably ignorant. Affection sets all on work; whatsoever faculty the mind hath it will not suffer it to be useless, and it hardens it against hazards in defence of the truth. But the only way so to know and love the truth and to have courage to avow it, is to have the Lord "sanctified in the heart." Men may dispute stoutly against errors, and yet be strangers to God and this hope. But surely it is the liveliest defence, and that which alone returns comfort within, which arises from the peculiar interest of the soul in God, and in those truths and that hope which are questioned: it is then like pleading for the nearest friend, and for a man's own rights and inheritance. This will animate and give edge to it, when you apologise, not for a hope you have heard or read of barely, but for a hope within you; not merely a hope in believers in general, but in you, by a particular sense of that hope within. (*Abp.*

Leighton.) *A reasonable hope* :—There is a play upon the words in the original which it is difficult to transfer into English. “Be always ready to give a justification to those who ask you to justify the hope that is in you,” or, “to show a reasonableness of the hope that is in you to those that ask you a reason for it.” The Bible is a book of hope. The gospel is a glad tidings of hope. The religion of Jesus Christ is pre-eminently a religion of hopefulness; it differs in this respect from other religions. Now and then a glimmer of light shines from ancient philosophy, as in the writings of Socrates; but, for the most part, the religions of paganism, though they may be religions of reverence and of duty and of fidelity and of conscience, are not religions of faith or of hope. Now, the message of Christ enters into the world bright with hope. It comes to men as a ship comes to shipwrecked mariners on a desert island; it comes as the bugle-blast comes to men starving in a beleaguered city; it comes with the same note of rescue in it that the besieged at Lucknow heard in the Scotch pibrochs sounding across the plains. Now, Peter, recognising that the Christian religion is a hopeful religion, and that the Christians are to walk through life with the brightness of hope shining in their faces—Peter says: “You must have a reason for this hope; it must not rest merely in your temperament. You must have a reasonable ground for your hope; and when men who have not a hopeful temperament, and men who have a wider view of life than you have, and see the evils that infest society and life—when they come to you with their dark vision, and their dejected spirit, it is not enough for you to say, ‘I am hopeful’; it is not enough for you to say, ‘Look on the bright side of things’; you must be prepared to tell them what reason you have for hope, what is the ground of your hopefulness.” Let us see what are the grounds for our hopefulness for ourselves, our families, or nation, and the world. In the first place, then, we believe in God. We believe that He knew what He was about when He made the world; and that He made the world and made the human race because the product of that making was going to be a larger life, a nobler life, and therefore a more blessed and a more happy life; that in the very beginning, when He sowed the seeds, He knew what kind of harvest was going to grow out of it, and He was not one that sowed the seed of tares, but one who knew that the wheat would over-balance the tares in the last great harvest. We believe that He is a God of hope. He understands life better than we do; He understands the tendencies that are at work in society and government better than we do. With all that understanding, with the clear vision of the dark side of things as well as the bright side of things, He has an invincible hope for the future, and we borrow our hope from His hopefulness, and, because of His hope, we, in our ignorance, hope also. He has given definiteness to this hope. He has put before us unmistakably in human history not only what He hopes, not only what He desires, but what He expects, and what He means the human race to be. We look upon humanity and we say, “What is man?” And we go down to the savage, and look at him: “No, he is not man.” And we go to the prison-house: “No, these are not men; they are the beginnings of men, they are men in the making, but they are not men.” We look out upon society, with its frivolity and its fashion and its pride and its vanity and we say, “No, this is not yet man.” We look out into the industrial organisation, and see men hard at work for themselves and for one another, and we say, “This is not our ideal of man.” We go into statecraft, but we do not find our ideal of man in the politician and statesman. We look along the paths of history; it is not to be found in the general or the monarch. It is not even in the father and the mother, though we come nearer to it then. And finally we come to the New Testament, we come to the life of Christ, and we say, “This Jesus of Nazareth was above all others the Son of Man.” He stands as the ideal of humanity. He is the pattern and the type of what God means man shall be. And then we hear the voice of God saying, “You also are to become as He was, sons of God”; and from all the radiance of Christ’s face, and from all the glory of Christ’s character, we borrow inspiration and hopefulness, because this is what God hopes we shall become. Moreover, we see—dimly, it is true, and imperfectly, but we see—by faith, more and more, God entering into human life; we see Him moving upon human souls, and we see Him shaping them according to His ideal and according to His purpose. We look on human life, with its carnage, with its wrestling, with its battle, with its selfishness, with its corruption—ay, with its grave and its decay; we see civilisations perishing and literatures perishing, we see nations buried deep, and yet we say: This is but the carboniferous period; this is but the movement of the chaos; there is a God that is brooding on this chaos; there is a law in all this antagonism and battle of life;

God is in human history, as God is in human hearts and lives; God is bringing order out of the chaos, and a new-created world will spring up at His command. Oh, our hope is not in princes or potentates, or leaders or politicians—it is in a God that is at work in humanity! Churches, creeds, nations may disappear, but human character will grow and grow, because God is begetting men and working out His own conception of manhood, because all these things are the instruments through which He is accomplishing a definite creation—not moulding men from without, but entering into men and fashioning them from within. And so we believe God is not only using all these outward instruments enviring man, but He is entering into him and lifting him up, as the mother lifts the child, little by little. But this, you say, is hope for the world at large. “How about myself personally? How about my little life? How about my baby and my cradle? I do not care so much about the universe, as I do about my cradle and my baby.” There are no large things with God, and there are no little things with God. There are no large things in life, and there are no little things in life. It is a small rudder that directs the course of the ship. And we believe in a God that is not merely brooding over the whole globe, but that is determining the fall of every leaf and the shaping of every limb; in a God that not merely deals with nations in the mass, but that broods and watches above every cradle and every soul. Some one of you will say, “How can you believe this? Looking out into life, and seeing what it is, can you escape the conclusion that many things are going wrong, and much is running to evil?” Ah! I do not think you see what life is. You are just in one room of the great school; you are just watching one episode of the great drama. Can you tell me what are the resources of the Infinite Mercy? (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*)

The Christian's duty, to know the principles and reasons of his holy faith, and to own and adhere to them in the time of persecution.—I. IT IS THE DUTY OF EVERY CHRISTIAN TO USE HIS MOST SERIOUS ENDEAVOURS THAT HE MAY UNDERSTAND THE REASONS AND GROUNDS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. 1. Scripture enjoins the exercise of our reason and judgment about religion (1 Cor. xiv. 20; Col. i. 16; Heb. vi. 11, 12; John v. 31-40; 1 Cor. x. 15; Acts xvii. 11). 2. The sincere and humble performing of this duty would contribute very much to render our religion and the acts thereof acceptable to God; as being thereby more suitable both to His nature and ours, more fit for us to offer, and for Him to receive (Mark xii. 33; Deut. xv. 21; John iv. 22-24). 3. That which should very much excite the Christian's endeavours, to understand the principles and reasons of his holy religion is that his being ignorant of them would be a most shameful and ignominious thing. How extremely reproachful is it that men whom God hath adorned with judgment for the direction of their actions should be stupid children, or very brutes in their religion! 4. This ignorance is also extremely dangerous to the Christian, because it exposes him to all the attempts of the enemies of the truth, and makes him a cheap and easy conquest to persecutors and impostors. 5. The duty of inquiring into the reason of religion is particularly incumbent upon those who disclaim an infallible judge of controversies upon earth, and reckon it to be a Christian privilege and right to receive no articles of faith upon the sole credit of human authority. 6. The woful divisions of Christendom in matters of religion, the high pretensions of each party to the truth, and our being surrounded not only with heresy and schism, but also with downright infidelity, do loudly call us to a most impartial inquiry into the grounds and principles of faith, that so we ourselves may be well instructed and confirmed therein, and be likewise ready to give an answer to those who ask us a reason of the hope that is in us. 7. Consider the most effectual methods for attaining the knowledge of the grounds and reasons of our holy religion, and our ability to vindicate and explain them to others as we shall have occasion. (1) We must in all humility by frequent and importunate prayer apply ourselves unto God the Father of lights, the great Author of wisdom and knowledge (Eph. i. 17, 18; James i. 5; Col. i. 9). (2) We must make the Scriptures our continual and serious study (2 Tim. iii. 15, 17). (3) We must exercise ourselves unto godliness (Psa. xxv. 12-14, cxix. 100; Prov. ii. 7, iii. 32; John vii. 16, 17, xiv. 21). (4) A devout and conscientious attending upon religious assemblies will be very profitable to the Christian in this affair (Eph. iv. 11-15).

II. THE CHRISTIAN IS INDISPENSABLY BOUND CONSTANTLY TO ADHERE TO THE TRUTHS AND PRECEPTS OF THE GOSPEL, AND, WHEN CALLED THEREUNTO, TO CONFESS THE TRUTHS AND OBSERVE THE PRECEPTS THEREOF, EVEN IN THE MOST DISCOURAGING JUNCTURES. 1. Our Lord has in the plainest and most peremptory terms, and with the most weighty sanctions, obliged all His followers constantly to adhere to His doctrines and precepts; and, when called

thereunto, to confess the one and obey the other, when persecution threatens or attends the doing either of them (Matt. x. 37-39, xvi. 24-26; Luke xiv. 25-27). 2. The Christian is bound to the performance of this duty by the laws of the highest equity and justice; and the doing otherwise would involve him in the guilt of the most criminal iniquity and unrighteousness to his sovereign Lord (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). 3. The wilful and deliberate renouncing of the Christian faith, or any of the articles and precepts thereof, with a design to avoid persecution thereby, or to retain or acquire the advantages of this world, is at once an instance of the most horrible impiety, of the vilest falseness and dishonesty, and of the most abject cowardice. The apostate plainly declares that he fears weak man more than Almighty God, that he prefers the transient things of time to the infinite joys of eternity. 4. What in the most dangerous seasons ought to prevail with the Christian to be steadfast and firm in professing the truths, and obeying the precepts of his holy religion, is that his constancy would tend very much to the glory of God, the interest of religion, and the advantage both of the friends and enemies of truth and righteousness. 5. The disciples of Jesus Christ are both exceeding encouraged and obliged to a noble and bold adherence to the truth and their duty in the time of persecution, by His glorious example, and that of confessors and martyrs under the Old and New Testaments. III. THE QUALIFICATIONS WHICH MUST ACCOMPANY AND ADORN THE CHRISTIAN IN THE DISCHARGE OF THE DUTIES CONTAINED IN THIS INJUNCTION.

1. Calmness and patience of spirit, whereby the Christian may avoid exasperating the adversaries of the truth by wrath and passion while he vindicates the same. 2. A holy and religious fear, lest by an indiscreet and unwarrantable zeal, or any other sinful misbehaviour, he should offend God, or give just offence unto men, and particularly to his lawful governors. 3. A good conscience founded upon a blameless and Christian behaviour, by which he may be able to silence or refute the calumnious reproaches of heathens and infidels. (*David Ranken.*) *The Christian ready to account for his hope*:—I. THE BELIEVER MAY BE QUESTIONED CONCERNING HIS HOPE.—1. By the infidel. To the mere scoffer the Christian is not required to reply. With such our only aim should be so to speak as to awaken the conscience, and arouse and touch the heart. 2. By the worldling. The hope of the believer will stand the severest scrutiny; while the worldling is often found to confess that the advantages of the present state are with him who is living under the influence of a hope that has respect to the future. 3. The sincere inquirer after truth may question him. One who has just been made sensible that he is a sinner against God, and needs pardon. His mind is full of anxiety; and he feels that he needs direction, instruction, and guidance. II. THE BELIEVER SHOULD BE READY TO ANSWER THOSE WHO INQUIRE CONCERNING HIS HOPE. 1. He should be ready to answer, not forward, but prepared, competent to reply. 2. The reply should be an answer. It should be to the point; adapted to the character, and appropriate to the circumstances of the questioner. "A word fitly spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

III. THE DISPOSITION WITH WHICH THE INQUIRY SHOULD BE ANSWERED. 1. With meekness. By a harsh manner of vindicating the truth, the enmity of the carnal heart against it may be increased. 2. With fear. With holy fear and jealousy of ourselves, that we may speak only that we have known, and testify only that we have seen. Lessons: 1. Believers, aim to be intelligent Christians. 2. Be humble, meek disciples of your great Master. 3. Many of you may never while on earth be questioned concerning your hope. The day is fast coming when "the fire will try every man's work of what sort it is." What will be the character of the worldling's hope then? (*S. Steer.*) *Christians required to be prepared to give a reason of the hope that is in them*:—I. THAT IF WE ARE TRUE CHRISTIANS, THERE IS A HOPE THAT IS IN US. If we are true Christians; Christ is in us the hope of glory. 1. This hope may be distinguished from the hypocrite's hope by its objects. It regulates all its expectations by the Word of God. 2. This hope may be farther distinguished by its basis. This is the inviolable truth of God's promises, made to sinners through Christ. 3. This hope may be farther distinguished by its effects. It purifies the heart. II. THAT THERE IS A REASON FOR THIS HOPE. It is a reason for this hope, that the Word of God, written by the inspiration of His own Spirit, correctly defines its objects. A true Christian can also give a reason for the ground of his hope. It is Christ. There is a reason for the hope that is in us, in the effects which we are conscious it has produced upon us. It has a holy tendency. III. THAT WE ARE TO EXPECT THAT MEN WILL ASK US A REASON OF THIS HOPE. Some may ask a reason of the hope that is in us, from a sincere desire to know and to embrace the truth. But others may ask us a reason of the hope that is in us, from a wish

to weaken our confidence, or to tear us away from the hope of the gospel. IV. THAT WE ARE TO BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO THOSE WHO THUS ASK, A REASON OF THE HOPE THAT IS IN US. Have I searched the Scriptures with becoming diligence, so as to know the evidence on which my faith rests? Have I been so convinced of the truth and power of the gospel by the Spirit of God, that I am prepared to defend it as the wisdom of God and the power of God? V. THAT WE ARE TO BE SO PREPARED AS TO BE ABLE TO DO THIS WITH MEKKNES AND FEAR. 1. With meekness. We are to defend the gospel in the spirit of the gospel. 2. With fear. Not terror, but reverence. Application: 1. If you are disposed to question the reality of the religion of the heart, it is not because there can be no proof given of it, but from an indisposition to believe it. 2. Be sure that nothing but a "lively hope" implanted within you will avail to the good of your soul, and that all profession without it will be ineffectual to your salvation. 3. Dread being the subject of a delusive hope. 4. If you have reason to fear that hitherto your hope has been a deceptive one, seek and pray to be made the subject of a good hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, that abandoning all other dependence, you may be led to Christ for salvation, on whose merits and righteousness you shall not depend in vain. (*Essex Remembrance.*) *The Christian's hope*:—I. ALL REAL CHRISTIANS POSSESS A HOPE PECULIAR TO THEMSELVES. It is a hope in connection with Christ, a hope arising from the gospel. The hope of the Christian is called a living hope. It is a hope that sustains the spirit here, and embraces celestial happiness hereafter. II. THIS HOPE RESTS ON GROUNDS THE MOST SOLID AND INDUBITABLE. This hope is generated in them by the resurrection of Christ. They have the testimony of all holy men in all ages, and they have their own experience. III. THIS HOPE CANNOT BE CONCEALED, AND OUGHT NOT TO BE CONCEALED. The Saviour commands that those who have this hope in them should confess Him. IV. THOSE WHO HAVE THIS HOPE IN THEM MAY SOMETIMES BE QUESTIONED CONCERNING IT. V. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE ARE CALLED UPON TO EXPLAIN, TO VINDICATE, AND EVEN TO RECOMMEND THE RELIGION WHICH BRINGS US SUCH A HOPE. There might have been Jews anxious to know what Christianity was; there might have been Gentiles doubting as to the truth of their systems, and desiring to be instructed in the doctrines of Christianity; and there may still be those with whom we have to do, who may be anxious for information, and it should be our delight to explain, to vindicate and to recommend the hope that we cherish. IV. THIS VINDICATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF OUR HOPE OUGHT ALWAYS TO BE DONE IN A SPIRIT BECOMING THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SUBJECT. It is no light thing to deal with questions of this sort. Peter says, "Be always ready"—qualified, fitted for it. (*R. Littler.*) *Personal goodness*:—The words suggest four things in relation to religion. I. ITS PROSPECTIVENESS. It is a "hope." Personal religion is a great hope in a man. II. ITS SOCIALITY. Here is asking questions and answering them. Genuine religion excludes the anti-social and dis-socialising element—selfishness. 1. It has a community of paramount interest. All religious souls have the same imperial concerns. 2. A community of leading aims. One grand purpose runs through all godly hearts. III. ITS REASONABLENESS. "Give a reason for the hope." Every godly man can give a reason for this hope. It does not require erudition or talent to enable him to do so. Ask him why does he hope to become good, and he could give such answers as these: 1. Because my nature was made for goodness. 2. Because Christ came into the world to give me goodness. 3. Because God works to make me good. 4. Because the great struggle of my nature is to be good. These are good reasons, are they not? IV. ITS REVERENCE. "With meekness and fear." (*Homilist.*) *Reasons for our hope*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN HOPE. Why is the word hope used instead of that of faith? Usually it is faith that stands so conspicuously in the foreground in Christianity. Faith has mainly a reference to the hard dry facts of the intellect. Of course there is in Christianity a living, vital faith, and every Christian must possess this. But hope is a much softer word, and has to do more with the emotional part of human nature. Hope to be worth anything must be based upon faith. Yet hope is the higher state of the two. The reason why St. Paul so often speaks of hope is twofold: 1. It had a reference to the early state of his people. 2. This hope was connected with something personal and future. Hope will, of course, differ according to the disposition of the man. The miser hopes for gold, the ambitious man for power, the vain man for applause. But we have to do with the Christian's hope. (1) The Christian has a hope in the purpose of his life. He has a mission in the world which God has planned, and he knows that whatever happens will be for the best. He allows all his arrangements to depend upon the Divine Will. In the most minute events of life, as well as in

the most gigantic schemes that the human brain can evolve, God rules. (2) The Christian has a hope in the trials and afflictions of life. (3) The Christian has hope in death. The most brilliant human lives must end. (4) The Christian has hope in the hereafter. This is the most glorious hope of all. II. THIS HOPE HAS A RATIONAL BASIS. The hope of the Christian may be cheering and consoling, yet if it had not a rational basis it might after all be a delusion. But Christianity is as much in harmony with reason as it is with the emotional side of man's nature. And it is the only religion that has a rational foundation. The necessity for a revelation from God has been felt in all ages and amongst all peoples. And if such revelation has been made it must be found in the Bible, for it can be no where else. Then the evidences of the truth of Christianity are overwhelming. The resurrection of Christ is a fact established by conclusive evidence. III. EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE PREPARED TO DEFEND HIS HOPE. "Be always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you." Each man is expected to be able to defend his faith. This reason must be—1. Intellectual. Christians ought to study the evidences of the truth of their religion. 2. Moral. Every Christian's life ought to be morally higher than that of others. 3. Spiritual. The Christian religion is an experimental religion. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." IV. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH OUR REASONS ARE TO BE GIVEN. 1. Meekness. There must be no self-sufficiency. Humility is a Christian virtue. A religion of love must be defended lovingly. 2. With fear. This means reverence to God and respect to man. He must take care that the great truths which he has to teach do not suffer from his ignorance or incompetency. We must each make this hope our own. Christianity is a personal matter. (*George Serton, L.L.D.*) *Ready to give an answer* :—The ability to state our convictions with clearness and completeness yields two benefits. 1. It makes our convictions respected. There is persuasion in the forceful putting of a thought, and in sentences sharply drawn and well considered. The effect of words, as of soldiers, can be trebled by their manner of marshalling. A word aptly chosen is an argument, and a phrase judiciously contrived a syllogism. And so Peter would have his readers study to state their hopes and the grounds of them in an orderly and intelligent manner, and procure for their convictions in this way a respect, at least, among those whose opinions differed or even antagonised. 2. Another benefit intended was the effect which the rational statement of an opinion has in giving to that opinion firmer establishment in our own minds. Our religious beliefs are sometimes irrelative, because we do not know with precision what they are, nor with definiteness why they are. We are established by feeling the grounds of our establishment. The boat drifts till it feels the pull of its anchor. We get a sense of stability by inspecting the means of our stability. If we are crossing a stream upon a bridge of ice or timber, even though assured of safety, we contemplate with earnest pleasure the massiveness of its icy or oaken beams. Even confidence loves to be reminded of the grounds of its confidence, and wins bravery from their review. The architect lets the buttresses and the broadened courses of basal masonry as far as possible lie out in the light. Such a disposition of facts satisfies the eye because it satisfies the mind. We get a sense of stability by inspecting the means of stability. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Ready to give an answer* :—Observe, they are not required to be always disputing about their hope, or obtruding it upon others, without regard to the proprieties of time, place, and person, but to "be ready" in their own clear apprehension of the subject, and ready also in a loving concern for the guidance and salvation of others; "ready always" on the humblest occasions, as well as the more public and formal; ready in the house, and by the wayside, and amidst the ordinary businesses of life, no less than when brought before the kings and judges of the earth; "ready always for an answer," apology, vindication, defence, as when Paul spoke for himself on the temple-stairs and before Agrippa's throne; but, so far from waiting for rare opportunities of that sort, "be ready always for an answer to every one," rich or poor, learned or unlearned, "Greek or Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free"; what you have to say is of equal moment to one as to another, and they have all an equal claim on your benevolence; "to every one," therefore, "that asketh of you," and so manifests a degree of interest, greater or less, and howsoever awakened, in the topic so dear to yourselves; "that asketh of you," not merely "a reason of," but, in general, an account of, a statement concerning, "the hope that is in you," its nature, ground, object, and influences. Tell him how you, too, like your heathen neighbours, were lately living without hope in the world—with no hope for eternity. Then speak to him of "God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, our hope." Open to him the glorious mystery

of His person, and work, and death, and resurrection, and ascension. Explain to him, moreover, your own personal interest in all this through your living union by faith with this blessed Son of God, the world's Redeemer, and the consequent indwelling and gracious witness of His Spirit with your spirit. (*J. Lillie, D.D.*)

The value of personal experience:—There is a power in direct personal testimony which transcends all laboured argument. A skilled topographical engineer would be prompt to yield his convictions as to the lay of the land beyond him in a new country, if a trusty rodman or chainman of his party were to return from a scout in advance, and say that he had actually found a road or a stream which the engineer had been positive could not be there. So, also, it is in the higher realm of spiritual truth. He who has experienced the loving ministry and fellowship of Jesus, can carry more weight, in an interview with an unbeliever, by bearing his simple witness accordingly, than by any processes of skilful reasoning. If only this truth were more generally recognised, there would be less of arguing and more of witnessing, with better results to those who need to be convinced of the truth concerning Jesus. **With meekness and fear.**—*Logic aided by good temper*:—Here our A. V., following the T.R., unfortunately omits the emphatic word *but*; of two Greek words so rendered, the more forcible is found here in all the best MSS. and ancient versions. St. Peter presses this condition most urgently; of all dangers that of angry, arrogant, and irreverent demeanour on the part of men closely, and often captiously, questioned, is the most common and subtle. Sweetness, coupled with awe, remembering whose cause is defended, will commend true reasoning, and they will be in themselves evidences calculated to impress and often to win opponents. The word “fear” may also include anxiety to avoid giving offence by inconsiderate or intemperate arguments, but it certainly does not mean fear of magistrates. The Christian is bound to submit to law, but is released from all fear of personal consequences when put on his trial. (*Canon F. C. Cook.*) **Having a good conscience.**—*A good conscience*:—I. The possession of a good conscience IS POSSIBLE FOR MAN. 1. A conscience that rules the entire man. 2. A conscience that is ruled by the will of God. II. The possession of a good conscience DOES NOT PROTECT FROM THE TONGUE OF CALUMNY. The man who lives in a corrupt world, ringing out a good conscience in every tone of his voice, and radiating it in every action, has ever awakened the most antagonism amongst his contemporaries, and will ever do so. III. The possession of a good conscience WILL UTTERLY CONFOUND YOUR ENEMIES. 1. Slanderers of the good are often confounded now in courts of law. 2. Slanderers of the good will be overwhelmingly confounded one day in the moral court of the universe. IV. The possession of a good conscience IS VITALLY CONNECTED WITH A CHRISTLY LIFE. (*Homilist.*) *A good conscience*:—I. CONSCIENCE IS AN ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTE OF PERSONAL BEING. It is that in which we are consciously bound in allegiance to the Great Supreme in truth, righteousness, and goodness. Its function is—1. Prospectively, to incite to good and to restrain from evil; and—2. Retrospectively, to fill with joy when the evil has been overcome and the good achieved, and to reprove and fill with shame and remorse when the good has been eschewed and the evil done. II. A GOOD CONSCIENCE IS A MOST DESIRABLE POSSESSION. 1. It must be a conscience binding its possessor to the right and good. It is not always thus with conscience. It binds, indeed, to what the man judges to be right. But his judgment may be wrong (*John xvi. 2; Acts xxvi. 9*). It needs to be enlightened to see light in God's light (*2 Cor. iv. 3-6*). 2. It must be a faithful conscience. Some consciences are insensitive, cauterized (*Eph. iv. 17-19, v. 7-14; 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2*). A good conscience is faithful, and performs its proper function. 3. A good conscience is a peaceful conscience. If burdened with guilt and fear it is essentially “an evil conscience.” For such a conscience there is only one source of peace (*Heb. ix. 13, 14; 1 John i. 7; Rom. v. 1*). 4. A good conscience is a self-approving conscience (*2 Cor. i. 12; Acts xxiii. 1*). It involves the abiding consciousness of integrity. III. THE VIRTUE OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE. It is a precious possession. 1. For the man himself. It makes him strong to toil, contend, endure, die. It ensures continual victory and final triumph (*Rom. v. 3-6, viii. 35-39; Heb. xi.*). 2. For the Church and the world. A church made up of such members, of men firmly holding “faith and a good conscience,” must be a mighty power amongst men; “putting to silence” the ignorant and foolish (*chap. ii. 15*); and leading the observant “to glorify God in the day of visitation.” Conclusion: 1. By penitent faith in Jesus secure a good conscience. 2. By obedient faith in Jesus keep a good conscience. (*W. Tyson.*) *What is a good conscience?*—Conscience is that faculty

of the human mind by which rational creatures endeavour to form an estimate of their own principles and practices, so as to determine whether they are good or evil. It is universally admitted to be one of the most valuable of those powers which our all-wise and ever-gracious Creator has been pleased to impart to us. But it, like every other faculty of the mind, has been exposed to all the baneful effects of the Fall. It is by nature—in common with the human heart—ignorant, and perverse, and polluted. It must, before it can fully accomplish the purposes for which it is intended, be instructed, and purified by the Holy Spirit. I. MISTAKEN VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT ARE, IT IS TO BE LAMENTED, VERY COMMON. 1. Natural amiableness of disposition is sometimes mistaken for a good conscience. How many a friend, whose heart is desperately wicked in the sight of God, still cherishes the strongest earthly friendship! How many an individual, whose heart never entertained any just sense of the enormity of sin as perpetrated against a holy God, has yet sighed and cried over the miseries of mankind, and has done what he could to alleviate human wretchedness! But these emotions are no proof whatever of the conscience being right. Guilty, indeed, must that conscience be which can resist so much natural tenderness. 2. Partial contrition on account of sin is sometimes mistaken for a good conscience. Who experiences at times greater anguish than the drunkard? but who returns so readily or so speedily as he to his wonted practices? 3. Limited abstinence from evil is sometimes mistaken for a good conscience. Many are to be found who cautiously shun some sins, while they confidently rush upon others. All such partial turning from sin, or abstinence from evil, must prove that the conscience is not right before God. II. WHAT, IT MAY NOW BE ASKED, IS, IN THE SCRIPTURAL SENSE OF THE TERM, A GOOD CONSCIENCE? 1. It is a conscience renewed by Divine grace. 2. It is a conscience regulated by the holy Scriptures. Even after holy principles are implanted within us, the conscience is liable to err unless a standard is provided by which its decisions may be governed. That standard the Word of God supplies. To it we must appeal in every situation in which we are placed. From it we must derive all that instruction in righteousness which we need. (*Alex. Reid.*) *The conscience*:—The word “conscience” does not occur often in the Bible. It does not occur once in the Old Testament, but the thing “conscience” is in the Bible from first to last. Why was it that our first parents, when they had eaten the forbidden fruit, were ashamed to look in each other’s faces; and why was it that they hid among the trees? That was conscience. Or take the very next story in the Bible—the death of Abel. Why did Cain hear a voice rising from his brother’s blood to heaven, and why did he flee from it, a fugitive and a vagabond? That was conscience. Conscience, in fact, is everywhere in the Bible. Without conscience there would be no religion. But let us define clearly what conscience is, and what it does. Conscience has been called the moral sense. Now, what does that mean? It means this: that as by the sense of taste we distinguish what is sweet and what is sour, and by the sense of hearing we distinguish what is harmonious and what is discordant, and by the other bodily senses we discriminate the qualities of material things, so in the soul there is a sense which distinguishes right from wrong, and that is the conscience. There have been many nations who have never seen the Ten Commandments, and yet they have known quite well that to lie, and to steal, and to kill are wrong. How did they know that? St. Paul seems to tell us when he says, in one of the profoundest passages of his writings, “When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law,” &c. In opposition to this sceptical philosophers have pointed to the barbarities which have claimed the sanction of conscience, and from these undeniable facts they have drawn the inference that conscience knows no more and no better than custom; but the power resident in human nature of rising out of superstitious practices, and seeing the better life when it shows itself, appears to prove that behind such mistakes there is a power of discerning “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest,” &c. The conscience is the categorical imperative. That is a name given to it by the German philosopher Kant. I suppose it is too big a name. It brings out a second feature. As soon as it is ascertained that one course is right and the opposite one wrong, the conscience commands us to follow the one course and avoid the other. Thus it is imperative; and it is a categorical imperative—that is to say, it accepts no excuse. The course which conscience commands may apparently be contrary to our interests; it may be dead against our inclinations; it may be contrary to all we are advised to do by friends and companions; but conscience does not on that account in the least withdraw its impera-

tive. We must obey. We may yield to temptation, or be carried away by the force of passion; but we know that we ought to obey. It is our duty, and that is the grand word of conscience. It is conscience that tells us what duty is. I am sure you all remember in the "Heart of Midlothian" how Jeanie Deans, with her heart bursting with love for her frail sister, yet refuses to deviate one hair's-breadth from the truth, although her falsehood would save her sister's life. But such scenes do not occur merely in fiction. Perhaps the grandest scene of modern history is the appearance of Luther at the Diet of Worms, when, facing the hostile powers of all Europe, he said, "It is neither safe nor honest to do anything against conscience. Here stand I; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." There is never an hour passes but in the secrecy of some man's soul or in the obscurity of business life some one, putting aside the promptings of self-interest and the frowns of power, pays the same tribute to conscience by doing right and taking the consequences. Conscience has often been compared to a court of justice, in which there are the culprit, the judge, the jury, and the witnesses; but, strange to say, these all are in every man's own breast. Ay, and the executioner is there too who carries out the sentence. There is not one of us who does not know in some degree both the pain and horror of a condemning conscience, and the pleasure of an approving conscience. A habitually approving conscience gives even to the outward man elasticity and courage, while a habitually condemning conscience gives to a man a look of confusion and misery. One of the great writers whom I have already quoted has a wonderful passage in which the two characters are put in contrast. I wish I could quote it all, but I will quote a few of the most significant sentences. Here is first the picture of a very good man, with a habitually approving conscience: "He was sleeping peacefully, and was wrapped up in a long garment of brown wool, which covered his arms down to the wrists. His head was thrown back on the pillow in the easy attitude of repose, and his hand, adorned with the pastoral ring, and which had done so many good deeds, hung out of bed. His entire face was lit up by a vague expression of satisfaction, hope, and beatitude—it was more than a smile, and almost a radiance. There was almost a divinity in this unconsciously august man." And here is the opposite picture. The burglar, on the contrary, "was standing in the shadow with his crowbar in his hand, motionless and terrified by this luminous old man. He had never seen anything like this before, and such confidence horrified him"; and then he adds, "The moral world has no greater spectacle than this—a troubled, restless conscience, which is on the point of committing a bad action, contemplating the sleep of a just man." In all ages the higher imaginative literature has found its best resources in depicting the horrors of a guilty conscience. The ancient Greeks represented these terrors by the Furies, who with shadowy, silent, but remorseless steps, pursued the criminal until they pulled him down; and in such dramas as "Macbeth" and "Richard III." Shakespeare is dealing with the same theme. You all remember how, when King Duncan was murdered, a paralysing and agonising terror fell on his murderer; and how, in "Richard III.," on the night before the battle in which the tyrant received the reward of his deeds, ghosts of the victims of his tyranny passed one by one through his tent, summoning him to meet them on the battlefield, until the man, streaming with perspiration, sprang from his bed, crying—

"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain."

But observe this, that not only does a man's own conscience pass sentence on his conduct; but the consciences of others, if they chance to be acquainted with it, do so too, and to this may be due a great intensification either of the pleasure or the pain which conscience causes. For instance, a man may have committed a crime and suffered for it in his conscience, but gradually time assuages his pain, and he is forgetting it. Well, suddenly it is found out, and the conscience of the public is brought to bear on him. He is put out of respectable society, and feels now for the first time the full enormity of what he has done. The conscience is an intuition of God. We have seen that as soon as the choice is made and the deed done, conscience inflicted immediate reward or punishment. But it has another function. It hints unmistakably at reward and punishment yet to come, and from another source. You remember how Hamlet expresses this when contemplating the crime of suicide:

“The dread of something after death,
 The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
 Than fly to others that we know not of.
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.”

In the Egyptian book of the dead, which has just been published in Europe, but is many centuries older than the Christian era, two hundred and forty figures are represented as meeting the soul when it enters the other world. These are virtues, and to each of them the soul has to answer how far it has practised these virtues in this life; and besides this strict inquiry, up in the corner of the picture God is represented weighing the heart. Analyse your own consciousness when conscience is acting, and see if it does not inform you that God is looking on. For instance, when you have done something wrong, and are feeling ashamed and horrified, are you not aware that God is near you, and that it is from His hand that retribution is to come? Will you permit me to say a word about the cultivation of the conscience? Conscience is the foundation of character. Does a man listen to the voice within him? Can he look himself straight in the eyes? That is the most important question you can ask about any man. There are some men and women that would almost as soon meet a tiger in the jungle as meet themselves in solitude. But if a man is accustomed day by day to bring his conduct under the survey of his own conscience, and if he is moved with joy and sorrow according to the sentences which conscience pronounces, that man is safe. He will not need to mind much what the opinion of other people is about him. Yet conscientiousness is not everything. It may be only a petty and self-satisfied pharisaism. There are few things that astonish me so much as to find how many people there are whose final judgment on themselves is this, that they have never done any one any harm, and they have not much to reproach themselves with. That betrays an unenlightened conscience. The conscience requires to be made observant and sensitive by acquaintance with the law of God, as revealed in His Word, and especially as expounded by Christ Himself, when He taught that even when the outward conduct is correct the law may be broken, in the secret thoughts and wishes. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*)

The conscience of a Christian:—Wherever a man acts consistently on higher principles than are generally current, his very example is a silent rebuke which worldly society is apt to resent. It cannot reconcile his conduct with its own generally received maxims. It cannot rise to a conception of his loftier principles. What is the consequence? Surely this, that society will impute to him lower principles, will fix a bad name upon him, hypocrite, bigot, and the like, and so seek to justify itself, and put him in the wrong. Against this power of prejudice, deepening often into malice, the power of a Christian's conscience informed by faith and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is his great resource. Let us see how it operates. 1. By making him feel directly the presence of God, the conscience of the Christian becomes an organ of the Holy Spirit. “Greater is He that is with us, than he that is in the world,” is his constant thought. He feels thus: I have the moral power of the universe on my side. Truth must prevail, with God to back it, in the end. 2. A good conscience sets a man free from all unworthy motives. Whether those around him persecute or approve, to him matters little. He does not derive his principles of belief and conduct from any censure or approval of theirs. He feels that he need conceal nothing. He can afford, in every sense, to “walk in the light.” How much anxiety and inward disquietude is saved by this; how much perilous manœuvring is made needless! 3. As a consequence of this, a directness of aim and simplicity of character distinguishes the man. He will not flatter, he will not violently condemn. How different this from seeking human applause as an object, and then bribing for it in its own base coin, by adulation, by trimming to prejudices, by adopting false views and echoing mere popular cries. (*H. Hayman, D.D.*)

The man inside:—“I cannot do this,” said a Christian merchant, in reference to some business operations in which he was asked to take part—“I cannot do this. There is a man inside of me that won't let me do it. He talks to me of nights about it, and I have to do business in a different way!” Oh! those talks of night about the business of the day, when the “man inside” has our ear and there is no escape from the judgment he pronounces! Thrice blessed is he who is able to hear it in peace!

A good conscience:—It is a conscience which is purged from dead works (Heb. ix. 14), sprinkled with the blood of Christ (Heb. x. 22), borne witness to by

the Holy Ghost (Rom. ix. 1), whilst a joy, which is full of glory, wells up within it (2 Cor. i. 12), and as a calm, unruffled lake of peace it reflects the cloudless heaven of God's good pleasure above. Such a conscience is a good companion for our days, and a good bed-fellow for our nights. Every effort should be made to preserve its integrity. And when life is moulded by such an inward influence, it will live down all misrepresentation and slander, it will outshine all the mists of envy and malice which have obscured its earliest beams, it will falsify false reports. Detractors shall be ashamed at the triumphant answer made to their accusations by the unblemished beauty of a holy Christian life; whilst those that love God shall take heart. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.)

Vers. 18-20. **Christ also hath once suffered for sins.**—*The great atonement*:—I. THE GLORIOUS PERSON WHO SUFFERED FOR SIN AND SINNERS. II. THE SUFFERINGS BY WHICH HE MADE ATONEMENT FOR SIN. 1. Sin was the procuring cause of them. 2. His human nature was the immediate subject of them. 3. They were the sufferings of a Divine person. 4. They were not imaginary but real. 5. The sufferings of Christ were necessary. 6. Vicarious. 7. Grievous. 8. Voluntary. 9. By them the justice of God was fully satisfied. 10. Though they are long since finished, they have the same merit and efficacy that ever they had. III. THE END OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS. 1. How, or in what respects, sinners may be said to be brought to God. Their being brought to God—(1) Implies their being brought into a state of reconciliation and favour with God. (2) It implies their having access into the gracious presence of God. (3) It implies their being admitted to communion and fellowship with God. (4) Sinners are brought to God when they attain to likeness and conformity to God. (5) Sinners may be said to be brought to God when they forsake the service of sin, and cordially engage in the service of God. (6) Sinners are brought to God, in the fullest sense, when they are brought to the full enjoyment of Him in heaven. 2. What influence the sufferings of Christ for sin have on the bringing of sinners to God. By the sufferings of Christ all grounds of controversy between God and sinners were legally removed (Col. i. 20). (D. Wilson.) *The sufferings of Christ*:—I. THEIR REALITY. Christ suffered from—1. Privation. 2. Satanic hostility. 3. Unkindness. 4. Misunderstanding. II. THEIR ATONING NATURE. 1. The character of Christ. 2. The doctrine of substitution. 3. The solitariness of the sacrifice, (1) Nothing more is needed. (2) Nothing more will be given. III. THEIR DESIGN. "That He might bring us to God"—1. In penitential sorrow. 2. To obtain mercy and peace. 3. With entire self-surrender. 4. Unto God's immediate presence. Lessons: 1. There is hope and help for all. 2. Christ is the way of access to God. (M. Braithwaite.) *The saints coming home to God by reconciliation and glorification*:—The scope of the apostle in this place is to fortify Christians for a day of suffering. In order to their cheerful sustaining whereof, he prescribeth two excellent rules. 1. To get a good conscience within them (vers. 16, 17). 2. To set the example of Christ's sufferings before them (ver. 18). The sufferings of Christ for us is the great motive engaging Christians to suffer cheerfully for Him. I. THE SUFFICIENCY AND FULLNESS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS intimated in that particle [once]; Christ needs to suffer no more, having completed that whole work at once. II. THE MERITORIOUS CAUSE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, and that is sin, "Christ once suffered for sins"; not His own sins, but ours. III. THE ADMIRABLE GRACE AND UNEXAMPLED LOVE OF CHRIST TO US SINNERS, "The just for the unjust"; in which words the substitution of Christ in the place of sinners is plainly expressed. Christ died not only for our good, but also in our stead. IV. THE FINAL CAUSE OR DESIGN OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, "To bring us to God." 1. What Christ's bringing us to God imports. (1) That the chief happiness of man consisteth in the enjoyment of God: that the creature hath as necessary dependence upon God for happiness, as the stream hath upon the fountain. (2) Man's revolt and apostasy from God (Eph. ii. 12). (3) Our inability to return to God of ourselves; we must be brought back by Christ, or perish for ever in a state of separation from God (Luke xv. 5). (4) That God's unsatisfied justice was once the great bar betwixt Him and man. (5) The peculiar happiness of believers above all people in the world: these only shall be brought to God by Jesus Christ in a reconciled state; others, indeed, shall be brought to God as a Judge, to be condemned by Him. All believers shall be solemnly presented to God in the great day (Col. i. 22; Jude 24). They shall be all presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. 2. What influence the death of Christ hath upon this design. (1) It effectually removes all obstacles to it. (2) It purchaseth (as a

price) their title to it. (*John Flavel.*) *The Saviour's mission*.—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE SAVIOUR'S MISSION. 1. It was one that involved Him in suffering. 2. It was one of innocent suffering. 3. It was one unconquered by suffering. II. THE PURPOSE OF THE SAVIOUR'S MISSION. 1. We are away from God. 2. We can be restored to God. (1) In thought. (2) In will. (3) In resemblance. (4) In filial fellowship and friendship. 3. God Himself brings us back by Christ. III. THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE SAVIOUR'S MISSION. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Christ's sufferings*.—I. The due consideration of Christ's sufferings doth much temper all the sufferings of Christians, especially such as are directly for Christ. It is some ease to the mind in any distress, to look upon examples of the like or greater distress, in present or former times. It diverts the eye from continual poring on our own suffering; and when we return to view it again, it abates the imagined greatness of it. The example and company of the saints in suffering, is very considerable, but that of Christ is more so than any other, yea, than all the rest together. Therefore the apostle, having represented the former at large, ends in this, as the top of all (Heb. xii. 1, 2). 1. Consider the greatness of the example; the greatness of the person "Christ." There can be no higher example. Since thus our Lord hath taught us by suffering in His own person and hath thus dignified sufferings, we should certainly rather be ambitious than afraid of them. Consider the greatness and continuance of His sufferings, His whole life was one continued line of suffering from the manger to the Cross. Art thou mean in thy birth and life, despised, misjudged, and reviled, on all hands? Look how it was with Him, who had more right than thou hast, to better entertainment in the world. But the Christian is subject to grievous temptations and sad desertions, which are heavier by far than the sufferings which the apostle speaks of here. Yet even in these, this same argument holds; for our Saviour is not ignorant of those, though still without sin. If any of that had been in His sufferings, it had not furthered but undone all our comfort in Him. 2. Consider the fitness of the example. As the argument is strong in itself, so, to the new man it is particularly strong; it binds him most, as it is not far fetched, but a home pattern; as when you persuade men to virtue by the example of those that they have a near relation to. 3. Consider the efficacy of the example. "He suffered once for sin," so that to them who lay hold on Him, this holds sure, that sin is never to be suffered for in the way of strict justice again, as not by Him, so not by them who are in Him. So now the soul, finding itself rid of that fear, goes cheerfully through all other hazards; whereas the soul perplexed about that question, finds no relief in all other enjoyments: all propositions of lower comforts are troublesome to it. II. Having somewhat considered these sufferings, as the apostle's argument for his present purpose, we come now, to take a nearer view of the particulars by which he illustrates them, as the main point of our faith and comfort. Here are two things to be remarked, their cause and their kind. 1. Their cause; both their meritorious cause and their final cause; first, what in us procured these sufferings unto Christ, and, secondly, what those His sufferings procured unto us. Our guiltiness brought suffering upon Him, and His suffering brings us unto God. 2. We have the kind of our Lord's sufferings: "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." "Put to death." This is the utmost point, and that which men are most startled at—to die; especially a violent death. "In the flesh." Under this second phrase, His human nature and His Divine nature and power are distinguished. But the "Spirit" here opposed to the "flesh," or body, is certainly of a higher nature and power than the human soul, which cannot of itself return to re-inhabit and quicken the body. "Put to death." His death was both voluntary and violent. That same power which restored His life could have kept it exempted from death; but the design was for death. He therefore took our flesh, to put it off thus, and to offer it up as a sacrifice, which, to be acceptable, must of necessity be free and voluntary; and, in this sense, He is said to have died even by that same Spirit, which here, in opposition to death, is said to quicken Him; "Through the eternal Spirit, He offered Himself without spot unto God." And yet it was also expedient that His death should be violent, and so the more penal, to carry the more clear expression of a punishment, and such a violent death as had both ignominy and a curse tied to it, and this inflicted in a judicial way; that He should stand, and be judged, and condemned to death as a guilty person, carrying in that person the persons of so many who would otherwise have fallen under condemnation, as indeed guilty. "Quickened." For all its vast craving mouth and devouring appetite, crying, Give, give, yet was the grave forced to give Him up again, as the fish to give up the prophet Jonah. The chains of that prison are

strong, but He was too strong a prisoner to be held by them. That rolling of the stone to the grave was as if they had rolled it towards the east in the night, to stop the rising of the sun the next morning; much farther above all their power was this Sun of Righteousness in His rising again. That body which was entombed, was united to the spring of life, the Divine Spirit of the God-head that quickened it. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

The sufferings of Christ:—Suffering is universal in the world. It comes from the first wailings of the infant to the last enfeebled cry of old age. It is found in the silent endurance of weakness and in the bold struggle of strength. It is in every station and rank of life. It is so various in its manifestations, that it seems as if we took a new lesson in it every day. To pass it by, to try to deny it, to make the ignoring of it a victory over it, is very short-sighted policy; it is what we would do with no other fact of like universal significance and power. And therefore, when Christ begins His gospel with the fact of suffering, we are at a loss whether to admire most the wisdom or the love of the method; together the boldness and the reasonableness of what He does startle us into asking the secret of One who could thus utilise the world's greatest enemy, and turn in defence of mankind the very weapons which have so long wrought their destruction. The man who taught to his fellow-men the uses of destructive fire was the hero of ancient mythology; the men who have bridled the lightnings, and chained the forces of air and water, are the great names of modern civilisation. But what shall we say of Him, who stopped not with the powers and material of the earth, but, going into the heart and life of man, found there the fact of suffering, and out of that formed the corner-stone of His kingdom? who, out of the cries and groans to which we close our ears, made the praises of God resound through the world? In this bold action the first element of strength is, that all suffering is traced to one source. Suffering is made to flow from sin. Christ suffered for sin, suffered as a criminal, suffered because of sin, under the weight of sin. The wisdom of Christ, the singleness of His purpose, the central power of His action, start out before us then; and we feel that He was indeed one who was fitted to deal with the great fact of human suffering, as He could thus put His finger on the very place whence it all flowed. It is only by getting at the true nature of a difficulty that we are able to conquer it; the new and deeper knowledge opens ways of approach unthought of before. There stood in proud seclusion the steepest peak in the Alps. Men looked at it, and said that human foot could never scale its heights. Bolder spirits tried every way which they could devise, approached it from all sides but one; and they succeeded in reaching certain points, but still there towered above them that inaccessible point. At length a wiser, more experienced eye was turned to that very side which had been pronounced evidently impossible; and, as he thus faced what had seemed the most despairing side of the problem, he saw that the strata of the earth below, broken sharp off in the upheaval of that majestic peak, furnished a series of steps which made the passage possible directly to the summit; and now every year even unexperienced feet make their way over the path thus opened. If any of us stand wondering how the mountain of our own or the world's suffering shall be conquered, and have never seen the path opened on the side of man's sin, have tried every way but the fight against sin, have shed tears over every calamity but the depravity of our nature, have done everything but confess our sins in the sight of God, nay, have dismissed that as too dark and hard a side of the problem for us to face, now let the way opened by One who knew the secrets of our nature and of the generation of that mountain of suffering,—let that way be the one for our feet to follow. One of our greatest troubles, under the suffering which we feel ourselves or see in the world, is, that it does not seem to come upon the right people. But when this great Master approaches this very fact of suffering, as the one which He will use in His work, we have reason to expect a word of authority from Him on this most distressing feature of it. And it is here; “the just for the unjust,” Christ suffered. That runs through all His life,—the thought that it was the very sinlessness of His life that made Him able to do the work for sinful men, that made Him able to take up the load of sin. The fact that He came from the Father, and was ever bound to the Father, was the very thing that made Him able to call men back to the Father. It is the privilege of strength to suffer for weakness. As it does so, strength is glorified; it conquers weakness, it spreads the power of its own life, it becomes strength in its right place. Only the mighty can help; and, as He thus helps, we look to His might as the reason for it, and through the work for us we find our Saviour. It is not gratitude alone—that, indeed, moves us as we think of what He did for us—but it is the opening of the source of strength by which He was able to do it. We come to Him through grati-

tude; and, as we reach Him, we find Him one who is mighty to save, because He could bring us near to God. This shows us the meaning and power of the last clause of our text. The apostle has been saying that Christ's sufferings were so like the sufferings of the disciples, that they could feel the sustaining power of them. But here it is not likeness, it is dependence, that is brought out. These sufferings were to bring to God the very men who were now exhorted to imitate them. Never were they to forget that they had been brought to God by those sufferings. They had opened His love. They had drawn to Him who was able to reveal God to them. They had made the world a different place, one that had the power and presence of God as well as of man in it; never were they to forget that. But, as they remembered it, it would affect their lives, and change the whole character of them. The mystery of life's power would be made theirs. They, too, would have but one object—to bring men to God. Never was there a time when the suffering of the world was so keenly felt as it is to-day. A philanthropic age needs the Cross, men anxious to alleviate the sufferings of the world need to have their own hearts broken for their sins, and all of us need to cling to these events of the suffering and death of Christ, and to feel that they contain the very power of our lives within them—the power of forgiveness and redemption, the power of happiness, the power of true labour, the power of the life eternal for this world and for the world that is to come. (*Arthur Brooks.*)

The unrepeatable sacrifice:—The sufferings of Christ were in many respects peculiar: I. THEY WERE OFFICIALLY UNDERTAKEN AND ENDURED. The designation by which the Redeemer is here distinguished, and the emphatic statement whereby He characterises His sufferings must be taken together—"Christ once suffered for sins." Suffering is no uncommon thing; "Man is born to trouble." But Christ was not an ordinary man. Here then is a marked distinction between His and all merely human suffering. Man was not made man for the purpose of suffering; on the contrary, it is the result, the penalty, of his sin; but the very end for which the Christ became man was that He might suffer. In this sense, therefore, it may be said that He "once suffered"—the entire of His sufferings from the very first lay before Him. To us it is a merciful provision which leaves us in ignorance of future ills. "Christ once suffered." His sufferings stand alone. Where can we find a just comparison for them? Here then is another peculiarity. The statement is that "Christ suffered for sins." Were His sufferings the consequence of His own desert? Had this been so, His bitter enemies would not have failed to convict Him of sin; but His challenge in this respect was never answered. The sufferings of Christ were expiatory, substitutionary and vicarious. What was the doctrine of atonement under the law? Was it not that the innocent suffered for the guilty, and that on account of this suffering the guilty might go free? Hence the care in selecting the sacrificial victims that they might be without blemish or defect. How far from satisfying the requirements of such language as this is the view that would reduce the death of Christ to the mere result of a life of disinterested and self-sacrificing benevolence employed in turning men to righteousness; the seal of His doctrine, and a distinguished example of passive virtue! II. To set forth the DESIGN OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS, and to aim at its accomplishment in BRINGING MEN TO GOD. Let us reflect upon the connection between sin and suffering, as viewed in relation to Christ's suffering for sins. 1. Apart from personal interest in the sufferings of Christ, suffering regarded as the result of sin—suffering for sin—is a fact, the most terrible and unrelieved in the experience and history of our world. Men may quarrel with the suffering while they hug the sin, but the connection is there. Science may be invoked, and art and artifice may be employed to make sinning physically safe; but all this cannot remove or alter the fact—the gods are there. 2. To those who have a personal interest in His sacrifice, Christ's suffering for sin takes away the sting of suffering. 3. The removal or lessening of sin must ever be the most effectual way of removing or lessening suffering. That is a spurious philanthropy which seeks to depreciate the gospel. (*J. W. McKay, D.D.*) *The sufferings of Christ:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE SUFFERER, AND OF THE PERSONS FOR WHOM HE SUFFERED. 1. Christ hath suffered, the just for the unjust. The expression intimates the perfect purity of His nature. But the expression, "the just," intimates not only the perfect purity of His nature, but also the perfect purity of His life. His life was as pure as His nature. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." 2. He suffered for the unjust. As the term, "just," expresses the perfect purity, both of the nature and of the life of the Saviour; so the term, "unjust," must express the impurity, both of the nature and of the life of those for whom He suffered. II. WHAT HE WHO IS THE JUST HATH DONE FOR THE UNJUST: HE

HATH ONCE SUFFERED FOR THEIR SINS. 1. This language intimates, that Christ the just One hath suffered. He suffered in His body. He was wounded, bruised, scourged, crucified. He suffered in His character. Crimes were laid to His charge which His righteous soul abhorred. He suffered in His soul. Satan tempted Him; His friends forsook Him; God hid His face from Him. 2. The language intimates that Christ the just One, hath suffered for the sins of the unjust. Why, then, if Christ had no sin in His nature, no sin in His life—why did He suffer? Why did not His perfect sinlessness screen Him from all evil? To answer these questions, we must have recourse to the doctrine of the substitution and atonement of Christ, and then to such questions it is easy to give an answer. 3. The language intimates that the just suffered only once: Christ hath once suffered for sins. The expression “once,” denotes the perfection of His atonement. 4. The language intimates that Christ suffered once for sins voluntarily. He is the just One, the equal of Jehovah, and who could have compelled Him to suffer? Or, if it had been possible to compel Him, His sufferings would have possessed no value. III. THE DESIGN OF THE JUST SUFFERING FOR THE UNJUST, THAT HE MIGHT BRING THEM TO GOD. (*Wm. Smart.*) *Christ's sufferings; or, the basis of evangelism*:—I. THEY WERE ENDURED ONCE. He hath “once suffered.” The word “once,” is capable of being taken in two senses. The sense of actuality: that is, the mere expression of the fact that He had suffered. Or, it may be taken in the sense of onliness. “Once for all”:—“never again,” as Bengel has it, “to suffer hereafter” (Heb. iv. 28). Taken in this sense, two ideas are suggested: 1. That nothing more for the purpose is needed. His sufferings are sufficient. 2. That nothing more for the purpose will be vouchsafed. “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.” II. THEY WERE ENDURED BY A JUST PERSON. The “Just.” Christ was “without sin.” He was at once the foundation, standard, and revelation, of eternal rectitude. III. THEY WERE ENDURED ON BEHALF OF THE UNJUST. 1. This is a proof of His amazing love. “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die,” &c. 2. This is an encouragement for the greatest sinner. “The unjust” of all grades and types of wickedness. IV. THEY WERE ENDURED TO BRING THE UNJUST TO GOD. “That He might bring us to God.” 1. Legally: They remove all governmental obstructions to reconciliation. 2. Morally: They remove the enmity of the human heart, and are the means of uniting the soul in love to its Maker. 3. Locally: Although God is everywhere, yet in heaven He is specially seen and enjoyed. V. THEY WERE ENDURED TO THE UTMOST EXTENT. “Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit.” 1. Here is the death of His human nature;—“the flesh.” “He suffered even unto death.” 2. Here is the revivication of His human nature by the Divine Spirit:—“quickened in the Spirit.” The subject furnishes—First: Encouragement to suffering Christians. Secondly: A rebuke to those who limit the provisions of the gospel. Redemptive mercy is not for a favourite few:—it is for the unjust. Thirdly: A lesson to the impenitent. What ingratitude is yours! (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Christ's sufferings*:—I. THE HIGHEST INSTANCE OF UNDESERVED PERSECUTION. 1. We see that suffering is not necessarily a mark of sin. 2. We see that sufferings are not necessarily the sign of a bad cause. 3. We see that sufferings are not always a sign of defeat. II. WE HAVE A DISTINCT AND DIRECT STATEMENT OF CHRIST'S SUBSTITUTORY SACRIFICE. III. WE HAVE A REFERENCE TO THE OBJECT OF CHRIST'S ACCOMPLISHING THIS OBJECT—“To bring us to God.” We can only appreciate this suggestion by realising what is implied in being away from God. For man to be away from God is as if a flower were separated from its root, a babe from its mother. IV. WE HAVE THE GREAT MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S DEATH ALLUDED TO—“Put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit.” Our Lord's soul could not die; no more can man's soul die. (*J. J. S. Bird, B.A.*) *The sufferings of Christ our atonement and our example*:—I. OUR ATONEMENT. Christ's sufferings. 1. Unique (*ἄπαξ*), once for all. 2. Propitiatory. “For sins.” 3. Vicarious. “The just for the unjust.” 4. Effectual. “That He might bring us to God.” II. OUR EXAMPLE. (*F. Dobbin, M.A.*) *The sufferings of Christ*:—I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ARE HERE ASSERTED. II. THE MERITORIOUS CAUSE OF THEM IS ASSIGNED. III. A MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCE RELATING TO HIS SUFFERINGS IS TAKEN NOTICE OF. IV. THE OPPOSITE CHARACTERS OF CHRIST, AND OF THOSE FOR WHOM HE SUFFERED, ARE LAID DOWN. V. THE GREAT DESIGN OF HIS SUFFERINGS IS DECLARED. 1. The ends of Christ's sufferings are various. (1) That He might set us an example of patience and resignation to the Divine will, under the troubles and difficulties of this life. (2) To teach us self-denial and mortification. (3) That He might exercise tender compassion towards us, under our trials and sorrows. 2. But the great end of His suffering for sins, the just for the unjust, was to bring us unto God. Application: 1. Our hearts

should be greatly affected with the representation which has been made unto us of the love of Christ. 2. How should we hate and abominate sin! 3. Let us draw nigh to God. 4. All our approaches to God should be through Jesus Christ. (*S. Price.*) *The design of Christ's sufferings*:—I. THE PERSON WHO SUFFERED. It was "Christ, the just." 1. His official character. The word Christ properly means one anointed or consecrated to some sacred office. 2. His personal character—"the just." II. THE SUFFERINGS HE ENDURED. "For Christ also hath once," &c. 1. The nature of His sufferings. "Christ suffered, being put to death in the flesh." 2. The period of His sufferings. 3. The object of His sufferings. 4. The issue of His sufferings. He was "quicken'd by the Spirit." III. THE DESIGN HE ACCOMPLISHED. "That He might bring us to God." 1. The natural state of fallen sinners. 2. The personal efficacy of Christ's atonement. It "brings us to God." (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) **The just for the unjust.**—*The just suffering for the unjust*:—I. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS. 1. Intense. 2. Ignominious. 3. Voluntary. II. THE PURPOSES OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS. "That He might bring us to God." 1. By His atoning sacrifice, thereby removing every obstacle in the way of the sinner's access to God. 2. By the operations of His Holy Spirit. 3. By the prevalency of His intercession. (*W. J. Brock, B.A.*) *Christ's sufferings for us*:—We accept the life and the death of Christ as an atonement, as a substituted suffering, the just for the unjust; but we do not feel that He was a sufferer only when He was on earth, and that His suffering then was all the suffering that was needful to the salvation of the world. It was the nature of Christ to suffer for sinners. He was embodied in the physical form that we might judge of what that nature was in the past, and what it was to be in the future, for the atoning nature of God existed from all eternity, and is going on to all eternity. The Lamb was historically slain in the time of Christ; but long before the coming of Christ there was the Divine atoning love, there was the vicarious suffering of the Saviour. And now, although no longer humbled in the flesh, Christ has not lost that peculiar element and attribute of the Divine nature—namely, substitution, imputation, vicariousness. Still He suffers in all our sufferings. He is afflicted in all our afflictions. 1. Sin becomes exceedingly sinful when judged by such a test as this. There is nothing that the whole world revolts at more than at flagrant ingratitude. 2. It is the presentation of such a Saviour as this that makes confession easy to pride. There are a thousand things that hinder men that have done wrong from forsaking their wrong-doing. But if God be for you, who can be against you? If the bosom of Christ's love is open, and is a refuge to which you may fly for safety, why should you not avail yourself of it? 3. When we stand, at last, in Zion and before God, and look back upon our past career, how inevitable will it be that every one shall turn disgusted from the thought of his own strength, and that we shall take our crowns and cast them at the feet of Christ, and say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the praise of our salvation!" The patience of God, the gentleness of God, the forgiveness of God, the sufferings of God for us—these will stand out in such illustrious light in that day that every one will be filled with joy, and gratitude, and triumph, and new pleasure in the consciousness that it was of God that he was saved, and not of himself. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christ the substitute*:—I. THE NEED OF PARDON, suggested by the word in our text—"sins." Unless you come to know and feel your need of a thing, you will never desire or welcome it. If I wished to convince you that you needed pardon, from your father, for instance, in an ordinary matter, I should first have to show you your offence. I am afraid many young people do not feel their need of pardon in a far higher sense. I wish I could write the word "sins" on your hearts to-day. This is one of the greatest words in all the Bible—in all the world. It tells about our offences against God—about our breaking of His holy law—about the evil we have done against our loving Father in heaven. And when once we come to get a sight of our sins as against God, we never can rest until we have got His pardon. II. THE GOSPEL WAY OF PARDON. Some people think it is enough to ask pardon. Others think the way of pardon is to be sorry for their sins. Others think the way of pardon is trying to be as good as they can—saying their prayers, and striving to do what is right. Now the gospel way of pardon, though it might be said to include all these, is yet different from them all. It is very simple. It is very shortly told. I have heard an esteemed Edinburgh minister tell of his visiting an aged Christian man on his deathbed, and saying to him, "Is it not a happy thing that we have the gospel set forth in so few and in such simple words?" The old man looked up and said, "One word, sir!" His friend said, "What is the one word?" He replied, "Sub-

stitution!" The whole gospel in one word—substitution! If any one were to ask me, "What is the way of salvation?" and I wanted to put it as shortly and as fully as possible, I would say, "It is the immediate, present acceptance of Christ as the substitute on the authority of God's word and offer." There is a touching story told regarding a body of men who had taken part in a rebellion, and were sentenced to have every tenth man of their number shot to deter others from doing what they had done. Among these were two, a father and son. We can fancy we see the men drawn up in a long line. Fixing, perhaps, on the first man by lot, he is marked out for death, and every tenth man thereafter, counting from him. The father and son stand together, and as the son runs his eye along the line he discovers that his father is a doomed man. He realises what it will be to have their family left without a head, his mother a widow, the old home stripped of its light and joy, and, quick as thought, he steps in where his father stood, and falls in his stead. He becomes his father's "substitute," and, if you ask the father in after years how he was saved, with the tear in his eye and a quivering voice, he will tell you he was saved by a substitute—that substitute his most loved and loving son. This, then, is what I want to bring out as the most important thing. The gospel way of pardon is by substitution—by One taking the place of another, by the Just taking the place of the unjust—the Good taking the place of the evil—the just Jesus, the good Jesus, taking the place of the unjust and the evil. God is just and holy, as well as merciful and loving. He is a King and Judge, as well as a Father. The authority of His law must be maintained. His justice must be vindicated. The law in its precept and penalty must be satisfied. It must be perfectly obeyed; and in the event of disobedience, the penalty of the broken law—death—must be suffered, either by each man himself, or by another in his room. We have all disobeyed, and so there is no hope for any one of us, except in the obedience and death of Christ. I would come to each of you and say, "You are lost, and unless you get pardon you will be lost for ever. The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to be your substitute now and here, and in God's name and on the authority of His own Word I offer Jesus Christ to be your substitute. Here is One willing to take your place. Will you have Him? If you take Him you are saved, you are pardoned." When visiting our Jewish Mission Schools at Pesth, the capital of Hungary, a few years ago, I heard the truth on which I have been dwelling strikingly brought out by one of the pupils. The lesson was about the crucifixion of Christ, and the teacher asked, "What connection have we with the work and death of the Lord Jesus?" A young Jew held out his hand, as being prepared to give an answer, and said, "It is just as if we had the merit; it is just as if we had been crucified!"

III. THE RESULTS OF PARDON—that is to say, the consequences of being pardoned through the substitution of another—through the Lord Jesus taking our place.

1. The first thing that follows gospel pardon is safety. There is no more danger. There is no condemnation to them who are thus in Christ Jesus.
2. There is happiness. (1) This is the secret of happy living. A young friend, who had been in much anxiety about her soul, was shown into my study one night. Her face was quite radiant. It was such a change from what had been before that I could not help asking, "What has happened to-night?" The brief but expressive answer was, "I have taken Him to be my substitute!" That explained all.
- (2) This is the secret of happy dying. Dr. Carey, the great Indian scholar and missionary, tells of his visit to one of the wards in an Indian hospital. On a bed, in a corner of the room, lay a dying soldier. Stepping gently up to him, he knelt at his bedside, and whispered into his ear, "My dear brother, are you afraid to die?" Looking up with a smile, the dying man answered, "Oh, no, sir; I have died already!" He meant that Jesus, his substitute, had died for him, and he had not to die, but only to fall asleep in Jesus.
3. There is gratitude—thankfulness.
4. There is love.
5. Lastly, there is service. It is told of the Duke of Orleans ("Philip Egalité"), father of Louis Philippe, the last king of the French, that on one occasion he was out riding, followed by his servant, who was also on horseback. The Duke had crossed an old bridge over a rapid stream in safety, but when his man-servant was following, the bridge gave way, and horse and rider were thrown into the river. In a moment the Duke leaped from his horse's back, plunged into the stream, and with considerable difficulty succeeded in saving the drowning man and bringing him to land. Need I describe the scene that followed? All dripping as he was, you might have seen the grateful servant prostrated at his master's feet, promising the gratitude and service of a lifetime, and asking what he could do to serve one who had done so much for him. You know the story of "The Heart made Captive"—the slave bought with

British gold, who vowed he would never serve his purchaser. But when he learned that the stranger had bought him to set him free, there were no bounds to his love and gratitude, and no limits to his service. When asked as to the secret of his constant and devoted service, there was but the one answer, "He redeemed me! he redeemed me!" Such is the secret of all right-hearted service done for Christ, as well as of all holy living. "He is my substitute. He suffered for me. He died for me. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits unto me?" (*J. H. Wilson, D.D.*) *The just for the unjust:—*

I. THAT CHRIST SUFFERED SHOULD MAKE SUFFERING CHRISTIANS PATIENT. Not that I would make light of trials; far from it. I know they are often bitter and so long-continued as to put a sore strain on clinging faith. Remember there is a ministry of suffering. The very trials of our life are ordered by a wiser will than ours, and are parts of a Heavenly Father's discipline. As the stress of the storm strains the ship and shows where the weak parts are, so by our trials God would show us the weak points in our character, that we may strengthen what is weak and supply what is wanting. II. CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS WERE FOR HIS PEOPLE AND ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR SINS. A man leaps overboard from the deck of a steamer on the broad Atlantic, and you think him a fool or a madman. But wait a little; why did he do it? He saw a sailor on the bulwarks overbalance himself and fall over the ship's side, and he, a strong swimmer, leaped overboard to save him. And if you found that that drowning man had in time past often reviled the one who in his sore need risked his own life to deliver him, how could you find words to express your sense of the nobleness of such self-sacrificing conduct? And do you not think that the man thus plucked from the jaws of death would be heartily ashamed of his past reproaches, and would nevermore cease to love his deliverer? Is not this something like the case of the sinner and his Saviour Christ? III. Consider now THE OBJECT WITH WHICH THE SAVIOUR SUFFERED. It was "that He might bring us to God." This plainly implies a state of alienation and estrangement. O man, how far off hast thou wandered! How deep the enmity, how dire the distance between thee and thy God! How shall the awful gulf be bridged which thy sins have opened between thy God and thee? You now see how false is the common notion which many have of religion. They regard it as a thing to be turned to when one comes near to die—as a sort of desperate remedy to be taken when one can do no better. On the contrary, religion is a walk of fellowship with God; a thing for the daily round of duty; a life of obedience flowing from love and gratitude for redemption; a life unselfish, Christ-like, God-glorifying. (*Wm. McMordie, M.A.*) **Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by [in] the Spirit.**—*The quickening influence of suffering:—*

The main idea is of course a comparison between the experiences of our Lord and those of His suffering followers. The sacred writer was striving to the utmost to sustain and comfort them under the severe stress of persecution through which they were passing. "Take heart," he seems to say; "your sufferings are not exceptional; they run in the Divine family; even our Master was not exempt from them; He also suffered in the flesh; but His sufferings did not stay His blessed ministry; nay, they even augmented His sphere of usefulness; 'He was quickened in spirit,' in which also He went forth to herald His accomplished work in regions to which, but for death, He had not obtained access. So shall it also be with you. Your sufferings shall not clip your wings, but add to your powers of flight. The things which happen to you shall fall out rather to the furtherance of the gospel; and it is through death that you must pass up to share His glorious resurrection and imperial power." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The resurrection of Christ:—*No man ever yet came out of a great work the same as he went into it; he has always lost something, and gained something. A great effort for a noble purpose taxes a man's strength; but it builds up character, confidence, and reputation. A great effort for a selfish purpose drains a man's moral resources, he has to surrender nobler considerations and higher purposes; but it leaves him better off in the things of this world, with a larger fortune, and a greater command of earth's luxuries. It is this process of gain and loss to which our attention is called in the review of Christ's death and resurrection. It was a great transaction, nothing less than the attempt to overthrow the reign of sin and suffering in the world. The character and success of the great work would be largely indicated by the effect on Him who undertook it; the question which all must ask is, What part of Him gained, and what part of Him lost? As that is known, it ought to determine whether it is a work in which we wish to join. Flesh and spirit were both strong in Christ through all His life. Then came the contest with sin

and suffering, and the body succumbed. It suffered, and went down into the grave. When its work was through, the spirit, which had never been daunted, which had relied upon the Father in its darkest moments, had an opportunity to show its strength. It was the spirit of the Son of God. It belonged to Him who was the incarnate Son of God; and it must take that same body, and show its own power, and do what the flesh had been unable to do. The spirit must assert itself: it must be seen to be the life-guard of the body; it must be evident as the great protecting, rescuing power. And when that was once done, there was no defeat. What had been lost by the flesh had been more than made up by spirit, and the great transaction was a victory. Can we wonder, then, at the Christian's joy at Easter? It is not as a single event by itself that the resurrection stirs our hearts: it is because it is connected with the whole nature of our being, with the whole work of Christ's life, and with the mysteries of our existence, and of the world for ever. We see spirit triumphing over flesh everywhere; not always, but on every side and in all departments, giving us the hope and key to this great fact. A poor weakened body labours under pain and disease for years; but the mind grows brighter day by day, and the spirit becomes more refined. It sometimes seems as if spirit could do anything; and it can, if it is the right spirit. It is its duty to animate the flesh, and it shows itself able to do it; and time after time it manifests its ability far above and beyond all the powers of flesh, making that flesh do things for which it has seemed to have no capability. Now let it be the perfect spirit, the spirit of the Son of God, and directly in a line with all our experiences is that resurrection from the dead. We find no hope of the resurrection but in the greatness of Christ, in His intimate and personal connection with the Father. It was the Father's witness to His being the Son of God; in that He has raised Him from the dead. Spirit is nobler than flesh. Place two men side by side, one of whom has always lived for the flesh, the other of whom has always tried to find the spiritual side of everything, and of every event with which he has come in contact. The former weighs you down with his grossness. His talk of the pleasures of the table, his gossipy narration of things that have taken place, his dull, unimaginative dealing with all that happens, his narrow interests and selfish aims, they are dreadfully unsatisfying and wearisome. The other always seems to be buoyant with joy and hope of something better. He hates all grossness enough to drop it out of his life; and yet, with a sympathy with all souls, he finds gleams of hope in those of whom the world can say nothing but evil. You know the two types of men, and of the approaches to them in every degree and form, from your daily experience with those about you; you know it still more from the experiences within you. Every transaction upon which you enter has its two sides—it can exalt the flesh and kill the spirit, or it can kill the flesh and exalt the spirit. You may come out of a successful business or social career with all that the flesh can possibly give you, and find that the virtues of the spirit—the unselfishness, the purity, the honour, the thought of better things have been put out of existence; you are quickened in the flesh, you are put to death in the spirit. Here again we see that the resurrection of Christ was not an isolated fact, and did not stand alone. It gathers to itself all the words of the Sermon on the Mount, all the exhortations of nobleness of life, and living above this world, which had been dropping from Jesus' lips ever since He began His ministry. They cannot stand alone; they ask a great completion, a victory on their side, that they may have power, and not meet with discouragement. It seems as if Christ would say, "I appreciate how great a weight of conduct I have put upon you; I would help you bear it. I know how the forces of the flesh press on every side; a greater force of the spirit shall be with you through Me. See what the spirit can do to the flesh, and be encouraged in every battle." The power of a risen Saviour is to show itself in spiritual lives. Do you say that this may demand the giving-up of certain things? Then let them go; be "put to death in the flesh," if you can but "live in the spirit." That was Paul's desire: "If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead." It was a matter of present attainment in the triumph of the spirit day by day; and for that we too are to labour, if our Easter joy and songs do indeed mean all that they say. We saw that this greatest feature of Christ's resurrection was based on the fact that no man comes out of a transaction the same as he went into it. The same fact can lead us to the most complete participation in that resurrection, to which our minds are always turned. Are we to rise as He did? Had it hope for victory to any beyond Himself? We never come out of the great transaction of life the same as we went into it. We begin with spirit in the infant body, so unable to provide for itself. Then the flesh grows and asserts itself, until

at length its hour of weakness comes, and, in the failure of disease or of old age, it loses its power, and sinks once more into the earth. What happens then, we ask? We never have any doubt as to that question about Christ. We find a clearer view and statement of His nearness to the Father coming out each day, as His life goes on. More and more He is bound to Him, until at last, in the great occasion of His death, it is not surprising that the trained and strengthened spirit conquers and raises Him. We can all tell of lives that have so followed Him, have so learned of God's presence and love in the world through Jesus Christ that at every step in life their spirits have grown stronger, and without effort, nay, of necessity, our hearts include them in the Easter rejoicing, because we know which side of them the great transaction of life strengthened. (*Arthur Brooks.*)

He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.—*The gospel preached to the dead*:—Who is here spoken of? He. The form of the expression resembles that in our Creeds. "He suffered and was buried. He descended into hell." The text does not say that the flesh of our Lord was put to death nor that His spirit was quickened. It states that He was Himself put to death *qua* flesh, and Himself quickened *qua* spirit. The flesh denotes His living body and animal soul; the spirit denotes here not the Holy Spirit nor the proper Deity, but the higher principle of the human spirit life, which was especially united to the Deity of Christ. He who is very God and very man, one person in two natures, did suffer death—in which nature?—not in His Divine nature—that is impossible—but in His human nature, which is possible. In the whole of His tripartite humanity? Not so: in a part of it, even in the flesh, and having there suffered death He, the same person, was quickened in the life, which never for a moment was quenched, of His own spirit. In that highest compartment of His human nature He experienced a transition to a new mode of existence, which issued in the resurrection of His incorruptible body. Meanwhile—in the intermediate state—between the crucifixion and the resurrection, He, the Lord of Life, neither slumbered nor slept. His activity of philanthropy never ceased. Through the gates of death in the new life of the disembodied spirit He went, He made a journey. He the Crucified One, His body still hanging on the tree, passed away from the Cross of Calvary to the place of custody, where the souls of the departed were in confinement. These spirits in prison are they who, when they were in the flesh, in the midst of a universal apostasy saw not the signs nor felt the shadow of the coming judgment, nor heeded the voice of the righteous preacher, and therefore perished in their sins and in the flood. Their bodies were buried in the deep of the Deluge, and their spirits were carried into the deeper abyss of Hades. To these imprisoned souls was revealed in Hades the presence and the form of one like unto the Son of Man, clothed in human spirit. Thus disembodied and spirit-enspered the Son of God to the departed souls of the antediluvian world made a journey—and made a preaching. What was that preaching? Did He, in whom death could work no moral change, speak in His disembodied spirit to disembodied spirits, as He spake in the flesh to men in the flesh? Did He, the Apostle on earth of His Father in heaven, continue to pursue His Divine mission in Hades? There is a passage in this same Epistle which, rightly considered, makes it evident that St. Peter believed that to the dead in Hades the gospel itself had been proclaimed. To what class or classes of the dead it was proclaimed he does not specify; by whom it was proclaimed he does not specify; but, if we compare the two statements in the same Epistle—(1) that "Christ went and preached to the spirits in custody," and (2) that "to the dead also the gospel was preached"—we must conclude that, according to St. Peter, our Lord in the world of spirits, between His own crucifixion and resurrection, announced "glad tidings of great joy." It is certain that the offer of salvation formed a part at least of His Divine message. And it is likely that this offer was made to all. Why not? Was not this their first opportunity of hearing of the great salvation wrought for all believers? There are some who have thought that the substance of our Lord's preaching in Hades was of two kinds—that to some He preached salvation, to others perdition; that to the irreclaimably lost He preached a *concio damnatoria*. Surely this could not be; such a theory could never be in harmony with what we know of His Divine mission. Far better, and far more true, is it to suppose that He preached Himself, the One Saviour, to all alike. Not that all to whom He preached were alike susceptible of the message of glad tidings; because the multitude of the antediluvian unbelievers had indeed died in their sins, but still had so died in a very unequal measure of sin. To the class of incorrigible sinners the preaching of Christ in Hades would, we may believe, be in vain. They had sinned away their receptivity of the Divine message. They listened,

indeed, from their sullen prisons to the heavenly Herald of mercy, and, as they listened to Him, they learned that He had died for the sins of the whole world, that He had died even for their sins, but at the same time they knew of themselves that He was not their present Saviour but their future Judge. Thus they would stand before the Preacher self-convicted and self-condemned. I conclude by mooted the question whether this interpretation of the text after all involves any abnormal teaching; whether, in fact, it is an exception to the general rule of Christian doctrine. It seems to me that there are some few passages in Scripture which indicate the broad theory that all men of all ages, who in this life never had the opportunity of hearing of Christ and of His salvation, will not perish hereafter for lack of that opportunity given some time, but failing this world will find that opportunity in the world to come; and if they are equal to it, if by patient continuance in well-doing here they are able to meet it, then they will embrace the gospel, and become partakers of the kingdom of heaven, if not as princes and rulers in Israel, yet as subjects. From this interpretation of the text an inference may be drawn. If Christ, through all His several stages of existence, was a forerunner and pioneer to His apostles and faithful followers, it may be that as the Personal Head of the Body Mystical did in that unseen world preach the gospel to departed spirits, so some or many of His living members, as they have disappeared one by one behind the veil, have also in their turn, and after His example, preached the same gospel there. If this idea is akin to truth, then it is possible that "through the ages all along" the gospel which St. John calls "the gospel of the ages" has not been hidden, but preached to such departed spirits as never heard, nor could hear, the glad tidings when they were in the flesh, and that it is not from lack of opportunity that any soul perishes. (*Canon T. S. Evans, D.D.*) *The spirits in prison*:—St. Peter is urging his readers to endurance under suffering. He sets before them the example of Christ. He suffered not only unjustly but for the unjust. "That He might bring us to God"—us, the erring and straying, the sin-bound and self-exiled. This is the starting point. St. Peter expatiates in the field thus entered. He bids us contemplate the effect of Christ's suffering upon Himself. He bids us contemplate the two parts of His humanity—the flesh and the spirit. Death dissolved the compound. He was "put to death" as regards the one; He was "made alive" as regards the other. It is as though the dropping of the one gave new energy to the other. He had spoken in the days of His flesh of being "straitened" till the great "baptism" was accomplished. There was a compression in that enclosure of flesh and blood which would be taken off instantly by its removal. While the lifeless body was hanging for its last hour on the tree, He, the living spirit, was using the new liberty in a special office and mission—He was on a journey—He was making Paradise itself a scene of activity—"in the spirit," St. Peter says, "He went and preached to the spirits in prison." St. Peter defines with great precision the objects of this unearthly visitation. They are "spirits in prison"—they are dead men fast holden in Divine custody, as guilty aforesaid of a great disobedience, which sealed their fate here, and swept them promiscuously into a condition which men must call "judgment." These "spirits" were "disobedient once"—and the tense suggests an act of decisive and definite disobedience—"at the time when the long-suffering of God was waiting in the days of Noah." They were "judged" for their disobedience to this call—men, from the side of flesh and time, could not say otherwise than that these men had died in their sins—but a miracle of mercy sought them out, after long ages, in their prison-house—the "three days" of Christ's sojourn "in the heart of the earth" were used, of special grace, in their evangelisation—in the sight of men they lie still under judgment, but in spirit, according to God, they have been quickened into a supernatural life. Let us see if there is anything elsewhere in Scripture that will help us in bearing up under the weight of this remarkable disclosure. Yes, St. Paul has something very like it in his discourse on the communion—where he says that, for dishonouring this holy sacrament, many of the Corinthians not only "are weak and sickly," but even "sleep"—have been, as he goes on to say, "judged of the Lord," not only with "divers diseases," but with "sundry kinds of death"—and goes on to explain to them that, when thus "judged," punished even with death itself, they are "chastened" lest they should be "condemned"—death itself, judicial death, may be but a "chastening" to save from that "condemnation" which yet (the same verse says) is for "the world." What is this but St. Peter's "judged, according to men, in flesh," yet "living, according to God, in spirit"?—a judgment, not of condemnation, but of "chastening" unto salvation? Before we pass to our last words of counsel, let us throw the

light of St. Paul and St. Peter upon some of those darkest passages in the history of the Old Testament which seem to consign to a disproportionate doom men of a single sin, or men sinning half under compulsion. Take such an instance as that of the disobedient prophet—a man lied to by another prophet—and failing, under that persuasion, to keep the safe rule, what God has said to thee thyself is more true, for thee at least, and more concerning, than that which God is said to have said, in correction of it, or in repeal of it, to another. That man, for that yielding, is executed, within the day, under God's death-warrant. But is there any man to tell us, on the word of God, that the disobedient prophet is among the lost—that his is so much as one of the "spirits in prison"? "Judged according to men in flesh"—judged so far as the body, and the life of time, goes—for is it not judgment to be cut off hastily from this life of the living, and by a sentence written for evermore upon the page of God?—not necessarily "condemned with the world"—"living" possibly all the time, and to live, according to God the Judge, and in that higher part of the man, which is "spirit." How many of the supposed injustices of God's dealing may have their reconciliation and their justification in this hint of the apostle's—in this more profound study of the Scriptures! Use the text thus, and it has life in it. Let it open to thee just a glimpse of realities out of thy sight! (Dean Vaughan.)

Christ in the flesh and in the spirit:—Christ dealt with the living in the body, with the spirits in the spirit. (A. J. Bengel.) *Spirits in prison*:—I. THAT THERE ARE HUMAN SPIRITS ACTUALLY IN THE PRISON OF HELL.

1. A prison is a scene of darkness. Impurity, remorse, despair, constitute "the blackness of darkness for ever." 2. A prison is a scene of guilt. 3. A prison is a scene of bondage. Chains of iron confined the miserable culprit. 4. A prison is a scene of thoughtfulness. Hell is a dark realm of thinkers. But there are two features connected with hell that distinguish it from all the prisons on earth. (1) It is self-erected. Each prisoner constructs his own prison. (2) It is spiritual. The spirit is in prison. Earthly prisons cannot confine the soul. II. THAT THERE ARE HUMAN SPIRITS WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE PRISON OF HELL FOR CENTURIES. Christ preached to them, by Noah, when on earth. Peter speaks of them now as being in hell. What period of time has elapsed between this lengthened suffering, however, impresses me with two considerations—1. The fearful enormity of evil. 2. Man's capacity for endurance. Diseases soon break up the body; time withers the patriarchal oak, crumbles the marble; and "the waters wear away the stones" of the mightiest rocks; but, through ages of agony, the soul lives on! III. THAT THERE ARE HUMAN SPIRITS WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE PRISON OF HELL FOR CENTURIES, TO WHOM THE GOSPEL WAS ONCE PREACHED. Christ was "in the world" before His incarnation. The fact that there are spirits in hell to whom the gospel was once preached suggests two very solemn considerations: 1. That there is no necessary connection between hearing the gospel and salvation. "He that heareth My words, and doeth them not," &c. 2. That the final misery of those who have heard the gospel must be contrary both to the disposition and agency of Christ. (D. Thomas, D.D.)

The spirits in prison:—I. THEIR STATE. 1. Disembodied. 2. Immortal. II. THEIR CONDITION. 1. A prison is a place of gloom. 2. A place of restraint. 3. A place of punishment. 4. A place of confinement for trial. III. THEIR HISTORY. 1. They had the gospel preached to them. 2. God's long-suffering waited for them. Applications: 1. Let not disobedient men doubt the certainty of future punishments. 2. Let not sinners question the justice of future punishment. 3. Let not the wicked be emboldened by numbers. 4. Let not the righteous be discouraged by their fewness. 5. Let not those who are alarmed despair. (Essex Remembrancer.)

The long-suffering of God waited.—*The patience of God*:—The term applied here to the Almighty represents Him as we are not very apt to think of Him, i.e., as having before Him all the evil, of every kind, in His children, and bearing it; our ingratitude, our disobedience, our folly, our fickleness, our obstinacy, our selfishness, our wilfulness, our sensuality, our irreverence, our vanity—the whole dark and diversified mass of our sin. The catalogue of its shapes and degrees is well-nigh inexhaustible, yet it does not exhaust His patience. We have, it is true, as men and women, our disapprobations and even our little indignations at wrong-doing. But what marks a special contrast between them and the Divine displeasure is this, that as they gain in strength our human antipathies toward transgression are apt to grow hot and hasty. We want to see judgment against evil works executed speedily, forgetting that it was only just now that we began to see them to be evil works. Our brother trespasses against us, and, not considering that he is our brother, moulded of just such clay and subject to just such infirmities as ourselves,

we cry out for the magistrate and the prison, if not the lash; and sometimes because there is no lash in the jailer's hand, we take one up with our tongue. This is the impatient spirit that vitiates so many of our remonstrances against our neighbours' crimes. Let us give a little wider reach to the treatment of the subject by contemplating the patience of God in its sublime delay, its slowness as men count slowness, in bringing about the most beneficent ends. He shows us this patience first as the Maker of things. You find it in the unhurried order of the natural creation; the slow building and furnishing of the outer worlds; the slow succession of geologic ages; the slow procession in ascending ranks, one only so little above another, of the races of plants and animals, affording an epoch for a reptile or a fern; the slow preparation of the planet for its final purpose in the rearing of an immortal family, the revelation of the spiritual glory of the Divine Man in the flesh, and the manifestation, by that incarnation, of a new earth with the sons of God for its kings and priests. We rise from the physical to the moral world. Take the broadest divisions of the human family—races and nations. From their beginnings in the East, as an eastern shepherd leads out his flocks, the Everlasting Father has brought His tribes out of their native sheepcotes and stationed them here and there over the globe. Vast territories, with fertile soils and blooming vegetation, with the wealth of navies and harvests in their bosom, were waiting to receive them: and some are waiting still. God waited His own good time for occupying them with human industry. Nor is this the chief exercise of His patience. One after another these nations have broken away from their Creator's commandment. For each one of them He kindled the light of conscience or of revelation, to show them the way, and they shut their eyes upon it. Every national life has grown corrupt. No sooner have they come to prosperity than they have come to luxury, idleness, and the beginnings of decay. They have tempted and betrayed each other; cheated, fought, enslaved, murdered each other. Very seldom has He come to them with sudden judgments or wide-spread desolations. He has waited till they would destroy themselves. He has tried them again and again. When one has gone down He has set up another, and waited patiently for that. Even the one people that He chose out of all the rest for His own, folding and guarding them, turned itself into the bitterest offence against Him. But His longsuffering waited, and waited not only in the days of Noah, as the text says, but waited through the age of the patriarchs, waited through the age of Moses, and of the judges, and of the kings, waited till the captivity, waited and brought them back after it, waited till the fulness of time. But we can bring the doctrine home much closer to our personal feeling than this. We all know well enough what those things are that try and irritate us, in the common intercourse of life, and where our patience gives way. We know what the provocation is, when our motives are misjudged, or our self-respect is insulted; when mean calculations take advantage of our friendship; when our children are forgetful or wilful, our pupils dull, our servants careless, our neighbours arrogant, our beneficiaries unthankful or impertinent. We all know the sting that hurts us in contempt, in estrangement, in forgetfulness. Now, all these hateful things, in every instance, are known to God. They are full in His sight. Just so far as they are real offences at all, they are offences against Him before they are to us. He does not overlook them, but looks directly at them all. He sees the tyrants, the traitors, the hardened profligates, living out their many days, and some of them dying natural deaths in their beds, the Alvas and Torquemadas, small and great, of every age—His judgment-seat not moved forward one hair's breadth to meet them this side the grave. Some one says, God is patient because He is eternal; and so we make excuses for our impatience. God is patient because He is good, as well as because He is strong and wise. He waits for men that they may return to Him. He spares them that they may spare each other. And then, if we could look far into the heart of God, might it not appear that He has—considering their light, their calling, their privileges, and promises—quite as much occasion to let His patience have her perfect work in the inconstancies of Christians as in the crimes of unbelievers? the cold affections, lifeless prayers, halting steps. He has to wait even for His own people that He has redeemed—the Church that He has purchased with His blood—in her backward and worldly living. It is quite noticeable that one of the apostles of our Lord dwells on this grace of patience with peculiar earnestness, returning to it as if it had a special power to his conscience and a special sacredness to his heart; and this is St. Peter, from whom my text is taken. Have we not a reason for this, and at the same time a deeper look into his warm

heart, when we turn to his personal character and history? His was just one of those impressive, impetuous temperaments, with great faults and great virtues, which lay a heavy tax upon the patience of friends, and yet inspire, beneath all that, a lively interest. So he must have felt how repeatedly and bitterly he had tried that one Divine Friend. Nor is the whole Scripture less clear and strong as to the practical value of this virtue in the Christian standard of character. Thus it shows us the kneeling suppliant at his lord's feet crying, "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all." It pronounces its blessing on those that bring forth fruit with patience. It casts in a beam of light on the dark mystery of our sufferings by telling us that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, bidding us rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Nay, further yet; by one true and deep interpretation of it the Cross of our Saviour is but the symbol of this doctrine. Patience and passion are but varied forms of one word; the sacrifice of longsuffering. In the Son of Mary the patience of God comes down among men, and we behold His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, in the face of Jesus Christ giving His life for the world, and waiting for its faith. (*Bp. Huntington.*)

While the ark was a preparing.—*Safety in the ark*:—I. In the first place, we see by the parallel drawn between THE FAITH OF A CHRISTIAN AND THE PRESERVATION OF NOAH IN THE DELUGE, that we must look for a deluge answering to that which then came upon the world. Who can seriously think of the world blaspheming its Maker, rebelling against Him, and then proudly contending that there is very little evil in that rebellion, and not see that some signal proof from the Governor of all, that that rebellion shall not be tolerated? The deluge of wrath, then, will come, like the deluge that swept away the millions of mankind in the days of Noah. II. But then, as THERE WAS AN ARK which Noah constructed for his preservation and that of his family, we have an ark too, built not by our own hands, but built by our great Creator and Redeemer. Christ is to His people now the one Ark. There is one Shelter from the coming deluge of God's wrath, one only Ark, for a lost soul; unless we are saved by that, we perish. Christ is the only thing between us and eternal destruction. III. But as Noah was saved, not merely by understanding its construction and not merely by looking at its fair proportions and its massive timbers, but BY ENTERING WITHIN THE ARK and being shut within it by God, so the disciples of Christ are saved by entering into their Ark; and the one thing by which they enter in is faith. So that unless we come to Christ as our only hope, we are excluded from that Ark. It is built by the hand of God, it will float in safety over the deluge, and whoever is in it will be gloriously saved; but we must get within it. We may talk as Christians, we may belong to a Christian church, we may think ourselves safe; but unless we have climbed into the true Ark by faith, and have been shut in by the hand of God, we have no more possibility of safety than a person could have been saved by walking round the ark which Noah had constructed, or examining with surprise and admiration its massive construction. IV. But there is another similarity between the disciples of Christ and Noah and his family. That similarity is in THE WATER OF BAPTISM, as compared with the water of the deluge to Noah. Antitypical to which, the apostle says, "Baptism doth now save us." And therefore, just as the water bore up the ark of Noah, and it was when the waves dashed upon the ark in which he floated that his preservation was completed, so it is by baptism that the disciples of Jesus Christ are likewise saved. The water of baptism could no more save the baptized man, of itself, than the water of the deluge could save the antediluvian sinners who were outside the ark. It was the ark which saved; and then the water completed the salvation, by bearing up the ark upon its flood. And the water of baptism is the antitype of that water of the deluge, because it completes the figure which makes the person safe in Christ, who is the only Ark of the soul from the deluge to come. That this was the apostle's meaning is further manifested by the expression which he used himself, to correct the imagination which might arise in any mind, that the external rite had in itself any such efficacy. He adds, "Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh"; external washing cannot save any one; but it is the "inquiring after God of a good conscience," it is the seeking God with the heart and with the soul—it is this which is the essence of the baptismal profession. There are two more points of comparison on which I must dwell. In the days of Noah there were multitudes that disbelieved, and but few that believed, the warning God gave; eight only out of the millions of mankind believed. The millions disbelieved. And so it is with the threatenings of God now; there are few that credit them, and millions that disbelieve them; which are

right, the few or the millions? Christians! hold fast the truth, even if you were much fewer than you are; and never let your opinion be in the least shaken by any allegation of the presumption, the enthusiasm, or the folly of entertaining the opinions which are against those of the great mass of mankind. Hold them fast, and it will be for your happiness. And lastly, there is one final comparison between the two cases. The multitudes of those who disbelieved, in Noah's days, perished, and the few that believed were saved. Oh! that a warning voice could reach the millions of this world! (*B. W. Noel, M.A.*) **Baptism doth now save us.**—*The two baptisms* :—It is questionable whether we would have had skill enough to discover that the two facts mentioned in the text contained essentially the same revelation, if the union had not been expressly pointed out to us in Scripture. The wild flood that destroyed the ancient world, and the gentle waters of baptism in Christian times—these two at first sight seem to have little in common. The connection is by no means so obvious as in some other types; but it is not less real.

I. THE SALVATION OF NOAH AND HIS FAMILY BY WATER. As long as you think merely of Noah being saved from death by drowning, you miss the grand design of God in bringing the flood upon the earth. If the purpose of the Supreme had been to preserve the lives of those eight, it could have been accomplished by preventing the flood from coming, better than by constructing an ark to float on its surface. What object did the Almighty Ruler contemplate in those stupendous arrangements? To preserve His truth, and the earthen vessels that contained it, not from the flood of water, but from the flood of sin. The water flood, so far from being the source of danger, was the instrument employed to save. God employed one flood to wipe away another. The salvation which God works for His own, both in its whole and in its several parts, is a twofold operation. It is deliverance by destruction. In the Old Testament times, this principle of Divine government was exhibited in acts and ordinances of a more material kind. Christ had not yet come; and the personal ministry of the Spirit had not yet been fully developed. The providential dispensations and religious rites in which the principles were embodied, accorded with the infant state of the world and the Church. In form the manifestation was childish; but even in form all that was childish has been done away, and the self-same truths are set forth in the ordinances of a more glorious ministration.

II. THE SALVATION OF CHRISTIANS BY BAPTISM is like the saving of Noah by the waters of the flood.

1. The danger. In God's sight the ailment of humanity is sin. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Find the way of making an end of sin, and the sting of death is instantly taken away. If it were not for sin we should have nothing to fear. We could smile at death, and at him who hath its power, if we were free from sin.

2. The deliverance. It, too, is like Noah's. We are saved by a flood. We are saved by baptism. And what is meant by baptism? In the first place, it is not "the putting away of the filth of the flesh." It is not the outward act of washing with water that can save a soul from the dangers that surround us. It is not a corporal and carnal thing. Not this; but "the answer of a good conscience toward God." It is the cleansing of the conscience from its guilt, so that when God makes inquisition for blood, He finds no spot or wrinkle there; so that the conscience, when put to the question, answers peace to the challenge of the Judge. "Baptism doth now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is by being in Christ that we may get our sins purged away, and yet be ourselves saved. He stands before God to receive what is due to His people's sins. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." That baptism to which He looked forward from the first of time, and which He met on Calvary, was none other than the wrath of God against sin, which He had in covenant engaged to bear. The Messiah met that deluge, and emerged from it triumphant. From that baptism He rose again. The salvation of believers lies not in meeting God for themselves, when the vials of His wrath for sin are poured out; but in being found in Christ, when He receives His people's due. It is the part and privilege of a believer to be baptized into Christ, and specifically to be baptized into His death (Rom. vi. 3, 5). Our baptism is into Him, and He meets the baptism for us which would have carried us away. We have received the baptism, when in our Substitute we have received it. As Noah remained safe, shut up within the ark, while it received the surges of the deluge; so we, in Christ our refuge, are unhurt, while He meets and exhausts in our stead the justice due to sin. As the flood saved Noah, by destroying the wicked that swarmed on the earth, while he escaped by being shut within the ark; the baptism wherewith Christ was baptized saves Christians, by destroying sins and sinners, so that they who are found in Him

in the time of visitation shall step out with Him upon a new earth, under a new heaven, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (*W. Arnot.*) "Baptism": helpful:—The apostle speaks of "baptism" as saving us; that is the point that concerns us most. Of course the question starts, How does baptism save us; in what way is it helpful to us in our Christian life and career? If you look at the passage you will see that the apostle guards himself carefully. He says, "Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh." We cannot too distinctly assert that there is nothing saving in "baptism" itself. In what way, then, you may ask, does baptism save us? How can it be made helpful to us in the cultivation of Christian character and in the living of Christian life? The apostle tells us, "But the answer of a good conscience toward God." The Greek term here translated "answer" means a question or interrogation. It is used to signify the mutual return of question and answer, which implies compact. You know that when two parties present themselves to the minister for marriage he requires them to say certain words after him; those words form what we may call the marriage oath, or declaration, or compact. When that declaration or compact has been made by both parties the man puts the ring on the finger of the woman as a sign or evidence that such declaration has been made. Now, what the wedding ring is to the married couple and society, baptism is to the believer and Christ. It is the sign, token, symbol of the covenant, compact, which the believer has entered into with his Saviour. In this sense it has an element of salvation in it, and it may be made helpful to you in the cultivation of Christian character and life by reminding you of the terms of that covenant.

I. THAT YOU HAVE REPENTED OF YOUR PAST LIFE AND CONDUCT. There are some in whom the process or change we call "repentance" is not very marked or great. In some, from their natural temperament, or from the advantages of early surroundings, the religious life seems a gradual development. As the lovely bud opens under the genial influence of the spring's sun, so their hearts open under the genial influence of the heavenly Father's love. In others, as in the case of the prodigal, there is a time, sharp and distinct, when reflection arrests them in their course of sin and folly. Now, "baptism" is a standing perpetual reminder of that solemn crisis—that solemn resolve in your history. Hence Paul writes: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death?" &c. (Rom. vi. 3-13). The act of baptism is an open public renunciation of sin, of sinful pleasures, of the follies of the world.

II. THAT YOU HAVE ACCEPTED CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOUR. The compact you now make with Christ, and of which your "baptism" will be the standing sign and symbol, is that you accept, believe in Him as your Saviour. In accepting Christ as your Saviour you promise Him that you will give yourself up to Him. When tempted to relax or disobey, you will answer your tempter, "I have placed myself in the hands of Christ; I am not my own. I have His prescription, and, unless I attend to that, I cannot expect spiritual healing or health." You will point your tempter to your "baptism" as a standing symbol of your covenant with Christ; and in this way your "baptism" will be helpful to you, and will save you.

III. THAT YOU HAVE CONSECRATED YOURSELF TO CHRIST'S SERVICE. The wife sees the ring on her finger, and she says, "I am married; I am no longer my own. I am pledged to give my husband as much real pleasure and joy as lies in my power, to abstain from everything that would grieve or displease him, to make any and every sacrifice if necessary to contribute to his comfort and well-being." In the same way, remembering your "baptism," you will say, "I am married to Christ; I have pledged myself to His service as the great purpose of my life."

IV. THAT YOU SUSTAIN THE MOST HONOURABLE RELATION TO CHRIST. I wish I could so fire the hearts of our young men and women that they could adequately realise the dignity and the honour of the relation they sustain to Christ, and of which "baptism" is the standing sign and seal. You know how the soldier is fired with the sense of his dignity as a soldier. There are many things that he would not do because it would disgrace his profession. And so I would that you should be ever conscious of the dignity and honour of the relation that you sustain to Christ. Remembering your "baptism," the standing seal of that relation, you will say, "I am a baptized Christian, one of Christ's soldiers. How can I do this mean act, speak that false word, do that great wickedness, and sin against Christ?" In this way, too, "baptism" may be helpful to you, and so save you. (*B. Preece.*)

Who is gone into heaven.—Our Lord's ascension:—The ascension of our Lord was, in one point of view, only a result of His resurrection, and the proper completion of His triumph then achieved. That is, no new work was done by Him after His resurrection which brought about His ascension. It was His pleasure to remain on earth during

those forty days, in order to show Himself alone to His disciples, and to establish beyond doubt the fact that He was risen from the dead ; but they were only a delay interposed before that triumphant departure whose way was already prepared. First of all, then, the ascension of Jesus was the seal of the accomplishment of redemption. His work which He wrought in our nature was the rescuing it from the dominion of sin, and bringing it into union with God. This His glorious state of final perfection of humanity is not His alone. It belongs not to Him any more than His death and resurrection belonged to Him, as man individual. It belongs, in its actuality and in its effects, to our whole nature, which He bore on Him and bears on Him at this moment. In, and as accomplished in, that humanity thus glorified, does the Father behold all His creatures and all His purposes ; in Him it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and that all things in heaven and in earth should be summed up. O how blessed an encouragement is this, in all our difficulties and under all our troubles. Thou feeble Christian, who believest and prayest and strivest, but hast never laid firm hold on the hope set before thee, who day by day art conning over thine own imperfections, turn thine eyes from looking inward, and look upward on Him where He is. That human Body, pierced but glorified, marred above measure, but also exalted above measure, let that be thy one object of contemplation. There is thy safety ; there thy guarantee of God's favour ; on that blessed Form falls no frown of the Father's countenance, but an everlasting smile of approval, and under that smile thou, His lowly and fainting member, art included. Fix thine eyes on Him and fear not ; in Him thou hast all ; through Him thou shalt rise after all thy falls ; shalt enter into the kingdom after all thy doubts ; for he that hath the Son hath life. I want in my belief which is to sustain me, which is to renew me in holiness, something as present to me as the world and the flesh and the devil are present with me ; not only a past fact, however gracious and glorious ; but a present fact, which I may look upon as part of this moment in which I live and struggle onward. And I can find this only in the glorified form of my Lord, now in heaven at God's right hand, holding together this world, creating, blessing, vivifying, governing all things. This is no past matter. Far above this earth with her living tribes and her waving blossoms, far above these bright stars which bound the vision of the outward eye, I see that form of Him in whom I live ; there is He who is made to me wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption ; His life is my obedience ; His blood is my ransom ; His resurrection is my justification. Earth and hell may combine against my weak nature ; but there I see that nature standing in the Godhead glorified, and I know that I am safe. Outward appearances may discourage me to the utmost. Both the Church and the world are summed up in and ruled by that glorified One, who reigns above them both. Besides being the seal and pledge of our accomplished redemption, He is, in this His glorified state, our continuing High Priest and Intercessor. There, in the centre of the Father's glory, He rests not idle, nor is He unmindful of those whom He came to save. They are ever borne on His thoughts, and not the least of their cares or wants is forgotten by Him. Through Him, not as an unconscious medium, but as the living and conscious offerer, all prayer is made. Again, our glorified Saviour is the giver of the Holy Spirit. From Him all spiritual influence comes direct, and without union with Him no man has the Spirit of the Lord. And this is a most important consideration. For men are apt to imagine of our blessed Lord as withdrawn from His Church ; and the participation of spiritual gifts and spiritual life to be derived from a long succession of secondary instruments, and ordinances of grace ; whereas it is by direct contact of every believing soul with Himself in glory, that all spiritual grace and gifts are derived, and means and ordinances are but helps to lifting the soul by faith into realisation of His person and office, and into communion with Him. (*Dean Alford.*)

Our ascended Lord :—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. They begin thus—"Who is gone into heaven." "He is gone" : that sounds rather dolorous. Yet we dare not raise a monument to Christ as one who is dead. Let us complete the sentence—"who is gone into heaven." Now you demand the trumpet, for the words are full of soul-stirring music, and create intense delight. Still, there are the words, "He is gone" : He is gone away from you and from me ; we cannot now embrace His feet, nor wash them, nor lean our head upon His bosom, nor look into His face. Henceforth we are strangers here because He is not here. He intends us to remove, for He has removed. We are not at home on earth. He seems to say, "Upwards, My brethren, upwards from off this earth ; away from this world to the glory land. I am gone, and you must be gone. This is not your place of resting, but you must prepare

yourselves for a time when it shall be said of each one of you, 'He is gone.' Now let us consider that He "is gone into heaven." What does this signify but, first, that He is gone out of the region wherein our senses can perceive Him? But then we know that our Lord, as man, is gone into a greater nearness to God than ever; "He is gone into heaven," where is the throne of the great King. Let us joy and rejoice that our covenant Head is now in the bosom of the Father, at the fountain-head of love and grace, and that He is there on our behalf. In going into heaven there is also this thought, that our Lord is gone now into the place of perfect happiness and of complete glory. The Lord Jesus is filled with ineffable satisfaction, which is the reward of His passion and His death. Thinking this over, let us reflect that nothing could stop His going there. "He is gone up into heaven, despite all who raged against Him." But I beg you to remember that He is gone up into heaven as our representative. Jesus does nothing by Himself now. All His people are with Him. He says, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me." They are always in union with Him. This is the best seal that our faith could desire, the resurrection and ascension of Christ being practically the resurrection and the home-bringing of all His redeemed.

2. Secondly, His sitting at the right hand of God: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." Remember that this being on the right hand of God relates to the complex person of our Lord; it relates to Him not as God alone, but as God and man. It is His manhood that is at the right hand of God. Wonderful conception! The next being to God is man. Infinite leagues must necessarily lie between the Creator and the created; but between God and man in Christ Jesus there seems no distance at all, the man Christ Jesus sits at God's right hand. What meaneth it that Christ sits at the right hand of God? Does it not mean, first, unrivalled honour? To sit at the right hand of God is the highest conceivable glory. Does not it also signify intense love? When Solomon would describe the love of the King to his bride, he said, "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." It means also communion and counsel. We speak of a person with whom we take advice as "the man of our right hand." God taketh counsel with the man Christ Jesus. When you have a friend at court, you hope you will do well; but what a friend have we in the King's courts; even Him who is the Wonderful Counsellor! Does it not also signify perfect repose? Jesus is gone up to the right hand of God, and sitteth there. O restful Saviour, we labouring, come to Thee and find rest in Thee; we also sit down expecting the time when Thou shalt put down all our enemies, and we shall tread even Satan under our feet.

3. The third fact is, His dominion: "Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." Angels are subject to Him whom they nailed to the Cross, and at whom they wagged their heads. This is one of the wonders of heaven. Men in countless myriads are in heaven white-robed, praising God; and one Man is actually on the throne of God, vicegerent, Lord over all; having every knee to bow before Him, and every tongue to call Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

II. THE LESSONS OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.

1. The religion of Christ is true. Our doctrine is not sentiment, and view, and opinion, but fact.

2. Christ's cause is safe. Let not His church tremble, let her not think of putting out the hand of unbelief to steady the ark of the Lord. The wheel will turn, and they that are lowest now shall soon be highest; they that have been with Him in the dust shall be with Him in His glory.

3. Now I can see that His saints are safe; for if Jesus has risen and gone into His glory, then each individual in Him shall be safe too.

4. This explains the way in which Jesus deals with sinners. That which took place in His own person He makes to be a picture of what takes place in the men whom He saves. If you come to Him you can only get to know the fulness of His gracious power by being buffeted with conviction and repentance, and by having self, especially self-righteousness, crucified and slain.

5. I think, since Christ has gone into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, it shows which way we ought to go. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." He draws them to the Cross, and you may be sure He will draw them to the crown. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Christ at home:—I. HIS RESIDENCE.

1. He has gone there as to His proper abode.

2. To prepare for His disciples.

3. To attract the hearts of His disciples.

II. HIS POSITION. "On the right hand of God." The figure implies—1. Might. Christ is at the fountain-head of power.

2. Dignity.

III. HIS AUTHORITY.

1. Co-extensive with the universe.

2. Exercised for the promotion of moral excellence everywhere.

3. Specially contemplates the good of His followers. (Homilist.)

Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.—All angels subject to Christ:—Both good and bad; the good willingly,

the others against their will. I. FOR THE GOOD ANGELS. 1. If such glorious creatures be subject to Christ, then—(1) How great a one is He, and how glorious is His kingdom. (2) The greater honour and dignity our Head hath, the more joy and comfort may we have, who are His members. 2. In that He appoints them to watch and guard us—(1) What a great honour is this to us. (2) How may we hereby be comforted and encouraged against Satan's malice. (3) We must keep within compass, and walk carefully in God's ways. II. FOR THE EVIL ANGELS. 1. All these are subject to Christ, and He hath triumphed over them. 2. As it is no small honour to Him our Head to have all these under Him, so the meditation hereof cannot but be comfortable to us, both in regard of Him and ourselves. 3. Those evil angels cannot do that evil they would, and if they cannot, much less can their instruments. (*John Rogers.*) *Christ the King of angels*:—We indeed are but little able to enter into the thoughts of apostles when they saw Him in His crucified body, ascending up into heaven. But we may understand that this was a part of their feelings; that now One, who is true Man as we are, who can enter into our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears, He is set in the highest place, over all created things. And He carries with Him there the same tender love towards the meanest of His faithful servants which He ever vouchsafed to exercise here. It was, in some sort, as if one's nearest and dearest relation were made absolute king of the country. If persons who care for earthly things would rejoice in such a change as that, and consider their own fortune made, how much more joy to those who care for heavenly things, when we set our hearts to consider that He who laid down His life for us, He is made the great King in heaven and earth, and has all the treasures of grace and glory put for ever into His hand. In this we see at once is included every good thing. But for the present there is one blessing in particular. It is the subjection of the spiritual world to our Saviour, "Angels and authorities and powers were made subject" to the Son of Man when He went into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God. We naturally think, even from our childhood, a good deal of the spiritual world; of beings out of sight, who yet, for aught we know, may often be very near us, and may have great power to do us good, or to hurt us in body and soul. And the thought of our Lord gone up into heaven, and sitting on the right hand of God, is a thought of great power to set us right in our feelings towards both sorts of angelic beings. Consider, first, what a thing it is to know that the good angels are on our side, that they camp about us to deliver us. This certainty of angelical aid, so far as we are on Christ's side, we have by His exaltation into heaven, and the subjection to Him of angels, authorities, and powers. But those words, doubtless, mean the evil angels as well as the good; our unseen enemies, as well as our unseen friends. Let us not try to put out of our minds the notion of the bad angels being around us, until we have turned in serious prayer to Him who for our sake holds them in chains. Imagine Christ our Lord on His throne, how His eye is ever fixed, both on you in your helpless slumbering condition, and on your adversary waiting to hurt you. And be sure, that if before you lay down you seriously and reverently committed yourself to Him in prayer, with sincere penitence for all your sins, He will not let the roaring lion devour you. You may, without presumption, imagine Him, then, saying to some of His good angels, "Here is one who lays down to rest, desiring to dwell under the defence of the Most High; he hath set his love upon Me, and tried to know My name; therefore do you, My good angels, take charge of him, and keep him from the evil that walketh in darkness." (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*) *The ascension*:—"Who is gone into heaven." It is the correction of all that is carnal and all that is superstitious in our religion. It is the Christian application of "God is spirit." It bids us not to rest in forms; not to multiply services as services, not to rest in sacraments as sacraments, but to look through all to One who is not here, but ascended; and to be sought therefore as one deeply sympathising with human infirmity, but exercising that sympathy not in weak indulgence but in transforming strength. "Who is gone into heaven," and therefore can "fill all things." Such is St. Paul's argument in his Epistle to the Ephesians. He reminds us that the Saviour Himself, remaining below, must have been confined by earth's conditions. It is ascension which makes Him the Omnipresent. "Gone into heaven." There then seek Him. There, when you have found Him, with Him dwell. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1-6. Christ suffered in the flesh.—*Ecce Homo* :—The Redeemer of the world is in one sense infinitely above us; but in another sense He is actually beside us. His sympathy is as true as His sovereignty. I. TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS WERE. "He suffered in the flesh." No one can read the Gospels without seeing indications of those sufferings. 1. There can be no doubt that Jesus was exempted from many of the physical ills from which we suffer. We can only think of Him as healthy, not only because of His birth, but because the exacting nature of His self-forgetful work required a perfect physique. Besides this, we must remember that many of our physical sufferings we bring on ourselves. Idleness, self-indulgence, artificial modes of life, irregularities, are the causes of many of the ills which flesh is heir to; but the life of Jesus was exquisite in its simplicity and unstained by a single vicious propensity. And this reminds us further that He could not have suffered, as we do, from a sense of personal sin, from the remorse which follows after our utterance of an unkind word, or the indulgence of an evil propensity, or from the tumult of passion which rises up within a sinful heart. Yet He was a sufferer. "He was a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." But besides these His whole life was a martyrdom. His sensibility, not only to physical pain, but to mental and moral agony, must have been exquisite. 2. Think, too, of His utter loneliness. His was the solitude of a holy soul surrounded by sinners; of a heavenly spirit in contact with things earthly and sensual; of a mind whose higher thoughts not a single being on earth could appreciate; whose truest objects in living and dying as He did none could comprehend. 3. That expression, "in the flesh," reminds us of His uncongenial surroundings. He lived and died among a despised people, and was regarded as an outcast even by some of them! Often must He have felt as the Jews did when, exiled from home and fatherland, they hanged their harps upon the willows, and wept as they remembered Zion, saying, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" II. HOW THESE SUFFERINGS WERE ENDURED BY HIM. I. It is evident that He accepted them as God's appointment for Him here. "The cup which My Father hath given Me shall I not drink it?" indicates His attitude to trouble right through. If a day's ministry brought Him no result, He did not repine; if His own nation rejected Him, He meekly accepted the result, though with unutterable sorrow over the issues of it to them; if the Cross was to be faced, He went forth willingly to Calvary, there to die—the just for the unjust—to bring us unto God. 2. Notice also that our Lord never allowed Himself to be absorbed in His own sorrows. He was always ready to enter into other people's joys and griefs, whatever His own sorrows might be. He is not so absorbed in the joys of heaven that He will not listen to the faltering cry of the lowliest penitent. I have known some sufferers who have been armed with the same mind. Their unselfishness has been sublime. Their couch of pain has proved the centre of joy and peace to those who circle round them. III. BUT HOW CAN WE DO THIS? (*A. Rowland, LL.B.*) *Christ's sufferings* :—I. CHRIST SUFFERED IN HUMAN NATURE. His sufferings in the flesh were—1. Great, corporeal, social, mediatorial. 2. Ignominious. Poverty, obloquy, persecution, crucifixion. II. CHRIST SUFFERED FOR MEN. III. CHRIST SUFFERED WITH A SPIRIT WHICH MEN SHOULD CULTIVATE. 1. Profoundly religious. 2. Self-denyingly philanthropic. IV. THE POSSESSION OF THIS SPIRIT IS THE POWER TO DELIVER US FROM MORAL EVIL. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Sin pierced* :—Use sin, as Jesus was used when He was made sin for us; lift it up, and make it naked by confession to God. And then pierce—1. The hands of it, in respect of operation, that it may work no more. 2. The feet of it, in respect of progression, that it go no further. 3. The heart, in respect of affection, that it may be loved no longer. (*J. Trapp.*) **Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.—*Conformity with Christ*** :—I. THE HIGH ENGAGEMENT TO THIS CONFORMITY. "He suffered for us in the flesh." We are the more obliged to make His suffering our example, because it was to us more than an example; it was our ransom. This makes the conformity reasonable in a double respect. It is due that we follow Him, who led us as the Captain of our salvation; that we follow Him in suffering and in doing, seeing both were for us. What can be too bitter to endure, or too sweet to forsake, to follow Him? Were this duly considered, should we cleave to our lusts or to our ease? Should we not be willing to go through fire and water, yea, through death

itself, yea, were it possible, through many deaths, to follow Him? Consider, as this conformity is due, so it is made easy by His suffering for us. Our chains which bound us over to eternal death being knocked off, shall we not walk, shall we not run, in His ways? II. THE NATURE OF THIS CONFORMITY, to show the nearness of it, is expressed in the very same terms as in the pattern; it is not a remote resemblance, but the same thing, even "suffering in the flesh." But that we may understand rightly what suffering is here meant, it is plainly this, "ceasing from sin." So that this "suffering in the flesh" is not simply the enduring of afflictions, which is a part of the Christian's conformity to His Head, but it implies a more inward and spiritual suffering. It is the suffering and dying of our corruption, the taking away of the life of sin by the death of Christ: the death of His sinless flesh works in the believer the death of sinful flesh, that is, the corruption of His nature, which is so usually in Scripture called "flesh." "Ceased from sin." He is at rest from it, a godly death, as they who die in the Lord rest from their labours. Faith so looks on the death of Christ, that it takes the impression of it, sets it on the heart, kills it unto sin. Christ and the believer do not only become one in law, so that His death stands for theirs, but one in nature, so that His death for sin causes theirs to it (Rom. vi. 3). III. THE ACTUAL IMPROVEMENT OF THIS CONFORMITY. "Arm yourselves with the same mind," or thoughts of this mortification. Consider and apply the suffering of Christ in the flesh, to the end that you with Him suffering in the flesh, may cease from sin. Think that it ought to be thus, and seek that it may be thus with you. "Arm yourselves." There is still fighting, and sin will be molesting you; though wounded to death, yet will it struggle for life, and seek to wound its enemy; it will assault the graces that are in you. You may take the Lord's promise for victory in the end; that shall not fail; but do not promise yourself ease in the way, for that will not hold. If at sometimes you be undermost, give not all up for lost; he hath often won the day who hath been foiled and wounded in the fight. But likewise take not all for won, so as to have no more conflict, when sometimes you have the better in particular battles. Now the way to be armed is this, "the same mind." How would my Lord Christ carry Himself in this case? And what was His business in all places and companies? Was it not to do the will and advance the glory of His Father? Thus ought it to be with the Christian, framing all his ways, and words, and very thoughts, upon that model, the mind of Christ, and studying in all things to walk even as He walked; studying it much, as the reason and rule of mortification, and drawing from it, as the real cause and spring of mortification. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *Cardinal truths*:—I. THE CARDINAL TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY—"Christ hath suffered for us." II. THE CHRISTIAN'S CARDINAL DUTY—"Christ having suffered for us, arm yourselves with the same mind." 1. Arm yourselves with the same mind as to the method of conduct. 2. Arm yourselves with the same mind as to the purpose in view. III. THE CHRISTIAN'S DAILY COURSE OF LIFE—that we should no longer live, &c. (*J. J. S. Bird.*) *Christ the grand necessity of man*:—I. CHRIST'S "MIND" IS THE WEAPON WITH WHICH MAN IS TO FIGHT HIS WAY ON TO MORAL PERFECTION. His moral perfection is here taught. But to reach this what a battle-man has to fight! By the "mind of Christ" we are to understand, of course, not His mere intellect, great as it was, nor His conscience, sublimely pure though it was; but the moral spirit that inspired and directed all His intellectual and moral powers. By His "mind" we mean, in one word, His moral character. Now this is the weapon by which alone man can win victories over evil, and obtain the crown of life, namely, conformity to the "will of God." Doctrines will not do it, however Scriptural; religious rites will not do it, however studiously observed. Who is the man in our world the most successful in putting down wrong? Not the legislator, however just the laws he enacts; not the moralist, however cogent his arguments and powerful his rhetoric; but the man who has the "mind of Christ" as his armour. II. CHRIST'S "SUFFERINGS" ARE THE ARGUMENT FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF THIS WEAPON. First, the sufferings of Christ were "in the flesh." He was in the flesh, but not flesh. Secondly, Christ suffered "in the flesh" in order to establish human holiness. "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lust of men, but to the will of God." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The rest of his time in the flesh*.—"The rest of his time in the flesh":—Who can tell how long that may be for any one of us? The sands run swiftly through life's hour-glass. The shadow hastens to go down upon the dial. The waves eat away so quickly the dwindling shoal of land which crumbles beneath us. The Christian finds nothing in such thoughts to make him sad. Every milestone marks the

growing nearness of his home. The waves cannot be crossed too swiftly by the eager traveller. Before us lie the ages of eternity, filled with a blessedness of personal enjoyment and rapturous ministry which defy tongue to tell or mind to picture. But the blessed future must not divert our thoughts from the duties to be discharged during the rest of the time which we are to spend in the flesh. We must not be dreamers, but warriors. To arms! Arm yourselves with the same mind; and when we ask, "What mind?" we are told to arm ourselves with the mind that took Jesus to His death. In a venerable old church at Innsbruck, famous for containing the tomb of the great Emperor Maximilian, there is a magnificent bronze statue of Godfrey of Boulogne, the illustrious crusader. His head is covered with a helmet, and on the helmet rests a crown of thorns. Of course, there was a meaning in the mind of the artist other than that with which we now invest the strange conjunction. He doubtless designed to represent the sacred cause for which that helmet was donned. But we may discover an apt symbol of the teaching of our apostle, who unites in these verses the armour of the Christian soldier, and the recollection of Christ's suffering in the flesh. This witness of the sufferings of Christ first takes us to the Cross; and after gazing reverently on that spectacle of love, we are brought to a point where two ways diverge. And the only way of discovering and maintaining the right path is to imbibe the spirit of that wondrous death; nay, to bind it around us as a talisman of victory. "In hoc signo vinces." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The right use of the residue of our time*:—I. **NEGATIVELY.** "Not to the lusts of men!" This does not mean that we are to neglect our bodily interests. What are the lusts? Animal instincts grown to a dominant force. II. **POSITIVELY.** "To the will of God." This implies—1. That God has a will. 2. That God has a will concerning men. 3. That God's will is revealed. What is the will of God concerning men? First, it is His will that we should believe in Christ (John vi. 29; 1 John iii. 23). Secondly, it is His will that we shall be purified from sin. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 3). Thirdly, it is His will that we should cultivate a practical gratitude for all the blessings of life (1 Thess. v. 18). Fourthly, it is His will that every man shall be saved (1 Tim. ii. 4). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The time in the flesh*:—I. **OUR TIME IN THE FLESH IS CHEQUERED.** II. **OUR TIME IN THE FLESH IS SHORT.** III. **OUR TIME HERE IS UNCERTAIN.** IV. **OUR TIME HERE IS IMPORTANT.** (*Homilist.*) **To the lusts of men.**—*Men's lusts opposed to God's will*:—1. To live after the lusts of men and to the will of God are opposite each to other as light and darkness. 2. We cannot at one and the same time both walk after our lusts and live to God's will. One lust loved, sufficient to condemn. 3. In the course of sanctification, we must begin at renouncing our own will, and the lusts of men. None sow a plant till weeds be pulled up; none put on new apparel till they have put off their rags. 4. It is not sufficient that we renounce our lusts and evil, except we yield obedience to the will of God. 5. It is not one action or two whereby a man is discovered what he is, but his constant course of walking or living. (*John Rogers.*) *The flesh rightly used*:—The flesh itself, under the calm subduing influence of your purer spirit, will become a dignified servant in waiting on its superior. Good gardeners know a better way of conquering the wild thorn than by uprooting and destroying it. They set it in their garden. They graft it on some queenly rose. Then the wild thorn expends its energy not upon itself, but upon that which is above itself; and as a reward is crowned with a glory which itself could not possibly produce. (*G. Calthrop.*) **To the will of God.**—*Will of God*:—1. It is a good will. 2. A holy will. 3. A just will. 4. An impartial will. 5. A practicable will. 6. A supreme will. 7. An obligatory will. (*John Bate.*) *Living to God's will*:—I. **THIS IS THE LESSON OF MAN'S PAST EVIL LIFE.** 1. Sadness. (1) Enough of sin, because of its—(2) Degradation to self. (3) Injuriousness to others. (4) Rebellion against God. 2. Hope. (1) Forgiveness for time past. (2) Deliverance from time past. II. **NOTWITHSTANDING BAD MEN'S WONDER AT GOOD MEN'S CONDUCT, WHAT PETER SAID TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO IS TRUE TO-DAY.** The thoroughly corrupt man finds it impossible to understand the Christly man. 1. He thinks his conduct strange, and so, perhaps, ignores him altogether. 2. Or he thinks his conduct strange, and is aggravated by it. 3. Or he thinks his conduct strange, and it leads him to inquire. This is the good effect. III. **BOTH CHRIST'S JUDGMENT AND CHRIST'S GOSPEL ARE FOR ALL.** (*U. R. Thomas.*) *God's will*:—The perfection of a man's nature is when his will fits on to God's like one of Euclid's triangles super-imposed upon another, and line for line coincides. When his will allows a free passage to the will of God, without resistance, as light travels through transparent glass; when

his will responds to the touch of God's finger upon the keys, like the telegraphic needle to the operator's hand; then man has attained all that God and religion can do for him, all that his nature is capable of. *The will of God*:—What a glorious contrast to the will of the flesh is "the will of God"! This was the food of Jesus. To do this He came to earth. It was the fire-cloud that lit His pathway, the yoke in carrying which He found rest, the Urim and Thummim, which dimmed or shone with heavenly guidance. There is no course more safe or blessed than to live in the will of God. God's will is good will. Where the will of God lies across the wilderness pathway, there flowers bloom, and waters gush from rocks of flint. Sometimes the flesh rebels against it, because it means crucifixion and self-denial, but under the rugged shell the sweetest kernel nestles, and none know the ecstasy of living save those who refuse the broad, easy road of the lusts of men, to climb the steep, upward path of doing the will of God from the heart. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

VERS. 3-5. The time past of our life may suffice us.—*The consideration of misspent time an incentive to repentance.*—1. The time spent in sin, we know how much it is, but what is behind we know not. The devil is sure of his part, but what God shall have, whether half or a quarter, so much is uncertain. If we knew we should live twenty years more to serve God as we have done twenty years in sin, God should have but the half, but we know not whether we shall live twenty days. Should we then defer? 2. Time is very precious, above gold and silver, and hereof we have squandered a great part. 3. There is no time to be spent in sin, but we are to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. Therefore, having robbed Him of some of His due, is it not well He will take this that remains? 4. Whatsoever time is spent till we return to God is all going out of the way; and if a man hath gone out of the way but till eight or nine o'clock, assuredly that is more than enough. 5. Whatsoever time is spent that way is but doing that that must be undone again and repented of. Is not a little of this too much? Who will willingly so do his work that it must be unravelled out again? 6. All that is done this way is for the devil, our sworn enemy, for whom even the least is too much; for the flesh, to which we owe nothing; and for the world, which is our deadly enemy. 7. It is all done against God, to whom we owe all; and is it not then sufficient we have wronged Him so far? 8. And all is against our own souls; and have we not wounded them enough already? (*John Rogers.*) *Departed years*:—What is time? Without regard to philosophic niceties, I may say that it is limited duration, vouchsafed to man for moral purposes, through the mediation of Christ. **I. AS A PORTION OF PROBATIONARY EXISTENCE.** "Time past of our life." Take three views of the years that have departed. 1. Look at what they have given us. 2. Look at what they have taken away from us. The warm impulses and tender sensibilities of childhood and youth. Precious gifts are these! What friends are gone! 3. Look at what they have left us. They have left us life, reason, memory, religious privileges, augmented responsibility, wider memories, and greater power for good and evil. Many precious germs of blessedness. **II. AS A COURSE OF WRONG MORAL CONDUCT.** The apostle intimates that those to whom he wrote had, during the past years, "wrought the will of the Gentiles." During the time past of their lives they had not been passive but active. What was this will of the Gentiles? The will of corrupt humanity. Nothing more, nothing less. Every wheel in its vast and complicated machinery is moved and ruled by this. It is true that this will works in different men with different instruments and under different phases of character. Its language in some is vulgar, in others classic; in some obscene, in others refined. 1. That this will is generally the ruling power in the first stages of man's history. 2. That there is a danger even of good men yielding to its influence. **III. AS AN ARGUMENT FOR IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT.** "For the time past of our life may suffice," &c. The urgency of this will appear from two considerations. 1. The will of God ought to have swayed with an absolute power from the commencement of our responsible life. 2. All the time that has been spent in neglect of this has been spent in contracting guilt and increasing our exposure to ruin. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The voice of the past*:—Life! What mystery is wrapped up in life! How great the power needed to originate it! What transcendent worth belongs to human life! to—I. "OUR LIFE." "Our life" is redeemed life. It was great to speak a world from nought; greater to create moral life and fashion it after the Divine original; greatest to redeem. **II. "THE PAST OF LIFE."** How little we know of the past—taking the word in its comprehensive relationship to the world! As a question of history we know something of the world's civilisation, science, art,

human laws, &c. But what do we know of the individual experience of mankind—its joys and sorrows? But there is a past for which God holds us responsible—an individual past. III. "THE TIME PAST OF OUR LIFE." Nothing that I have is my own. I belong to God, in body, soul, and spirit. I am, therefore, accountable to Him for my time. Life is God's loan to man, and time man's "life-rent of the world." In the great day we are to stand before God to give an account of our stewardship. The "life-rent" which the great Proprietor claims is service. He has put us into His beautiful world to make it more beautiful by adding moral to material beauty. If we fail to render this service we shall lose our life, in a sense which human language is not adequate to express. "And now what have we to say with respect to this strange, solemn thing—Time?—that men do with it through life just what the apostles did for one precious irreparable hour of it in the garden of Gethsemane—they go to sleep! What opportunities have we lost! What privileges forfeited! What work for God neglected! The secret of all the failures which have been enumerated is expressed by the apostle in one word, self-will—"the will of the Gentiles." Man doing his own will is the history of the world's sin and woe. Adoption into the family of God does not exempt us from its insidious workings. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" asks us to let the past "suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles," to renew our early vows, our first love, to be henceforth inspired with the holy ambition to be "conformed to the image of His Son." To attain unto this we must yield our wills to God. What are we living for?—for God or for self? (*A London Suburban Minister.*) *The old year and the new*:—Look at the qualities that are here forbidden. Lust, lasciviousness, drunkenness, carousings—all these are especially mentioned; and the apostle declares that the time past suffices. You have had experience enough in regard to those things; it is time to leave them. There are multitudes of men that are sacking their very constitution; for whatever may be the opinions of men as to the morality of lascivious conduct, there can be no doubt as to the folly of it. And what shall I say of the concurrent danger of drunkenness, or excessive indulgence of the appetite? Surely I need not point out how base the life of a man is whose whole being circles around about that carnal, animal appetite; upon whom the habit is growing, and, like a maelstrom, swings into its centre, destroying everything that is pure and beautiful that comes near it. It sacks and ransacks the whole nobility of a man. The time past is sufficient for such things. But then there are a great many men that do not consider themselves either lascivious or drunkards. Nevertheless, carousings are familiar to them. What an ignoble way of living to make the whole of life consist, not in building up, but in the commerce of the lower feelings, and the prostitution of the sanctities of friendship to make the friendship of the cup, in all that wild excitement which breeds no single new idea, cleanses no single passion, throws light upon no single element of beauty, but is pure buoyancy of the flesh and the enjoyment of animal life! Higher than these, but still under the ban, are all forms of life where feeling and endeavour are concentrated upon frivolous social enjoyments, with their very selfishness and vanity and pride. I would not restrict the enjoyment of the young, except it trenches upon higher and nobler obligations. I love elasticity of spirit, overflow of pleasantry. All these things I believe belong to life; and just as much under the gospel as outside of it—yea, more. Now in regard to these passions, and the lower forms of intense self-indulgence particularly, the apostle is speaking here, and says, "The time past ought to suffice." All these wastes and degradations ought to cease absolutely. They shut out a man's reason. They shut out his best nature. They stand in the way of the accomplishment of the final ends of life. There are times when all these indulgences may be left. The time past gives men sufficient experience and knowledge, both of their uselessness and of their wastefulness, and also of their peril; and that is the time when men should stop and say, "Well, I have had enough of that, now and for ever." Time enough to bring the higher qualities of your mind to sit in judgment over the lower. The conscience is Chief Justice. Call up those criminal appetites. Let them hear the judge decide, and follow the decision. The time past is sufficient for knowledge and for judgment. That which is true of these lower passions and appetites is just as true of the higher and inanimate one of a frivolous, self-indulgent, wasteful life that proposes nothing, but dances on from hour to hour, with no more purpose than the butterflies or the insects of a summer day have. The time past is sufficient. Now, allow me to ask you: Are there not in your life some things palpitating, fresh and warm in your bosom, that you know to be wrong in your career? Is it not time for a change?

And if your faults are superficial, if they are simply faults of temper, or of balance in the development of your life outwardly, is there nothing in your home life, is there nothing in your friendship life, is there nothing in your business life, judged by the canons of morality, and still more judged by the higher forms of supreme duty, that needs to be changed? Are you the chief occupant of your own self? or are there vermin that dwell in the cracks and crevices and partitions of the soul-house? And if there is something more than faults, if there is something that lies deeper, ought you not, above all, for this to make a solemn pause? Be manly, and take a nobler view of what a man is born for, and of what his duty is to himself, to his fellow men, to society, to God, and to eternity; and form a judgment of yourself for the old year; and on that deliberate personal investigation of facts and dispositions in your own case put the question to yourself, "Have not I carried this thing far enough?" If you will do that, you will have taken one step; and will you follow that up by proposing to yourself a deliberate decision? Now, in all these changes that are going on in the human soul it is too often the case that a man says, "I mean to try it; but I am not going to expose myself to ridicule, because I may not be able to carry this thing out; and if I don't, well, nobody will know it, and I will be no worse off than I was before." That is to say, you leave a door of retreat open for yourself. I would not give the turn of my hand for a man's purpose who says he is going to change, but leaves all the old influences at work, and all the means of escape from his resolution at command. It is an illusion, and it is the repetition of these things that discourages men finally, and makes them believe they cannot reform and cannot do what they ought to do. If you are going to make a decision, do it on business principles. As all resolutions are so fugitive, so unstable, and as experience has shown that they are so unless when a man wants to correct a habit, commit yourself. What is the effect of committing yourself? Your pride and your vanity now work toward you and for you, whereas otherwise they would work against you. It is going with the current, instead of against it; with the wind, instead of against the wind. Therefore, hedge yourself; trust in somebody. Now is the time for thought; now is the time for purpose; now is the time for declaring your purpose; now is the time to begin. Whatever changes are necessary, will you make them now? (*H. W. Beecher.*) *A sinner changed by grace*:—I. THE WALK OF A NATURAL MAN DESCRIBED. He works "the will of the Gentiles," and lives in sin. II. THE GREAT CHANGE THAT THE GRACE OF GOD MAKES IN A NATURAL MAN. The change we mean is far more than the mere reformation of a sinner's life; it is an inward, supernatural change wrought by the Spirit of God, and by means of the gospel of Christ (Rom. i. 16). III. THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS CHANGE. 1. Sin is a dreadful waste of precious time. 2. Sin is a useless thing. 3. Sin is extremely hurtful and dangerous to ourselves and others. 4. Sin is highly dishonourable to the blessed God. 5. A life of sin is directly contrary to our Christian profession. IV. THE USAGE WHICH A CHANGED PERSON MAY EXPECT TO MEET WITH FROM A WICKED WORLD. Now, here observe that where such a change as this takes place it is visible; for if the world did not see it, they could not hate it. The change cannot be hid. Carnal companions will be deserted; places of vain amusement forsaken. This will excite hatred. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and everything godly and Godlike (Rom. viii. 7). (*G. Burder.*) *Christian consistency*:—I. THE WORLD SILENTLY CONDEMNED BY THE CHURCH. This is often done not so much positively as negatively. It is very peculiar, for they condemn them without saying a word, simply by "not running into the same excess of riot"; and this, it seems, is exceedingly well understood by the worldly party. Noah condemned the world by what he did, as well as by what he said; every stroke of his hammer was a sermon. The marked avoidance of the prevailing sins and follies of the world is often felt to be a powerful condemnation of them. But why should Christians thus refuse to mingle themselves up with the evil of the world? 1. Love to Christ requires it. "Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, therefore, with the same mind." 2. The painful remembrance of the past prompts it. "The time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." It is always a sad thought to the Christian to look back upon his past devotedness to the sins of the world. 3. Christian consistency requires it. "Let every one depart from iniquity." A wicked life in a Christian is an indignity committed upon his Master in the disguise of a friend, and an outrage against the gospel. It seems to declare either that this religion tolerates immorality, or that it has not sufficient authority to enforce its own laws. 4. Your own highest interests demand it. II. THE CHURCH CENSURED

BY THE WORLD. 1. In their thoughts. "They think it strange that ye run not into this excess of riot"; but pardon me if I say they would think it stranger if you did. They may dislike you now, but they would certainly despise you then. "They think it strange." Why? Because they know nothing of the high standard of excellence which Christians possess; nor of the elevated principles by which they are actuated; nor of the superior sources of pleasure which are open to them. The Christian and the worldly man have both reason to wonder at each other. The worldly wonders that the Christian loves Christ so much: the Christian wonders that the worldly loves Him so little. 2. In their speeches. They speak evil of you, and contemptuously, as precise, formal, unsocial, repulsive. The Jews spoke evil of the prophets; Ahab spoke evil of Micaiah: "I hate him, for he always prophesies evil of me." The disciples were "a sect everywhere spoken against." 3. In their writings. Pliny wrote to the Roman emperor to complain of the Christian converts, as addicted to a morose and severe superstition. Infidel and irreligious men have indited many a sarcasm against the Christian cause. 4. By their conduct. That is, towards Christians, whom they persecute in various ways. III. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD CONCERNING BOTH. "Who shall judge both quick and dead." 1. The certainty of the judgment. "They shall give an account." 2. The speediness of the judgment. "He is ready to judge." 3. The universality of the judgment. "The quick and dead." 4. The consequences of the judgment. The awards of eternity are final, and they are extreme. (*The Evangelist.*) *Contemning the good*:—God's law is a guide which conducts surely to the goal. His precepts are nought but communications of free favour. But what does the blinded world see in these precepts, testimonies, and statutes? First, we are told, it surprises, seems unaccountable to them, that believers run not in their ways. They put on an air of astonishment when you decline doing so. "Why then," they ask, "do you refuse? Thousands upon thousands are on this side, and among them so many men of note, so many prominent members both in Church and State!" But we are told they blaspheme all who are not moved from their steadfastness. Their blasphemy consists, first, in their accusing God's true witnesses of blasphemy. They stand up and say, "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law"; or, this is the man "that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place" (Acts vi. 13; xxi. 28). They abide by the old slander, "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts xxiv. 5). To the righteous acts of the pious man unworthy motives are attributed, and he is made a mark for the arrows of evil tongues, solely because he seeks the good of Israel all his life long. If he rest in the promises of God, even these are made the subject of mockery! But such blasphemy and pretended surprise is very painful to the righteous, and a real snare to their feet, out of which they do indeed need to be helped. How often are the weak, and even the apparently strong in faith, induced for a time to run with those who make either a mock or a sport of sin! Yes, verily, nothing short of almighty grace will suffice to enable a man calmly to take on himself the dishonour with which his Lord was dishonoured, and to bear with a chivalrous courage the contempt and shame which, for Christ's name's sake, the world heaps upon him! (*H. F. Kohlbrügge, D.D.*) *The pleasures of a holy life inexplicable to the ungodly*:—The Roman soldiers, at the sacking of Jerusalem, entered the temple, and went into the Sanctum Sanctorum; but seeing no images there, as they used to have in their own idolatrous temple, gave out in a jeer that the Jews worshipped the clouds. And thus because the pleasures of righteousness and holiness are not so gross as to come under the cognisance of the world's carnal senses (as their brutish ones do), therefore they laugh at the saints, as if their joy were but the child of fancy, and they do but embrace a cloud instead of Juno herself, a fantastic pleasure for the true; but let such know that they carry in their bosom what will help them to think the pleasures of a holy life more real, and that the power of holiness is so far from depriving a man of the joy and pleasure of his life, that there are incomparable delights and pleasures peculiar to the holy life, which the gracious soul finds in the ways of righteousness. (*J. Spencer.*) *Excess of riot*:—A strong and expressive metaphor, especially in countries where, after violent rain, the gutters are suddenly swollen and pour their contents together with violence into a common sewer. Such is the apostolic figure of vicious companies rushing together in filthy confusion for reckless indulgence and effusion in sin. (*C. Wordsworth.*) *Amusements to virtue are like breezes of air to the flame*: gentle

ones will fan it, but strong ones will put it out. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Pleasure* must first have the warrant that it is without sin; and then the measure, that it is without excess. (*T. Adams.*)

Vers. 7-11. The end of all things is at hand.—*The end of all things*:—I. THE SOLEMN TRUTH HERE ANNOUNCED. 1. The end of your earthly engagements is at hand. 2. The end of your worldly enjoyments is at hand. 3. The end of trial and sorrow to the godly is at hand. 4. The end of our privileges and opportunities is at hand. 5. The end of our probation is at hand. II. THE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOUNDED ON THIS TRUTH. 1. Be sober. 2. Be watchful. 3. Be prayerful. (*Pulpit Studies.*) *The end of all things at hand*:—"The end of all things is at hand." 1. This is literally true of all those objects which we see or which are obvious to any of our senses. They are temporal; they have had a beginning, they shall have an end. The material universe, in all its beauty, forms but a single link in the plans of that adorable Being who is without beginning of days or end of time; and its whole duration is but a single step in the march of that government which is from everlasting to everlasting. 2. The end of all things earthly is at hand, so far as we are concerned with them, or take an interest in them, because we shall soon leave them all behind. To each of us the time is short. Our days are but an hand's breadth. Shall we devote ourselves to pursuits we must soon abandon? Shall we heap up treasures in this world as if it were our eternal home, when we know not at what moment we shall be summoned to bid a last adieu to all things earthly? 3. The end of all things is at hand, because all the objects of time and sense are frail and fluctuating; human society, in all its relations and interests, is full of change; and the world itself, with everything fair and excellent that it contains, is constantly fading and dying around us. And now what practical lessons ought we to learn from the view we have thus taken of ourselves, as dying creatures, and of this as a fading world? Surely we ought to give heed to the exhortation, "Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer." Shall we not subdue and restrain within the strictest bounds of temperance those appetites and passions which belong only to these dying bodies, and which, if indulged, will destroy our souls? But the subject should teach us lessons of devotion as well as of soberness. "Watch unto prayer." Shall we forget that awful eternity on whose very threshold we daily walk, or fail to recognise our relations to that adorable Being whose glorious perfections will so soon break in unclouded splendour upon our souls? Forbid it, reason, duty, conscience; forbid, Parent of our mercies. (*W. J. Armstrong.*) *The nearness of eternity*:—I. THE END OF ALL THINGS IS AT HAND. Nothing abides around you. Like the stream which wanders through the valley, everything is flowing by. A single year is often sufficient to change the whole complexion of life. The Christian contemplates, if with awe, yet in peace, the breaking up of all human schemes, and societies, and pleasures, and gains, and losses. He anticipates the wreck, but he feels himself to be in the ark. II. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF THIS CONSIDERATION. 1. Sobriety of mind is that temperate use of all earthly things, and that moderate estimate of their worth, which disposes the Christian rather to detach his affections from present objects, than to be inordinately excited by them. The near view of eternity peculiarly assists him in this moderation as to worldly enjoyments. 2. Prone, however, to be misled by his senses, he feels the necessity of incessant watchfulness. "Be ye therefore sober, and watch." His natural love of ease, his reluctance to self-denial will but too readily dispose him to adopt the theory rather than the practice of sobriety. Hence it becomes his duty to be ever vigilant over his own spirit, to examine candidly the actual habit of his mind; to watch diligently lest he act inconsistently with his professed principles; lest the world exert an undue influence over his heart; lest self-delusion put him off his guard. 3. But the apostle directs believers to connect this sobriety and this vigilance with prayer. Indeed prayer is the only source of this sobriety and this watchfulness of mind. The brightest impressions fade from the soul if they are not renewed continually by the grace and blessing of God. Hence prayer is to the Christian the very life and health of his soul. (*G. S. Noel, M.A.*) *The nearness of eternity*:—There is a great contrast between the believers of the apostolic age and ourselves. The voyager detects the near proximity of land by the fresh land-breeze which breathes in his face, wafting the sounds and scents of forest, or prairie, or heather-covered hill. So through these Epistles we inhale another atmosphere than that with which we are so familiar in Christian societies. We live in the world and pay occasional visits into the unseen and eternal; they lived in the unseen

and eternal, and paid periodic necessary visits into the world. We conform to the world; they were transformed by the daily renewing of their minds. We read the society papers, discuss society gossip, send our children into society, and strive to hold our own in dress and appointments with the cream of society around us; they, on the other hand, were thought strange and ridiculous, because they lived amongst men as "the children of the resurrection." Surely the contrast is not to our credit, although we vaunt our fancied superiority. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Waiting for the end*:—The warning of the apostle meant one thing to the Jew, another to the Christian. To the Jew it meant that the end of his nation, as a nation, had come. It meant that all the types and signs of the Messiah had been fulfilled in Christ, the true Light had appeared, and the shadows must flee away. But for the Christian the text means more. For each of us, in one way or another, it is true that "the end of all things is at hand." Yes, of all things which belong to this life. 1. The end of earthly greatness, or wealth, or pleasure, is at hand. We read of our most famous heroes, conquerors, statesmen, and all we can see of them is a tomb in our calm cathedral. When the famous General and Conqueror Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, was old they used to beguile the tedious hours by reading aloud the history of his own campaigns. Then he would turn to the reader and ask the question, "Who commanded?" He had forgotten all the glories of Blenheim, and of Ramillies, of Oudenarde, and Malplaquet. I saw but lately a lock of King Charles I.'s hair, that is all that remains of the martyr-king of England. The end of earthly greatness is at hand. 2. Again, the end of earthly friendship and connections is at hand. 3. Next, the end of our opportunities is at hand. Ah! make the most of your chances; once lost, they come not back again. Wisely did the old Greeks write upon the walls of one of their temples, "Know thy opportunity." 4. Once more, the end of our time of trial and waiting is at hand. Peter bids us prepare ourselves for that great beginning which commences when this life is ended. He bids us to be sober, to be watchful in prayer, to have fervent love for one another, and to show it in deeds as well as words. You would not expect the flowers to grow in your garden if the weeds were allowed to have the upper hand. Neither can you expect the graces of the soul to flourish if your body is your master. And not only should we be sober in our bodily passions, but in our words. There are many good people, sober people in other things, who are very intemperate in their talk. And again, we need to be sober in our religion, especially in these days. I do not mean that we are to be idle and indifferent, but we need not be noisy. Next, we are bidden to watch unto prayer. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) **Be ye therefore sober.**—*Soberness and watchfulness*:—I. THE SOLEMN FACT, by the mention of which it is evidently the design of the apostle to arouse thought, to set the religious imagination on the full stretch of all its powers. "The end of all things is at hand." Different interpretations have been put upon this expression. Some understand it of Christ's coming at the end of the world; others only the dissolution of the Jewish ecclesiastical polity, then about to receive its last blow at the hands of the armies of Vespasian. The predicted accompaniments of the destruction of Jerusalem were so overwhelmingly awful, that, for all practical purposes to the men of that generation, the event might as well have been the winding up of the present economy—the termination of the life of all human kind. And we see at once the force of the motive drawn from this reference to "the end of all things." It is to make us connect with everything belonging to our present state the idea of unsettledness; to keep our hearts from growing to particular places, or being bound up with particular forms of happiness; to make us feel that everything we love or look upon, in the present state, is waning, shifting, and of doubtful life. Oh! surely the anticipation of future good things should elevate, purify, solemnise, bless. It should teach moderation. It should incite to diligence. II. Consider what DUTIES devolve upon us in view of these expected consummations. 1. "Be sober." The expression may be taken in many ways. For instance, we are to be sober in the use of God's providential gifts. It is constantly assumed, in Scripture, that all habits of luxurious living, all undue concessions to the desires of the lower nature, have an injurious effect upon character. They tend to impair the delicacy of the religious susceptibilities. They induce a dislike and reluctance to spiritual employments. They incapacitate for sympathy with distress and need. They tend to degrade and sensualise the whole man. 2. Again, the text may be considered as warning us to be sober in our aims of life; to keep clear of an entangled, perplexed, and cumbered spirit; not to raise the scaffolding of our worldly hopes too high, nor to have too many buildings going on

at the same time. The reason for the admonition is to be found in the tendency of these overheated contests in the race of life to enslave, and pervert, and unspiritualise the best affections of the heart. 3. Further, I think the text would teach us to be sober in our griefs—whether in time of sickness, or sorrow, or adversity, or bereavement. III. “AND WATCH UNTO PRAYER.” The exhortation to “watch” supposes danger, weakness, a proneness to fall asleep, or the near presence of a foe. The text seems to point especially to certain dangers or hindrances we are liable to in the exercises of devotion: we are to “watch unto prayer.” 1. Thus we are to watch against weariness, and coldness, and faintings of heart in prayer. If prayer be the soul’s strength, the heart’s repose, the world’s antidote, the devil’s dread, why is it that we pray, not only so languidly, but so little? It is therefore languidly, because little. We do not tarry long enough in the exercise to realise that without which prayer is no prayer—namely, mental communion with the Infinite, something in our heart felt to be reciprocated and returned by the heart of God. To watch against the stealthy encroachments of the world, we shall do well to be early with our devotions. 2. Again, we should watch against the distracting influence of an over-anxious and careful spirit in prayer. A perplexity, a disappointment, a fancied grievance, a slight difference with a friend, an issue hanging in suspense, a feared evil which may never come—any one of these, if not watched against, may rob us of all peace in devotion for days together. But we must learn to drive these intruders from the altar, as Abraham drove the fowls away. A Christian is to commit his way unto the Lord, and all his way—his burden, and all his burden. And having cast his care upon the Lord, he leaves it where it is cast. 3. Further, we must watch against any unsubdued tendencies to evil in our own hearts, in prayer. These tendencies may show themselves either in act or in spirit; and, in either case, will raise up a cloud between us and the eternal throne, which no prayer can pass through. 4. Lastly, I would regard our text as an exhortation to watch against unbelief in prayer; against any allowed misgivings of Christ’s love to pity or of His infinite ability to save. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Christian sobriety*:—There are sins of the spirit as well as sins of the flesh which the truly sober man will abstain from. The temperance commended in the New Testament is no one-sided, one-limbed virtue. It forbids the lust of wealth, and an extravagant devotion to business, and an inordinate indulgence in recreation, as truly as it forbids excess in drinking or gluttony in eating. It commands a wise self-government and a strong self-restraint in relation to all earthly pursuits and enjoyments and honours. The Puritanism that still lingers amongst us does not think too much about the quality, but it does think too little about the quantity of pleasure that is pursued. It is too often overlooked that probably people are spiritually damaged more by the extravagant amount than by the questionable character of their recreations. We prescribe some and we permit others; but discrimination as to the quality needs to be supplemented by an equal care as to the quantity. The exhortation of the apostle could be enforced by many facts from modern experience. Some wander away along the path of excessive pleasure-taking, and so the name is legion of those who, if they confessed truly, would have to say—

“The world is too much with us; late and soon
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.”

(*C. Vince.*)

Watch unto prayer.—*Watchfulness and prayerfulness*:—In explaining this injunction we shall show the importance of a watchful and prayerful spirit by considering the innate disposition of the human heart. I. The first characteristic of man’s sinful disposition, requiring watchfulness upon the part of a Christian, is its SPONTANEITY. This is that quality in a thing which causes it to move of itself. The living spring spontaneously leaps up into the sunlight, while standing water must be pumped up. Were man reluctantly urged up to sin by some other agent than himself, there would be less call for watchfulness. But the perfect ease and pleasure with which he does his own sinning calls for an incessant vigilance not to do it. The imperfectly sanctified Christian needs not to make a special effort in order to transgress. Can religion in the heart conquer sin in the heart if we do not bring the two into close contact and conflict? II. A second characteristic of man’s sinful disposition, requiring watchfulness and prayerfulness in the Christian, is THE FACT THAT IT CAN BE TEMPTED AND SOLICITED TO MOVE AT ANY MOMENT. How easily is the remaining sin in us drawn out into exercise by tempting objects, and

how full the world is of such objects! A hard word, an unkind look, a displeasing act on the part of another, will start sin into motion, instanter. Wealth, fame, pleasure, fashion, houses, lands, titles, husbands, wives, children, friends—in brief, all creation—has the power to educe the sinful nature of man. Consider what inducements to forget God, and to transgress His commandments, come from the worldly or the gay society in which we move. Is not the powder in the midst of the sparks? If unwatchful and prayerless, it is inevitable that we shall yield to these temptations. III. A third characteristic of man's innate disposition, requiring watchfulness and prayer, is the fact that it acquires the HABIT of being moved by temptation. It is more difficult to stop a thing that has the habit of motion, than one that has not, because habit is a second nature and imparts additional force to the first one. This is eminently true of sin, which by being allowed an habitual motion becomes so powerful that few overcome it. The cravings of unresisted sin at length become organic, as it were. For though the will to resist sin may die out of a man, the conscience to condemn it never can. The "ruin" of an immortal soul is no mere figure of speech. There is no ruin in the whole material universe to be compared with it, for transcendent awfulness. The decline and fall of the Roman Empire was a great catastrophe; but the decline and eternal fall of a moral being, originally made in the image of God, is a stupendous event. (*J. T. Shedd, D.D.*)

Watchfulness associated with prayerfulness:—The word "watch" is a military term. It teaches us that the same alacrity and watchfulness which distinguish the soldier on duty and the sentinel at his post ought to characterise the Christian; and, as you know, the safety of an army, the chance of a victory, the success of a campaign may all be endangered without watchfulness on the part of the soldier and the sentinel. A like contingency may befall the Christian who is not watchful. Now, I would say, there are three ways in which this watchfulness is to be exercised. There is to be watchfulness over ourselves, watchfulness against our enemies, and watchfulness that we get Divine assistance to help us in our struggles. I would liken the Christian to a general commanding a besieged fortress, who has to watch that he may keep down mutiny within the garrison, who has to watch that he may repel the assaults of the enemy assailing the garrison from without, and who has to watch that he may get assistance from friends who are advancing to help him. And now notice, there is to be prayer in addition to watchfulness. Prayer is the breath of the soul, the life of the spirit, without which you can no more conceive of the Christian existing than of an eye seeing without light, or an ear hearing without being subjected to the sense of sound. Prayer is to the soul of the Christian what his senses are to his body. He not more surely tells his natural wants and gets them relieved, looks upon the beautiful objects in nature, holds intercourse with his friends, and feels himself in contact with the material world by means of his senses, than he tells his spiritual wants and gets them relieved, and holds intercourse with the Former of his body and the Father of his spirit by the exercise of prayer. And what is calculated to enhance the value of prayer is this, that while my senses permit me to look upon many beautiful objects, and urge me to possess them, because they are not mine, I am not permitted to enjoy them; whereas there is not a single possession within the wide domain of the spiritual world that is not placed at my disposal by prayer. If the Christian be weak, then he is strengthened by prayer. If he be in doubt, then his doubts are removed by prayer. If he be in difficulty, his difficulties are surmounted through prayer. But I have to tell you, in order to issue in such gracious results, prayer must be possessed of certain qualities. 1. And here I would say, first of all, prayer must be intelligent. In all cases, our first prayer needs to be, "Lord, teach us to pray." 2. Further, I have to say, besides being intelligent, prayer must be humble. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth (and, of course, in answer to prayer) grace unto the humble." 3. But, besides being intelligent and humble, prayer must be offered in faith. Just as you cannot get your diseased bodies cured without submitting to the prescriptions of your physician, which implies faith in his skill, so you cannot get your sick souls healed without faith in the Saviour's willingness and ability to heal. You must approach Him as David did—and this implies faith—when he prayed: "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee." 4. Further, I would say prayer must be in earnest. It is only the fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous man that availeth much. God only promises to answer earnest, importunate prayer. 5. I observe finally, here, that prayer must be constant. We have thus looked at these words separately. We will now look at them in their relation to each other. Like those other two features of our religious character—faith and works—which

act and re-act upon each other, so that in proportion to the strength of our faith will be the number and excellency of our works, so in proportion to our spiritual watchfulness will be our prayerfulness. This, I hold, must be so from the necessity of the case; for the man who watches over himself is the man who discovers his own failings, the obstacles that impede his progress in the life of faith, and the number, the strength, and the power of his spiritual adversaries. What is the reason of the vast number of petitions that are presented to the Commons House of Parliament? Why, the inhabitants of these islands have watched the working of the British Constitution, and they have discovered that they have wants to be relieved, and grievances to be redressed, and think the Commons of England in their wisdom can relieve these wants and sweep away these grievances, and hence the table of the House is being constantly flooded with petitions. Well, the Christian watches and discovers his own weakness and liability to fall, the number, the vigilance and wiles of his spiritual foes, and he prays for Divine help to overcome them all. He watches, and, as a necessary consequence, prays. Indeed, such is our condition that we do not simply need to watch and pray to resist temptation, but to watch and pray that we may not enter into it, for there is every reason to believe that, were we to enter into it, we would yield to it; so that the only true course is, avoid it, and pass away. (*J. Inmie, M.A.*)

Watch unto prayer:—Strange words for Simon Peter to use! For him, the impetuous, the thoughtlessly self-confident, to say, “Be sober,” seems a strange contradiction. Well were it for us if our failures led to a similar recovery. Human nature is impatient; we would overleap all barriers, and plunge at once into the full transport of enjoyment, just as the soldier prefers the dash of a sudden assault to the tediousness of a regular siege. Delay looks to us like defeat, like sure disappointment. Why should we have to wait when God might conclude all in an instant? Surely, though the Saviour has ascended up on high, there is enough of His influence left in the world to sustain our courage for a little further delay. Why, with such precious gifts around us, should we avariciously demand the bestowal of all His store? It is “the patience of the saints” that God is looking to; He would see what we can bear for His sake, how long we can stay without doubting the sureness of His Word. I deny not the tryingness of waiting, but in that the real benefit of waiting consists. We fret for peace in the world, and men try, in one way or other, to force the current of the river and spread the fertilising waters over tracts so high that the forced stream cannot stay in the upland where they wish it to remain. Some would crush out the violence of nations and put down war by the sheer force of superior strength. The remedies to be used are—1. Be sober. The universe cannot bend itself to your will, therefore look not for too great results. 2. Pray. The only instrument which man possesses for hastening on the triumph of good, the only reliable argument for converting the world, the only channel for peace to ourselves, is prayer. 3. Watch unto prayer. How is it that men become disheartened and cease to pray? The wish is uttered with all earnestness, but it is the convulsive effort of a moment, not sustained, nor followed up. And often the prayer is heard, but the suppliant heeds it not. Watchers see where others notice nothing, their senses are more acute. Act on the firm faith that every earnest prayer is heard, and then you will receive insight enough to trace the coming answer. Wait for it if it comes not at once; it will surely come, it will not tarry. Blows that would crush others will only prove the buoyancy of your faith. Failure in business, beggary, friendlessness, will not prevent your knowing the riches of contentment and of spiritual blessings. (*G. F. Prescott, M.A.*)

Watching in relation to prayer:—How often it happens that when night comes a man prays rather from force of custom than from a sense of need. He has no prescribed form of prayer, and yet he finds himself continually repeating the same things. His supplications lack variety and force and definiteness. He is “as one that beateth the air.” This comes in a great measure from the fact that he does not “watch unto prayer.” He has taken little notice of his own spirit, and therefore he knows not his own weakness and his own necessities. The events of the day are not so remembered as to give form and colour and life to his evening supplications. The prayer that suits one day cannot effectually serve for all other days. Changes in ourselves and in our circumstances call for changes in our petitions. If a man pass through the day observing himself and increasing his self-knowledge, his devotions cannot always keep in old formal and familiar ruts, but they must sometimes flow with new vigour along the new channels which the new facts have made for them. We frequently confess that we know not what to

pray for. Sometimes this ignorance is a weakness for which we are to be pitied. We cannot tell what to-morrow will bring forth, and therefore cannot tell what special grace to pray for. But sometimes our ignorance is our sin. We know not what to ask for because we have not by watching acquired the wisdom which guides supplication. (*C. Vince.*) *Watching for answers to prayer*:—When an archer shoots his arrow at a mark he likes to go and see whether he has hit it, or how near he has come to it. When you have written and sent off a letter to a friend you expect some day that the postman will be knocking at the door with an answer. When a child asks his father for something he looks in his face even before he speaks to see if he is pleased, and reads acceptance in his eyes. But it is to be greatly feared that many people feel when their prayers are over as if they had quite done with them. Their only concern was to get them said. Sailors in foundering ships sometimes commit notes in sealed bottles to the waves for the chance of their being some day washed on some shore. Sir John Franklin's companions among the snows, and Captain Allen Gardiner, dying of hunger in his cave, wrote words they could not be sure any one would ever read. But we do not need to think of our prayers as random messages. We should therefore look for reply to them, and watch to get it. (*J. Edmond, D.D.*) *Fervent charity*.—*The pre-eminence of charity*:—I. **WHAT CHARITY IS.** It is not easy to find one word which adequately represents what Christ and His apostles meant by charity. Charity has become identified with almsgiving. Love is appropriated to one particular form of human affection, and that one with which self and passion mix inevitably. Philanthropy is a word too cold and negative. 1. Let us define Christian charity in two sentences. (1) The desire to give. Let each man go deep into his own heart. Let him ask what that mysterious longing means which we call love, whether to man or God, when he has stripped from it all that is outside and accidental, when he has taken from it all that is mixed with it and perverts it. Not in his worst moments, but in his best, what did that yearning mean? I say it meant the desire to give. Not to get something but to give something. And the more irrepressible this yearning was, the more truly was his love. To give—whether alms in the shape of money, bread, or a cup of cold water, or else self. But be sure sacrifice in some shape or other is the impulse of love, and its restlessness is only satisfied and only gets relief in giving. For this, in truth, is God's own love, the will and the power to give. (2) The desire to bless. It wishes the well-being of the whole man—body, soul, and spirit, but chiefly spirit. And the highest love is the desire to make men good and Godlike; it may wish, as a subordinate attainment, to turn this earth into a paradise of comfort by mechanical inventions; but far above that, to transform it into a kingdom of God, the domain of love, where men cease to quarrel and to envy, and to slander and to retaliate. "This also we wish," said St. Paul, "even your perfection." 2. Concerning this charity we remark two points. (1) "Fervent." Literally intense, unremitting, unwearied. Give us the man who can be insulted and not retaliate, meet rudeness and still be courteous; the man who, like the Apostle Paul, buffeted and disliked, can yet be generous and make allowances and say, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved." That is "fervent charity." (2) It is capable of being cultivated. When an apostle says, "Have fervent charity among yourselves," it is plain that it would be a cruel mockery to command men to attain it if they could do nothing towards the attainment. How shall we cultivate this charity? Now I observe, first, love cannot be produced by a direct action of the soul upon itself. You cannot love by a resolve to love. That is as impossible as it is to move a boat by pressing it from within. Love is a feeling roused not from ourselves, but from something outside ourselves. There are, however, two methods by which we may cultivate this charity. (*a*) By doing acts which love demands. It is God's merciful law that feelings are increased by acts done on principle. Let a man begin in earnest with I ought, he will end, by God's grace, if he persevere, with the free blessedness of I will. Let him force himself to abound in small offices of kindness, attention, affectionateness, and all those for God's sake. By and by he will feel them become the habit of his soul. By and by, walking in the conscientiousness of refusing to retaliate when he feels tempted, he will cease to wish it; doing good and heaping kindness on those who injure him he will learn to love them. (*b*) By contemplating the love of God. You cannot move the boat from within, but you may obtain a purchase from without. You cannot create love in the soul by force from within itself, but you may move it from a point outside itself. God's love is the point from which to move the soul. Love begets love. It is easy to be generous and

tolerant and benevolent when we are sure of the heart of God, and when the little love of this life, and its coldness and its unreturned affections are more than made up to us by the certainty that our Father's love is ours. II. WHAT CHARITY DOES. It covereth a multitude of sins. 1. In refusing to see small faults. That microscopic distinctness in which all faults appear to captious men who are for ever blaming, dissecting, complaining, disappears in the large, calm gaze of love. And oh! it is this spirit which our Christian society lacks, and which we shall never get till we begin each one with his own heart. What we want is, in one word, that graceful tact and Christian art which can bear and forbear. 2. Love covers sin by making large allowances. In all evil there is a "soul of goodness." Most evil is perverted good. Now there are some men who see all the evil, and never trace, never give themselves the trouble of suspecting the root of goodness out of which it sprung. There are others who love to go deep down and see why a man came to do wrong, and whether there was not some excuse or some redeeming cause, in order that they may be just. Just, as "God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Now human life, as it presents itself to these two different eyes, the eye of one who sees only evil, and that of him who sees evil as perverted good, is two different things. Take an instance. Not many years ago a gifted English writer presented us with a history of ancient Christianity. To his eye the early Church presented one great idea, almost only one. He saw corruption written everywhere. In public and in private life, in theology and practice, within and without, everywhere pollution. Another historian, a foreigner, has written the history of the same times, with an intellect as piercing to discover the very first germ of error, but with a calm, large heart, which saw the good out of which the error sprung, and loved to dwell upon it, delighting to trace the lineaments of God, and discern His Spirit working where another could see only the spirit of the devil. And you rise from the two books with different views of the world: from the one, considering the world as a devil's world, corrupting towards destruction; from the other, notwithstanding all, feeling triumphantly that it is God's world, and that His Spirit works gloriously below it all. You rise from the study with different feelings: from the one, inclined to despise your species; from the other, able joyfully to understand in part why God so loved the world, and what there is in man to love, and what there is, even in the lost, to seek and save. Now that is the "charity which covereth a multitude of sins." It understands by sympathy. It is that glorious nature which has affinity with good under all forms, and loves to find it, to believe in it, and to see it. And therefore such men—God's rare and best ones—learn to make allowances, not from weak sentiment, which calls wrong right, but from that heavenly charity which sees right lying at the root of wrong. 3. Lastly, charity can tolerate even intolerance. St. Paul saw even in the Jews, his bitterest foes, that "they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." St. Stephen prayed with his last breath, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Earth has not a spectacle more glorious or more fair to show than this—love tolerating intolerance, charity covering, as with a veil, even the sin of the lack of charity. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*)

Fervent charity :—I. A DESCRIPTION OF CHARITY. 1. A sincere love to God as the spring of our love to our Christian brethren. 2. Charity comprehends such a habit of benevolence in the soul as disposes us to wish all good to others in all their capacities, in respect either of their souls, their bodies, their reputation, or their estate. 3. Wherever this benevolent principle is it will discover itself by a readiness to assist and relieve all men, especially those who stand in need of our help, according to our abilities. 4. That our charity may be complete, and deserve to be called fervent charity, it must extend to all men, even to our enemies. II. SOME ARGUMENTS TO IMPROVE AND STRENGTHEN ALL TENDENCIES IN US TO CHARITY. 1. Fervent charity of all other things is most beneficial to society, nay, it is absolutely necessary to the good order, peace, and happiness of every society. And in this respect charity well deserves to be called the bond of perfectness. 2. The exercise of charity is agreeable to our natures. By being charitable we gratify the noblest of our inclinations and appetites. 3. It naturally follows from the former argument that the exercise of charity is the most delightful exercise we can choose for ourselves. (1) This satisfaction doth not only just accompany a charitable action, but it is permanent, and endures as long as our lives. (2) This pleasure and joy that attends charitable actions doth herein exceed all fleshly delights, that it is then at the highest when we stand in most need of it. 4. To be charitable, to wish, and to do good to others, is the most God-like qualification that we are capable of. 5. Another argument to excite us to the exercise of charity is taken from the command

of Christ, the author of our religion. This is a very powerful consideration when we reflect what He hath done for us, and upon the example which He hath left us for our imitation. 6. We all partake of the same human nature, and are all born for society, so I might persuade to charity from this consideration, that we are all the children of the same heavenly Father, we have all the same Saviour, we have all one faith, and we expect to attain to the same perfect happiness in the end. 7. Let us exercise charity that we may adorn our Christian profession, and cause it to be well spoken of in the world. 8. To persuade us to exercise fervent charity among ourselves, let us consider that charity is the main part of the Christian religion, and as we shall be found to have or want charity, so must we stand or fall in the great day of judgment. Charity is the most acceptable sacrifice we can offer or service we can perform to God. It is said to be the fulfilling of the whole law. (*P. Witherspoon.*)

*Dissuasives from uncharitableness:—*I. YOUR OWN CHARACTER AND HABITS. 1. Remember that you have the very same feelings which led to those faults you usually rail at, to their vices whose vices you condemn. Did vanity lead them to folly? that same vanity dwells with you. Did pride overthrow them? pride dwells royally with you. Did selfishness make them mean? are not you selfish? Did their appetites seduce them? are not those same seducers at work in your bosom? 2. But there is an additional reason for forbearing uncharitable censures in the multitude of your actual overt transgressions. They may not, to be sure, be of the same kind as those which you unfeelingly reprehend. Are they slovens? Perhaps you are wasters. They may be fickle whom you blame, you may be obstinate. If we looked as sharply at ourselves as we do at censured persons we might find their faults matched in every point in ourselves. 3. Even this, however, does not exhaust the point in hand. For in weighing relative guilt circumstances are always to be considered. Men may be so situated that a foible will be less excusable in them than a vice in others. While you freely rail at all around you perhaps God is putting you down, with all your proud morality, as the less excusable creature of the two. You may have a better mind, you may have been better trained, you may have been better educated, you may be in better circumstances, you may be surrounded by the influence of better associates, you may have ten restraints to others' one, they may have ten temptations to your one. 4. The fourth particular is the remembrance of our past mischiefs as a motive for leniency of judgment. II. THE INDIGNATION EXPERIENCED IN VIEW OF EVIL IS IN A LARGE PROPORTION OF CASES SELFISH, AND SOMETIMES HYPOCRITICAL AND DETESTABLE, IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. I suppose that the feeling of condemnation is frequently more wicked than the thing condemned. 1. The first bill purporting to be a true indignation at evil has the plainest marks of a clumsy counterfeit. The feeling has no respect whatever to the moral qualities of the evil it chastises. It is simply an outcry raised to contrast our own excellences with the censured evil. Some men inveigh against squandering because they are economical. Some rail at parsimony because they are open-handed. Some cry out at indolence that men may note their industry. 2. On the success of this device may issue another counterfeit of moral indignation. They are clamorous against evildoers to hide the fact that they themselves are such. 3. Vociferous indignation is not infrequently the mere creation of fashion and of sympathy with bad feelings. Each clamours because all the rest do. 4. A seeming virtuous indignation is often only an ebullition of wounded pride and vanity. Is there a misstep from virtue? The guardian angel weeps, mercy flies swiftly to the penitent, and Christ says, "Neither do I condemn thee, only go, and sin no more." Not thus do fellow-mortals of like passions. All the slights and petty offences, all the ignoble strifes of envy and sensitive vanity, are raked out of the embers, and the bitter taunt is but the revenge of these covered with the garb of virtue. A hated rival is down, a haughty head a little higher than mine is in the dust, superior beauty is humbled, the wearer of better clothes, the recipient of more pointed attentions, the immovable rival, the one who once said this or that of me—these are the real archers lurking in the ambush of virtuous or religious indignation which bend the bow and infix the venomous shaft. 5. Revenge is almost invariably cloaked under the guise of moral indignation. And of this, as of almost all that I have mentioned, it may be said, the uncharitableness of the censor is often more malignantly guilty than the offence of the sinner. III. REASONS AGAINST CENSORIOUSNESS AND UNCHARITABLENESS SPRINGING OUT OF THE FEELINGS AND AFFECTIONS OF THE VICTIM. 1. Severity exercised without pity tends to provoke rather than reform the transgressor. That man is the most influential against vice who, to a hearty abhorrence of it, adds a cordial desire to rescue the

evildoer. Uncharitableness promotes evil, while pity reforms it. 2. Then, methinks, our pity should flow out with our indignation in view of the sufferings often of those whom we scourge. There is something peculiarly touching in that vice and crime which prevail among the ignorant and neglected. Multitudes have had no childhood instruction. Others have been too fatally taught by renegade parents. Look in, then, upon the motley throng of ignorant and vicious. Are they happy? Does the fullness of the cup of pleasure take away the necessity of pity from you? Of all the sun shines on, none need pity more than those whose career of vice and crime is near to its close. Suffering has made every feature haggard, and there is war in every limb, anguish in every nerve, and groaning at every bone. Want torments them. Their own demoniac passions scorch them. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Fervent charity :—I. THE EXHORTATION. 1. The Apostle urged upon the Christian converts the importance of charity. It was the exercise of a grace, and not merely good temper, upon which he insisted. 2. This love is a Divine virtue. Philanthropy may exist in the sphere of nature, but love, in this higher sense, can only exist in the sphere of grace. This charity is a Divine thing, the work and a fruit of the Spirit in the soul. 3. This charity was to be kept "fervent." It is a word which implies great earnestness and intensity (Luke xxii. 44). It was to be something very unlike cold propriety. The metal was to be kept glowing, and the chill of selfishness warded off. It was to be continuous in its exercise, and its exercise was manifold. 4. The sphere of this charity: "among yourselves," that is, among Christians. As natural love, as a rule, is governed by propinquity, so is spiritual. This "fervent charity" was to be exercised primarily amongst those who had the closest union, *inter se*, through their union in Christ. 5. The Apostle marks the momentousness of his precept: "above all things." II. THE RESULT OF ITS FULFILMENT. 1. The interpretations that the love in question is God's love for man, or Christ's love in His Passion, cannot certainly be accepted, though, of course, true in themselves. It is quite evident that the Apostle is speaking of the effect of mutual love. 2. The word "cover" does not simply mean "hides," the sins leaving them where they were, but causes their remission, in fact, obliterates them. 3. Whose sins does the text refer to? 4. Charity covers over our sins in the sight of God, because charity is to sin what water is to fire—it puts it out. It is written of St. Mary Magdalene, "Her sins which are many are forgiven her; for she loveth much." Love is the soul of contrition. An act of fervent charity can obliterate the sins of a life. It is the solvent of guilt and of penalty. But repentance does not purchase pardon. It is the condition of receiving it, not its source. Christ gives remission of sins in ways of His own appointment. 5. Charity also covers the sins of others. It has a way of seeing the good in people rather than the bad: "Charity thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. xiii. 5). (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*)

The greatness of love :—Love is like gravitation, the great attracting power, keeping all things in their place. Without gravitation the universe would become a chaos, without some measure of love society would be impossible. The world could perhaps rub along somehow without philosophy, but I defy it to do so without love, as animals can exist without light but not without warmth. Love is the water of life, of which whosoever will may take freely without money or price; it is the heaven-springing stream which quenches all thirst, removes all impurities, and also, as in the case of Naaman, the very simplicity of the means causes the proud to disdain it. But like the grand and wonderful simplicity of the laws of nature, fulfilling themselves in the greatest and least phenomena, so is the law of love, prompting equally the widest public service man can perform and the smallest act of private friendship. No matter how deformed or twisted a man's way of thinking if love once gets access to him, for, like water, it will find its level in the most crooked as in the best proportioned vessel. Like snow falling so quietly and equally on all manner of objects, however mean or base, creeping in at every crevice, so also is love, its voice not heard in the streets, covering a multitude of sins, insinuating itself into every cranny that selfishness leaves open. (*P. H. Sharpe.*)

Above all things—love :—It were better to dispense with all else in the Christian's character and work than to miss love, though, in point of fact, where this is in operation all that is likely to impress and touch men must be present also. This love must, of course, go forth in its sympathies and activities to all the world, but it should begin at home. We must have love among ourselves as believers in the same Lord before we can presume to speak of our love to the great world of men around. Nor must it be a platonic love, a love of the cold light of reason, it must be fervent, at boiling point, on full stretch, going to the furthest extents of love, and in doing so

learning the breadths and lengths of the unsearchable love of God. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Love must be fervent* :—The manner or kind of love required is a large, continued, stretched-out, constant love. As a cloth folded up is in a little room, but when it comes to be cut is stretched out into many men's uses, so our love must be stretched out to many persons, to many duties; as in giving and doing good to body, soul, goods, good name, and that not sparingly, but liberally, so in forgiving both much and often, neither must this be only when we can well do it, or when we have nothing else to do, but when it is against our profit, pleasure, ease, &c., so as we neglect not ourselves too much, and thereby more pleasure may be done our neighbours than hindrance come to us. (*John Rogers.*) **Charity shall cover the multitude of sins.**—*Love covereth all sins* :—It is strange that this verse should have been so often misunderstood. This is closely parallel with that last verse in St. James, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death," and, as a necessary part of that conversion, "shall hide a multitude of (that converted man's) sins." "Love shall cover multitudes of sins" from God and man. Only observe carefully, not our own sins; never, in any sense, does love do that; but other men's sins, love, by silence and by veiling, hides from man; and by prayer and by converting, hides from God. And yet, in all ages of the Church, and in every Church, people have built from my text the fallacy, that a man's charities are, in some way, a set-off against his sins. So some people of the world take a satisfaction every day, that, if they are living rather too gay lives, they are kinder than others who are called serious. It is often put thus, that Christ's righteousness covers our unrighteousness, *i.e.*, in other words, that His obedience is accounted to us in place of our disobedience. But I would much rather say that Christ Himself—His own immensity—comes in and covers us. Then the view of you, passing through Him, comes out to the eye of God a beautiful object. It is all white, the dark places are not seen. And when I think of the immense amount of evil, which now, and at the day of judgment, will thus be hid, never to be seen by God, through that interposition of Jesus Christ, what an emphasis may it throw into the words, "Love shall cover the multitude of sins." We are, therefore, never nearer to Christ than when we are making ourselves, in any way we can, the coverers of sin. Now there is a way by which a man can cover sins from God. In the same sense in which I can convert a man I can cover that man's sins from God. Your mission as a Christian is to be a coverer of sins. There is seldom a greater thing done in this world than when we can manage anyhow to put a sin out of sight. Therefore, let me offer to you one or two rules respecting this high duty. If you know anything to any one's detriment, hold it as a sacred deposit, to be used religiously. Do not tell it unless the necessity be urgent, or the utility great. Never tell of a man what you have not first told to the man. Never think that you can make yourself great by making another less. Make a principle of always putting in the foreground persons' good qualities. If a fault be mentioned, see and mention the extenuating circumstances, the palliating considerations. Look out for them, and you will find them. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Charity covering a multitude of sins* :—And wherefore does the apostle inculcate this precept so earnestly? It is not that the duties of self-denial and humility, of soberness and prayer, can be dispensed with in the formation of a truly Christian character; it is not that charity alone will suffice to atone for our deficiencies in other respects; but charity is the distinguishing mark of a Christian spirit; our Lord Himself has said that "by this should His disciples be known." I. First, FOR THE FORCE OF THE APOSTLE'S INJUNCTION, "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves." I have before called charity a disposition of the mind; and it is of importance that we should remember that it is such. Our grand errors on this point arise from our mistaking the effects for the cause; in making no distinction between particular acts of a charitable nature, and that disposition which produces them. When the favour of God, the present blessings of this life, and the eternal joys of another, are promised to charity, it is not such and such special acts of benevolence which shall be so signally rewarded; but it is the earnest inclination to benefit our fellow-creatures, and the continual and diligent habit of doing good which are of such high price before God. Our conduct will, of course, have more or less influence upon the good and the happiness of mankind, according to the circumstances under which we act, and the situation which we occupy in society. But though a charitable disposition may in one case have a wider sphere of action than it has in another, still the disposition itself is altogether independent of these external circumstances. The desire

to benefit mankind may be as sincere and as fervent in him whose means are limited, as in the richest and the most powerful of the sons of men. And though the practical consequences of that disposition may not be as extensively felt in the one case as in the other, still God regards the sincerity and the fervency of that love, which prompts us both to labour and to endure, in such sort, as the particular duties of our station may require. Two truths are to be deduced from what has been said: first, a few acts of a charitable nature do not necessarily prove the existence of a charitable spirit in him who performs them—because these may be prompted by very different motives, and because true charity is not exemplified merely on a few particular occasions, but in the general tenor of our conduct, and in the habitual discipline of our tempers. The second truth we learn is this: no man can possess a spirit of genuine charity who does not seize every opportunity of being actively beneficial to his fellow-creatures; and so many opportunities are there of this kind, which every one, even the poorest among us, must possess, that it is easy for any man, who will take the trouble of examining into the tenor of his daily intercourse with those around him, to determine whether he indeed possesses “that most excellent disposition of charity, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God.” II. But, in the second place, the apostle says, in the text, that charity “SHALL COVER THE MULTITUDE OF SINS.” Now it is evident, from the definition which we have just given of this disposition of the heart, that they cannot be the sins which we commit against our fellow-creatures that charity shall cover; for did we possess this grace in perfection, we should not trespass against our fellow-creatures at all. True charity would lead us to the unfailing fulfilment of all the duties which we owe to our brethren. It is equally certain that charity towards men cannot atone for our sins against God; for though the love of our neighbour be a characteristic badge of our Christian profession, though it is vain to pretend our love towards our Heavenly Father, whilst we hate our fellow-creatures; though the second commandment necessarily springs from the first, and is like unto it in its nature, still it cannot be made in any degree to supersede it. It can only mean, therefore, that charity will cover, or conceal, and forgive the sins which they commit against us. And this will appear yet more evidently if we consider, in the first place, from whence St. Peter quotes this proverbial expression; and in the next, if we attend to the general object of this Epistle. First, then, we must remark that these words are quoted by St. Peter from the Book of Proverbs. In the twelfth verse of the tenth chapter, the wise man says, “Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins.” Here the opposite line of conduct which is suggested by hatred and love is sufficient to guide us to a right interpretation of the passage. The one stirreth up strifes, it dwells upon them, and rouses them up afresh, and does not allow them to be forgotten. But the contrary disposition of love covereth all sins; it is desirous that offences should be hidden and die away, and instead of enmity and dissension, is anxious for peace and goodwill, and mutual forbearance. It follows, then, that as St. Peter introduced into his Epistle this latter part of the proverb, he intended it to be understood in the same sense in which it stood in the original language of Solomon. This is, moreover, still further confirmed if we regard the general tenor of St. Peter’s Epistle. It seems to have been one of his principal objects to reprove and reform those dissensions and disputes, which, even in those early days, prevailed in the Christian world. (*T. Ainger, M.A.*) *Love covers sins*:—The whole conception may have been based on the filial act of Noah’s sons, of whom it is recorded that they took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders and went backward, and covered their father’s drunken sin. 1. Love forgives. We are to be imitators of God in the swiftness and completeness of His forgiveness. 2. It avoids giving occasion for sin. It has been said that if you have a favourite horse, which always takes fright and shies at a certain point in the road, you are careful to come along another road, if possible, or to coax him, by speaking to him kindly, to go by without fear. So if you are aware that a certain subject will always invoke an outburst of hot temper in your friend, true love will lead you to avoid it. You will not needlessly incite to sin if you know how to avoid giving the first inducement. 3. It is quick to discern some generous construction to put upon the fault, or to quote some consideration to weigh in the opposite scale. “True, he was unpardonably dull and slow, but then how trustworthy and reliable.” “Yes, he was very irritable and abrupt; but, then, remember what a strain he has been under lately in his business, not leaving the factory or counting-house till late at night, and going back early in the morning, with no recreation or respite.” “Granted, that he is now becoming soured and crabbed; but, then, what a glorious man he

was in those earlier days, when he stood in the breach." "Are you sure that there is not some other explanation possible for his action?" In some such ways as these, Christian love argues with itself and others, and, as the result, many a sin is hindered on its way, and many a fault condoned. 4. It rebukes with great tenderness. There are cases where duty demands public censure. The sore must not lie covered up lest it prove to be deadly. It must be lanced or it cannot be cured. But the lancing is done with exquisite tenderness. The wrong-doer is reproved, rebuked, and exhorted, but with all long-suffering (1 Tim. iv. 2). The man overtaken with a fault is restored in the spirit of meekness (Gal. vi. 1). (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Charity covering faults*:—"Dear Moss!" said the Thatch on an old ruin, "I am so worn, so patched, so ragged; really, I am quite unsightly. I wish you would come and cheer me up a little; you will hide all my infirmities and defects, and through your loving sympathy no finger of contempt or dislike will be pointed at me." "I come!" said the Moss; and it crept up and around, and in and out, till every flaw was hidden, and all was smooth and fair. Presently the sun shone out, and the old Thatch looked glorious in the golden rays. "How beautiful the Thatch looks!" cried one. "How beautiful the Thatch looks!" cried another. "Ah!" cried the old Thatch, "rather let them say how beautiful is the loving Moss, that spends itself in covering all my faults, keeping the knowledge of them all to herself, and by her own grace making my age and poverty wear the garb of youth and luxuriance." (*Great Thoughts.*) **Use hospitality one to another.**—*Ungrudging hospitality*:—"To God the intention of the heart is all-important. He loveth a cheerful giver. He takes such delight in doing good that He has no sympathy with anything like reluctance. Not that hospitality should necessarily be profuse; for, if it be, it is difficult to maintain, besides reminding the guest that he is regarded as a stranger; only that which is done should be done freely, gladly, with the whole heart. There is no hospitality so grateful as that which makes the stranger feel at home, because there is nothing forced or restrained, and he is permitted to feel completely at his ease." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The warmth of hospitality*:—"If the two hands be plunged, one in water at the temperature of 200°, and the other in snow, and being held there for a certain time are transferred to water of the intermediate temperature of 100°, this water will appear warm to one hand and cold to the other—warm to the hand which has been plunged in the snow, and cold to the hand which has been plunged in the water at 200°. The anomaly is easily explained. The sensation of heat is relative. When the body has been exposed to a high temperature, a medium which has a lower temperature will feel cold, and when it has been exposed to a low temperature, it will feel warm. Now this fact will suggest, by analogy, a way for testing hospitality. It is not uncommon to hear a man speak about "the warmth" of somebody's hospitality. Perhaps that same "warmth" seemed very much like coldness to us. How are we to explain the difference in the sensations of our friend and ourselves? Simply by remembering that hospitality, like heat, is a relative thing. A man who has just come out of the cold house of Mrs. Niggard will feel the tepid house of Mrs. Moderaté to be quite a warm, hospitable place. On the other hand, a man who goes to Mrs. Moderate's house after a prolonged stay at the genial mansion of the generous Lady Bountiful, will feel that establishment to be rather chilly in its hospitality." (*Scientific Illustrations.*) **As every man hath received the gift.**—*Gifts*:—"I. THE NUMBER AND VARIETY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH. The term "gift" represented by nine different words in the Greek, occurs in three different shades of meaning, viz., "a present," "an offering to God," and "a personal endowment." The last is evidently the gift of our text. 1. Every believer has a gift, and his own gift (Luke xix. 13; Matt. xxv. 15). The little wheels in an engine, the little stones in a building, and the little gifts in the church, occupy a place for which the larger would be quite unsuitable. An organism is healthy only when all its members perform their functions; and efficiency in the whole is the gross result of efficiency in every part. 2. The gifts of the Church are a revelation of the manifold grace out of which they spring. "Gifts," the most general class, such as wisdom, knowledge, and faith, are referred to the Father. "Administrations," a more limited class, as healing, prophesying, and speaking with tongues, are referred to the Son. "Operations," the smallest class, such as miracles, discerning of spirits, &c., are referred to the Holy Ghost. Individual character determines largely individual spiritual gifts. A ray of light passing through a crystal heptahedron is broken up into seven different colours, one of which is appropriated by each of its seven sides. So entering the prism, the Church, the white light of the Spirit is analysed into its

various elements, and each soul appropriates the particular one that suits it. The gifts acquired are thus as various as the cast of the acquiring minds. II. THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF THE BESTOWAL OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS ON THE CHURCH. "Ministering it among yourselves." This is a noble thought. 1. It implies that we study our gifts, and so make no mistake as to the work we are fitted to do. This is a matter of great importance. The navigation of a ship will be bad with children at the ropes, and a landsman at the helm. A ministry without ministerial gifts is a machine incapable of moving, even if the power were there. 2. It implies that we train and cultivate our gifts so as to use them at their best. He would be an eccentric farmer who allowed his land to lie untilled because the soil was rich. It is the richest land and the highest gifts that, being cultivated, will yield the best return. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the Alpha, but not the Omega, of qualification for spiritual work. The apostles had this to begin with, yet were all carefully trained by Christ, and Paul warns Timothy to "stir up" his gift. 3. Our gifts in their most highly cultivated form are all to be used for the common good. "Among yourselves." The perfection of reciprocity exists in the religious life (Matt. v. 23; vii. 12). There is no place for selfishness in it; the peculiar quality of it being the look outward, instead of inward (Phil. ii. 4; 1 Cor. x. 24). The selfish soul shrivels and dies, and the maimed and weakened Church suffers in all its functions. It is incredible the moral power that is lying dormant in the Church. The power once latent in steam and inaccessible is now evoked by the millions of horse-power daily. The power once hidden in electricity is now in exercise in every village, carrying on swift and silent wing the thoughts of men across the continents, "and their words to the world's end." But the ten thousandfold greater power sealed up in the napkinned talents of idle Christian people is still unreached. What an amount of religious machinery would be in motion if an ecclesiastical James Watt or Stephen Gray would come and unlock this magazine of spiritual force! Nothing could stand against it. Darkness would be dissipated, sin would be jostled off the earth, and misery would spread its sable wings and fly away. (*Homiletic Quarterly*.) *God's gifts and their use*.—I. IT IS ASSUMED THAT EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS SOME GIFT FROM GOD. 1. All our endowments are blessings received (1 Cor. iv. 7). 2. All are received from the multifiform goodness of God. "Manifold." (1) How gracious is this procedure, by which God's gifts come to us tinged by the infinite variety of the substances on which they fall! When He might have poured His influences in one indistinguishable flood of radiance, He rather sends them reflected differently from each different mind, diversified by all the colours of the rainbow, and sparkling with manifold hues. For thus we are brought to admire and rejoice in not only God Himself as the primal source of all good, but in our fellow-men through whose "manifold" concurrence this "manifold grace" has been diffused around us. (2) It shows itself in all sorts of persons, with all sorts of endowments, in all sorts of offices, for all sorts of duties. 3. All must be accounted for to God. II. EACH MAN'S GIFT IS TO BE USED FOR THE GOOD OF HIS FELLOW-MEN. The funds put into our charge must be administered. We must neither misuse them nor neglect them. 1. We must not appropriate them to ourselves through selfishness. 2. We must not withhold this grace from others through negligence. The sluggishness of our nature is as much to be watched against and overcome as its selfishness. III. GOD WILL BLESS THE PROPER USE OF HIS GIFTS. Look only at the works of nature. See how the little, almost imperceptible, seed, being cast into the ground in the proper season, with proper care, is blessed by the bounteous Author, and is made to bring forth thirty, sixty, a hundred-fold. Will God be more niggard of blessing to spiritual husbandry than to earthly? No effort to do good is ever lost. (*T. Griffith, M.A.*) *Gifts and responsibility*.—I. First, then, the IDEA OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY lies at the foundation of all morality. It is not distinctively Christian—it is human; it is inherent in man as a moral being. If we would trace it to its immediate source, it springs from the testimony of conscience—the personal experience of the Light which lighteth every man. It not only enlightens and instructs, but it counsels and exhorts. These are the conditions of our personal responsibility. But behind all these there lies the idea of the personal God, whose holy life has ordered the distinctions of right and wrong. I have dwelt upon these points because it seems to me that in these days there is a tendency to lay the foundations of moral conduct and of the religious life rather in the emotions and affections than in the demands of conscience and the obedience of the will. By such methods the sense of responsibility is inevitably weakened, and our duties, both moral and religious, become only a higher kind of

self-gratification. It is true that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and that the religious life is rich in present rewards of both peace and joy. But these are not its true or highest motives. It is a great step in the Christian life when this responsibility is recognised. II. But the text further reminds us of THE DIVERSITY OF GIFTS. Every man hath received a gift—not the gift—not all men the same gift. The gifts and endowments of individual men are as various as their outward appearance. Every man has some gifts; no man has all gifts. It is this diversity that gives a chief interest, and even beauty, to human life, and affords opportunity for the exercise of some of its highest virtues. If all men were equally gifted, the intercourse of life would become drearily monotonous. It would be as if in the natural world all mountains were of one height and one outline; all the now changeful clouds of one permanent form; all trees of one kind and colour and shape, like the trees in the toy-box of a child. But this variety of gifts brings with it a varying responsibility, differing according to the character of the gifts which each has received. There is a tendency among men to esteem some gifts more highly than others; and this estimate varies in different places, and under different circumstances, and at different times. But in themselves they bring no real honour to those who possess them. No man deserves credit for mere intellectual power any more than for brute force. But it is in the use of these powers that the man himself is to gain credit and honour. So far as the gifts themselves are regarded, they are, as the apostle reminds us, the gifts of God. The man of quick intelligence and retentive memory who gains easily his place in the tripos may be far less worthy of honour than one of humble gifts and feeble powers. For the most part it is the union of great gifts with diligent work which ensures success; but it has sometimes been otherwise. But how often the less gifted man, feeble in his mental power and slow in its exercise—painfully acquiring the needed knowledge with continuous effort, how often is such a one regarded only with a half-contemptuous pity. But the diversity of gifts of which our text speaks is not only a difference of degree, but of kind. Even here we see this distinction in a limited degree. The man who is strong in mathematical may be weak in classical studies. And, again, how constantly does experience prove that there is a special gift of imparting knowledge distinct from that of attaining it. The gifts of personal influence, of discerning sympathy, of persuasiveness of speech, of practical wisdom, as distinct from knowledge. All these have their own great value. But under all these diversities of gifts there lies upon each of us the great responsibility declared in the words of my text, “As every man hath reserved the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” III. To every one of us it speaks in very solemn tones, remembering THE ACCOUNT THAT WE MUST ONE DAY GIVE. But far above all these gifts of God, which we call gifts of nature, are those higher gifts, which we call gifts of grace—the gifts which find their exercise, not in the work of the world, but in the training and perfecting of the soul. These are gifts which are common to all, and within the reach of all. The gift of grace which comes in answer to our private prayers, the grace which comes to us through the daily study of the Word—the grace of the holy sacrament of the body and blood. All these gifts we have received in promise, and our responsibility lies in seeking and claiming them for our own. (*Bishop of Lichfield.*) *Duty.*—I. THE CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE. The text first of all speaks of receiving—that is the privilege to which it points. We get in order that we may give; but we can give nothing until we are first of all put into possession. And what the Christian does receive, he accepts as a gift—not as the equivalent of service rendered, or achievements accomplished, or worth acknowledged—but as a something to which he has no sort of claim, sent down out of that boundless Divine treasury which the apostle, at the end of the text, describes as “the manifold grace of God.” Whatever gift you have, it is of God’s sending: all spiritual endowment and all natural capacity, your influence, your wealth, your leisure, your power of speech, or action, or organisation; all is God’s giving; you have won nothing, deserved nothing. You have received all, freely, unconditionally, as so many pledges and foretastes of “the manifold grace of God.” We all have gift, and all we have is gift. And the dissimilarity in individual cases is the most patent fact in experience. One man can do good work at home, another finds his proper element in the school, or in the streets, or the cottage meeting. II. THE OBLIGATION. “As ye have received even so minister.” God’s gift then is not intended to terminate with ourselves. It is not meant for self-gratification, least of all for personal parade. It begins with the individual always: it ends with him never. This is involved in the ultimate aim of

Christianity itself. The apostle asks us only to give out what and as we take in. "As every one hath received, minister the same." Give in measure and in kind as ye have received. Give what you have got, and do not distress yourself because you cannot give something else which you do not have. However much you admire another man's gift, and profit by it, there is no call to imitate it. Do what you can, and you will do as well as the brother whose work you so greatly appreciate. You will receive as high a reward and as lofty a commendation. III. And now notice THE CHRISTIAN POSITION. The redeemed are required to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Now, a steward is not an absolute owner but a responsible administrator. And all gifts, according to the apostle, are trusts. No Christian in his view gets his natural talents or material possessions, still less his spiritual endowments, for himself alone. This is the position here set forth; but how miserably its obligation is responded to. How scant a return does our stewardship yield. (*Hugh Ross.*) *Christian stewardship*:—The great Giver of the universe is the great Economist too. He has written it everywhere. The fulness of nature is not kept up by new creations, but by that power of self-repair which He has made the law of its life. It is the same in the kingdom of grace. God gave it a beginning by His own direct and almighty power; by the same power He could carry it on to its final completion. But this is not His manner of doing. He expects it, by virtue of that principle of life which He has communicated to it, to carry itself on now, not independently of Him, but in reliance upon Him, and receiving from Him, just as nature is dependent on Him for the continuance of its vitalising force. But still, in so far as instrumentality is concerned, the work is its own, not His. I. THE NATURE OF THE THING HERE SPOKEN OF: MINISTRY—SERVICE. We are apt to look on service as a menial thing. There is nothing more glorified in the Bible. Service, mutual helpfulness growing out of mutual dependence, is the law of the universe. The man who lives for himself is not worthy of the name of man. He is as unlike Christ, the ideal man, as it is possible for him to be. Service—tender, considerate, beneficent work for others—ennobles a man, and is the first thing to do so. Till then it is all receiving with him, and no giving; and all incurring obligation, no discharging of any; and that is death to any character. II. THE RANGE OF THE DUTY. It is universal. 1. "As every man," &c. This makes the matter very simple. It puts an end to all casuistry and all excuses. God is the centre of the universe which He has made, and He ministers to all. "To Him belongeth power." But as all rational life is after the pattern of Himself, He has put into it everywhere something of this ministering power, and we fulfil His idea, and show ourselves to be His children, rising into His likeness, just in proportion as we exercise that power in our several spheres. 2. "One to another." Here is the idea of reciprocity added. It is not to be all giving with some, and all receiving with others. The thing is to go round—a perpetual interchange of blessings and gifts, a mutual well-doing, a generous commerce of souls, supplying each other's lack out of each other's abundance from the highest to the lowest, and from the lowest to the highest. III. THE RULE OF THE DUTY. "Minister the same." It is idle to say that you can do nothing, for if you are a Christian you have received something—"the gift." The apostle does not assert this, but takes it for granted. "As every man," &c., and gift is faculty, for which God holds us all directly responsible. Now, observe, this rule applies both to the form and the measure of the gift, both to its kind and to its degree. It applies to its form. It differs in this in different individuals, and hence the apostle speaks of the "manifold" grace of God. It is very plastic this grace of God, and accommodates itself to the constitutional peculiarities of men. However unpretentious our gift may be, it may count for more than we think. If our life and conduct say what is true about Christ, and nothing but what is true, representing His yoke as easy, His burden as light, His service as love, His reign as righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, then it does not matter how humble our work may be in its outward form, it will still be work for God, work for Christ, and for truth, and the souls of men. We shall be ministering "as we have received the gift." But now observe, this "as" applies to degree as well as to form. We are to minister one to another up to the extent to which we have received the gift, that is, to the full extent of our ability. (*A. L. Simpson, D.D.*) *God's gifts and their purpose*:—I. ALL OUR POSSESSIONS ARE THE GIFTS OF GOD, BEING PART OF HIS MANIFOLD GRACE. 1. When we consider the shortness of the time for which these gifts are granted, we may consider them as loans, returnable to the lender when the term for which they are lent is expired. 2. These gifts are not committed to us merely for our own enjoyment, but that we

may use them to the benefit of the whole body of the Church. This is evidently God's purpose. His grace is manifold. He is no maker of favourites. 3. That which is shown to be true of God's natural gifts is true in a still higher degree of His gifts of grace. The imagining that spiritual privileges are bestowed for the exclusive benefit of their possessors was the error which destroyed the Church of Israel. 4. The gifts which we receive of God we receive of Him through the Eternal Son. (1) This is true even apart from the fact of the Incarnation. He is the Word of God, by Him all things are made. Through Him God goes forth to His creatures. (2) This is true in a much higher sense since the Word has become Incarnate, and through His Incarnation reconciled us to God. Having fulfilled all the will of God, to Him is given all power in heaven and in earth. In the might of that power He bids His apostles go forth to claim all human souls as His rightful inheritance. II.

WHAT GIFTS HAS GOD BESTOWED UPON US, AND HOW ARE WE TO USE THEM? These gifts are: (a) spiritual, and (b) natural. 1. Spiritual gifts are such as we receive through our membership with the mystical body of Christ. They consist in redemption if we will accept it; sanctification if we will seek for it; and all the blessed means whereby the life of the Incarnate Word is bestowed upon us and kept alive within us, if we will use them. 2. Among our natural gifts some are common to all. Life, a sphere of usefulness large or small, health, powers of mind and body. There are other gifts bestowed upon some persons, and withheld from others. The power of influence, the possession of talent or of wealth, the gift of utterance, the advantages of position. While it is possible to claim these natural gifts as our own without reference to our Incarnate Lord, yet it is only when we possess them in Him that we may be said to possess them truly. Otherwise, they are as likely to possess us as we are to possess them, to be our masters as we are to be theirs. 3. Thus ministering the gift as we have received it, whether it be large or small, whether it be natural or spiritual, we find upon gathering up the fragments that remain over and above to those to whom we have ministered, that there is greater store than we knew, greater because more full of God's blessing! (*Canon Vernon Hutton.*) *Personal Christliness*:—1. Whatever man has is a gift from God. 2. Whatever man has he should benevolently employ for the advantage of others. I. PERSONAL CHRISTLIENESS IS A DIVINE GIFT. 1. It is the greatest gift. Qualifies man to please his Maker, bless humanity, serve the universe, and inherit all things. 2. It is the costliest gift. II. PERSONAL CHRISTLIENESS IS A DIVINE GIFT TO BE SOCIALLY EMPLOYED. This social ministry is—1. Obligatory. 2. Varied. 3. Divine. Learn: 1. The divinity of a Christly life. 2. The test of a Christly life. Genuine social benevolence. (*Homilist.*) Minister the same one to another.—*Gifts to be communicated for the good of others*:—Though a Christian be the freest man in the world (as being freed from Satan, sin, hell, the law, &c.), yet is he to be of all others the most serviceable; he must not put his light under a bushel, nor hide his talent in a napkin. 1. As the sun shines not for itself, nor the earth bears for itself; so have not we a gift for ourselves, but for the common good. 2. The perfection of gifts consists not only in the having of it, but in the use thereof. 3. The communion of saints, which we believe, requires it. 4. This brings most peace to our conscience both in life and death. 5. This procures credit while we live, as a good name and memory when we die. 6. We are divers ways partakers of the gifts of others, and so must make them partakers of ours. 7. Our gifts increase by using; the more we bestow them, the more we have them. (*John Rogers.*) *Receiving and ministering*:—Clouds when full pour down, and the spouts run, and the eaves shed, and the presses overflow, and the aromatic trees sweat out their precious and sovereign oils. (*J. Trapp.*) *Mutual obligations*:—The "grace of God" means His liberality. It is called "manifold," because God's gifts are so various in kind and in degree. They are of many descriptions, and variously proportioned. On some the Divine bounty seems to pour itself in torrents, while to others it comes in very slender rills, or apparently in drops only. Still we know that God "is good to all." And, doubtless, were the least gifted among us more quicksighted and pious, they would find themselves possessed of far more considerable gifts from God's hand than they acknowledge or discern. Our corrupt selfishness makes us dull of sight, coldhearted, and ungrateful. Now the apostle asserts, in the text, that we are all sharers in God's manifold grace. "According as every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another." He has just before been enjoining the mutual exercise of ungrudging hospitality. And afterwards he signifies, that our powers of speech and action are all to be employed in a holy and charitable manner for the welfare of our brethren, and to the glory

of God our common Father, through Christ. You see, then, that to each of us is allotted a ministry. We must lay ourselves out to do good; not wait lazily for an almost constraining impulse of circumstances. And that we may be useful and not hurtful, it is our duty to ascertain what our gift is; and not to attempt what lies beyond our province, and so mar instead of making or mending. One obstacle of our own making to the useful exercise of our talents is a reluctance to co-operate with those who possess that quality which is wanting in ourselves, but which needs to be combined with ours in order to its efficiency. Now I believe that God has distributed His gifts variously for this very purpose among others, to force upon us a partnership in good works. He has made us so necessary the one to the other, that selfish separatism is hardly less consistent with human well-being than with Divine philanthropy. The man of sagacity is not always good in action: he wants an energetic coadjutor. Moses, good in counsel, requires the help of Aaron ready of speech. Nay more, it is better for the business of the world that high attributes should not be so justly blended in the several individuals, called to act an important part, as to constitute what is nearest to perfection; but rather that what is excessive in one should be balanced and corrected by an excess of another kind in his help-mate. The vehemence of Luther was a blemish in him, while Melancthon was cautious to a fault. Yet who can doubt that the glorious Reformation was better accomplished by two such fellow-labourers, than it would have been by the same men, had there been an equal distribution between them of their respective characteristic properties. Such then is God's way of dispensing His gifts. He divides "to every man severally" as He pleases. In the Church He has given "some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"; and all this is arranged with a view to unity—unity of faith, unity of love, unity of action. Nothing can be clearer than the duty of turning our means and opportunities to good account. We are prone to view our talent under false and vicious limitations; to confine our notions of the proper sphere of assiduous kindness to one's own immediate connections. The gospel vastly expands our field of duty. It urges upon us that we are all brethren. Therefore, whatever gift we possess is meant for the general welfare. Let me here say a word or two upon our accountableness. People are not seldom anxious to believe that by declining to undertake a certain work they avoid a serious responsibility. No doubt that is sometimes true. But if that work be a duty, then you cannot escape the responsibility which lies upon you to engage in it. (*J. N. Pearson, M.A.*) *In what a variety of ways we may serve and benefit others*:—Doing good to others rejoices every human heart that is not totally callous and corrupt. Doing good to others engages the approbation of every man. I. HOW GREAT IS, FIRST, THE DIVERSITY OF SITUATIONS AMONG MANKIND, AND HOW VARIOUS THEREFORE THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE INDUCEMENT TO BE USEFUL TO ONE ANOTHER IN DIFFERENT WAYS! How many classes and descriptions of persons fill up the interval between the monarch or the prince and the meanest of his subjects! And how various their destination; how various the sphere of action assigned them; how manifold the good and useful that each may contrive, adopt, and do therein! If the government is watchful over the public tranquillity and safety; if the magistrate maintains the laws in their due respect, and protects the individual in his property; if one preceptor teaches the child the elements of human knowledge, another instructs the youth in the higher branches of science; if the statesman is attentive to the several exigencies of the country and provides for its great concerns; the countryman produces a plentiful supply of food from the furrows of his plough and the fields he industriously cultivates; the manufacturer and the mechanic work up and improve the products of the country; the tradesman brings them into circulation, and the merchant barter the surplus against those of other nations; thus thousands of hands are set in motion which none of those could perform without neglecting their own, and which are equally indispensable with theirs. And how much good now may every one do, if he does what belongs to him with willingness, with fidelity, with a heart benevolently affected towards his brethren, participating in their happiness and cheerfully concurring to promote it! II. CONSIDER AGAIN HOW DIFFERENT THE WANTS OF MANKIND AND HOW VARIOUS THEIR SUFFERINGS, AND THENCE JUDGE IN WHAT A VARIETY OF WAYS ONE MAY SERVE AND BE USEFUL TO ANOTHER. Here are wants of the body—food, raiment, lodging, health, strength; there wants of the mind—information, knowledge, wisdom, virtue, inward peace, pleasure, hope, content. Here is the want of necessities; there the want of the commodious, the elegant, the agreeable. Here are

corporeal sufferings—weakness, debility, mutilation, decrepitude, pain, sickness, lingering death; there are sufferings of the soul—vexation, trouble, anxiety, grief, dejection, doubt, remorse, pangs of conscience, melancholy, despondency, peril of despair. Here is the want of advice, there of support; here of courage, there of prudence; here of means and implements of trade, there of abilities for it; here of understanding, there of alacrity and application; here of moderation, there of patience; here of modesty and diffidence, there of self-importance and confidence. And thus the matter stands in numberless other cases. The necessities of the one are not the necessities of the other; the sufferings of the one are not the sufferings of the other. What is wanting to the former is possessed by the latter. Every one may therefore in various methods give and receive, administer relief and accept relief, comfort and be comforted, serve and submit to be served, communicate benefit and satisfaction and enjoy benefit and satisfaction. III. CONSIDER THIRDLY, HOW NUMEROUS AND VARIOUS THE CAPACITIES AND POWERS, THE GIFTS AND ACQUIREMENTS OF MANKIND ARE, AND THENCE JUDGE HOW GREAT THE VARIETY OF WAYS IN WHICH THEY MAY SERVE AND ASSIST AND BENEFIT EACH OTHER. No one is exactly that which another is; no one has precisely that which another has; no one knows all that another knows; no one can and may do whatever another can and may. One has understanding; and how various the species of it are! Here is a profound, collected, there a comprehensive and excursive; here a quick but volatile, there a slow but solid understanding. Another has authority and strength, and how various are these in their kinds! Here is strength of mind, there strength of body; here the power of beauty, there the power of eloquence; here the command of oneself and the passions, there the authority of the ruler and the commander over his subjects; here impetuous, overwhelming, there mild, insinuating, yet more irresistible force. And who is able to recount the infinite variations of human capacities and powers and endowments and their analogies to each other? One has ingenuity, an extensive, strong turn for invention; the other has judgment and dexterity in execution. One quickness and pliancy to the business of the present moment; the other persevering, indefatigable patience for intricate and tiresome undertakings. One an ardency to animate all around it; the other cool consideration and resolution to put a stop to this devouring flame. And now let each exchange his capacities and endowments and possessions against those of the other; now let every one apply the particular talent entrusted to him, as often as he has the proper motive and opportunity for it; what a blessing would the prodigiously various commutation of kind offices, of assistance and support, of benevolence and beneficence, be to all in general and to each in particular! IV. CONSIDER LASTLY, HOW MANIFOLD AND DIFFERENT THE METHODS IN WHICH YE MAY SERVE YOUR BRETHREN, IN WHICH YE MAY DO THEM ALL THE GOOD THAT YE ARE ABLE. Thinking and speaking, keeping silence and hearing, giving and lending, partaking and borrowing, bearing and suffering and relieving, doing and not doing, are so many different methods of serving and being useful to others, and each the best in its proper season, the most productive of beneficial consequences. (*G. J. Zollkofer.*) “*As*” and “*so*”—*the method of ministry*:—You and I can only give large sums of money to God’s service, as God makes us wealthy. It is so in earthly things, and surely it must be so in spiritual things. If we are living in the fulness of God, then the promise of Jesus Christ shall be fulfilled in our case—“Out of our belly shall flow rivers of living water.” If, on the other hand, we are straitened in ourselves, then what wonder that our life should be unprofitable, and that we should scarcely to any degree minister the gift, simply because we receive it so scantily. But when I look again at that word “*as*,” another thought occurs to me. It strikes me that we have not only there a law of proportion, we have also a law of quality, qualifying the bestowal of the gift. The gift is bestowed by the hand of Him who is an example to us in giving, as well as in every other respect. As we receive, so we are to give. There ought to be a certain God-like liberality in our efforts to distribute the favours with which God loads us. But further, that word “*as*” seems to teach us more than this. Not only have we received the gift freely, but we have received it wisely; that is to say, God, in bestowing the gift upon us, exercised a wisdom which belongs to His own nature, preparing us for its reception, and bestowing upon us just the gift appropriate to our state. Are we not too often very clumsy in this respect? We get into a kind of stereotyped way of working for God. I cannot but feel that, if we would minister the gift as the Lord would have us minister it, we require greater delicacy of touch, keener discernment of human character, and a fuller appreciation of God’s different methods of dealing with different souls than are commonly to be met with. (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*) **As good**

stewards of the manifold grace.—*The Christian stewardship* :—The manifold grace of God—the term is a remarkable one—it is that word by which the Greeks expressed infinite variety of hue or of design—the shiftings and glistenings of richly-mingled colours, or the dappled patterns of skillful embroidery. We have not, I think, been good stewards of this manifold grace. We have been ever apt to look on the grace of God in one or at most in some few of its aspects only. We have forgotten its manifoldness. In other words, we have assumed for the gospel of Christ too exclusively theological a character. We want to raise up the new life within men. Now it seems to me, that in doing this we have been too long acting contrary to all natural analogies. Have we, like the unskilful workman, been utterly careless about minutæ? O when will men begin to see that religion is not a separate trade or profession, but the business of life? When will they begin to apprehend the grace of God in its manifoldness? to see that it was sent to win every affection, to brighten every smile, to shed fresh interest over every pursuit, to light up new hopes in every prospect—to embrace every variety of human temperament, assist every degree of human capacity? We never shall be good stewards, till we know and apply this truth, and carry it out in practice in our own times, and among those with whom we live. “Am I a good steward of this manifold grace?” “Am I occupying with it, that at my Master’s coming He may find it increased and fructified?” We will first speak, as the most obvious case, of the bestowal of God’s grace in the position and opportunities afforded by rank, wealth, and influence among men. It is God who putteth down one and setteth up another. The purpose for which He has ordained various ranks in human society, is that He may thereby be glorified in the Christian use of influence over others, the Christian bestowal of worldly means. Who can overestimate the value of such an one as a centre of influence for good? A blessing to his own relatives, to his dependants, among whom he is ever moving and speaking; a blessing to his equals, with whom he communes in the intercourse of social life; a blessing to general society in checking all that is evil and encouraging all that is good. And a word on mere wealth, considered as a stewardship. The question in every case for them is not an absolute, but a relative one; not “what?” but “what proportion?” As a man’s worldly means increase, so his charities ought to increase. Then there is another matter belonging to this part of our subject; the stewardship of administration of charity, or of any money laid out for the general good. The labour of love is essential not only to good stewardship, but to the Christian character itself; and every man may make—and ought to make if there be any difficulty in the way—leisure and opportunity for such labour of love. The ways and occasions for it are manifold, as the grace which will help us in it. Let me now speak of another stewardship of God’s manifold grace; that which we ordinarily know as talent; ability of various kinds, wherewith many are considerably, and some few eminently, endowed. Great numbers of ordinary men are made very much by that which they read, or that which they hear, of the sentiments of those who are abler than themselves. With what a vast responsibility does this invest those who thus stand in the first rank, and lead mankind! How great a difference, to take an example, will be made in general society in the matter of Christian belief, according as one commanding man of genius, who has power over thought and language, makes use of that power. We are all, as was said of the Spartan army of old, commanders of commanders; we all work upon those, who work in their turn upon others. And therefore our ability, be it ever so small, is our stewardship, of which God will most certainly have an account from us. But influence over others is not the only matter in which we are to be good stewards of His manifold grace. It was given us for influence over ourselves; that our whole body, soul, and spirit might be sanctified wholly—that it might fill us to our utmost capacity with the fulness of God, and render us efficient for promoting His glory. (*Dean Alford.*) *The idea and duty of human life* :—I. THE TRUE IDEA OF HUMAN LIFE. “Stewards.” We are not principals, proprietors, masters, but trustees; our gifts must not be used for ends of personal indulgence; we must please our Lord. Do we always remember this theory of life? Surely we often practically forget this, and act as if our gifts were our own, to be used simply for personal gratification and aggrandisement. A gentleman walks into his grounds on a summer morning, and delighted with certain flowers, says to his gardener, “These are very fine; send a few into the house.” The gardener distinctly declines to do anything of the sort. “I am keeping these against the Show,” is his reply, “and I cannot permit them to be cut.” By and by the gentleman orders his carriage to be sent round at a given time, when once again the coachman refuses to obey: “The roads are bad,” “It is

inconvenient," and the carriage is not forthcoming. Arrived at his counting-house, the gentleman orders his cashier to write him out a cheque for £50, but to his astonishment the clerk decisively objects to draw the cheque; he "will not allow the balance at the bank to be disturbed." How long would a master endure that kind of conduct, and consent to be shut out of the disposal and enjoyment of his own property? But we often act thus in dealing with God, using His gifts capriciously and selfishly, forgetting God's absolute authority and life's larger purpose. Whatever we have, we have received; whatever we have, we must restore. II. THE GRAND WORK OF HUMAN LIFE. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another." The individual trees of a forest do not need much from one another; they grow the better, perhaps, for growing in a brotherhood; they shelter each other, they benefit by a certain neighbourhood and reciprocity, but they are not absolutely essential to one another; if there were but one oak tree in England it would grow pretty much as it does to-day in the forests of oak. But it is far otherwise with the human species; we are essential to each other; one man in Leeds, one man in Europe, would hardly prosper; it is only in mutuality that the individual can live and come to the fulness of his glory and fruitfulness, that the race can reach its ideal life. The rich must help the poor. As long as the mountain and valley exist the inequalities of society will exist; but as in the economy of nature there is no antagonism between the height and the depth, the mountain sending its streams into the valley, and the valley sending its fertility creeping up the mountain side; so there need be no war between rich and poor, between capital and labour, because together they establish that interdependence among men which is essential to the growth and perfecting of all. The wise must help the ignorant. God has given us gifts of imagination, knowledge, expression, music, song, that we may plant intellectual flowers in waste places, and make dull, sad lives bright with thoughts of truth and hope. The strong must help the weak. "Ye that are strong must bear the infirmity of the weak." Thank God that you are the strong, and not the weak; that you are the helper, and not the helped. But there is another side to all this; the poor, the illiterate, the weak, the obscure may also truly minister in many ways to the world's enrichment and blessing. In Italy it is a delight to see the rich vines creeping from tree to tree. But when I was in that country I used to look with much interest on what is generally overlooked—the dwarfed, mutilated, hidden bits of trees, which to a large extent support the clinging vines, and hold them up into the sun. These hidden props have for the most part few leaves and less fruit, but their service and glory are that they bear up the goodly vine, with all its wealth of gold and purple; and however entirely these stumps may be forgotten in the day of vintage, they made a splendid contribution to the joy of harvest. So humble people often make great men possible, although the world knows the great men only, and forgets the lowly helper. In the biography of the Earl of Shaftesbury we have an illustration of the ministry of the obscure. "Although there was little in the home to foster, while there was much to discourage, the growth of that piety which was to characterise so signally his after-life, one source of helpful and tender influence was preserved to him. There was in the household a faithful old servant, Maria Millis, who had been maid to young Ashley's mother when she was a girl at Blenheim, and who was now retained as housekeeper. She was a simple-hearted, loving, Christian woman, faithful in her duties to her earthly master, and faithful in her higher duties to her heavenly Master. She formed a strong attachment to the gentle, serious child, and would take him on her knees and tell him Bible stories, especially the sweet story of the manger of Bethlehem and the Cross of Calvary. It was her hand that touched the chords and awakened the first music of his spiritual life." The great ameliorative movements of the world are also vastly indebted to the weak and poor. Everybody knows of Livingstone, of Bishop Hannington, of Paton, of Calvert; but the sublime enterprise conducted by these heroes would be impossible if it were not for the self-denying work of labouring men, farm-servants, domestic servants, little children who give and collect coppers through the land and through the year. Do you say, "Yes, if I were a Garibaldi, or a Victor Hugo, or a John Bright, I would rejoice to serve my generation; but my talent is small, I am only one of the million"? The lily in the field is one of a million, but it makes the summer air a little sweeter for all that; the star of the sky is one of a million, but it is not less a thing of glory for that; the dewdrop of the morning is one of a million, yet it leaves a spot of fresh beauty as it exhales into the light. The Orientals have a wise saying, "A little stone in its place weighs a hundredweight." The most inconsiderable people are

valuable in their place. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) **Let him speak as the oracles of God.**—*The preaching of the Word*:—I. PARTICULAR RULES FOR THE PREACHING OF THE WORD MAY BE MANY, but this is a most comprehensive one which the apostle gives; “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” 1. In fidelity, it is supposed that a man should have a competent insight and knowledge in the Divine oracles, that first he learn before he teach. 2. A minister must speak holily, with that high esteem and reverence of the great Majesty whose message he carries, that becomes the divinity of the message itself, those deep mysteries that no created spirits are able to fathom. 3. The Word is to be spoken wisely. By this I mean, in the way of delivering it, that it be done gravely and decently. Now you that hear should certainly agree in this too. If any hear, let him hear “as the oracles of God,” not as a well-tuned sound, to help you to sleep an hour; not as a human oration, to displease or please you for an hour; not as a school lesson, to add somewhat to your stock of knowledge, or as a feast of new notions; but hear as the oracles of God. II. THE END OF ALL THIS APPOINTMENT IS, “that in all, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ”; that in all, in all persons and all things; the word includes both, and the thing itself extends to both. All persons and all things shall pay this tribute, even they that most wickedly seek to withhold it; but this is the happiness of the saints, that they move willingly thus, are not forced or driven. “Through Jesus Christ.” The Christian in covenant with God, receives all this way and returns all this way. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *The oracles of God*:—I. THE ORACLES OF GOD ARE OF DIVINE ORIGIN AND ARE THEREFORE OF SUPREME AUTHORITY. The heathen oracles owed all their influence to the belief that prevailed that they were the answers of the god enshrined in his temple. II. THAT THESE ORACLES OF GOD ARE ACCESSIBLE TO US, AND MAY BE CONSULTED BY US, IN THE DIVERSITIES AND PERPLEXITIES OF OUR CONDITION. The heathen oracles were accessible too, but only under circumstances that forbid universal approach. III. THE ORACLES OF GOD CLEARLY ANNOUNCE THE DIVINE WILL, AND ARE THEREFORE TO BE BELIEVED AND OBEYED. The oracles of the heathen were mysterious but useless mutterings. (*W. G. Barrett.*) **That God in all things may be glorified.**—*The import and application of glorifying God through Jesus Christ*:—I. THE IMPORT. The glory of God, as alone it can be affected by His creatures, consists in the homage and service which they render Him, and in the manifestation of His glorious perfections and the accomplishment of the great ends of His moral administration—the virtue and happiness of His intelligent offspring. II. THE APPLICATION. 1. God is glorified by the diffusion of such knowledge respecting His works, as tends to give a lively conviction of His existence, and His attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness. 2. God is glorified by all that manifests His providential and moral administration respecting mankind. 3. God is glorified in an especial manner, by the effectual diffusion of the gospel, since there His perfections are most plainly illustrated, His dealings towards mankind most clearly displayed, and His requirements of homage and service most forcibly delineated and sanctioned. 4. We glorify God, whenever we act under the influence of religious principle, from a sense of Christian duty, prompted by the example and Spirit of Jesus, and guided by His commands; by a sincere regard to Him as our Maker, our Preserver, our Witness, and our Judge. (*J. R. Beard.*) *God glorified by Christ*:—Glory is the manifestation of the hidden attributes of the ever-blessed God. He dwells in light which is so transcendent in its burning purity that no mortal eye could bear the blaze which enwraps His being. But if unknown He would be for ever unappreciated and unloved. How could men or angels worship an inaccessible and unknown God? But Jesus Christ, who has dwelt for ever in the bosom of the Father, has declared Him, has brought out His attributes from their dark obscurity, and has displayed them. The prism, which shows the exquisite tints that hide in sunbeams, glorifies the sun and its Maker. The artist who reads nature's secrets, and catches bewitching smiles which are only seen by her lovers, glorifies Him who lives behind all nature. The student who shows some unsuspected beauty in our favourite author, adds to that author's glory in our esteem. So, though in an infinitely superior sense, as the Son has been the medium through which the Father has shone forth, and has attracted the admiration and homage of all intelligent creatures, we may rightly say that in Him He has been glorified. This was so in creation, when the creative qualities of the Almighty passed through the Son into efflorescent beauty. It has been so in providence, wherein the sustaining grace of God has been revealing itself through successive ages of activity. It was especially so in the life and words and death of the Redeemer. These were windows into the heart of God. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Reflected glory*:—When

the sunbeams fall upon a mirror, it flashes in the light, just because they do not enter its cold surface. It is a mirror, because it does not drink them up, but flings them back. The contrary is the case with these mirrors of our spirits. In them the light must first sink in before it can ray out. They must first be filled with the glory, before the glory can stream forth. They are not so much like a reflecting surface as like a bar of iron, which needs to be heated down to its obstinate black core before its outer skin glows 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 hill-side, lighting up the grey stones with a passing gleam, 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. So must we have the glory sink into us before it can be reflected from us. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *How Christians may glorify God*:—A painting that is a work of art may be so inappropriately framed, and hung at such disadvantage as to light and shade, that only a master recognises its merits. Or it may be so worthily framed and so fitly placed that the skill and power of the artist's work appeal to the most casual beholder. So a Christian heart may be enshrined in such meagre and unworthy human qualities that they detract from the recognition the grace of Christ ought to receive, the impression it should make. Where religion is in disrepute, it is largely because of its association with unworthy human qualities, and its consequent identification in the minds of many with them. It is unfortunate when a Christian man is not also a man among men, able to hold his own place, and make for himself a higher. The youth who is first at the bat or the oar; the student who leads his college class; the man who has made a reputation or a fortune in his profession or business; the woman whose grace and accomplishments are the delight of her friends; these, having the grace of Christ in their hearts, are not by these attainments detracting from its power, they are enshrining that grace more worthily; even as a diamond is more fittingly set in a ring of gold than in one of pinchbeck.

Vers. 12-16. **Think it not strange.**—*Not so strange*:—"Think it not strange!" But it does seem strange that the waters of a full cup should be wrung out to the saints, whilst sinners walk on the sunny side of the hedge! Strange to find some of the sweetest and noblest of God's children racked with agony, dying of cancer, beset with poverty, misunderstanding, and hatred. And yet it would be stranger still if it were not so. Let us look into the considerations which rob suffering of its strangeness. I. **THIS WORLD IS IN REVOLT.** Is it to be wondered at that the servants of the Divinely designated Prince should experience rough treatment at the hands of the rebel forces? It could not be otherwise. II. **ALONG THIS WAY THE MASTER WENT.** III. **THIS IS THE WAY HOME.** If we were universally beloved, and no voice were ever raised in hatred or calumny, we might truly question whether we were at all on the heavenward track. As mountain-climbers after a snowstorm can tell the path by the line of posts placed at intervals along the mountain side, so may Christians tell that they are on the track of the Church by the antagonism manifested against their religion in Jesus Christ. IV. **THERE IS AN OBJECT IN SUCH SUFFERING.** It is carefully designed by the skill of the great Artificer. There may have been many a previous secret prayer for growth in grace and usefulness, and the answer has come in the use of fire, file, and hammer, wielded by God, though furnished by the hatred of the sons of men. There is no other way of eliminating much of the selfish dross of our natures. V. **HEREIN WE PARTAKE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.** His life in us meets the same treatment as it did in Him. Ah, it is good to share anything with Him. Sweet things are bitter when He is absent, and bitter things sweet if He is near. VI. **LOOK ON TO THE END.** His glory shall be revealed! His sufferings quicken our anticipations of that blessed day. Too much comfort might make us think ourselves at home, so that we might not so ardently reach out our hands towards our coming glories. VII. **WE ARE COMPENSATED FOR SUCH SUFFERING BY THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF GLORY.** When such suffering lies heavily on the soul, God sees to it that it is no loser. What is lost from without is replenished from within. As water is thrown on the fire from the one side of the wall, a bright angel on the other pours in oil through a tiny aperture, till the flame breaks out as coals of juniper. Ah, what compensations are ours! The Jews who walk the streets of Tangier and other Moorish towns, the hatred of all the people, are said to have exquisitely furnished rooms within their ordinary-looking dwellings, where they surround themselves with every luxury. So, as the spiritual man turns from the

hatred of man to the special bestowments of God, he is compensated a hundred-fold. When we have least human love, we have most of God's. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

The proper temper of Christians in affliction.—I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRISTIANS ARE NEITHER "STRANGE," IN THEMSELVES, NOR SO TO BE RECKONED BY THEM. 1. The nature of their principles accounts for opposition from men of the world. These are principles of holiness. They condemn, by contrast, the men of the world. Christians must cease to be what they are, or the world cease to be what it is, for them to escape persecution. 2. The genius of their dispensation renders probable a greater share of outward ills to them than to the saints of the Old Testament. They have a fuller revelation of the mind of God, and are put more upon future hopes, and less upon present things. "Prosperity was the promise of the Old Testament; adversity of the New" (Mark x. 30). 3. The partial renewal of their character calls for a corrective discipline. The buddings of evil dispositions require nipping frosts to check their growth.

II. ALL THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRISTIANS ARE INTENDED FOR TRIALS TO "TRY" THEM. 1. They detect the presence of sin, as fire brings out the latent dross in metals. 2. They make manifest the sincerity of our profession. Persecutions and afflictions keep the church from being overrun with hypocrites. 3. They purify and improve our Christian virtues. III. CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO "REJOICE," NOTWITHSTANDING ALL THEIR SUFFERINGS, AND EVEN BECAUSE OF THEM. "Think it not strange, but rejoice," &c. 1. They increase our spirituality. The overflowing of the Nile distressed Egypt for a time, but when it retired, left behind it fertility and abundance. 2. They furnish ground for the comfortable assurance of a gracious state. If the storm that uproots others leaves us standing, it gives evidence of being well-grounded in faith. 3. They enhance our future glory. Application: 1. Let this check the over anxiety of some Christians to avoid affliction, or to prevent themselves, if possible, from feeling it. 2. Let the subject correct our judgment respecting affliction. 3. Be brought by affliction to enter more deeply into the sufferings of Christ. 4. Let sympathy with others in their sufferings be promoted by our own. (*The Evangelist.*)

Trials no strange thing.—Men are apt to fancy, in their misfortune, that it exceeds the usual measure, or comes in an extraordinary shape. They aggravate their suffering by surprise and disappointment. They make exaggerated estimates of it by self-tormenting reflections. It is too heavy to bear. We could submit to anything better than this. It is "strange" that the "fiery trial" should scorch just in this or that place, or should consume what they were specially anxious to preserve. It is "strange" that I should be prevented, deprived, disabled. "Strange" you call it. 1. And this word of yours implies, in the first place, that you are on the whole graciously dealt with; that the order of things which encircles you, and carries you forward, is on the whole merciful. For why else should you find fault with what afflicts you, as if it were a departure from that order? The hand of Providence—how much oftener it is open to give, than clenched to strike! Do you not prove yourselves unreasonable, therefore, if you chide with it, when it withholds your desire or admonishes you with its unwelcome dispensations? And this is one side of our subject that is worthy of attention. But there is another. It is, that the afflictions of life, though few when set by the side of the innumerable kindnesses that are so continuous as to be unregarded, are yet neither uncommon nor light. They form a regular part of the great system of heavenly appointments, in which we, with our changing circumstances and vanishing life, are included. They are more impartial than they are supposed to be. They spare none. They are not to be bought off by the opulent, nor fought off by the strong. "Think it not strange," so run the words of the apostle, "concerning the fiery trial that is to try you." 2. You there read what is the design in view. It is to prove and not to destroy you. You are tempted by pleasures and prosperity to see if you are weak enough to be seduced. You are searched by hurts and deprivations to see if you are strong enough to endure. If you are sick, secure the inward health that knows neither the fever of passion nor the consumption of care. If you are poor, learn to feel that everything else is destitution, if compared for a moment with the incorruptible wealth of conscious integrity, and the thoughts that turn confidently towards God, and the substance that no reverses can make less. (*N. L. Frothingham.*)

Trial no strange thing to the Christian.—It is said by the wise man in the book of Ecclesiastes—"That which hath been, is now; and that which is to be, hath already been; and God requireth that which is past." The assertion here is, that of there being great uniformity in the dealings of God; so that the history of any one generation is little more than the repetition of that of any other. From such a description of the dealings of God, it would follow that there

cannot be anything "strange," at least not to those who live in a remote age of the world; for nothing can happen to them, which has not often happened before, and for which therefore they might not have been prepared by due attention to the experience of others. The case is evidently very different with ourselves and the earlier converts to Christianity, the difference being much the same as between the later and the earlier inhabitants of the world. We can appeal to the history of many ages for the workings of Christianity; we can show its predictions fulfilled, and its promises verified, in the progress of events and the experience of the Church. But the first converts were obliged, in a great degree, to take all upon trust. With them the whole was matter of experiment. There was therefore great room, as it would seem, for what was "strange" in their case, though not in our own. With us, the experience of a Christian may be mapped out beforehand. His own experience may not be an exact copy of that of any one of his predecessors in the faith; but there shall be nothing in it which has not been experienced before, the parallel to which may not be found in the history of any other believer, and therefore nothing which ought to come upon him unexpectedly, or to take him as it were by surprise. But it was not thus with the earlier Christians. They were themselves to furnish experience for those who came after; but had scarcely any power of appealing to the experience of those who went before. And yet in one great particular, it appears from our text that there is no difference betwixt the earliest and the latest converts, so far as the foreknowledge of God's dealings is concerned. With ourselves it amounts almost to a truism, that "they who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," and that "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven." It were expecting God to change the established course of His dealings, to expect Him not to chasten where He loves, and therefore to "think it strange concerning the trials which are to try us." But can the same be said of the earliest Christians? Had they not embraced the religion of One, who was promised by the auspicious title of "Prince of peace"; whom seers of old had beheld in visions, glowing and tranquil and beautiful? And might they not therefore have justly expected that their lot would be one of freedom from trouble? No, saith the apostle; a "fiery trial" can be no unlooked-for thing. I. Now the first thing which I would argue from this alleged absence of "strangeness" from the dealings of God, is that there were more points of correspondence than of difference between the Christian and the Jewish dispensations. It is true that they could not co-exist, but not because they were in any measure opposed the one to the other. The dawn and the noon-tide cannot co-exist; yet the one does not so much displace the other, as it is that other in a more advanced stage. The Mosaic economy was the Christian in its dawn, or in its bud, presenting the same truths, though in a more shadowy form, and proposing the same way of salvation, though with less clearness and precision. The Christian dispensation superseded the Jewish, but only in the manner in which history supersedes prophecy. And this must necessarily have been the case, if you only consider how God had from the first determined the plan of our redemption, and virtually announced it ere Adam was driven from Paradise. There was not one method of being saved in one age, and another in another, so far as the method of reconciliation is concerned; neither can there be thought to have been any such variation, so far as the method of application is concerned. In all ages there has been the same necessity for a renewal of nature in order to a meetness for the kingdom; and therefore must it be supposed that in all ages the dealings of God with a view to these ends have borne in the main the same features. But undoubtedly God had from the first made sorrow one of His chief engines in weakening attachment to the things of time and sense, and directing the affections towards heaven. Was it therefore for a moment to be expected, that because there came a dispensation of greater light, a dispensation of substance in place of shadow, sorrow was to depart and no longer to be used in preparing men for heaven? And, indeed, without tracing accurately a sameness in the dealings of God, we might venture to say that the discipline of affliction is indispensable in the case of depraved creatures like ourselves. It is not that under this economy, but not under that, sorrow is a wholesome thing for those whose nature is corrupt; it is rather that in every condition and estate, man cannot do without affliction, if he is to be kept up to the task of preferring the future to the present. Hard it may be, bitter it may be, but "strange" it can never be, that whilst "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," God should constantly verify the saying, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." "Are ye not men?" might be the address of the messenger of God: "are ye not sinners? and is it not your sanctification which

is proposed? Oh! then, 'beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.'" II. But possibly these remarks on what we may call the necessity for affliction, and therefore on the truth that it ought never to seem "strange," hardly clear up the point which is presented by our text. The case of those addressed by St. Peter is not that of men exposed to trouble in its ordinary sense, but of those on whom was coming a great onset of persecution. The "fiery trial which was to try them," was to result from the efforts of the enemies of Christianity to destroy by violence what they could not disprove by argument. What is strange, if it be not strange that heaven's best gift should be received with loathing; that the very remedy, which at an immeasurable cost God prepared for the evils which have pressed on this creation, should meet not only with scorn, but hatred; that they whom it is designed to benefit, should agree with themselves to cast it out from the earth? Yet the apostle does not hesitate to tell them in our text, that nothing "strange" had happened to them, when a "fiery trial" arose and they had to maintain their profession in the face of persecution and death. We close with this statement of St. Peter, and we wish you to see whether it may not be vindicated by almost self-evident reasons. The results which Christianity proposes, and which beyond all question it is calculated to effect, are those of a wide-spread peace and a dominant happiness: but the processes, through which it would work out these results, are those of self-denial and restraint, of mortified passions and curbed affections; and they who would be quite in love with the results, may be quite at war with the processes. There is not after all, anything surprising in persecution, whether in the bold shape it assumed in early days, or the more modified which it exhibits in later; it is, we might almost say, but a natural result of the rejection of Christianity—whether of the open rejection of the sceptical, or of the more covert of the indifferent. Doctrines which are not embraced must be disliked, when they are doctrines which would bind us to practices, which conscience secretly pronounces to be right, but which inclination vehemently opposes; and disliking the doctrines, men must also dislike those who hold them, for every believer is a reproach to the unbeliever, condemning by his example those whom it does not excite to imitation; and there is only a step from dislike to persecution. Persecution is but dislike in action—the effort to remove what annoys by reproving. Then till Christianity be universal, persecution, in some form or other, is unavoidable. It is not the product of a dark age, rather than of a light; it is the product of human nature—the same in its corruption, acted upon by a system the same in its holiness. III. But we cannot suppose that St. Peter used these remarkable words, in order merely to correct an erroneous impression which had been made on the minds of the first Christians—an impression as to the likelihood that Christianity would disarm rather than provoke opposition: we may further believe that he designed to offer a topic of consolation and support—to suggest what ought to reconcile the suffering to their lot. "You ought not," St. Peter seems to say, "to be amazed or confounded; you are called to no affliction which others have not sustained; and where there is nothing but what has been experienced, why should there be surprise, as though it were unexpected?" And truly the distressing thing to a believer would be, if he were able to show that God's dealings with himself were quite different from what God's dealings with His people had ordinarily been. Suppose the registered course of God's proceedings had been, that where there was belief in His Word there was comparative freedom from trouble, so that religion and temporal happiness went hand in hand: what a fearful thing would it then be, for a Christian to find himself in trouble! It would not be the amount of the trouble, so much as its strangeness, that would overwhelm him. His inference would be—"Surely I am not one of the people of God: if I were, He would not deal with me in so unusual a manner." Or, to take what might be thought a more supposable case: let righteousness and peace of mind be almost invariably found together, so that a righteous individual is seldom, if ever, disquieted with doubts and apprehensions: if, then, a Christian feels himself depressed and cast down, his hopes darkened through the suggestions of his great adversary the devil, do you not see that the bitterest thing in his portion would be, not the depression, but the consciousness of this depression being a "strange thing" in a believer, and therefore almost an evidence of his not being a believer at all? But now take the opposite, which is the actual case, namely, that the Christian has nothing strange to undergo, nothing befalling him but what is common to believers; and do you not perceive that this very circumstance is full of consolation, and ought to do much towards producing in him patience and resignation? The tempest may

rage, the sword may glitter, the destroyer may ravage; but he is calm, he is confident, because he can never "think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try him, as though some strange thing had happened unto him." IV. And now, lastly, there is yet another remark which, in a practical point of view, is perhaps of greater importance than the foregoing. It may be questioned whether our translators have given the exact meaning of the original, in saying, "Think it not strange." The more literal meaning is, "Be not strange in fiery trial." It is not so much an opinion, as a deportment, to which the apostle has respect. What he enjoins on Christians is, that when the fiery trial came, they were not to receive it as an unexpected thing; they were not to be like strangers, but rather to show that they had been waiting the onset, and had prepared themselves to meet it. An old writer justly says, "Things certainly fall the lighter upon us when they first fall upon our thoughts." Arm yourselves therefore beforehand; it is hard to have your weapons to seek, when the foe is upon you. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The Christian's persecutions*:—I. THE CONNECTION OF RELIGION WITH TRIAL—"Do not wonder at the burning which is to try you." It is no wonder; it is a natural consequence. 1. Is it likely God would commit the keeping of His honour and glory into the hands of untested witnesses? 2. Is it likely that God would give the work of saving souls to untried emissaries? 3. Is it likely God would admit to His eternal kingdom unproved citizens? By no means. II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TRIAL AND SUFFERING—"The burning." What more potent picture of suffering than that which is expressed by this terrible word? III. THE CONNECTION OF SUFFERING WITH JOY. Strange apparent inconsistency!—"Think it not strange, but rejoice." We may gather—1. That anything which brings us into harmony with Christ is to be desired. Suffering brings us into sympathy with Him. We appreciate the sacrifice which His atonement entailed when we feel something of its consequences. 2. That the only true way to triumph is through the vale of tears. Christ became Conqueror through submitting. IV. THE CONNECTION OF JOY WITH GLORY—"For the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." (*J. J. S. Bird, B.A.*) **The fiery trial which is to try you.**—*Afflictions are trials*:—1. To try whether we have any truth of grace in us, whether we be sound or hollow. 2. To try what measure of grace we have, whether as much or more or less than we thought. 3. To purify and refine that measure of true grace that is in us. In the days of peace and prosperity, the best men are subject to gather soil, as standing waters putrefy, bodies without exercise prove full of gross humours. (*John Rogers.*) **But rejoice.**—*A rejoicing heart*:—A heart rejoicing in God delights in all His will, and is most surely provided to the most firm joy in all estates; for, if nothing can come to pass beside or against His will, then cannot that soul be vexed that delights in Him, and hath no will but His, but follows Him in all times and in all estates—not only when He shines bright on them, but when they are clouded. That flower that follows the sun, doth so even in cloudy days—when it doth not shine forth, yet it follows the hidden course and motion of it: so the soul, that moves after God, keeps that course when He hides His face; is content, yea, is glad at His will, in all estates, conditions, or events. (*Abp. Leighton.*) **Partakers of the sufferings of Christ.**—*Participation in the sufferings of Christ*:—It is strange what a power there is in suffering to unite in deepest intimacy those who have nobly borne it together. It would seem as if the affections could never be welded so firmly as when they have been exposed to the fiery solvent of adversity. Perhaps it is that we never so truly understand each other as when great and common trials sound the depths of our nature, and show to each what is in a brother's heart. Or it may be that love is strengthened most of all by the trials and hardships endured for the sake of its object. The survivors of the wreck who can recall the days and hours of danger and exposure, of alternating hope and despair, which they bore together; the remnant of the forlorn hope, who have stood side by side while shot and shell were raining death around them; or the few brave and true hearts who together have struggled through the protracted and terrible siege, and whose friendship is cemented by a thousand associations of sympathy and endurance, cannot choose but feel in each other a deeper than common interest. Now, some such thought as this may have been present to the apostle's mind when he congratulated his suffering fellow-Christians on the fact that they were partakers of the sufferings of Christ. The secret depths of that sorrowing heart they could better understand in virtue of the approximation to His grief which their own hearts had felt, and a fuller appreciation of His ineffable love could be theirs, when by experience they had learnt something of that penalty of suffering and

sacrifice which for them He so willingly had paid. Instead, therefore, of regarding it as a "strange thing" that theirs should be a lot of suffering and trial, it would rather have seemed unnatural had it been otherwise. But it is not all kinds of suffering in which we have community with Jesus. There are sorrows, obviously, of which the infinitely pure and holy Saviour could have no experience, and in the endurance of which no man can appropriate the consolation of fellowship with Christ. Let us endeavour, therefore, to find out what sort of suffering for sin is possible to a pure and holy nature. How far may suffering for sin be really noble and worthy? What elements must we eliminate from suffering caused by sin in forming our ideal of suffering purity? 1. One element of suffering for sin, and that a most bitter one, of which Christ could have no direct experience, is conscious guilt. With all godly sorrow Jesus sympathises, but He knows nothing, and never can, "of the sorrow of the world that worketh death." 2. Another element in suffering for sin, of which a perfectly holy nature could have no experience, is a personal sense of Divine wrath. Betwixt the experience of a guilty soul writhing under the frown of God, and His, even in His darkest hour of sorrow, there is an impassable gulf. 3. Nor, finally, though Christ "tasted of death for every man," could He ever experience personally that which constitutes to the sinner the very bitterness of death—the fear of what comes after death. On the contrary, death to Jesus was an escape from protracted banishment to endless and unutterable union with His Father. It was the passing from a world in which all had been to Him toil and weariness and woe, to one on which the sweet memories of an eternity of joy were resting. Death to Jesus, in one word, was but a going home.

1. I now go on to inquire what kind of suffering for sin may be conceived of as noble and worthy, and so not impossible to a pure and holy nature. (1) Amongst these kinds of suffering I notice, first, that which a pure and holy nature must feel from the mere contiguity of evil. The mere spectacle of sin, the life-long contact of the sinless with the vile—implied on His part bitter suffering. To man or woman of pure mind and tender conscience it would be intolerable to be forced to read through an obscene book; what agony of mind then—what pain and distress of spirit more unendurable than sharpest bodily tortures—would be involved in a similar lifelong contact with sin, not recorded merely, but hideously displayed in act! (2) Another element of Christ's suffering for sin, in which, as we grow in kindred purity of nature, we shall learn to participate, is the reflected or borrowed shame and pain which noble natures feel for the sins of those with whom they are closely connected. Christ was not a mere spectator of the world's sin, He was deeply implicated in the fortunes of the guilty, related to them by the closest ties of kindred and affection. There is a borrowed humiliation which we feel from the sins of those who are dear to us; there is a keen and cruel pain which pierces a good and generous heart in the contemplation of a brother's wickedness, and which is second only, and in some respects not second, to the agony of personal guilt. (3) Once more, Christ suffered for sin, not only as bearing relatively its guilt, but also as its victim. In the persons of those He loved, sin transmitted to Him a borrowed humiliation; but it hurt Him more deeply than thus, for it rose up against Him, to hate and assail and destroy Him. And this to such a nature as His was the saddest thing of all. (*J. Caird, D.D.*)

Participation in Christ's sufferings:—It has often been said that the Christian faith gives dignity to every kind of suffering. If we may so speak, the light shines from Christ's Cross as a fringe of glory upon every cloud which environs human life. You have given up that false notion which belonged rather to the heathen age, that the gods would not visit in pain or suffering those who were their special favourites. It is the other way in Christian conception. According to the Christian, those whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. "Think it not strange the fiery trial which is to try you"—that is coming for this purpose to put your life to the test, but see how far your faith needs consolidating, how far your love needs being drawn forth as often love only can be in the hours of sorrow. But he rises higher than this. He seems to say: "Do not merely look upon suffering as a certain ministry for good, but that he that suffers may be brought into the charmed circle of fellowship with Christ." But we are met at once by the thought: Are not the sufferings of Christ wholly unique in character? Are they not such that none may share them? I. IN WHAT SENSE IS IT TRUE THAT THE CHRISTIAN CAN HAVE A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST? In the first place it is not of the ordinary sorrows of life that the apostle is speaking; because he does not speak respecting the sufferings which Christ shares with us, but rather of certain sufferings which we share with Christ. There is

all the difference in the world between those sorrows which are rather the sorrows of humanity, and which Christ, in becoming man, of necessity became a participator in, and those sufferings which belong to the Christian life, and which only Christian lives can share with Christ. And I think that just as those sorrows cannot be in any fair sense called the sufferings peculiarly of Christ, so the whole analogy of similar passages in the New Testament shows us that the apostle is speaking of the sufferings which we suffer as Christians. What, then, does he mean? If we exclude the sorrows of life which are common to all mankind, if we exclude the special sufferings of Christ on the Cross as our Redeemer, what are the sufferings which we are privileged to share with Christ? In one sense the work of Christ was complete; He wrought a perfect and complete work upon the Cross. But, on the other hand, there is a real sense in which the work of Christ is not complete. Christ may, if I may use the figure, be supposed to have formed a great steel plate, on which every line and letter is engraved, but still the work of striking off the impressions is left for the Church of Christ to do. He formed every feature of the Christian character which was to be stamped upon mankind; He wrought all that great and glorious work which was the great picturing of Divine love in the eyesight of man; but having wrought that, He left it to His disciples to carry forth that image to the world, and they were to impress it upon the characters of men; they were, in fact, to work out that which Christ had left them to work. He had given them the rule, they were to work out the examples; He had given them the great completed seed, they were to sow it into the hearts of men. Christ's Church is built up in suffering. There is not a truth which is incorporated in our creeds, there is not a single aphorism of Christianity which is dear to your hearts that has not been consolidated by the blood of suffering men and women. But there is another sense in which we may also share the sufferings of Christ. All Christian life is progressive. Against all the knots, and against all the awkward angles of character, the grace of God has to contend, and in contending with these it is purging out the evil and implanting the good. And as Christian life is thus progressive, so the capacity of sharing a certain order of Christ's sufferings is growing within us. If a pure-minded person were made by necessity to go through the obscene details of the police records, even physical agony would be preferred to that. And just so he who feels that his spiritual life is growing, that the sanctifying influences of the Spirit make him more enamoured of purity and more hostile to evil, begins to understand what intense pain Christ must have endured in daily contact with sin; and so he becomes a partaker in that degree of the sufferings of Christ. The judiciousness of the apostle's language is to be seen in this: he says, "Rejoice, in so far as" (and no further) "you are partakers of the sufferings of Christ." That is to say, he shows to them that their cause of rejoicing can only lie in this—their consciousness that they are suffering with Christ. He who feels that the spiritual life within him is growing may know that in proportion as he is conscious of that pain which sin must bring to the pure in heart he is able to share somewhat in the sufferings of Christ. II. WHAT, THEN, ARE THE SOURCES OF THE JOY? These we have partly anticipated. The joy, and that which the apostle wishes the Christian to rejoice in, is precisely the thought that he is suffering with Christ. The faithful servant will feel that the hours are not merely wasted, but are positively dishonestly employed that are not being used in his master's service; and thus the Christian feels that his hours are not, indeed, his own, but belong to his Master; and even if those hours must be employed in pain, if constant conflict against the powers of evil be that which he is called upon to endure, he can rejoice, for it is for his Master. Not that he is indifferent to sorrow, but that he feels the sorrow is glorified by the fact that it is for Christ. And just as thus it is a joy to him to rejoice in suffering for Christ, so also is it so because he sees in it a witness of his own progress. Do I find sin a greater pain, do I find that the presence of it causes more agony than before? Then I am glad, for at least I can so far feel that I am growing in the image of Christ; I would rather feel sin to be ten thousand-fold the agony it was before than that I should live a life which is utterly indifferent to Christian progress. And there is yet another reason of joy. The love which the Christian has is that which the apostle assumes. But what is one of the first features of love? Is it not to be linked with the object it loves? We always long to appropriate that which we love, because there is the straining desire of the soul to be drawn nearer to the object of its love. And so the Christian feels that the desire of his love is to be linked with Christ. And where is the link? Look round the world and answer, where can the link with Christ be? Is it in joy? I know

no joy as long as sin reigns in the world. Is it to be found in the mere amusements of life? These are impossible. The only law by which the soul of man can be linked with Christ is the law of suffering; it is the very law of our physical being, it is the very law of society, it is the very law of God's universe, because of the strange distortions which sin has introduced, that all love is a bond in suffering. Not one has suffered; not one has loved without feeling that love and suffering are always co-relatives in life. It was not because your life was easy and smooth together that you loved one another so intensely; it is because you have fought together, because you have struggled together, because you were partners in the same sorrow and in the same care. And not merely thus; those who have suffered the same loss, for example—see what a freemasonry of love that establishes! But it is not merely this; it is more. It is not merely the same loss you are suffering. "For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me"; but the sorrow which men endure together in establishing the same cause, is not that a link which binds them fast? None have suffered for Christ without loving Christ the more, and none have loved Christ the more without feeling Christ's love the more, and none have felt Christ's love the more without feeling that He has stooped down to their very side to be near them. (*Ep. Boyd Carpenter.*) **Let none of you suffer as a murderer.—Righteous and evil suffering:—**I. THE APOSTLE DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN DESERVED AND UNDESERVED SUFFERING. Many of the early martyrs brought on their own deaths through incautious and foolish utterances, or want of that meekness which ought to characterise a professor of the gospel. II. THE APOSTLE URGES THE HIGHER RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROFESSORS OF THE GOSPEL. They possess a higher standard of moral conduct than the worldling. III. THE APOSTLE REMINDS US OF THE TERRIBLE END OF THE FINALLY IMPENITENT. The shipwrecked mariner who has lashed himself to a spar, and is striving frantically to reach the shore, is far more likely to be saved than the sailor who stays on the burning vessel. (*J. J. S. Bird, B.A.*) **A busybody in other men's business.—***The busybody:—*It is very common to compare ourselves with other men, and to draw flattering conclusions from the fact of their conduct being marked by more of open flagitiousness than our own. Yet it may be the very grossest of self-deceptions. The degree of criminality must evidently depend, not only on the sin committed, but on the amount of temptation and the measure of resistance. I am not necessarily better than another, unless better under precisely the same circumstances; and it is impossible for me to know and to judge what all those circumstances are. It is not necessary that we suppose the busybody to be equally criminal with the murderer and the thief, but at all events there must be much greater criminality in the busybody than we are accustomed to suppose; otherwise an apostle would hardly have so combined offenders as they are combined in our text. 1. Now it is certainly far from the design of the Christian religion to separate us one from another, to shut us up in our individual capacities, and confine our attention to our individual interests. Christianity, on the contrary, enjoins universal brotherhood and love; brotherhood and love, which are entirely at variance with the supposition that we take no concern in the affairs of our neighbour. The great general rule, in this as in every case of Christian casuistry, must evidently be fetched from the motive by which we are actuated. If it be honestly our aim to promote the Divine glory by promoting the good of our fellow-men, we can scarcely go wrong, whether in the measure or the manner in which we concern ourselves in the affairs of other men. Whosoever there is opportunity of doing good to another, whensoever, more especially, his soul may be benefited through our instrumentality, then and there indeed it were worse than absurd to suppose it playing the busybody's part to concern ourselves in his affairs. Let no one, therefore, think to shelter himself under the plea that non-interference is a duty, and thus excuse himself from all public endeavour at discountenancing vice, defending truth, relieving misery, or propagating Christianity. It is at a far remoter point that interference becomes sinful. And we may begin our investigation by stating that probably St. Peter had respect to a species of meddling, which is sufficiently common, though hardly thought criminal. The one compound word in the Greek (for there is but one), which is rendered by us "a busybody in other men's matters," might be more literally rendered—a bishop in another man's diocese; as though what the apostle specially wished to denounce were that interference with constituted authorities, whether civil or ecclesiastical, which in those days and countries exposed men to punishment. Just because those in power bring not forward the precise measures which these men think the best,

they will break at once into injurious expressions; as though they must be better judges of what is good for an empire, who have no means of looking into all the intricacies of the machine, than others who are placed at the wheel, and have the power of observing the most secret springs. But it is a more private sort of meddling with which the busybody is generally occupied; he, or she, is prying into family secrets, as well as into state, and presuming to adjust the affairs of neighbours as well as the intricacies of government. The man who, unasked, obtrudes his opinions on others in matters in which they alone have any concern, who infringes the liberty of others where they have undoubted right to follow their own inclination, who sets up on every occasion for a teacher of others, as though he must be wiser and better informed, who is always for adjusting his neighbour's business, and is so disinterested that he will do it at the neglect of his own: such an one—one who is guilty whether in any or in all of these particulars—is emphatically a “busybody in other men's matters.” The woman who plays the spy upon her neighbours, as though she were the constituted inspector of themselves and their households, who is not easy except she knows every particular of their domestic arrangements, who, if she have a visit to pay, is sure to talk over the affairs of the family she last left, only leaving herself time to find out something to tell at the house to which she goes next, who is critical alike upon character and upon dress, so that she will pronounce with equal fluency what people ought to do and what they ought to wear: such a woman is undeniably a “busybody in other men's matters.” 2. But now you will inquire what great criminality, after all, attaches to the busybody, or with what show of justice he can be associated with those whom even human laws sternly reprobate and punish. (1) The busybody violates justice; because, by meddling with other men's affairs, he does his best to deprive them of their office, which is certainly to manage their own business. (2) The busybody, again, is conspicuous in arrogance; for he who is always obtruding his advice is always proclaiming himself wiser than others. (3) The busybody neglects himself, and those affairs which are specially his own. (4) And who does more harm than the busybody? Half the dissensions in a neighbourhood are his or her work. The parties into whose affairs the busybody pries are naturally incensed or irritated by the interference; and in this feeling is evidently laid the foundation of enmity. Besides, what is found out by the inquisitiveness of the busybody is sure to be propagated by the industriousness of the tale-bearer; so that the secrets of families become public talk, and chief friends are separated by injurious reports of things which were perhaps never done, or remarks which were perhaps never made. There is another assassin besides he who kills the body—he who wounds the reputation; and who does this more than the busybody? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *A hint to meddlers*:—Some people do not understand how to co-operate for public ends without interfering with the privacy of domestic life. The seals teach a good lesson in this respect. They can work together at proper times; but they honour the sanctity of home. They live sociably, and in great numbers frequent the same localities. Although, in the sea, these animals co-operate in numerous herds, and protect and valiantly defend each other, once emerged from their favourite element they regard themselves on their peculiar rock as in a sacred domicile, where no comrade has a right to intrude upon their domestic tranquillity. If one of them approach this family centre, the chief—or, shall we say the father?—prepares to expel by force what he considers a foreign aggression; and there invariably takes place a terrible combat, which only ends in the death of the lord of the rock, or in the compulsory retreat of the indiscreet stranger. This proceeding is well worth the attention of every busybody. It is full of sense, and shows a discrimination between public co-operation for the common good, and officious interference in private life, which would do credit to even human beings. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Mind your own business*:—“Come, hurry up!” said the second-hand of a clock to the minute-hand; “you'll never get round in time if you don't. See how fast I'm going,” continued the fussy little monitor, as it fretted round on its pivot. “Come, hurry up!” said the minute to the hour-hand, utterly oblivious of being addressed by the second-hand. “If you don't be quick you'll never be in at the stroke of one.” “Well, that's just what our young friend there has been saying to you.” At this point the clock pealed forth the hour as the hour-hand continued, “You see we're all in time—not one of us behind. You take my advice: Do your own work in your own way, and leave others alone.” Moral—Mind your own business. (*Great Thoughts.*)

Vers. 16-19. **Yet if any man suffer as a Christian.**—*The twofold sorrow*:—One often hears it insinuated that a godly life is free from care and sorrow, but those persons do much harm who would cheat people into becoming religious by any such delusive hopes. All have troubles, but it makes a very great difference whether we sorrow with God or without Him. Let us now consider some of the sorrows of righteousness and compare them with the no less certain sorrows of unrighteousness. We divide the sufferings of the Christian into, first, those which spring from his struggles with outer things; secondly, those arising from his own nature—the world within. Every one knows how the first professors of Christianity had to suffer when that religion was in its infancy, and paganism or indifferentism was the creed of respectability. They were tortured, thrown to wild beasts, “butchered to make a Roman holiday.” The men of noble aims find their lot a sad and lonely one still. They are smiled at as enthusiasts, sneered at as hypocrites. And then there is the pain which is felt by every one who bravely contends against the besetting sins of his inner life. Oh, who can escape from himself—this slothful, vain, selfish, lustful, envious self? To conquer this is indeed a struggle. But do not fancy for a moment that the sorrows of unrighteousness are at all less real. Suppose a man did gain the whole world at the trifling cost (as he might think it) of his own soul, what then? We know that Alexander was troubled because he had not another world to conquer, and is there not such a thing as satiety, monotony of success, and the want of not having a want? Ruined homes and cursed lives proclaim the penalties of unrestrained passions. The sufferings in this world of the murderer, thief, evil-doer, with death for wages, are at least as great as those of the Christian to be followed by God’s gift of eternal life. Certainly it is difficult to resist our unholy natures, to tame rebellious passions; but there is one thing even more difficult, and that is to endure the misery which their unrestrained indulgence invariably brings along with it. Suffer we all must; but surely it makes a great difference whether God’s love is seen through our sorrow, or we have the additional misery of feeling that we are in rebellion against our Heavenly Father, and that, therefore, the whole constitution of the world is against us. (*E. J. Hardy, M.A.*)

The character and privileges of a Christian:—I. HIS CHARACTER. 1. A Christian is one who fully and cordially believes the testimony that is given concerning Christ. 2. A Christian is one who permanently obeys the commandments of Christ. 3. A Christian is one who receives his faith and holiness, and his desert in them, by the Spirit of Christ. II. HIS PRIVILEGES. 1. A Christian is justified from the guilt and condemnation of sin. 2. A Christian possesses friendship and constant intercourse with God. 3. A Christian possesses the certainty of victory over death. 4. A Christian has the prospect of perfect and immortal happiness and glory. (*J. Parsons.*)

The Christian described:—I. THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME (Acts xi. 26). II. THE COMMONNESS OF THE APPELLATION. 1. In one aspect this commonness is astonishing, and should be convincing. “This is the finger of God.” 2. In another view this commonness is reasonable. 3. In another view the commonness of the name is lamentable. The word Christian was once very significant and distinguishing. But, alas! in numberless instances now, it is not distinguishable at all. III. THE REAL IMPORT OF THIS TITLE. 1. A Christian is one who has a relation to Christ; not a professed, but a real relation—not a nominal, but a vital relation—yea, a very peculiar and pre-eminent relation, arising above every other you can mention; spiritual in its nature, and never ending in its duration; and deriving the possession and continuance of every enjoyment from Christ. 2. A Christian is a lover of Christ’s doctrine. 3. A Christian is a lover of Christ’s person. 4. A Christian is a copier of Christ’s example. 5. A Christian is a dependent on Christ’s mediation. 6. A Christian is expectant of Christ’s coming. (*W. Jay.*)

Glorify God on this behalf.—*The pious sufferer exhorted to glorify God*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN SUFFERING AS A CHRISTIAN. 1. To suffer in the character of a Christian. Where piety has its seat in the heart it will appear in the life, to be seen and identified by all (Matt. v. 13-16). 2. To suffer for discharging the duties of a Christian. Christianity frees its possessors from the slavery of custom; they are governed by the high principles of religion. 3. To suffer in the spirit of a Christian (Luke xxi. 19). II. WHY CHARACTERS WHO THUS SUFFER SHOULD NOT BE ASHAMED. 1. Because they suffer innocently. 2. They suffer in a good cause. 3. They suffer from the purest motive. 4. They suffer for a blessed Master. 5. They suffer in imitation of the brightest examples. III. THEIR DUTY UNDER SUFFERING CIRCUMSTANCES, viz., to “glorify God on this behalf.” 1. Devoutly acknowledging Him and His gifts (1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12 ;

confessing Him "worthy to receive honour, glory, might, and majesty" (Rev. iv. 11). The very circumstance of their suffering should prompt them to this. 2. By firmness in the day of trial. Let nothing shake their firmness (1 Cor. xv. 58); but imitate the example of the disciples, who continued with their Lord in His temptations (Luke xxii. 28, 29). 3. By a faithful and patient endurance of suffering. IV. TO THIS ACT OF GLORIFYING GOD, THEY ARE ENCOURAGED FROM—1. The declarations and promises He has made. These are many, great, and various (Isa. xli. 10, xliii. 1, 2, liv. 17; Matt. x. 32; James i. 12; Rev. ii. 10, xxii. 7). 2. The honour it will confer upon them. Improvement:—1. Let us examine our experience by this test. 2. Let us encourage ourselves in the Lord. 3. Let us pray for our persecutors. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Vers. 17–19. **Judgment must begin at the house of God.**—*The Church's visitation*:—How we may know when some judgment approacheth. God usually, before any heavy judgment, visits a people with lesser judgments. 1. "This, and this have I done," saith the Lord, "and yet ye have not returned unto Me" (Amos iv. 6, 7). There be droppings before the ruin of a house. 2. Again, usually before some great calamity, God takes away worthy men, "the councillor, and the captain, and the man of war" (Isa. iii. 2, 3). This is a fearful presage that God threateneth some destruction, for they are the pillars of the church and the strength of the world; for they keep away evil and do good by their example and by their prayers many ways. 3. God usually visits a people when some horrible crying sins reign amongst them, as—(1) Atheism. (2) Idolatry. (3) When divisions grow amongst a people. Union is a preserver. 4. Again, when sin goes with some evil circumstances and odious qualities, which aggravate the same in the sight of God, as when sin grows ripe, and abounds in a land or nation. (1) When it is impudent; when men grow bold in sin, making it their whole course and trade of life. (2) When sin grows common and spreads far. It is an ill plea to say, Others do so as well as I. Alas! the more sin the more danger. (3) When there is a security in sinning, without fear of the Almighty, as if men would dare the God of heaven to do His worst. 5. Unfruitfulness threateneth a judgment upon a people. When God, the great husbandman in His Church, sees that upon so great and continual cost bestowed upon us, we remain yet unfruitful, He will not suffer us long to cumber the ground of His Church. 6. Decay in our first love is a sign of judgment approaching. (*R. Sibbes.*) *Difficulties in the pursuit, despair in the neglect, of salvation*:—I. THAT THE CONDUCT OF GOD TO HIS CHURCH IS SUCH, THAT "JUDGMENT" MAY BE SAID TO "BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD," AND "THE RIGHTEOUS" TO BE "SCARCELY SAVED." 1. The Church is here often subject to persecution. 2. The Christian life is a painful course of exertion and warfare. 3. Many serious apprehensions and fears are felt by the people of God respecting their final salvation. 4. "The righteous is scarcely saved," as, to be saved, he must endure to the end. II. We proceed to THE SOLEMN INQUIRY, which the apostle infers from such a conduct of the Lord toward His servants; "What shall be the end of those who obey not His gospel? where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear; if judgment begin at the house of God; if the righteous be scarcely saved?" 1. Now if these require such a process of afflictive correction and purification, what shall be the doom of those who experience none; those who live without God? If His corrective dealings were so severe, what will be His severity, when justice alone, without mercy, shall preside? 2. The saints are prepared for glory by a course of privations and endurances; by learning to deny themselves: what then may be expected by those who never aimed at following the will of God as their rule? those, that live at large after the desires of the flesh and the mind. 3. If the righteous had so many fears and anxieties regarding their state; what then shall be the portion of those who had no such fears, who lived in a reckless disregard of all that is most serious? 4. The followers of Christ, in the midst of all their difficulties, endure to the end: but if thus only are they saved, what shall be the doom of those who persevered in an opposite path? acquiring only, at every step, fresh degrees of obduration, a more fixed habit of resistance to the will of God! "Where shall they appear?" (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *The Church's visitation*:—I. THE CHURCH OF GOD IS HIS OWN HOUSE. 1. God hath two houses, the heavens, which are called His house, because He manifests His glory there, and the Church here below, wherein He manifests His grace. Yea, the whole world, in a sort, is His house, because He manifests His power and wisdom in it; but heaven and His Church, in a more peculiar manner; and that in these respects—1. Because God by His grace hath residence in His

Church. (2) Because by the means of salvation—the Word and sacraments there administered—He doth feed His Church, as in a house. (3) A man rests and takes contentment in His house; so God takes His best contentment in His Church and people; they are the most beloved of all mankind. (4) As in a house we use to lay up our jewels and precious things; so God lays up in His Church whatsoever is precious—His praises, His graces, yea, whatsoever is good and of high esteem, that He bestows upon His Church and people. 2. God provides for His Church as His own house. First, a man provides for his family; so doth God provide for His Church. And as a man protects his house from all enemies, so will God protect His Church and people, and be a wall of fire, and a defence round about them. 3. The heart of true Christians is God's private closet. And as in every house or building, there are some open places, and some private closets, &c., so is it here. God hath His private chamber, and His retiring-place, which is the heart of every true Christian. II. THE HOUSE OF GOD NEEDS VISITING AND PURGING. 1. Such is the weakness of man's nature, that evil things soon discourage us; and good things, except we wrestle with our spirits, prove a snare to the best. Even the Church of God, after a long time of peace, is apt to gather corruption, as water doth by standing, and as the air itself will do if it have not the wind to purge it. 2. Most certain it is that the Church of God cannot be long without some affliction, considering that it is now in a state of pilgrimage, absent from God, in another world as it were. III. GOD WILL COME TO VISIT AND PURGE HIS HOUSE WHEN NEED IS. He afflicts His own people before others, because—1. They are of His own family, and are called by His name (Numb. vi. 27). Now the disorders of the family tend to the disgrace of the governor of it. 2. The gospel suffers much through the sins of professors. 3. The sins of the godly are more heinous than others. (1) Committed against more light. (2) More benefits and favours. (3) Sacrilege. (4) Idolatry. IV. GOD APPOINTS A PARTICULAR TIME FOR HIS VISITATION. 1. The time of visiting the Church of God is from Abel to the last man that shall be in the earth. The whole days of the Church are a time of persecution. 2. The Church is afflicted when the light of the gospel hath most clearly shined. 3. Now is the time of the Church's affliction. V. JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD. God begins with His own Church and people—1. Usually because He uses wicked men and the enemies of His Church for that base service, to correct and punish them. 2. To take away all excuse from wicked men. 3. That His children might be best at last. 4. That when He sends them good days afterwards, they might have the more taste and relish of His goodness. (*R. Sibbes.*) *Afflictions amongst the people of God:—* I. AFFLICTIONS MUST BEGIN WITH GOD'S SERVANTS. Jacob's house first, afterwards the Egyptians, felt the famine; first the Israelites were oppressed, afterwards the Egyptians; the Jews were first carried into captivity, but afterwards the Assyrians were destroyed by the Medes and Persians. 1. In respect of their sins, they are full of terror ere they can get any comfort, and when they have obtained it, it is often eclipsed, and they go mourning. 2. They are subject to many sicknesses, grievous pains, diseases, losses, crosses, disgrace, persecution at the hand of the wicked, &c. (1) To humble them for sin past. (2) To fetch them into the way from wandering, and teach them obedience. (3) To humble them. (4) To mortify their lusts, wean them from the world, and quicken them to duty. (5) Hereby also God showeth that He will not bear with sin in His dearest servants. (6) To confute the devil, and show that God's people serve Him not for wages. (7) To show them their happiness is to come, and that if God thus school His servants, that then He will deal severely with the wicked, so that this may be a looking-glass to them. II. IT IS OF NECESSITY THAT GOD'S SERVANTS MUST HERE SUFFER TROUBLES. 1. In respect of God's will. He hath appointed us thereunto. 2. In respect of our necessity. Sin is so riveted into us, and in our very nature, as it must be no easy thing to pluck it out from us. (*John Rogers.*) *God's judgment of the world:—* I. THE HUMAN WORLD MORALLY IS DIVIDED INTO TWO GRAND SECTIONS. 1. "The house of God." All good men are members of one great family, They have one Father, one Elder Brother, one spiritual life, and one common home. 2. Those who "obey not the gospel of God." II. THESE TWO SECTIONS ARE ALIKE SUBJECT TO SUFFERING. 1. The best men, in their greatest suffering, feel that their sufferings are deserved. 2. That they are disciplinary. III. THE SUFFERING OF THE ONE IS FAR MORE TERRIBLE THAN THAT OF THE OTHER. 1. The one has resignation to the Divine will; the other has not. 2. The one has peace of conscience; the other has not. 3. The one has the hope of a better life; the other has not. 4. The one has fellowship with the Father; the other has not. Learn:—1. The transcendent importance of moral

character. 2. The fallacy of judging from appearances. 3. The influence of the gospel upon man's destiny. (*Homilist.*) *Judgment beginning at the house of God*.—The stormy shower lighteth first on the high hills, and having washed them, settleth with all the filth in the valleys. (*J. Trapp.*) *Judgments of grace*.—It is necessary to distinguish the judgment of grace from the judgment of wrath, and temporal punishment from eternal. (*J. P. Lange.*) **What shall the end be of them that obey not.**—*What is the doom of those who die impenitent?*—I. NOT ANNIHILATION. 1. Future punishment of some kind seems essential to the moral government of God. 2. The fact of there being various degrees in punishment makes it impossible for that punishment to be annihilation. 3. All that is said about the sinner's doom shuts out the idea of annihilation (Luke xii. 4, 5; Matt. xiii. 41, 42; Mark ix. 43). II. NOT MERELY A TEMPORARY PUNISHMENT. The most general argument brought against eternal punishment is that it is opposed to the perfect justice of God. "The punishment," they say, "being eternal must at last exceed the sin." In order to understand aright the nature of the sin, you must bear in mind the being against whom the sin is committed. It is against Jehovah, the Infinite One, and against one to whom we are under infinite obligations. "But," say others, "God is infinitely merciful, and the very idea of eternal suffering is opposed to that attribute." It may be according to your idea of that mercy, and yet not against that mercy itself. Remember God is as just as He is merciful. That mercy can permit eternal suffering is proved by the fact that it does in the case of Satan and the rebel angels. There will be nothing in hell to refine or alter the sinner. Hell fire is no "refiner's fire," to purge the dross away. (*A. G. Brown.*) *The ultimate destiny of the wicked*.—The question concerns those who "obey not the gospel." Observe, the gospel is not to be treated as a mere subject for study; although a more noble subject comes not within the reach of man. Nor as a means of mere excitement. It is not a book for entertainment, such as a tale, a poem, a drama. The gospel is a statute, a law to be obeyed; it comes with the highest authority. Unless it is translated into our lives, and embodied in our actions, it is a curse. I. The question in the text is one that it is IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WITH CERTITUDE. No less than three theories have been propounded, in order to render an answer to this tremendous problem's utter extinction—eternal torment—ultimate restoration. II. CERTITUDE ON SUCH A SUBJECT IS OF NO VITAL IMPORTANCE. 1. Genuine religion is the one thing essential for man. 2. Genuine religion is independent of any certitude of the future. 3. Whilst genuine religion is independent of any certitude of the future, it is dependent upon the knowledge of some things, and these things are clearly revealed. (1) Our great moral obligations. (2) Our means of spiritual improvement. (*Homilist.*) *The end of the ungodly*.—This is a verse of implication. It affirms nothing, but by its own species of argument causes us to gather some very striking lessons. I. We have implied THE MEANING OF RELIGION. "Obedience." This is God's due as—1. Creator. 2. Father. 3. King. II. We have implied THE LAW ON WHICH OBEDIENCE IS TO BE FOUNDED. "The gospel of God." The gospel is the revelation of good—1. On account of its Author. 2. Purport. 3. Practical influence. III. We have implied THAT THE PUNISHMENT OF THE UNBELIEVER WILL BE SEVERE. The answer, left here as a great hiatus, is fully given in other parts of Scripture—1. In the threats which it utters. 2. In the examples it affords. 3. In the logical course of sequence. IV. We have implied a WARNING TO THE SINFUL. They stand on the brink of an awful precipice, in which at any moment they may fall. V. We have implied a CONSOLATION TO THE RIGHTEOUS. If their lot here is hard, it is nothing to that in store for the disobedient. Sin may be pleasant for a season, but it brings forth death. (*Pryce Thomas.*) *The end of the disobedient*.—I. THAT THERE IS AN END TO THE UNCONVERTED. II. THAT THIS END IS FRAUGHT WITH FEARFUL CONTINGENCIES. III. THAT THE NATURE OF THIS END DEMANDS URGENT AND CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. IV. THAT THIS END IS SHROUDED, EVEN TO THE MOST EARNEST INVESTIGATION, IN OBSCURITY. (*Homilist.*) *The sin and danger of not obeying the gospel*.—I. THE GREAT PRIVILEGE OF HAVING THE GOSPEL. 1. It is good news, the best news that ever reached our fallen world—news sent from heaven, news of a reconciliation for a fallen world. 2. Though it was intended for universal man and suited to meet all his spiritual wants, yet through the supineness of the Church its universal proclamation has been withheld, and millions of our fellow-creatures left without it. But we are blessed with it in all its purity, freeness, and fulness (Psa. xvi. 6; Heb. iv. 2). II. THE GREAT SIN OF NOT OBEYING THE GOSPEL. It is not enough to go and hear the gospel, to converse about it, to approve it, unless we

obey it (Titus ii. 11-14). III. THE AWFUL CONSEQUENCES OF NOT OBEYING THE GOSPEL. 1. It will be the end of their hope and happiness, but not of their existence. 2. It will be to die, not only under the curse of the law, but under the gospel. (*Pulpit Studies.*) *The ungodly's misery*:—I. THE SEEMING PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED SHALL HAVE AN END. See what a fearful judgment follows the wicked! That which he sins for—his honour, riches, delights—all shall vanish and come to nothing. II. THE HAPPINESS OF THE WICKED IS MOMENTARY, THEIR MISERY ENDLESS. When we are tempted to any sin or unlawful course, consider thus with ourselves: "Shall I, for a pleasure that will end, have a judgment that shall never end? For the favour of men that will fail, shall I lose the perpetual favour of God? Shall I, for a little profit, lose my soul eternally?" I beseech you therefore, whenever you are solicited to sin, for profit or pleasure, &c., set before your eyes the perishing condition of these things, and the everlastingness of that judgment which attends upon them. III. THOSE THAT OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL. 1. Sins against the gospel are sins against those attributes wherein God will glorify Himself most, as His grace, mercy, lovingkindness, &c. 2. Sins against the greatest light are most sinful. 3. Another aggravation of sins against the gospel is that they sin against the better covenant. (*R. Sibbes.*) *The criminality and the consequences of unbelief*:—I. THE CRIMINALITY OF YOUR DISOBEDIENCE. This will appear if you consider—1. The excellency and importance of that gospel which you have hitherto disbelieved. 2. The source in which your unbelief has originated. (1) Immoral conduct. (2) Inattention and inconsideration. (3) Worldly-mindedness. (4) Self-righteousness. 3. The motives and appeals which your unbelief has resisted. (1) Birth in a Christian family. (2) Afflictive dispensations. (3) Conversion of ungodly companions. (4) Impressions and convictions. 4. The injurious influence which your unbelief may have produced on the minds and destiny of others. II. THE RUINOUS CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR DISOBEDIENCE. 1. You are now in a state of condemnation. 2. You are in the greatest danger of being suffered to continue in impenitence and unbelief. What will be your condition in the next world? (*J. Alexander.*) *If the righteous scarcely be saved.*—*The righteous scarcely saved, and the misery of the wicked*:—To be saved is what the generality of persons in the world wish for. I am satisfied that the genuine sense of our text hath a particular reference to temporal salvation from calamity, for the copulative particle "and" makes a connection between it and the foregoing verses, where we have the apostle speaking unto God's people about their suffering for the cause of Christ. He tells them of judgment beginning at the house of God, by which we are to understand affliction and calamity, wherewith God exercises His people. But the text need not be particularly confined to this sense, but may hold good with respect to eternal salvation. 1. That the people of God are a righteous people. They are called so in the text, not that they are so in themselves or by nature. They are righteous in the righteousness of Christ, who is called the Lord our Righteousness (Jer. xxiii. 6; 1 Cor. i. 30). A principle of righteousness is planted in them at their conversion, from whence flows a righteousness of conversation (Luke i. 6). 2. That the people of God shall be saved. Our text plainly supposes it, though while in the world they are persecuted. Now what is it for them to be saved but to be delivered from sin and misery, and brought into the enjoyment of eternal glory by Jesus Christ. "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." (1) They shall be delivered from sin and misery. From sin, both from the guilt, filth, power, and being of it. (2) They shall be brought to the full enjoyment of eternal glory; and their bodies shall also be saved. 3. That though the righteous be saved, yet it is with abundance of difficulty. In temporal calamity the Lord may suffer things to run to the very last extremity before He appears for His people's salvation. Now their being scarcely saved is not for want of power in God, for "He is able to save to the uttermost," nor is it for want of will, for He will give grace and glory (Psa. lxxxiv. 11), nor is it for want of an appointment, for He hath not "appointed them to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 9); but the difficulty lies in the things they meet with in the way to salvation. (1) At their entrance into the way to heaven they meet with abundance of difficulty. The gate of conversion is strait, and a crowd of oppositions meet them at their entrance. Many temptations does Satan lay before young converts, and such a mighty advantage has he against them, their corruptions being strong and grace weak, that they find it a very hard thing to escape. The world also, sometimes with its charms and sometimes with its frowns, bears hard upon the poor creature, so that if he escape being entangled it is with great difficulty. (2) In their progress on the

way to heaven they meet with so many oppositions that they are but scarcely saved. The way to heaven is but a narrow way. God's people, like those in the shipwreck with Paul, escape all safe to land, yet it is with a scarcely, they get over the turbulent sea of this world. Oh, the snares that are laid for them! (3) At their exit out of the world they meet with abundance of difficulty, so that though they be saved, yet it is with a scarcely; their enemies would not suffer it if they could hinder it. When their souls are ready to take their flight into another world, then is Satan most busy to hinder their salvation. Now though it be impossible for him to hinder their salvation, yet he may so molest them as to make it difficult to obtain salvation, so that they shall find they are but scarcely saved. This further appears—(1) From the frequent apprehensions they have of their being in danger of hell and destruction. (2) This is further evident from the fears there are in the people of God about their salvation. 4. That as it is impossible for the ungodly and sinner to be saved as such, so their misery is unspeakable. Where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? (1) Negatively, I shall show where they shall not appear. Not in heaven. Not in the presence of God, for the foolish shall not stand in His sight; He hateth all the workers of iniquity. Not among the righteous. Sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous. Where, then, shall the wicked appear? (2) Positively, they shall appear in hell. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." They shall appear at the awful tribunal of God, before His judgment-seat. And are the righteous scarcely saved? Hence learn—1. That going to heaven is not so easy a thing as some imagine. It is not an empty profession of religion that will serve the turn. 2. Are the righteous scarcely saved? Hence we learn what a miserable disappointment many meet with, who, instead of getting to heaven, fall into hell. 3. If the righteous be scarcely saved, then we may from hence learn the miserable condition of the wicked in the other world, who are not saved. (1) O ye sleepy, secure sinners! where will you appear? (2) O ye drunkards! where will you appear—you that waste your time and estates, that spoil your constitution, and abuse the good creatures of God? (3) O ye fornicators and adulterers! where will you appear? (4) O ye sabbath-breakers! where will you appear? (5) O ye swearers! where will you appear? (6) O ye scoffers at religion! where will you appear? (*J. Sedgfield.*) *If so—what then?*—"Scarcely saved" points out the difficulty of salvation. It is no light thing to be saved; omnipotent grace is needed. It is no trifling thing to be lost, but it can be done by neglect. I. THE FACT. "The righteous scarcely are saved." 1. From the connection we conclude that the righteous are saved with difficulty because of the strictness of Divine rule. 2. From the experience of saints we come to the same conclusion. They find many saving acts to be hard, as, for instance—(1) To lay hold on Christ simply, and as sinners. (2) To overcome the flesh from day to day. (3) To resist the world, with its blandishments, threats, and customs. (4) To vanquish Satan and his horrible temptations. (5) To perform needful duties in a humble and holy spirit. (6) To reach to gracious attainments and to continue in them. (7) To pass the tribunal of their own awakened and purified conscience, and to receive a verdict of acquittal there. 3. From the testimony of those who are safely landed (Rev. vii. 14). II. THE INFERENCE FROM THE FACT. "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1. If even the true coin is so severely tested, what will become of the "reprobate silver"? 2. If saints scarcely reach heaven, what of the ungodly? What can they do who have no God? What can they do who have no Saviour? What can they do who are without the Spirit of God? What without prayer, the Word, the promise of God, &c.? 3. If saints are so sorely chastened, what will justice mete out to the openly defiant sinner? III. ANOTHER INFERENCE. Where will the mere professor appear? If the truly godly have a hard fight for it—1. The formalist will find ceremonies a poor solace. 2. The false professor will be ruined by his hypocrisy. 3. The presumptuous will find his daring pride a poor help. 4. He who trusted to mere orthodoxy of creed will come to a fall. 5. Height of office will do no more than increase responsibility. IV. ANOTHER INFERENCE. Then the tempted soul may be saved. It seems that even those who are truly saints are saved with difficulty; then we may be saved, though we have a hard struggle for it. V. ANOTHER INFERENCE. How sweet will heaven be! There the difficulties will be ended for ever. There the former trials will contribute to the eternal bliss. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The salvation of the righteous difficult*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS HERE SPOKEN OF. 1. The righteous. (1) None are such legally (Rom. iii. 10; Job ix. 15). (2) They are such as have believed in Christ, are pardoned and justified (Rom. iii. 25, 26). 2. The

ungodly sinner. They are such as remain in their native, unconverted state. Particularly they are such—(1) Over whom Satan exercises an uncontrolled dominion (Eph. ii. 2). (2) Alienated from the love of God (Eph. iv. 18). (3) Rebellion against God (Rom. i. 28-32). (4) Neglecting, perhaps rejecting, the only way of salvation by Jesus Christ (Heb. ii. 3; x. 28, 29). II. THE DIFFICULTY OF THE SALVATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. The text admits that the righteous shall be saved; their salvation is certain upon their being found faithful unto death. (1) The testimony of Scripture secures it (2 Tim. i. 12, iv. 17; chap. i. 3-5). (2) This is the purpose of God concerning them (2 Thess. ii. 13). (3) It was the ultimate end of Christ's sufferings (Heb. ii. 10). (4) Of His ascension into heaven (Heb. vi. 20). (5) God hath promised it (Rev. ii. 10). (6) The work of salvation in the righteous is already begun (Phil. i. 6). 2. Nevertheless, their salvation is here represented as being with difficulty obtained. (1) This difficulty is not owing to any deficiency in the love of God, which is universal (John iii. 16). (2) Nor in the death and merit of Christ, which are infinite (Heb. ii. 9; 1 John ii. 2). (3) Nor in the influence of the Spirit (John xiv. 16, 17; xvi. 7, 8). But it is owing chiefly—(4) To the difficulty of the work they have got to do (Tit. ii. 11-14). (5) The opposition they meet with from the world. (6) The influence of evil example which abounds in the world (John xv. 19). (7) The opposition they meet with from Satan (chap. v. 8). (8) The remains of corruption within. (9) The instability of some Christians (James i. 8), and the apostasy of others (1 Tim. i. 19, 20). III. THE CERTAIN AND DREADFUL MISERY THAT AWAITS THE UNGODLY SINNER. The question in the text relating to such may refer—1. To a time of popular calamity (Luke xxi. 25, 26). 2. To death (Psa. ix. 17). 3. To the day of judgment. Let the wicked tremble for the consequences of their conduct. Should they live and die such, their destruction is inevitable. (*T. Hannam.*) *The difficulty of salvation:*—Let us consider the solemn truth assumed—"If the righteous be scarcely saved." The meaning of this is that the righteous are saved with difficulty, or, as Steiger well expresses it, "it costs believers much to remain steadfast in their endurance of trials and to glorify God." The radical cause of the difficulty is with the righteous—original sin. The external causes of the difficulty are around believers—the world, which is in league with their infected nature, and offers corresponding objects to all its evil propensities. It is readily admitted that they are surrounded also with the helps of the Church. Now to notice the particular causes of such difficulty. Observe, first, that the faith of the righteous, which is always imperfect, has, like a physical power, a constant tendency to decrease in strength and firmness through its exercise being neglected. The temptations to such neglect are many and great. The righteous, for the most part, are leading a busy life. Hence they are tempted not to find time for the exercise of faith. Besides, sensible things ever surround them, try to press into their souls by every avenue of their senses, and exclusively fill their affections and engage their thoughts; hence their disinclination to exercise faith would be proportionately increased. True, if the righteous are exposed to temptation to neglect the exercise of faith, they have incentives to attend to the duty. One incentive is a sense of sin. Another incentive is special temptation, or trouble, or difficulty, which often besets them, and urges them to look to their Saviour for deliverance or support. A third incentive is the impulse of the Holy Spirit, inciting thoughts of Christ. Further, the faith of the righteous is liable to decrease in strength and stability, through their failure to properly seek its nourishment. Thus may their faith decline and waver through defect in spiritual appetite or neglect of spiritual food. And their exposedness to this may hardly be obviated by the frequent calls they may have to the healthy and invigorating exercises of devotion. Again, the faith of the righteous is liable to decrease in strength and firmness, through being exposed to attacks from the unbelief of their fallen nature, called in Scripture the evil heart of unbelief. Natural unbelief, therefore, needs to be much watched and prayed against, and an increase of faith to be much encouraged and prayed for. But further, the danger which their faith is in does not only arise from the unbelief of their fallen nature, but from the encouragement which such unbelief meets with in the world—ah! and the professing Church. For infidelity in some degree, practical or avowed, is everywhere manifest. The manner of such injury to their faith will be different at separate times. Sometimes, to notice the two extremes, when it is violently assailed by doubts within and infidel expressions and actions without, its injury will be sudden and apparent, like that of a plant which in spring is smitten with the blast of the east wind, so that one hour its roots are firm and its leaves green, the next its roots are loose, and its leaves dried

up and withered. At other times, when its exercise or its nourishment is neglected through a worldly spirit, its injury will be gradual and imperceptible, like that of a plant which, while it is left uncultivated, has a worm at its roots. The righteous are saved with difficulty, secondly, because, in consequence of the general causes mentioned, their holiness is exposed to some degree of failure. It is exposed to this through decrease of faith, like the fruit of a tree through injury of its root, and also, like faith, through its exercise and nourishment being neglected. The holiness of the righteous is exposed to failure in measure through temptations. Again, the holiness of the righteous is exposed to failure through trials. Further, the righteous are saved with difficulty, because they are exposed to failure, in measure, in holiness, through difficulty in certain parts of obedience. It is no easy matter for the righteous, depraved as they are in nature, to perform their various duties in their entirety. But even this is not all; some duties which the righteous have to perform are especially difficult, through their direct opposition to their natural tendencies. I mean such as are involved in the following sayings of the Master:—"If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. vi. 14). Now I have two inferences to draw from this solemn subject.

1. The first is, if the righteous are thus scarcely saved, must not many professors of religion be in a sad mistake?
2. The second inference is that the righteous have great cause for earnest striving that the evidences of their conversion may be clear to themselves and to others.
3. In a word, let them "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," and "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure." (C. H. Coleman.)

The salvation of the sinner impossible:—1. The faith in Christ of the righteous is maintained with difficulty. But the ungodly and sinners have no living faith in Christ at all. Thus they not only have not faith and seek not after it, but they yield themselves to be bound and fettered in infidelity. Yet without faith is it not impossible that the ungodly and sinners should be saved? 2. I observe, the holiness of the righteous is maintained with difficulty in resisting and overcoming the evil dispositions which are inherent in their fallen nature. But the ungodly and sinners are entirely destitute of holiness in principle and in practice. How, then, can the ungodly and sinners be meet for heaven? 3. The righteous often find it difficult to bear their trials with Christian consistency, being liable to impatience and irritability, through want of watchfulness in trials comparatively light and transient, and strongly urged to discontent and resistance of will, through distrust of God and failure in spiritual firmness, in trials severe and lasting. But the ungodly and sinners almost always, under any trials, allow themselves in discontent, bad temper, and resistance, whether the trials come the more evidently from God or from man. But the ungodly and sinners being thus refractory under trials, how is it possible that they can be finally saved? 4. The righteous frequently experience great difficulty in performing some of the harder duties of the Christian life. But the ungodly and sinners neglect them altogether. If they render bodily service, they render no spiritual service to God. How is it possible, then, that the ungodly and sinners can find favour before the judgment-seat? (*Ibid.*)

Salvation difficult to the Christian—impossible to the sinner:—I. WHY THE SALVATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS DIFFICULT. The difficulty in the salvation of either the righteous or the wicked turns not on any want of mercy in the heart of God. It is not because God is implacable and hard to be appeased. Again, it is not in any lack of provision in the atonement to cover all the wants of sinners. But, positively, one difficulty is found in the nature of God's government, and in the nature of free agency in this world. God has so constituted man as to limit Himself to one mode of government over him. This must be moral, and not physical. That physical omnipotence which sweeps the heavens and upholds the universe could find no difficulty in moving lumps of clay so small and insignificant as we. But mind cannot be moved as God moves the planets. Physical force can have no direct application to mind for the purpose of determining its moral action. Such being the case, the great difficulty is to persuade sinners to choose right. God is infinitely ready to forgive them if they will repent; but the great problem is to persuade them to do so. God may and does employ physical agencies to act morally, but never to act physically. There are a great many difficulties in the way of converting sinners, and saving them when once converted. One class of these difficulties is the result of an abused constitution. When Adam and Eve were created their appetites were doubtless mild and moderate. They did not live to please themselves and gratify their own appetites. Their deep and all-engrossing desire and purpose

to please God was the law of their entire activities. Sin introduced another law—the law of self-indulgence. Every one knows how terribly this law tends to perpetuate and strengthen itself. Their appetites lost their proper balance. No longer subordinate to reason and to God, they became inordinate, clamorous, despotic. Now in order to save men, they must be restored to a state in which God and reason control the free action of the mind, and appetite is held in due subjection. Here is the difficulty. Some have formed habits and have confirmed them until they have become immensely strong, and it becomes exceedingly difficult to induce them to break away. The rescue must be effected by moral, not by physical means, and the problem is to make the moral means powerful enough for the purpose. Again, we must notice, among the difficulties in question, the entanglements of a multitude of circumstances. I have often thought it well for Christians that they do not see all their difficulties at first. If they did, its discouraging effect might be disastrous. The great difficulty is living to please self rather than God. It is wonderful to see how much this difficulty is enhanced by the agency Satan and sin have had in the framework of society. It would seem that a bait is held before every man, whatever his position and circumstances may be. There is a man chained to a wife who is a constant source of temptation and trial to him. There is a wife who sees scarce a peaceful moment in all her life with her husband—all is vexation and sorrow of spirit. Many parents have children who are a constant trial to them. They are indolent, or they are reckless, or they are self-willed and obstinate. Their own tempers perhaps are chafed, and they become a sore temptation to a similar state of chafed and fretted temper in their parents. On the other hand, children may have equal trials in their parents. Who but God can save against the power of such temptations? Many children have been brought up in error. Their parents have held erroneous opinions, and they have had their moral constitution saturated with this influence from their cradle and upwards. How terrible such an influence must inevitably be! Or the business of their parents may have been such as to miseducate them. When the mind gives itself up to self-indulgence, and a host of appetites become clamorous and impetuous, what a labour it must be to bring the soul into harmony with God! How many impulses must be withstood and overcome! how great the change that must be wrought in both the physical and moral state of the man! No wonder that the devil flatters himself that he has got the race of depraved men into his snares and can lead them captive at his will. Many are not aware of the labour necessary to get rid of the influence of a bad education. Ofttimes the affections become unhappily attached, yet the attachment is exceedingly strong, and it shall seem like the sundering of the very heart-strings to break it off. Sometimes we are quite inadequate to judge of the strength of this attachment, except as we may see what strange and terrible means God is compelled to use to sever it. Oh, what a work is this which Christ undertakes that He may save His people from their sins! How strange and how complicated are the difficulties! Who could overcome them but God? Again, the darkness of nature is so great and so gross that it must be an exceedingly great work to save them from its influence and pour the true light of God through their intelligence. Indeed, Christians never know themselves except as they see themselves in God's own light. Finally, the greatness of the change requisite in passing from sin to real holiness—from Satan's kingdom into full fitness for Christ's, creates no small difficulty in the way of saving even the converted. Remarks: We see why the Scriptures are so full of exhortations to the Christians to run, run, and especially to run by rule. They must, however, give all diligence. A lazy man cannot get to heaven. To get there costs toil and labour. For his will must be sanctified. The entire voluntary department of his being must be renovated. The Christian is also commanded to watch—not to close his eyes for a little more sleep and a little more slumber. We see, also, why the Christian is to pray always. We may also see why Christians are exhorted to separate themselves from the world. Mark, also, why Christians are exhorted to spend the time of their sojourning here in fear, and to walk softly and carefully, as before God, through all the meanderings of their pilgrimage. When candid men come to consider all these things—the human constitution, the tendency to unbelief, the impulses towards self-indulgence, and the strength of temptation—they cannot but see that there is abundant occasion for all those faults in Christian character and conduct which they are wont to criticise so stringently. Yet often, perhaps commonly, wicked men make no allowance for the faults of Christians, but assume that every Christian ought to be spotless, while every sinner may make so much apology for

his sin as quite to shield his conscience from conviction of guilt. II. SHOW HOW AND WHY THE SALVATION OF THE WICKED IS IMPOSSIBLE. Vitaly important to be considered here is the fact that the governmental difficulty in the way of being saved, growing out of your having sinned, even greatly, is all removed by Christ's atonement. The difficulty in the way of saving sinners is not simply that they have sinned, but that they will not now cease from sinning and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The salvation of sinners is therefore impossible. 1. Because it is impossible for God by any means He can wisely employ to persuade them to desist from sinning. It may not be wise for God to bring all the moral power of His universe to bear upon the sinner in this world. If this were wise and practicable, it might avail—for aught we can know; but since He does not do it, we infer that He refrains from some wise reason. Certain limitations are fixed in the divine wisdom to the amount of moral influence which God shall employ in the case of a sinner. It is in view of this fact that I say God finds it impossible to gain the sinner's consent to the gospel by any means that He can wisely employ. 2. Again, the sinner cannot be saved, because salvation from sin is an indispensable condition of salvation from hell. The being saved from sin must come first in order. If salvation implies fitness for heaven, and if this implies ceasing from sin, then, of course, it is naturally and for ever impossible that any sinner can be saved without holiness. 3. The peace of heaven forbids that you should go there in your sins. What sort of happiness, congenial to his heart, could the sinner hope to find there? And now will heaven let you in? No. Nothing that worketh abomination can by any means go in there. 4. Besides, it would not be for your own comfort to be there. You were never quite comfortable in spiritual society on earth. 5. The justice of God will not allow you to participate in the joys of the saints. His sense of propriety forbids that He should give you a place among His pure and trustful children. III. If, then, the sinner cannot be saved and go to heaven, WHERE SHALL HE APPEAR? The question is a strong negation. They shall not appear among the righteous and the saved. This is a common form of speaking. Nehemiah said, "Shall such a man as I flee?" No, indeed. Where, then, shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? In no desirable place or position—certainly. Not with the righteous in the judgment, for so God's Word has often and most solemnly affirmed. It is asked, Where shall the ungodly appear? I answer, Certainly not in heaven, nor on the heavenly side. (C. G. Finney.) *Saved with difficulty* :—

I. THE PEOPLE OF GOD WILL BE SAVED WITH DIFFICULTY. 1. Owing to their strong remaining corruptions. 2. To their long and inveterate habits of sin. 3. To the strong and numerous foes that oppose his march. 4. A great amount of labour will be requisite to push him forward in his heavenly pilgrimage. 5. There will await him many other dangers, of which he can have yet no conception. II. BUT "WHERE SHALL THE UNGODLY AND SINNER APPEAR?" All the difficulties, and more yet, that obstruct the way of the Christian heavenward, are surely before the man who has not commenced his route thither. 1. The man who is not a Christian has yet to enter upon the way. 2. He may have yet more corruptions. He may have taken a more wayward course. 3. But his iniquities must all be uprooted. 4. He has more foes, in addition to those planted in the way of the Christian. 5. He must do more labour than if he had set out earlier. 6. The same, and more yet dangers await him than await the Christian. Remarks: 1. Would I have the sinner despair, lie down and die? Will not heaven be worth all the efforts he has yet to make? 2. Oh, then, how anxious should sinners be to commence the great work of their salvation! 3. How anxious, too, should the Church be that sinners might live! (D. A. Clark.) *The difficulties that are to be encountered in the way of salvation* :—That the righteous should scarcely be saved seems hardly reconcilable with the grace and design and promises of the gospel. Did not Christ come to save sinners? I. IN WHAT SENSE THE RIGHTEOUS ARE SAID TO BE SCARCELY SAVED. That may be understood two ways. (1) With respect to accidental difficulties arising from the particular circumstances of times and persons. For the difficulties of religion are not alike in all times, nor to all persons; for they are not like a geometrical measure, which is always exactly the same; but rather like a voyage at sea, which is to be managed by the same compass and to the same port; but it sometimes proves calm and pleasant, and at other times stormy and tempestuous. Which chiefly happens when a religion appears new, or goes about to reform the old; for then it is sure to meet with all the opposition which the passions and interests and prejudices of partial men can raise against it. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of

God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? *i.e.*, Christ hath foretold desolation and ruin to come upon the Jewish nation. Sincerity and constancy are the necessary conditions of salvation, which may be tried much more in some than it is in others. We must all have the same journey's end if we hope to get to heaven, but some may meet with a freer road, and a calmer season, and better company, in their journey than others. But herein mankind are apt to be deceived, as though all the difficulties lay in a suffering condition; whereas a soft and careless life is rather more dangerous to their souls, because persons are less apt to suspect their danger. The temptations of the suffering side are apt to awake the sleepy powers of the soul, whereas the gentle and easy condition of life often lays them asleep. But this is not all; for there are many things which make it more difficult to some than others, which are of another nature. Some tempers are more flexible and pliable than others; more capable of hearkening to reason, and more apt to reflect on their own actions; whereas others are naturally stiff and obstinate, who stick fast to an opinion or prejudice which they have once taken up. Some, again, are very easily convinced of a fault, but very hardly reclaimed. Again, some have had the advantage of a pious and religious education. For although the difficulties be not alike in all, yet, of one kind or other, they are such as cannot be overcome by ourselves without the power of Divine grace exciting, preventing, and assisting of us. (2) Having thus showed what difficulties there are which arise from the different circumstances of times and persons, I am now to consider those which arise from the terms of salvation, which are common to all persons and times. Here we must suppose salvation to be the thing aimed at as the chief end or happiness of such men, and here are two kinds of difficulties to be inquired into. (1) Such as are implied in the general pursuit or happiness. For happiness is not a thing of chance or necessity, but a matter of choice and design. (1) That happiness did consist in one uniform design of life, *i.e.*, that a man must choose one proper and chief end to himself, and so order his thoughts and actions that he may attain it. (2) That there must be a careful and attentive mind to pursue this design. (3) That any man who desired to be happy must, above all things, take pains about himself. (4) That those who consulted most the ease and pleasure of mankind were forced to put men upon some hard and unpleasant things to make anything like happiness to consist in pleasure. For they cast off all riot and excess, because the pain which followed exceeded the pleasure; and therefore they made temperance and chastity necessary to the true pleasure of life. So that all were agreed that it was impossible to attain to anything that looked like happiness without some real difficulty, which was necessary to be undergone, although the success were uncertain. (2) Let us now consider the difficulties relating to salvation, or that happiness which Christians expect. And here I shall show—(1) It is more reasonable to expect difficulties in the way of salvation. For the more excellent and desirable the happiness is, the more it is worth the while for us to take pains about it; especially when there is a certainty of attaining it. (2) The difficulties in our way to salvation are not such but we may reasonably hope to overcome them; *i.e.*, if we set ourselves about it; otherwise a very mean difficulty will appear too great for us. And there are two things to show that we may hope to overcome them. (1) That the most difficult duties are in themselves reasonable to be performed by us. (2) That God offers His gracious assistance for the performance of them. II. AND THIS HELPS US TO RECONCILE THE DIFFICULTY OF SALVATION WITH THE EASINESS OF THE TERMS OF THE GOSPEL. For that which is not only hard, but impossible to us, in our own strength, may, by the mighty power of Divine grace, become not only possible but easy to us. III. And from hence we see WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT THERE IS STILL FOR US TO HOPE TO BE SAVED, IF WE BE RIGHTEOUS. There is none for the ungodly and sinner. "But what is it," some may say, "to hear that the righteous are scarcely saved, when we are so conscious to ourselves of our own unrighteousness?" (*Bp. Stillingfleet.*) *The difficulties of salvation* :—This imports not any uncertainty in the thing itself as to the end, in respect of the purpose and performance of God, but only the great difficulties and hard encounters in the way, "fightings without, and fears within." All outward difficulties, however, would be as nothing, were it not for the incumbrance of lusts and corruptions within. Were a man to meet disgraces and sufferings for Christ, how easily would he go through them, yea, and rejoice in them, were he rid of the fretting impatience, the pride, and self-love, of his own carnal heart! And many times, after much wrestling, he scarcely finds that he hath gained any ground: yea, sometimes he is foiled and

cast down by them. And so in all duties the flesh is dragging downwards! When he would mount up, he finds himself as a bird with a stone tied to its foot; he hath wings that flutter to be upwards, but is pressed down with the weight fastened to him. What struggling with wanderings and deadness in hearing, and reading, and prayer! And what is most grievous, is, that, by their unwary walking and the prevailing of some corruption, believers grieve the Spirit of God, and provoke Him to hide His face and withdraw His comforts. How much pain to attain anything, any particular grace of humility, or meekness, or self-denial! And if anything be attained, how hard to keep and maintain it against the contrary party! How often are they driven back to their old point! If they do but cease from striving a little, they are carried back by the stream. And what returns of doubtings and unbelief, after they thought they were got somewhat above them, insomuch that sometimes they are at the point of giving over, and thinking it will never be for them! And yet, through all these, they are brought safely home. There is another strength than theirs, which bears them up and brings them through. But these things, and many more of this nature, argue the difficulty of their course, and that it is not so easy a thing to come to heaven as most imagine it. (*Abp. Leighton.*)

A solemn appeal:—I. Consider the appeal in ITS REFERENCE TO TEMPORAL CALAMITIES. 1. The righteous are saved, when the existence of the Church is preserved. 2. The righteous are saved personally, when their lives are preserved. 3. The righteous are saved, while the life and welfare of their souls are secured, whatever may otherwise befall them. II. Consider the appeal in ITS REFERENCE TO SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL SALVATION. 1. The righteous are scarcely saved—(1) Because their salvation could not be purchased but at the greatest conceivable expense. (2) Because the purchased redemption could not be applied but by supernatural power. (3) Because even when salvation is thus attained, it is not persevered in without the same supernatural aid, and the utmost diligence. (4) Because after death is the judgment. The righteous shall be saved, but it will be scarcely when the matter comes to a scrutiny of sterling evidence. 2. It remains now to ponder the inference which the apostle chiefly designs to impress on our minds, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" It is as if he had said, How certain their doom! (1) How certain! "Where shall they appear?" Not surely in a saved state. This is the simple answer to the question. (2) How dreadful must it be! The abrupt and pungent form of expression suggests the horrors of their doom. (3) How reasonable will be their doom! For this, too, the question strongly implies, not only as an appeal to reason, leaving themselves to decide, but as an allusion to the mode of procedure in courts among men. "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" On what ground shall they stand? What can they plead in their own behalf at the bar of the eternal Judge? Inferences: 1. What construction ought to be put on the little difference made between the righteous and the wicked in the dispensations of Providence. This has often been mistaken by the former (*Psa. lxxiii.*), and abused by the latter, as if religion were of no value. A real distinction exists, and will eventually be manifested. The ungodly have no reason to glory, indulging atheistical thoughts because of the sufferings of the godly. 2. What views ought to be entertained of spiritual salvation? It is not that easy trifling matter which many take it to be. "Who then can be saved?" 3. Propose this question to yourselves in a less limited form, "Who can be saved?" Through the grace of God, all sinners, even the chief. But, who will be saved? Only those who live a life of faith, and make their calling and election sure. (*The Christian Magazine.*) *The difficulty of salvation*:—The way to come to salvation is full of difficulties—1. Because there is much ado to get Lot out of Sodom, to get Israel out of Egypt. 2. Again, it is hard in regard of the sin that continually cleaves to them in this world, which doth, as it were, shackle them, and compass them about in all their performances. 3. Besides, it is a hard matter in regard of Satan; for he is a great enemy to the peace of God's children. Pharaoh after the Israelites. 4. Then, by reason of great discouragements and ill-usage which they find in the world from wicked men. 5. Besides this, scandal makes it a hard matter to be saved; to see evil courses and evil persons flourish and countenanced in the world. 6. This, likewise, makes the way difficult; we are too apt to offend God daily, giving Him just cause to withdraw His Spirit of comfort from us, which makes us go mourning all the day long; wanting those sweet refreshments of spiritual joy and peace we had before. When Christ wanted the sweet solace of His Father upon the Cross, how did it trouble Him? (*R. Sibbes.*) *Why God will have the righteous with such difficulty saved*:—

God will have it thus to sweeten heaven unto us. After a conflicting life peace is welcome; heaven is heaven indeed after trouble. We can relish it then. Because God will discard hypocrites in this life, who take up so much of religion as stands with their ease and credit in the world, avoiding every difficulty which accompanies godliness, but, so they may swim two ways at once, go on in their lusts still and be religious withal. This they approve of. Therefore, God will have it a hard matter to be saved, to frustrate the vain hopes of such wretches. Alas! it is an easy matter to be an hypocrite, but not to live godly. (*Ibid.*) *The righteous scarcely saved*:—Peter means this, “If Christians have such a hard tug to get into heaven, there is no chance at all for anybody else.” The soul that has long been driving before the winds of pleasure cannot so easily turn round and cut the wind’s eye. If religion were something you could wear like a cane in your hand, or a band of crape on your hat, or if it were portable, in the shape of a Bible or Psalm-book that you could carry under your arm, it would not seem so hard; but to have it as a principle in the soul, looking over your shoulder when you write out your ledgers, coming in to make suggestions when you are making a trade, breaking over the walls of Sunday, and running by your side from Monday morning to Saturday night, verily that seems a troublesome religion. How many postpone conversion because they think that it is so easy to become religious—they can begin at any time! They can shed sin as naturally as a bird his feathers, or a tree its bark. One crack of the whip of resolution will frighten out the drove of their iniquities. No! no! St. Peter himself was “scarcely saved.” It was not until every passion of his soul was in agony of earnestness that he fastened on to life. Oh, if in this instance it required the girding up of the soul in order to obtain the hope and joy of Christ’s salvation, what shall become of those who make no effort, reach forth no strong prayer, lay hold of no Bible promise, and sleep when peril stands at the helm? If the righteous be “scarcely saved,” where will the ungodly and sinner appear? But after pardon is obtained, there are batteries of strength which must be passed on our way into the heavenly harbour. All the Christian’s foes are marshalled under three sturdy generals—the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Business, entrenched behind counters, and bales of goods, and safes, attempts the overthrow of our souls. Disappointments fret, and fraud exasperates us, and meddlesome curiosity makes our lip curl. Gains lift us up, so that losses can better hurl us down. The Christian has to contend against temptations which made Adam disobey, and Abraham lie, and Moses get angry, and Job swear, and David sin against chastity, and Peter deny his Master. Satan makes assault. Having gathered skill by six thousand years of chicanery in making devotion profane, and integrity lie, and honesty cheat, and humility proud, and generosity tight-fisted, he knows just where to strike the Christian. Bad spirits are ever on the wing, coming to us on steps of sunshine, and floating on the dark wave of midnight, seated on the wings of the morning, and dropping with the evening dew. Guns cannot shoot them, swords cannot pierce them, fire cannot burn them, cold cannot freeze them. They fly with wings tireless, eye dimless, swifter than arrows, deadlier than plagues, cutting like hail, drowning like surges, crushing like rocks. Who can resist them? Only that arm which clasps God’s arm, and that heart sustained by God’s heart. If, with heavenly shield and sword, the righteous are only scarcely saved, where, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Scarcely saved*:—The victorious general in the hour of triumph has not unfrequently reason to remember how nearly, through oversight or miscalculation, he had lost the day: a little more pressure on this wing or that, a trifling prolongation of the struggle, a few minutes’ further delay in the arrival of reinforcements, and his proud banner had been dragged in the dust. The pilot guiding his barque safely into port sometimes knows how through lack of seamanship he nearly made shipwreck. And the successful merchant remembers crises in his history when he found himself on the brink of ruin, when the last straw only was wanting to precipitate the catastrophe. Men who have won the prizes of life have cause to wear their honours meekly when they recall the errors of judgment, the lack of courage, the acts of rashness, the ignorance, the credulousness, the hesitation, which so nearly deprived them of fame and fortune. Our religious history furnishes parallels to these narrow escapes on the lower level. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) **Commit the keeping of their souls to Him.**—*The saint’s hiding-place in the evil day*:—Wherein consider—1. That the state and condition of God’s children is to suffer. 2. The dispensation of that suffering, they suffer not at all adventures, but according to the will of God. 3. Their duty in this estate, namely,

to commit the keeping of their souls to God. In the duty we have these particulars comprehended—1. An action, to commit. 2. An object, what we must commit, the soul. 3. The person to whom, to God. 4. The manner, in well-doing. 5. The reason which should move us hereunto, implied in these words, as unto a faithful Creator. Observe—1. That the state of God's children is to suffer, yea, to suffer of God; for sometimes He seems to be an enemy to His dearest servants, as unto Job. But chiefly they are in a militant estate here. (1) Why God's children must suffer here. Because they live among those that they cannot but suffer from, wheresoever they live. (2) They must suffer also in regard of themselves; for the best of us all have many lusts to be subdued, and a great deal of corruption to be purged out, before we can come to heaven, that holy place into which no unclean thing can enter. In the best estate there will be suffering one way or other. Then, suspect thyself to be in a bad estate, for every true Christian suffers in one kind or other, either from without or within. We must be conformable to our Head before we can come to heaven. But the dispensation of our suffering is according to the will of God. God's will concerning our suffering is permissive in respect of those that do us harm; but in regard of our patient enduring injuries, it is His approving and commanding will. We are enjoined to suffer, and they are permitted to wrong us. It seems, then, there is some excuse for those that persecute the saints. They do but according to God's will; and if it be so, who dares speak against them? It is not God's commanding will, but His suffering will. He useth their malice for His own ends. But observe further, that we never suffer but when God will. And His will is not that we should always suffer, though generally our estate be so in one kind or other. God is not always chiding (Psa. ciii. 9), but hath times of intermission, which He vouchsafes His children for their good. And this the Lord doth out of mercy to His poor creatures, that they might not sink before Him, but gather strength of grace, and be the better fitted to bear further crosses afterwards. And it is for matters better than life that God lets His children suffer here; for, alas! this life is but a shadow, as it were, nothing. I beseech you, therefore, considering all our sufferings are by the appointment and will of God, let us bring our souls to a holy resignation unto His Majesty, not looking so much to the grievance we are under as to the hand that sent it. I. Now THIS WELL-DOING MUST BE DISTINGUISHED INTO TWO TIMES. 1. Before our suffering. We must not go out of our sphere, but serve God in our standings, that if trouble comes it may find us in a way of well-pleasing, either doing works of charity or else the works of our particular calling wherein God hath set us. 2. So likewise in suffering we must commit our souls to God in well-doing in a double regard. 1. We must carry ourselves generally well in all our sufferings. 2. In particular, we must do well to them that do us wrong. First, I say, in affliction our carriage must be generally good in respect of God, by a meek behaviour under His hand, without murmuring against Him. 2. In regard of the cause of God, that we betray it not through fear or cowardice, through base aims and intentions, &c., but endeavour to carry it with a good conscience in all things. When we make it clear by managing anything, that we are led with the cause and conscience of our duty, it works mightily upon them that wrong us. (1) It wins those that are indifferent. (2) Confounds the obstinate, and stops their mouths. Therefore, let us carry ourselves well, not only before, but in suffering. We should have an eye to God, and an eye to ourselves, and an eye to others, and an eye to the cause in hand; so we shall do well. We must not commit our souls to God in idleness, doing nothing at all, nor yet in evil-doing, but in well-doing. But I cannot do well, but I shall suffer ill. Labour, therefore, to carry thyself well in suffering evil, not only in the general, but even in particular, towards those persons that do thee wrong; endeavour to requite their evil with good. There is a great measure of self-denial required to be a Christian, especially in matter of revenge, "to pray for them that curse us, to do good to them that persecute us," &c., and so "heap coals of fire upon our enemies' heads" (Prov. xxv. 22; Rom. xii. 20). How is that? 1. Coals of conversion. 2. Coals of confusion. Some will say, Christianity is a strange condition, that enforceth such things upon men, that are so contrary to nature. It is so, indeed, for we must be new-moulded before ever we can come to heaven. But suppose a man carry himself ill in suffering. There is not the least promise of comfort in Scripture to such a man, unless he return, and seek the Lord by timely repentance; for all encouragement is to well-doing. II. BUT WHAT MUST WE COMMIT TO GOD IN WELL-DOING? The keeping of our souls. The soul is the more excellent part, witness

He that purchased the same with His dearest blood. Therefore, whatsoever estate thou art in, let thy first care be for thy soul, that it may go well with that. You know in the firing of an house, that which a man chiefly looks after is his jewels and precious things, "I have some wealth in such a place, if I could but have that I care for no more, let the rest go"; so it is with a Christian, whatsoever becomes of him in this world, he looks to his precious soul, that that may be laid up safely in the hands of God. But what should we desire our souls to be kept from in this world? From sin and the evil consequences thereof. But must we not commit our bodies and our estates to God, as well as our souls? Yes, all we have; for that is only well kept which God keeps; but yet in time of suffering we must be at a point with these things. If God will have our liberty, if He will have our life and all, we must hate all for Christ's sake; but we must not be at such a point with our souls, we must keep them close to God, and desire Him to keep them in well-doing. Suppose it come to an exigent, that we must either sin and hurt our souls, or else lose all our outward good things? Our chief care must be over our souls. We must desire God to preserve our souls, whatsoever becomes of these; our principal care must be that that be not blemished in the least kind; for, alas! other things must be parted with first or last. The soul is the better part of a man, and if that miscarries, all miscarries. If the soul be not well, the body will not continue long in a good estate. Bernard saith sweetly, "Oh, body, thou hast a noble guest dwelling in thee, a soul of such inestimable worth that it makes thee truly noble." Considering therefore that it is Satan's aim to unloose our hold from God, by defiling our souls with sin, oh! let it be our chief care to see to that which Satan strikes at most! III. BUT TO WHOM MUST THE SOUL BE COMMITTED? To God. Indeed, He only can keep our souls. IV. BUT WHY MUST WE COMMIT OUR SOULS TO GOD? Because He is a faithful Creator. Whence observe—That the soul of man being an understanding essence, will not be satisfied and settled without sound reasons. Comfort is nothing else but reasons stronger than the evil which doth afflict us; when the reasons are more forcible to ease the mind than the grievance is to trouble it. It is no difficult matter to commit our souls to God when we are once persuaded that He is a faithful Creator. We must take God here as a Creator of our whole man, body and soul, and of the new creature in us. Yea, God became man to enrich us with all grace and goodness, to free us from the hands of Satan, and bring us to an eternal state of communion with Himself in heaven. (*R. Sibbes.*)

The Christian's duty under trials:—I. CHRISTIANS MUST EXPECT TO SUFFER. 1. Sometimes by adversity. Poverty; Christ so suffered; so did His disciples; bodily affliction, &c. 2. In their reputation. Holiness of life and zeal in religion will provoke the ungodly (Matt. xi. 18; Luke vii. 33; Heb. xi. 25, 26). 3. In their property. Persecution in olden times; spoiling of their goods; loss of custom; piety a bar to temporal promotion. 4. In their liberty and life. Though the age of martyrdom has passed, let us cherish and honour the memory of those, &c.

II. CHRISTIANS SUFFER ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD. 1. These sufferings are for the trial of faith (vers. 12, 13; chap. i. 7). It is the day of battle that tests the valour and fidelity of soldiers. Then the believer feels his own helplessness and trusts in God alone. 2. They promote spiritual prosperity and happiness. The graces of the Spirit generally languish under worldly prosperity (Matt. xiii. 22). Under trials God gives "more grace" (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10). 3. They promote the glory of God. Show what His grace can do in supporting the mind of the sufferers, and in filling their hearts with gratitude. "He hath done all things well." III.

THE CONDUCT OF CHRISTIANS UNDER SUFFERINGS. 1. They should be characterized by well-doing. Obedience a sign of resignation. The more we are tried the stronger must be our attachment to Christ (Job v. 19–22.) Active usefulness a cure for trouble. 2. The soul is to be more valued than the body. 3. Enlarged views of the love and care of God. 4. The actual surrender of the soul to His keeping. "What can separate us?" &c. Application: 1. See the dignity, wealth, and happiness of God's people; He loves and protects them, and is their portion (Psa. xlv. 16). 2. Learn the folly of trusting in human resources amid the trials of life. 3. Note the folly of those who persecute the Church of God (Isa. liv. 17). (*The Lay Preacher.*)

Tranquillity in suffering:—These words contain the true principle of Christian patience and tranquillity of mind in the sufferings of this life, expressing both wherein it consists and what are the grounds of it. 1. It lies in this, committing the soul unto God in well-doing. If you would commit your soul to the keeping of God, know that He is a holy God, and an unholy soul that walks in any way of wickedness, whether known or secret, is no fit commodity to put into His pure hand

to keep. Therefore beware of wilful pollutions and unholy ways. Loose ways will loosen your hold of Him and confidence in Him. If thou give thy soul to Him to keep upon the terms of liberty to sin, He will turn it out of His doors, and remit it back to thee to look to as thou wilt thyself. Yea, in the ways of sin thou dost indeed steal it back, and carriest it out from Him; thou putteth thyself out of the compass of His defence, goest without the trenches, and art, at thine own hazard, exposed to armies of mischiefs and miseries. So much sin as gets in, so much peace will go out. Afflictions cannot break in upon it to break it, but sin doth. All the winds which blow upon the earth from all points, stir it not; only that within the bowels of it makes the earthquake. I do not mean that for infirmities a Christian ought to be discouraged. But take heed of walking in any way of sin, for that will unsettle thy confidence. "Commit the keeping of their souls." Their chief concern is, that whatsoever be lost, this may not; this is the jewel, and therefore the prime care is of this. If the soul be safe, all is well; it is riches enough. What shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, says our Saviour, and lose his own soul? And so, what shall it disprofit a man, though he lose the whole world, if he gain his soul? Nothing at all. Now the way is this, commit it to God: this many say, but few do. Give your souls into His hand, lay them up there, so the word is, and they are safe, and may be quiet and composed. Learn from hence what is the proper act of faith; it rolls the soul over on God, ventures it in His hand, and rests satisfied concerning it, being there. And there is no way but this to be quiet within, to be impregnable and immovable in all assaults, and fixed in all changes, believing in His free love. The ground of this confidence is in these two things, the ability and fidelity in Him in whom we trust. There is much in a persuasion of the power of God. If He was able to give them being, surely He is able to keep them from perishing. This relation of a Creator implies likewise a benign propension and good-will to the works of His hands. And as He is powerful, He is no less faithful, a faithful Creator, truth itself. Those who believe on Him, He never deceives or disappoints. There is another ground of quietness contained in the first word, which looks back to the foregoing discourse, "Wherefore"—what? Seeing that your reproaches and sufferings are not endless, yea, that they are short, they shall quickly end in glory, be not troubled about them, overlook them. The eye of faith will do it. A moment gone, and what are they? (*Abp. Leighton.*) *The soul's refuge:—I. THE SUFFERANCE OF THE SAINTS.* Let this teach us two duties. First, to prepare for evils before they come; next, to make them welcome when they are come. So they shall neither meet us with fear, nor leave us with sorrow. **II. THE INTEGRITY OF THAT SUFFERANCE.** They only are said to suffer according to God's will, who suffer first innocently, then patiently. **III. THE COMFORT OF THIS INTEGRITY.** He that suffers for Christ's testimony is confident of God's mercy. **IV. THE BOLDNESS OF THIS COMFORT.** 1. God loves us, as our Creator. 2. God is faithful to us, however unfaithful we have been to Him. **V. THE CAUTION OF THIS BOLDNESS.** "In well doing." 1. The wicked man may commit his soul to God's keeping, but how is he sure God will take the charge of it? What should God do with a foul and polluted soul? The soul must at last be committed to some; now He only is the receiver of it in death, that was keeper of it in life. If Satan have always ruled it, God will not embrace it. 2. A man may do good, yet come short of this comfort; it is given to them that do well. It is not doing good, but doing well that gets God to keep the soul. You have served Me, says God to Israel, but after your own lusts. To serve God is doing good, but after their own lusts, is not doing well. To build a church is a good work; yet if the foundations of it be laid in the ruins of the poor, their children come not to pray for, but curse the builder. (*T. Adams.*) *The support of good men under their sufferings for religion:—I. WHEN MEN DO SUFFER REALLY AND TRULY FOR THE CAUSE OF RELIGION AND GOD'S TRUTH,* they may with confidence commit themselves (their lives and all that is dear to them) to the more especial care of His providence. When men may be said to suffer truly for the cause of religion and God's truth, and when not. 1. When men suffer for not renouncing the true religion, and because they will not openly declare against it, and apostatise from it. 2. When then they are persecuted only for making an open profession of the Christian religion, by joining in the assemblies of Christians for the worship of God. 3. When they suffer for not betraying it by any indirect and unworthy means. 4. When they suffer for the maintenance and defence of any necessary and fundamental article of it, though they be not required to renounce the whole Christian religion. 5. When they suffer for maintaining the purity of the Christian doctrine and worship; and for opposing

and not complying with those gross errors and corruptions which superstition and ignorance had, in a long course of time, brought into the Christian religion. 6. When they suffer for not disclaiming and renouncing any clear and undoubted truth of God whatsoever; yea, though it be not a fundamental point and article of religion. Cases wherein men may seem to suffer for the cause of religion, but cannot truly be said to do so. 1. When they rashly expose themselves to danger and run upon sufferings for the sake of religion. 2. When they suffer not for their faith, but their fancy, and for the wilful and affected error of a mistaken conscience. 3. When they suffer for the open profession and defence of truths not necessary.

II. HOW FAR THEY MAY RELY UPON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD TO BEAR THEM OUT IN THESE SUFFERINGS. To which I answer: that provided we do what is our duty on our part, the providence of God will not be wanting on His part to bear us out in all our sufferings for His cause, one of these three ways. 1. To secure us from that violent degree of temptation and suffering, which would be too strong for human strength and patience. 2. In case of such extraordinary temptation and trial, to give us the extraordinary supports and comforts of His Holy Spirit. 3. In case of a temporary fall and miscarriage, to raise us up by repentance, and a greater resolution and constancy under sufferings. III. WHAT GROUND AND REASON THERE IS FOR GOOD MEN TO EXPECT THE MORE PECULIAR AND ESPECIAL CARE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN CASE OF SUCH SUFFERINGS. The providence of God extends to all His creatures, according to that of the Psalmist: "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." But He exerciseth a more peculiar providence towards mankind; and more peculiar yet towards those who study to please Him by obeying Him and doing His will (Psa. xi. 7, xxxiii. 18). When, in all our sufferings for the cause of religion, we may, with confidence, commit ourselves to the more especial care of God's providence. 1. Provided always that we neglect no lawful means of our preservation from sufferings, or our deliverance out of them. 2. Provided, likewise, that we do not attempt our own preservation or deliverance from suffering by evil and unlawful means. 3. Provided, also, that we do trust the providence of God, and do indeed commit ourselves to it; relying upon His wisdom and goodness, and entirely submitting ourselves to His will and disposal, both as to the degree and duration of our sufferings. 4. Provided yet further, that we pray earnestly to God for His gracious help, for His merciful comfort and support under sufferings; that He would be pleased to strengthen our faith, and lengthen out our patience, in proportion to the degree and duration of our sufferings. 5. Provided, moreover, that we be not confident of ourselves, and of the force and strength of our resolution. 6. Provided furthermore, that, according to our ability, we have been much in the exercise of alms and charity. 7. Provided, above all, that we be sincere in our religion, and endeavour to be universally good, and "holy in all manner of conversation," and "to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God." This is the largest sense of well-doing, and the most necessary, to prepare us for sufferings, and to give us courage and constancy under them; and likewise to engage the providence of God to a tender care of us, and concernment for us, if He shall see it fit to bring us into a state of suffering. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *The keeping of the soul* :—

I. OBSERVE BOTH THE MYSTERY AND THE MERCY OF THE BELIEVER'S SUFFERINGS IN THIS WORLD. 1. It is a mystery that God should be pleased to subject His people to suffering. 2. Though we may sometimes deem it a mystery we may readily see that it is a mercy—it is according to the will of God—both as to the end to be answered by it, and as to the measure and degree. II. THERE IS ONE SUPREME SUBJECT WHICH IN ALL OUR SUFFERINGS SHOULD BE OUR CHIEF CARE—THAT IS THE SOUL. 1. It is infinitely more precious than the body. 2. Everlasting happiness depends upon committing the soul to God now. III. THE TEXT SHOWS US WHO ALONE IS QUALIFIED TO BE THE KEEPER OF THIS INVALUABLE TREASURE—OUR IMMORTAL SOUL. 1. The soul belongs to God. 2. This Divine and merciful Creator has provided for the keeping of our souls. Sent a Saviour for them—engaged to accept and keep them. IV. HERE IS AN ACT OF SACRED RESIGNATION AND CONFIDENCE TO WHICH ALL, AND ESPECIALLY ALL SUFFERERS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE, ARE INVITED. Let them commit the keeping of their souls to Him, &c. 1. This is an act of faith resting on His promise of salvation through a Mediator. 2. This act must be accompanied with well-doing. It must be in the way of righteousness. (*The Evangelist.*) **A faithful Creator.—God's faithfulness**—This is one of those Biblical phrases upon which in many a time of need the souls of men may fall back and rest. The phrase was intended originally for the support of

some in the early Church who had been compelled to suffer for Christ's sake. Commit your souls, the Apostle writes to such, in well-doing to God as a faithful Creator. The first truth involved in this simple, large phrase is that the Creator has character. A certain well-known and fundamental character, that of faithfulness, we are warranted by this Scripture in ascribing to the Creator. It is one of the general characteristics of revelation throughout the Bible that it attributes to God certain distinct moral qualities; that it brings out by these the character of God, rather than the nature or mode in which God may be conceived to exist or to create. This is the grand peculiarity of the Old Testament. This one feature lifts it up above all the literature of the ancient times, as a clear mountain above a jungle; this feature renders it an inspiring Bible for the world, that it exalts the Lord God as having character—true, holy, righteous, merciful, supremely moral character. You have known some man who had this character of faithfulness. He may have accomplished little which men will remember; but he has kept on his way faithfully. He was always to be found where others had reason to expect to find him. Many a faithful woman's life has been the one scarce-noticed, continuous thread, slight, but not to be broken, on which has been bound and kept together all the happiness and success of sons and daughters. A faithful life resembles the sure, unceasing roadway, which runs on and on over the hills, and through the woods, and by the homes of men, into which we may always come back at evening time, no matter how far we may have wandered afield or how long we may have followed the winding brook, at our own sweet will during the day. Now this familiar, homelike, often unnoticed, but fundamental character is described by this Scripture directly to our God. He is the faithful One. Other Scriptures ascribe to Him characters more transcendent, and the very glory of them renders God to our thought unspeakable and high as the heavens above us. Carrying our thought of this character a step further, observe, secondly, that in this Biblical phrase is included the truth that God has some regular method in whatever He does. For regular habit, or methodical action, is a quality of faithfulness. The person who is here and there and everywhere, and whose belongings are never in their place; the person whose life follows no conceivable method may have some other attractive qualities, but would not be counted on as faithful. So that in speaking of the Creator as faithful we must mean that He has followed some method in creation. We say that our God has His regular habits of procedure; that He does not deal with His creation now on one plan and then on another; that He does not let His divine affairs run on of themselves from age to age without thought, system, or order. The faithful Creator is the God of regular habits, the God of system, the God who has His own time and place for everything. Now, think how very much it means for us to know that God is methodical, whether in the realm of nature or of redemption. Two helpful things in particular let me mention as of daily importance for us in the methodical habit of the Divine faithfulness; the one is that because God all through nature and history has been following His one chosen method, we can study what He has been doing, and find out to some extent at least what His method is, and as we find it out we can trust it and adjust our plans of life and our efforts and hopes to it. So we can live surely, as we live in accordance with God's method. Consider thus God's method in the natural creation. It is the business of all our sciences to find that out. And as our science discovers God's method in nature, we may learn to use it in our acts. We propel our street cars, we light our houses, we run our machinery, we multiply our conveniences, because we have found out something about God's regular habit or method of the light and the electricity and the admirable mechanics of the creation, to which from the beginning He has been faithful. As we learn what the laws of life are—the laws of development, survival, and fruitfulness—we discover still further truth concerning the methods of the faithful One from eternity; and we must trust these laws of life, and adjust our free action to them, or we shall perish. It is so, likewise, in the kingdom of heaven. God has His providential methods of soul-training, and soul-enlarging, and soul-ripening. Experience discloses to some extent these spiritual methods of the faithful One; and there is life, hope, and peace in submitting our souls to them. The other particular which I would bring out from this general truth of the methodicalness which the faithful Creator observes is this: a good method, as we know, is not to be set aside every now and then because it may seem not to meet exactly all cases and contingencies. So the fact that God has method, and must have it in order to be faithful, is reason enough why He does not vary the course of His providence to meet some of our

desires, however much the good God might wish to gratify us. We indeed sometimes have to change our methods, because we find that they do not work. But God's regular ways of doing things, whether in the evolution of the creation or in His redemptive work of making all things new—God's methods have been formed in wisdom, and are on the whole the methods which can be trusted to work out the largest amount of possible creaturely good. There is no new reason, therefore, arising in any juncture of natural forces, or even from any emergency of human history, which should lead God to change the laws of life or to give to His Church some different method of redeeming love than that which has been followed, and is now pursued, by the Divine wisdom on this earth. If, then, God's persistency in keeping straight on along His well-known ways of nature and grace may seem at times to work incidental evil; if God's steadfastness in letting fire burn, and lightnings blast, and devouring floods overwhelm, as well as the sweet sunshine restore and fructify, may at times destroy human homes or lay desolate for a season human hearts—nevertheless, it is His faithfulness which is involved, and that same faithfulness holds in its own persistent method the possibility of future good in place of present evil, and of even larger and eternal good in consequence of temporal hardship. A third element goes with those just mentioned. This text contains also the kindred truth that God has aim or object. Faithfulness is fidelity to one's aim or object. It requires that the goal be kept in sight. Faithfulness in the highest is for us to be true to our ideals. It is the same kind of loyalty in the Creator. This likewise is a grandly uplifting thought for us, that the Creator from the beginning, and through all the method of His working, has never lost sight of the goal; that He is faithful to the divine ideals; the divine ideal of a free life of the creature capable of sinning and suffering, because made also to achieve a righteousness and love which only along the way of spiritual freedom can ever be reached; the divine ideal also of embodied spirit, capable of being raised through death to celestial perfection. This likewise belongs to the faithfulness of God. One other characteristic might be added to these three elements of moral character, method, and aim, which are comprehended in the faithfulness of our God—viz., responsibility. This last, however, might be regarded rather as the resultant of all the others, or as a consequent of faithfulness. God is responsible. Think of that in relation to your own personal being and life, as well as in relation to the affairs of God's world. Perhaps we are more ready to think of it in the latter relation, and to admit God's responsibility for the world at large and its government, than we are to trust it in reference to our own individual lives. But it is equally true of both. We must assume the Divine responsibility on the large scale of history. When brave Martin Luther was once hard pressed, and inclined to be over-anxious concerning the prospects of the Reformation, quiet Philip Melancthon by his side would say to him, "Martin, let God be Governor of the world." The faithful Creator is the responsible One. There is not a verse of prophet or apostle, there is not a word spoken by Jesus Christ, to lead us to suppose for an instant that God on high would avoid His responsibility for His world; or that He would for a moment put off upon any man the least of His Divine responsibility for affairs. There would be indeed no use and no hope for anything we may do or say to make things human better were it not for this prior and this final responsibility of God, the faithful One from eternity to eternity. Let Martin Luther do and dare as the great reformer, because God is Governor of the world. Let us do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do, because we are but servants, and the responsibility is God's. Finally, let us take this same truth into our daily thought of ourselves, and of those with whose lives ours are bound in this world and beyond. God gave you and them power to live together in common affections and pursuits. He will be faithful to His own gifts. He will not deny Himself in the being and the powers of life, of thought, of love, which He has given you and them. God made these human hearts capable of love immortal, and even in their mourning capable of proving and deepening their power of love; He is faithful; He cannot deny Himself in the human hearts which He has made. (*Newman Smyth.*) *A faithful Creator:*—Suppose, in the place of God as Creator, we substitute chance, or fate, or law, what a blank we have at once in the highest regions of thought and feeling! If you are only the offspring of a blind, unintelligent, unknown force; if you are the product of something that men call "a tendency" or law, are you not immediately let down from a conscious dignity, which has been one of the most ennobling factors and influences of your life? As a child of God you have a supreme motive to be Godlike; as a creature

of force you are deprived of all such motives. **I. GOD THE CREATOR IS FAITHFUL IN HIS RELATIONS TO US HIS CREATURES.** It is surely not a presumptuous thing to assert that God has assumed, by the very act of creating us, something like responsibility for our well-being. We cannot conceive of a God calling sensitive creatures like ourselves into existence, and then leaving us to our own poor hapless devices. We reason from analogy—we say, in the common arrangements of society, that parentage involves the idea of obligation. But let us come to declarations and facts—the declarations of Scripture and the facts of human life. In the Book we read, from one end to the other, that God has the charge of our existence; that He acknowledges our claim, as His creatures, as His children, on His bounty and wisdom and love. We take the third step in the inquiry, and look at the facts of life. Just as a parent will seek to adapt the surroundings of a child to its powers and capacities, to place him in a position where he shall obtain all the enjoyment that is compatible with his growth and development; so God has provided the things that are. He has furnished the world as the fitting nursery and school-house for the family of man that He is educating for an immortal and perfect life.

II. GOD THE CREATOR IS FAITHFUL TO THE GREAT PURPOSE FOR WHICH HE MADE US HIS CREATURES. We here and now cannot see what the design in the creation of man is—that is, not to the full of what God purposes to make of us; how He intends by and by in another state of being to use us. We are here only preparing for the sublime work of some future, preparing to fulfil what our Father has had in view for us from the beginning. It could have been for no insignificant position and service that He did actually make men in His own likeness, giving them the high honour of resembling Himself in those spiritual characteristics which constitute the essence of His being. Some time since I stood looking with melancholy interest on the magnificent desolations of Kenilworth Castle. It was a spectacle that filled the heart with regret, but beneath one part were some workmen busily engaged in introducing new layers of stone. On inquiring what they were doing, I was told they were supporting the ruin to prevent its getting any worse. That was all that the owner of that once famous place could do—support the ruin! With that he must be content; but it would not be surprising if he left it alone to the swift process of decay. Human nature is ruined, but not left to decay, not simply kept from getting worse. The will of God is complete recovery, restoration to even greater glory in all its parts, and to this end nothing the Divine Father could expend that would serve this purpose has been withheld. A faithful Creator! Who is like unto Him? He has never left and never forsaken us. And He will not until we again reflect His glory in the fullest measure, and are prepared to take that high place and do that grand service for which we were originally designed. Being faithful to us, can we not trust Him and commit our souls to Him? (*W. Braden.*)

The faithful Creator.—**I. GOD IS FAITHFUL IN RESPONDING TO THE CLAIMS OF HIS CREATURES.** Even of the animal creation this is true. God's "tender mercies are over all His works." The "springs of the valleys give drink to the beasts of the field." "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle." "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father." And surely God is faithful also in responding to the claims of man. The appetites, desires, and affections with which man has been endowed, have their correspondent means of satisfaction in the world around him. There is nourishment for his body—for his intellect—for his heart. If God is thus faithful in responding to the claims of His creatures, surely He is faithful also in the sense of being worthy of our trust. **II. GOD IS FAITHFUL IN ADHERING TO HIS ORIGINAL PURPOSE IN CREATION.** Humanity, in His idea, is a holy and blessed thing; and this idea must yet be realised. God has not created sin, but He will triumph over it. As man has chosen that he shall not be educated by standing firm, he must be educated by and through his very fall. And so the "faithful Creator" becomes the merciful Redeemer. How faithful is that love which will even send sorrow upon us—yes, and take sorrow upon itself—rather than permit us to come short of the destiny for which it created us. It is God's purpose to make you holy and blessed. For this He created you. For this Christ died. For this God is educating you. And surely, if He is thus faithful in adhering to His own purpose concerning you, He is faithful also in the sense of being worthy of your trust. If He crosses your wishes and thwarts your projects, this may be simply because He is unwilling to let you ruin yourself. He would lead you into humility. He would subdue your selfishness and self-will. He would enrich your whole spiritual nature. He would lead you to Christ or into closer sympathy with Christ. (*J. C. Finlayson.*)

CHAPTER V.

VERS. 1-4. **The elders which are among you I exhort.**—*Elders exhorted*:—1. In that he, an elder, exhorts them, elders, note that ministers are fittest to teach ministers and to judge of their actions. When we dislike anything in a minister, it were wisdom to ask the judgment of some godly minister before we censure. 2. In that he requireth nothing at their hands but what he himself did, note that the most forcible way of teaching, whether private or public, is, first, to do that in our own persons which we require of others. He is an ill captain that bids his soldiers go fight, himself in the meantime tarrying behind. 3. In that he beseecheth, note his modesty and humility. (*John Rogers.*) *The office, spirit, and reward of a faithful ministry*:—The apostle Peter, after various exhortations to strengthen the brethren, turns at the close of his Epistle to his fellow-ministers, and gives them his parting counsel. St. Peter calls the Church “the flock of God.” It is not man’s flock, but God’s, which He hath purchased with His own blood. Our Saviour spoke of the Church as His flock—*My sheep, My lambs*—and Himself as the Good Shepherd. Each believer will have his own history. There will be peculiarities in it, not found in any other—in what way he wandered; where Jesus found him—in the house of God, on the bed of sickness, at the grave of some one dear to him as his own soul. When thus brought home to the fold, he becomes one of those sheep to whom Jesus gives eternal life. He feels that he is not his own, that he has been bought with a price and can no longer live to his own will, but to the will of Him that loved him. But though thus made one of the flock of Christ, the believer has not yet reached heaven; he must be fed, cared for, guided on his way there, and it is for this end, as well as to add to this flock, that the office of the ministry was instituted. Jesus so loves the souls of men, for whom He died, that He commits them only to those who love Him, and will feed His flock. Having thus considered the office of the ministry, let us consider the spirit in which it is to be exercised—not of constraint, but willingly, of a ready mind, neither as lording it over your charge. There may be a constraint in taking upon us this office and ministry, but it is such a constraint as St. Paul had when he said, “Necessity is laid upon me; woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! The love of Christ constraineth me.” We may shrink from it from a sense of our utter insufficiency for such a work. Isaiah said, “I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.” There may be a shrinking from the work from these causes, and at the same time a willing and ready mind. The constraint St. Peter speaks of is where there is no heart for the work, where there are secular motives of base gain or ambition. Where there is this constraint, a penurious, stinted service will be rendered. Christ praises the angel of the Church of Ephesus for labour unto weariness. This is what Christ praises in His servants. Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, the Church. Our Saviour had warned His apostles against the spirit of ambition which was found in the world. “You know,” He said to them, “that the great ones of this world exercise lordship over men, but it shall not be so among you.” And last of all in the qualifications of the Christian minister, we are to be examples to the flock in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. Having thus considered the office of the ministry, and the spirit in which it is to be exercised, let us now notice the reward of the faithful minister. “And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away.” The service of Christ in the ministry of the gospel is not without its reward. It has its reward, not only in prospect, after it is finished, but by the way, in the life which now is. Our work brings us in contact with Divine truth, which grows upon us in interest and delight, so that we are overmastered by its power and glory. This truth raises the soul above itself on the wings of faith and hope, and makes us heavenly-minded, which is life and peace. There is a satisfaction growing out of the nature of our work, so that the labour itself is its own exceeding great reward. Our work, again, brings us into a loving sympathy with the Man of Sorrows. The gospel we preach began first to be preached by the Lord Himself. And as He was grieved at the unbelief and hardness of heart of those who heard Him, as He wept over Jerusalem, so does every faithful minister of Christ mourn over those who obey not the gospel and neglect its great salvation. (*J. Packard, D.D.*) *Address to the young elders*:—It is quite plain that St. Peter is here addressing distinctively not elders in age, but elders by office. Age might enter then, more than now, into the question of fitness; nevertheless, what made a presbyter was not age, but

ordination. And when we see gathered together a goodly band of youthful ministers, we do well to say to them, Remember, you have an office given you which reckons not by years, but by graces; you have to walk the aisles of your church, to tread the streets of your parish, as men (in one sense) prematurely old—as men of that truest dignity, which consists not in wealth, not in rank, not even in age, but in bearing Christ's commission. St. Peter counts this so honourable an office that he will claim even for himself none higher. Another apostle, his friend and chosen brother, describes himself in like manner in two of his writings, only as "the elder" (2 John i.). They well knew, both of them, the higher compulsion of sympathy, above anything that mere power or official dignity can exercise. 1. I will say a word upon the dedication. The Christian clergyman is a dedicated man. Do you heartily believe that your motive in asking ordination is honest, truthful, pure? Is it the choice of your heart? Do you mean to give your life to it? You must not be satisfied with that sort of average ambiguous twilight state which the world considers good enough for a lay Christian. 2. Thus the dedication passes on into the commission. You dedicate yourselves to Christ, and He gives you His commission. It would be absolutely intolerable to one who knows himself to have to feel, when he robes himself in his vestry for the exercise of one of his clerical functions, that he is volunteering his counsels for that time to a body of rational spiritual beings who have just as good a right to teach him. Bearing this well in mind, still we say, Without Christ's commission we could not speak: with it a dying man may be bold to speak to dying men. 3. Next to the sanctity, the twofold sanctity, of the office, let me strongly urge upon you its Divine humanity. The secret of all influence is, Be human. One word of genuine kindness, of hearty compassionate sympathy, will be worth ten thousand expositions of your claim to reverence: it will open hearts otherwise barred against you, and, letting you in, will let in Christ after you. And as in your intercourse, so also in your preaching. Let it indeed assert strongly the direct revelation and inspiration of your gospel. But in the application of this Divine gospel, speak as a man to men; speak as one who knows its necessity to himself, as one who knows the nature, the life, the heart, to which he has to offer it, and has learned, not from books but from men, what is that heart-sickness too, and eager inward thirst, to which Christ his Lord came to minister, and has of His infinite mercy set him to minister in His absence, in His presence! 4. Need I say, then, in the fourth place, that the Christian ministry is a work? It is no pastime. It is no outside perfunctory propriety. It is a work. Be able to say, I am an elder of Christ's Church, and therefore my time, my strength, my life, is the Church's, is Christ's. 5. Who shall deny then this other avowal—that the ministry is a difficulty? Do you suppose, ye who pass by, that a clergyman's ordination sets him above the most trying snares of world, flesh, or devil? 6. Then let me record, for your encouragement, this one other characteristic—the ministry an honour, a privilege, and a blessing. There is a special coronet for the faithful presbyter, over and above that which he shall share with the lowliest of the redeemed. In this life it is his, if he be earnest in his work, to enjoy a gratitude scarcely given to another—the gratitude of lives remodelled, the gratitude of souls saved. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Peter exhorting the elders:—I. A WELL-EQUIPPED SOLDIER.* 1. An elder. (1) In age. (2) In knowledge. (3) In experience. (4) In position. 2. A witness. Of Christ's—(1) Suffering; (2) Atonement; (3) Love; (4) Sympathy; (5) Humanity. 3. A partaker—of the glory which shall be revealed. "Come ye blessed of My Father," &c. II. A HUMBLE-MINDED SAINT. This was not one of St. Peter's early characteristics. But he had learnt by experience to form a true opinion of his real position in the sight of God, and of the many infirmities which pertain to fallen humanity. This chastened spirit is particularly manifested—1. By the position assumed. "Fellow-elder." There is no assumption of extra wisdom or superior knowledge. 2. By the method of his teaching. Not "I command," "decree," "enforce"; simply "I exhort." He would suggest, remind, urge on. What a heavenly spirit! (*J. J. S. Bird, B.A.*) **A witness of the sufferings of Christ.—A witness and a partaker:—I. A WITNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.** So far as possible, let us be witnesses with Peter. 1. An eye-witness of those sufferings. In this we cannot participate, nor need we desire to do so. 2. A faith-witness of those sufferings. (1) He had personally believed on Jesus at the first. (2) He had further believed through after-communion with Him. 3. A testifying witness of those sufferings. (1) He bore witness to their bitterness when borne by Jesus. (2) He bore witness to their importance as an atonement. (3) He bore witness to their completeness as a satisfaction. (4) He

bore witness to their effect in perfect salvation. 4. A partaking witness of those sufferings. (1) In defence of truth he suffered from opposers. (2) In winning others he suffered in the anguish of his heart. (3) In serving his Lord he suffered exile, persecution, death. What he witnessed in all these ways became a motive and a stimulus for his whole life. II. A PARTAKER OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED. It is important to partake in all that we preach, or else we preach without vividness and assurance. 1. Peter had enjoyed a literal foretaste of the glory on the holy mount. We, too, have our earnestness of eternal joy. 2. Peter had not yet seen the glory which shall be revealed, and yet he had partaken of it in a spiritual sense: our participation must also be spiritual. Peter had been a spiritual partaker in the following ways: (1) By faith in the certainty of the glory. (2) By anticipation of the joy of the glory. (3) By sympathy with our Lord, who has entered into glory. 3. Peter had felt the result of faith in that glory. (1) In the comfort which it yielded him. (2) In the heavenliness which it wrought in him. (3) In the courage with which it endowed him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.—Partaking as well as preaching:—'Tis a very sad thing when preachers are like printers, who compose and print off many things, which they neither understand, nor love, nor experience; all they aim at is money for printing, which is their trade. It is also sad when ministers are like gentlemen ushers, who bring ladies to their pews, but go not in themselves—bring others to heaven, and themselves stay without. (*Ralph Venning.*)

Feed the flock of God.—True office-bearers in the Church:—I. THEIR DUTY. Feeding, leading, controlling, protecting. II. THEIR MOTIVE. 1. Negatively. (1) Not constrainedly. (2) Not covetously. (3) Not ambitiously. 2. Positively. (1) Voluntariness. (2) Sympathy. III. THEIR HOPE. 1. "The crown"—symbol of dignity. 2. "Of glory"—not tinsel or tarnished, but unalloyed. 3. "That fadeth not away"—imperishable. IV. THEIR SPIRIT. 1. Mutual subjection. 2. Perfect humility. V. THEIR HELP. "Grace"—the favour of God, the greatest and mightiest inspiration of souls. (*U. R. Thomas.*)

The discharge of the ministry:—I. THE DUTY ENJOINED. Every step of the way of our salvation hath on it the print of infinite majesty, wisdom, and goodness; and this amongst the rest, that sinful, weak men are made subservient in that great work of bringing Christ and souls to meet, and that the life which is conveyed to them by the word of life in the hands of poor men, is by the same means preserved and advanced. Oh, what dexterity and diligence, and, above all, what affection are needful for this task! Who would not faint in it, were not our Lord the Chief Shepherd, were not all our sufficiency laid up in His rich fulness, and all our insufficiency covered in His gracious acceptance? II. THE DISCHARGE OF THIS HIGH TASK we have here duly qualified. The apostle expresses the upright way of it both negatively and positively. 1. There be three evils he would remove from this work—constrainedness, covetousness, and ambition—as opposed to willingness, a ready mind, and exemplary temper and behaviour. (1) We are cautioned against constrainedness, against being driven to the work by necessity, indigence, and want of other means of subsistence, as it is with too many, making a trade of it to live by; yea, making it the refuge and forlorn resource of their insufficiency for other callings. This willingness should not arise from anything but pure affection to the work. (2) Not for filthy gain, but purely from the inward bent of the mind. As it should not be a compulsive motion from without, so it should not be an artificial motion by weights hung on within, avarice and love of gain. The former were a wheel, driven or drawn, going by force; the latter little better, as a clock made to go by art, by weights hung to it. But there should be a natural motion, like that of the heavens in their course. (3) The third evil is ambition, and that is either in the affecting of undue authority, or the tyrannical exercise of due authority, or to seek those dignities that suit not with this charge. 2. "But being ensamples": such a pattern as they may stamp and print their spirits and carriage by, and be followers of you as you are of Christ. And without this, there is little or no fruitful teaching. III. THE HIGH ADVANTAGE. "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear," &c. Thou shalt lose nothing by all this restraint from base gain, and vain glory, and worldly power. Let them all go for "a crown"—that weighs them all down, that shall abide for ever. Oh, how far more excellent!—"a crown of glory," pure, unmixed glory, without any pride or sinful vanity, or any danger of it—and a crown "that fadeth not," of such a flower as withers not. May they not well trample on base gain and vain applause, who have this crown to look to? They that will be content with those things let them be so; they have their reward, and it is done and gone, when faithful followers are to

receive theirs. (*Abp. Leighton.*) *Feed the sheep*:—I thought that I was passing by a sheepfold, where the shepherds seemed extremely busy. But they were occupied entirely with the gate and the hurdles, and had turned their backs on the sheep. The pasture was bare and brown, little better in some places than a sandy waste; the water was muddy, and full of dead leaves. The sheep were few in number—thin, emaciated, and looked scarcely more than half alive. “What are you doing, friends?” I asked of the shepherds. “Our master told us to feed his sheep,” they replied. “We want to attract those sheep out on the mountain-side; they are his too.” “And what are you doing to attract them?” “Do you not see? We are gilding the gate and the hurdles, in the hope that, when the sun shines on them, those outside sheep will be attracted by curiosity. Then when they come inside we can feed them.” “And why do you not feed those that are inside?” “Oh, they are in; they are safe enough! They can pick up food for themselves. We have not time to attend to them as well as attract the outsiders, and the latter business is by far the most important. We have a further attraction also: we play on the shepherd’s pipe. The outside sheep often come round to listen.” “But, friends, it is for the sheep inside that my concern is awakened. Your Master said, ‘Feed My sheep.’ Your gilding and music will never feed them.” “Oh, no; those are for the sheep outside. We do feed them inside. Look, here is grass, and there are turnip-troughs.” “Do you call it grass? Parched, poor, uninviting stuff! My good friends, these troughs want cleansing and filling.” “Do you think we have any time for that? We must attend to these other things.” “Surely not to the neglect of the main thing? To what are you attracting these sheep? To what are you dooming the others? Attraction to starvation is not a very attractive idea.” “Then you would have us to spend all our time on the sheep inside, and never gather the others in at all?” “By no means. I would have you to attract the outsiders; but I would have them attracted by fresh food and clear water, not by golden hurdles and shepherds’ pipes. Trust me, the true way to attract lost sheep is by letting them see that the found sheep are better off than they are.” “That is exactly what we are trying to do. Therefore we gild the hurdles to entice them to come and look into the fold.” “And when they come and look in, you show them—what? A bare patch of ground, and a few half-starved sheep. My poor mistaken friends, the day is coming—ay, and fast too—when you will stand alone behind your gilded hurdles; for the fold will be left empty. The sheep will either be starved to death, or will have dragged their emaciated limbs to other fields than yours, where there is yet green grass left, and the fountain of living water is fresh and pure. Will you put down the paint-pot and lay aside the reed, and begin at once to clear out the water and refill the troughs? It is not yet quite too late. It soon will be.” Does the parable need interpretation? Will the shepherds listen? (*Emily S. Holt.*) **Taking the oversight thereof.**—*Ministerial oversight*:—It is not enough for ministers to preach, yea, sacredly and diligently, but they must besides take a particular oversight of their flock, and looking into the conversation and behaviour, and applying themselves accordingly in admonition, exhortation, comfort. If a minister know any of his people riotous or profane, he must rebuke them; if any out of the way, admonish them; he must hearten them that be in a good course to go on still, and must comfort them that languish under their sins, temptations, and fears; in a word, deal with every one as the cause requireth. 1. This rebukes those ministers that be absent from their people usually or continually. How can these take care of them that come not at them but rarely, except they could indent with the devil, never to trouble their people, or tempt them in their absence. 2. It rebukes those also that living among their people, yet care not thus, but think themselves discharged that they meet them at Church on Sunday, and then preach them a sermon, whereas all the week after they consider not of them. (*John Rogers.*) **Not for filthy lucre.**—*God’s servants—their ruling motive*:—You cannot serve two masters—you must serve one or other. If your work is first with you, and your fee second, work is your master, and the Lord of work, who is God. But if your fee is first with you, and your work second, fee is your master, and the lord of fee, who is the devil; and not only the devil, but the lowest of devils—“the least erected fiend that fell.” So there you have it in brief terms—work first, you are God’s servants; fee first, you are the fiend’s. And it makes a difference, now and ever, believe me, whether you serve Him who has on His vesture and thigh written, “King of kings,” and whose service is perfect freedom; or him on whose vesture and thigh the name is written, “Slave of slaves,” and whose service is perfect slavery. (*John Ruskin.*) *Gold a con-*

temptible motive for service:—The noblest deeds which have been done on earth have not been done for gold. It was not for the sake of gold that our Lord came down and died, and the apostles went out to preach the good news in all lands. The Spartans looked for no reward in money when they fought and died at Thermopylæ; and Socrates the wise asked no pay from his countrymen, but lived poor and barefoot all his days, only caring to make men good. And there are heroes in our days also, who do noble deeds, but not for gold. Our discoverers did not go to make themselves rich when they sailed out one after another into the dreary frozen seas; nor did the ladies, who went out to drudge in the hospitals of the East, making themselves poor, that they might be rich in noble works; and young men, too, did they say to themselves, "How much money shall I earn?" when they went to the war, leaving wealth and comfort, and a pleasant home, to face hunger and thirst, and wounds and death, that they might fight for their country and their queen? No, there is a better thing on earth than wealth, a better thing than life itself, and that is, to have done something before you die, for which good men may honour you, and God your Father smile upon your work. (*C. Kingsley.*)

Too much money for a clergyman:—Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, was once offered a living in a small parish in the county of Durham; the duty was light, the stipend £400, and the surrounding country very charming. Mr. F. thanked the donor for his kind offer, but at the same time declined it, saying, "There is too much money for me, and too little labour."

Neither as being lords over God's heritage.—*Ministerial authority*:—1. Ministers must not exercise civil authority and temporal power over their people, but use a spiritual rule over them, by teaching them, &c., and ruling them by the Word of God. 2. Ministers must not carry themselves proudly and disdainfully.

3. Nor must a minister rule them with violence (Ezek. xxxiv. 18). (*John Rogers.*)

Not lords:—Bernard of Clairvaux wrote to Pope Eugene, "Peter could not give thee what he had not; what he had he gave: the care over the Church, not dominion."

Ensamples to the flock.—*Power of example*:—Of Mr. Henry Townley, who died in 1861, Dr. Henry Allon, his pastor, said in his funeral sermon: "I doubt whether a holier man than Henry Townley has ever lived. . . . I have often, in his presence, felt humbled and awed at his manifest sanctity and consecration. I never remember to have left him without shame and penitence, and prayer that God would forgive my shortcoming, and make me like him."

When the Chief Shepherd shall appear.—*The Chief Shepherd's appearance*:—I. THE STYLE AND CHARACTER HERE APPROPRIATED TO OUR DIVINE REDEEMER. 1. "Shepherd." (1) He has received His Church as a charge from the hand of the Father. (2) He has ransomed the sheep with His most precious blood. (3) He lives to gather the wanderers into His fold, by the power of His Spirit and the instrumentality of His Word. 2. "Chief Shepherd." (1) His infinite dignity. (2) His official supremacy. (3) The pre-eminent qualities He possesses for the office with which He has been invested. (a) The comprehensiveness of His knowledge. (b) His almighty power. (c) His exquisite tenderness and sympathy. (4) To Him all the subordinate agents in His kingdom are responsible. II. THIS CHIEF SHEPHERD IS ABOUT TO APPEAR. 1. This fact is most certain. 2. The circumstances of His second coming will be marked with peculiar splendour. III. THE RECOMPENSE WHICH WILL BE AWARDED AT THAT SOLEMN HOUR, TO THOSE WHO HAVE FAITHFULLY FULFILLED THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE OF UNDER SHEPHERDS.—1. The beautiful imagery employed by the apostle to exhibit this recompense—"a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 2. What are the substantial truths couched under this imagery? (1) The approbation of his Master. (2) The visible tokens and pledges of ministerial success. (3) His own personal exaltation and felicity.

Learn: 1. The vast importance of the Christian ministry as an ordinance of God for the present and everlasting welfare of His Church. 2. The true honour which is due, and ought to be presented, to those who have faithfully discharged this office on earth, and especially when their course has terminated. (*G. Clayton.*)

The Chief Shepherd:—I. THE TITLE WHICH IS HERE GIVEN TO CHRIST AS THE CHIEF SHEPHERD. The very name of "shepherd" is full of lustre and beauty, of condescension and grace. And whilst other names describe the different parts of Christ's work, and the various principles of Christ's character, this seems to combine them all. As Prophet, He was to teach His Church, to convey to it the lessons of Divine wisdom; as Priest, He was to make atonement for the sins of His people; as King, He was to rule over them in the gentleness and sanctity of His sway; but as He is the Chief Shepherd, we have the wisdom and goodness which instructs, the grace

and mercy which unfolds, the power which rules, the authority which legislates, all in one. 1. He is called the Chief Shepherd. In relation, without doubt, to the inferior and subordinate shepherds. For the universal Church, in all its subdivisions, is His vast sheepfold, and the ministers of religion are the shepherds in subordination to Him. And, according to the manners of the East, and in ancient and early times, there was one—the Chief Shepherd whose own the sheep were. It is in reference to this, that Christ, in the passage before us, is called “the Chief Shepherd.” 2. It describes, also, the dignity of His person, and the glory of His perfections. In every respect He is chief—chief among the angels, having a name as much more excellent than they, as His nature is more excellent than theirs. He is first among the priests: Adam was a priest, Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Melchisedec, and Moses were priests; and then come the descendants of Ham in their rank and order; but Christ is Chief Priest. So He is among the prophets; He infinitely transcended Moses. He is so among the kings; “King of kings and Lord of lords,” the blessed and only Potentate, whose power and splendour overwhelms them all. And so He is among the shepherds—the Chief Shepherd, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and ending. 3. He is Chief Shepherd also in having set a perfect example of a shepherd’s duty in watchfulness, care, and love. What instructions He delivered; with what authority, dignity, and power! 4. And, finally, He is called Chief Shepherd on account of His exaltation and majesty in the heavenly world. He has a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

II. THE APPEARANCE WHICH HE SHALL HEREAFTER MAKE IN GLORY; and the word “appear” denotes that He is now hidden. The God of this world has blinded the eyes of many, that they neither see nor believe. And as it respects bodily vision, He is hidden also from His own people; for we walk by faith and not by sight. 1. But the passage before us speaks of His appearance; He is to be made manifest. As the heavens were opened at the baptism, and the Holy Ghost descended visibly in the shape and appearance of a dove, so are the heavens hereafter to be opened, and the Chief Shepherd will appear and descend again. 2. And respecting the time of this appearance, it is reserved in the bosom of heaven, as a deep secret—not one of the holy angels is permitted to know—not one of the spirits of the just made perfect, have any more apprehension of the time of the second advent than you or I have. 3. Respecting the purpose of His coming. It is not to teach, to suffer, and to die; this He did once, and will do it no more. He will come, it is said, without a sin-offering unto salvation; He will come to accomplish the resurrection of all the dead. 4. And as to the manner of the Advent. I take it that all which was seen and heard at Sinai, the greater revelation of Divine power and justice, when the sign of the Son of Man was seen in heaven, and Jerusalem was overturned, is but a faint type and foreshadow of that which shall then be. Oh, all miracles, all prodigies of Divine power, which have taken place from the beginning of the world to this day, will be as nothing amidst all the miracles which shall then be accomplished. It will be a day of God emphatically, in which it will be seen what God can do. 5. And now let those of us who are in the ministry learn what we are to look for. Contempt there may be from men, but there will be honour of God. (*J. Stratten.*) **Ye shall receive a crown of glory.**—*The faithful minister* :—I. I shall describe the nature, qualifications, and duties of the ministerial office as stated in the context. 1. I shall consider the duties which this figurative description of the pastoral office implies. (1) It is incumbent on a Christian shepherd to feed the flock. And what is the provision with which he is to feed them? Food for the mind and heart, suited to their condition as rational beings, as fallen sinners, and as immortal creatures, the truth as it is in Jesus. (2) Inspection of the state of the flock is another duty implied in this figure. We should know the circumstances of our people, the sorrows which oppress, the cares which perplex, the sins which beset them, and the difficulties which embarrass them, in order that we may give to each “a portion of meat in due season.” (3) Protection of his flock is also the duty of a shepherd. Is not Satan perpetually going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour? Is not the spirit of the world ever watching for an opportunity to devastate the interests of piety in our churches? Are there not heresies ever lurking about the pastures of truth? (4) Affectionate tenderness is generally associated with the character of a shepherd. (5) A faithful minister will enforce all his instructions by his example. 2. The apostle states in a negative form the manner in which the duties of the pastoral office are to be entered upon and discharged. (1) A minister is not to take upon him the oversight of a flock under constraint, but with a willing mind. (2) We are forbidden to take the

oversight of the flock for the sake of filthy lucre. (3) A Christian minister is not to lord it over God's heritage. He has no dominion over the conscience; his power in the church is ministerial, not legislative. II. I shall consider HIS SUBORDINATION AND RESPONSIBILITY TO CHRIST. These are implied in the expression, "the Chief Shepherd." It is needless to say that this refers to our Divine Lord. This epithet implies—1. His superiority to all others. They are mere men of the same nature as their flocks; He in His mysterious and complex person unites the uncreated glories of the Godhead with the milder beauties of the perfect man. They (in a good sense of the term) are hired pastors; He is the great Proprietor of the sheep. They partake of the infirmities of the people; He is holy, harmless, and undefiled. They are encompassed with ignorance, and with the best intentions often err in the direction of the church. Unerring wisdom characterises all His dispensations. They possess affection for their flock, but the warmest bosom that ever glowed with ministerial love is as the frigid zone itself compared with the love of His heart. They are weak, and are often ready to sink under the multiplied cares of office; but though the government is upon His shoulder, He fainteth not, neither is weary. They are mortal, and continue not by reason of death; He is the "blessed and only Potentate, who only hath immortality," and reigns, as Head over all things to His Church, not "by the law of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life." 2. This epithet implies the authority of Christ. He, in this respect, is the Chief Shepherd. It is exclusively His right to rule in the Church, to regulate all its concerns and all its officers. III. Turn we now to contemplate THE FAITHFUL MINISTER'S GLORIOUS REWARD. 1. The reward will be bestowed when the Chief Shepherd shall appear. 2. But I must consider of what the reward is to consist. "He shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1) The figure implies honourable distinction. The crown was an emblem of honour. The faithful pastor will no doubt be singled out amidst the solemnities of the last day, and occupy a station where every eye will behold him. He will receive a public testimony of approbation from the Chief Shepherd. (2) Perfect felicity is evidently implied in this figurative description of a minister's reward. The crown of victory was worn on days of public rejoicing, and he who wore it was considered the happiest of the festive throng, and the centre of the universal joy. He received the congratulations of the admiring multitude as having reached the summit of human happiness. The apostle, therefore, intended to include the idea of perfect happiness in his beautiful allusion. The holy pastor shall partake, in common with his people, of all those sublime felicities which the Father hath prepared for them that love Him. (3) Eternal duration is ascribed by the apostle to the honour and happiness promised in the text. (*J. A. James.*)

Vers. 5-7. **Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves.**—*Counsels to the younger* :—**I. SUBMISSION.** 1. The younger are to submit to the elders. Are you young in years, or in the experience of the Christian life? Be not wise in your own conceit, but be willing to receive the advice of your superiors. 2. All are to be subject one to another. **II. HUMILITY.** "And be clothed," or rather, "clothe yourselves with humility." 1. Humility is a garment to be put on. And what garment is more beautiful than humility? 2. A reason is assigned. (1) "God resisteth the proud." (2) But to the humble—the lowly-minded—God gives grace, or favour, pouring it down upon them in richest plenty. 3. Humble yourselves, therefore, says the apostle, and this shall be the result: "He will exalt you in due time." **III. TRUST IN GOD;** casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. Humility is closely allied with confidence. 1. Let us look at the import of this exhortation. It is to trust our heavenly Father with ourselves and all our concerns. 2. And here is our warrant for the great privilege: "He careth for you." (*Thornley Smith.*) **All of you be subject one to another.**—*Mutual respect* :—There is a general complaint in our day that reverence is rapidly becoming extinct. The sentiment of respect is gone; each one stands upon his own powers and his own right. I suppose all of us, in a certain degree, recognise the truth of this charge against our own time. We may ask ourselves whether this feeling of personal independence is not in itself a good which may make amends for many losses that accompany the acquisition of it. But any consolation which we might derive from this last reflection is checked by another. Can we claim this sentiment of personal independence as at all characteristic of ourselves? Is it not fading along with the one which appears to contend with it? Is there not less of self-reliance than there was? I. But a sentence like this, if we felt it to be indeed a command, "All of you be subject one

to another,"—would not that be something more than these speculations about the decline of reverence in an age or a country? That speaks to me. It tells me of a temper which ought to exist in society, which would preserve it; but of a temper which is first of all to be cultivated in myself—which cannot by possibility be diffused through a mass, except as it is formed in the heart of a man. We may look at once to the root of the matter and see whether our respect is merely the effect of the circumstances and accidents in which we live; whether it depends on some external conventional witness of propriety; whether it has been merely taught us by the precept of men; or whether it proceeds from an under source, and is kept alive by springs within, which the Spirit of God Himself is renewing continually. The Bible and Christianity are continually forcing this thought upon us, that nothing can stand which has not a foundation; that if we wish any social edifice to bear the winds and rain, we must dig deep and build it upon a rock; that the passion of the heart for external things and forms, though it looks strong, is not a safe one—not one upon which we can depend. To this point then the apostle brings us. He recognises the relation of younger to elder as a very deep relation, involving duties, calling for subjection. With this natural relation he connects others equally real, though not equally acknowledged. But he has no hope that his admonitions will be heeded unless the principle which lies beneath them is apprehended. "All of you be subject one to another." This reverence is not one grounded ultimately upon differences of position or differences of age. Unless each man cherishes it toward every other man; unless he feels that there is a grandeur and awfulness in the fellow-creature who is not distinguished from him by any external signs of superiority at all, who has all the external signs of inferiority—unless he feels that there is (the word is a strong one, but it is St. Peter's and we cannot change it) a subjection due to every such man, that a positive deference is to be paid him—he will not keep alive the other kind of respect, it will assuredly perish. The old oriental notion that royalty is mysterious, and that when it casts away mystery it ceases to obtain respect, is unquestionably grounded on a great truth. St. Peter does not deny the mystery, but he finds this mystery in the being of man himself; every one he meets is the shrine of it; every beggar carries in him that which an archangel cannot look into, which can be described in no words, measured by no human standards. Try to think of that man as having a whole world within him, unknown to you, unknown to him, which is yet a more wonderful world than this which his eyes and yours look upon; nearer to the centre from which this external one receives its light and heat. Try to think so! But will the trial succeed? Is there any chance of forcing ourselves into so strange a state of feeling? Is not this sympathy with people utterly different from ourselves a special gift to a few individuals, commonly women rather than men? And is it not more properly called pity than reverence? II. St. Peter meets these questions in the second part of the text: "Be clothed with humility." St. Peter knew—no one better—that it is not in station nor in mere example to make a man humble. He was a fisherman, yet he was proud. He conversed with our Lord for three years. He was low, but he aspired to be high. He might be spurned by the people of Judæa as a Galilean, or by the Romans as a Jew; but perhaps he should set his foot upon the necks of both; he should have some goodly place in his Master's kingdom, if not the highest place of all. The self-confidence was brought to the test and fell. What darkness closed in upon him then and shut out all the past and the future! What light was really coming to him through that darkness—a light that illuminated past, present, and future! Such phrases as these, then, which occur so often in the New Testament, "Put on Christ," "Having the mind of Christ," "Be clothed with humility," which are often cast aside as mere figures of speech, oriental modes of thought, were the most accurate, the most exactly corresponding to his inward experience, which the apostle could use. III. It introduces and explains the third clause of the text, "For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." "How shall I be rid of this pride, it is so natural, so ingrained?" This must have been St. Peter's question very often; it must be ours. At last he found the answer. It was a terrible one. It was an everlasting one. When he was proud he was not sinning against a rule, a precept; he was resisting God. Every act of pride was nothing more than doing battle against Him; refusing to be ruled and moved by Him. And all humility meant nothing else but yielding to His government—but permitting the Spirit of Christ to hold that spirit which He had redeemed, and claimed for His own. And when a man is once bowed to the conviction that he is not meant to be what his Master and King refused to be, that

it is not condescension in him to be on a level with those to whom the Prince of the kings of the earth levelled Himself, "God giveth grace." All the powers of the universe are then conspiring with him, not pledged to crush his wild Titanic ambition. IV. St. Peter then could transfer his own hardly-won experience to the Church, and could say in his Catholic Epistle to the dispersed of that time, to the dispersed through all time, "All of you be subject one to another." So he asserted the true condition of a society while he took down the conceit of its separate members; so he exalted each of these members in the very act of depressing him. V. Generally this rule of being subject one to another, when applied to a society, implies that we should respect the opinions, habits, individual peculiarities, hereditary prepossessions of every man with whom we have to do; that we should take it for granted he has something which we need; that we should fear to rob him of anything which God has given him. This respect for him does not come from our caring more for him than for truth. It is part of our homage to truth. There is a danger of making him less true, of alienating him from truth, through our desire to attach him to ourselves. And therefore that same subjection one to another must make us resolute to maintain all truth so far as we have grasped it; vehement in denouncing all the habits of mind which, we know from ourselves, are unfavourable to the pursuit of truth, and undermine the love of it. And so this submission to man, which is in very deed submission to God, will preserve us from all servility; from that kind of deference to the judgment of individuals or of multitudes which is incompatible with genuine manliness, because it is incompatible with genuine reverence. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Seniors should not be over-exacting*:—There are occasions when it is very helpful to our composure and equanimity to look at our debtor account, and not merely at the credit side. We may have a real claim to another's deference, and still may be in many respects inferior to him. It is right that the younger should defer to and honour the elder; but it is equally right that the elder should not insist too much upon bare seniority. For others may be in their best bloom and vigour, while we are already in the decline of both. And let us not forget that with all our eldership we are but of yesterday. (*J. A. Bengel.*) **Be clothed with humility.**—*Humility illustrated and enforced*:—I. **HUMILITY ILLUSTRATED.** 1. When St. Austin was asked what was the first grace of a Christian, he answered, humility: what the second, humility: what the third, humility. This grace is more fundamental to the nature of all true religion than any other grace whatever. The foundation of repentance is laid in an abasing sense of our guilt. The reason why men are not humble is, that they do not see the greatness of God. It is the effect of all knowledge to humble us, by producing a sense of our distance from the object which we contemplate: the farther we advance in knowledge, the more this distance widens on our view: hence where an Infinite Being, God, is the object of contemplation, there must be infinite scope for humility in His worshippers. The gospel is peculiarly adapted to produce this feeling: this is its very end and effect: "no flesh shall glory in His presence; the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." This effect arises from the very constitution of the gospel; as it is a revelation of the free grace of God to sinners, without any respect to moral or natural differences of character. II. **THE MOTIVE BY WHICH SUCH A TEMPER IS RECOMMENDED.** 1. "God resisteth the proud." The expression is very emphatic; He sets Himself in battle array against him; marks him as an object of peculiar indignation. It is not so said of any other temper. When the heart is filled by pride, nothing but spiritual barrenness and hardness can ensue. In a word, the proud are equally disqualified for the duties of Christianity here, and for the blessings of glory hereafter. 2. "But," as it is added, "He giveth grace to the humble." The same words are used by the apostle James, with the additional expression, "He giveth more grace." The humble feel their poverty, and pray for grace; and their prayers are heard. III. Let us, then, **SEEK AND CHERISH THIS GRACE**, the only temper that can make us shine before God, the only one that can render us blessings to each other. The apostle exhorts us to "be clothed with humility." Men always use and wear their clothing, and we are to be clothed with this grace as a permanent vesture. It should pervade every part of our character; all the faculties of the mind: it should regulate the understanding, the will, and the affections. And then all other graces will shine the brighter through the veil of humility: it will shed a cheering influence on all. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *The loftiness of humility*:—This is St. Peter's command. Are we really inclined to obey it? For, if we are, there is nothing more easy. Whosoever wishes to get rid of pride may do so. Whosoever

wishes to be humble need not go far to humble himself. But how? Simply by being honest with himself, and looking at himself as he is. The world and human nature look up to the proud successful man. One is apt to say, "Happy is the man who has plenty to be proud of. Happy is the man who can divide the spoil of this world with the successful of this world. Happy is the man who can look down on his fellow-men, and stand over them, and manage them, and make use of them, and get his profit out of them." But that is a mistake. That is the high-mindedness which goes before a fall, which comes not from above, but is always earthly, often sensual, and sometimes devilish. The true and safe high-mindedness, which comes from above, is none other than humility. Better to think of those who are nobler than ourselves, even though by so doing we are ashamed of ourselves all day long. What loftier thoughts can man have? What higher and purer air can a man's soul breathe? The truly high-minded man is not the proud man, who tries to get a little pitiful satisfaction from finding his brother men, as he chooses to fancy, a little weaker, a little more ignorant, a little more foolish, than his own weak, ignorant, foolish, and perhaps ridiculous, self. Not he; but the man who is always looking upwards to goodness, to good men, and to the all-good God; filling his soul with the sight of an excellence to which he thinks he can never attain; and saying, with David, "All my delight is in the saints that dwell in the earth, and in those who excel in virtue." And why does God resist and set Himself against the proud? To turn him out of his evil way, of course, if by any means he may be converted and live. And how does God give grace to the humble? Listen to Plutarch, a heathen; a good and a wise man, though; and one who was not far from the kingdom of God, or he would not have written such words as these: "It is our duty," he says, "to turn our minds to the best of everything; so as not merely to enjoy what we read, but to be improved by it. And we shall do that by reading the histories of good and great men, which will, in our minds, produce an emulation and eagerness which may stir us up to imitation. We may be pleased with the work of a man's hands, and yet set little store by the workman. Perfumes and fine colours we may like well enough: but that will not make us wish to be perfumers, or painters: but goodness, which is the work, not of a man's hands, but of his soul, makes us not only admire what is done, but long to do the like. And therefore," he says, "he thought it good to write the lives of famous and good men, and to set their examples before his countrymen. And having begun to do this," he says in another place, "for the sake of others, he found himself going on, and liking his labour, for his own sake; for the virtues of those great men served him as a looking-glass, in which he might see how, more or less, to order and adorn his own life. Indeed, it could be compared," he says, "to nothing less than living with the great souls who were dead and gone, and choosing out of their actions all that was noblest and worthiest to know. What greater pleasure could there be than that," he asks, "or what better means to improve his soul? By filling his mind with pictures of the best and worthiest characters, he was able to free himself from any low, malicious, mean thoughts, which he might catch from bad company. If he was forced at times to mix with base men, he could wash out the stains of their bad thoughts and words, by training himself in a calm and happy temper to view those noble examples." So says the wise heathen. Was not he happier, wiser, better, a thousand times, thus keeping himself humble by looking upwards, than if he had been feeding his petty pride by looking down, and saying, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are"? If you wish, then, to be truly high-minded, by being truly humble, read of, and think of, better men, wiser men, braver men, more useful men than you are. Above all, if you be Christians, think of Christ Himself. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *On humility*:—I. I SHALL MENTION SOME OF THE CASES IN WHICH HUMILITY OF SOUL WILL SHOW ITSELF. 1. The natural powers of the human mind will be spoken of with modesty. 2. When he thinks of his graces and attainments, the Christian is clothed with humility. 3. Another genuine expression of humility is a ready acknowledgment of our constant dependence. II. I SHALL RECOMMEND THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY. 1. That "he who humbly himself shall be exalted," holds good with regard to our connections amongst our fellow-men. 2. The advantages of this grace are not confined to temporal consequences; they extend to a future and eternal state. 3. The inhabitants of heaven are celebrated for this grace; and any who are unfurnished with it cannot be members of their society. 4. To recommend the cultivation and practice of this grace, remember our blessed Lord exemplified it in the whole of His conduct. III. I SHALL DIRECT TO AN IMPROVEMENT OF THIS DISCOURSE. 1. Though the language of the text speaks

of humility as something that is external, "Be clothed with humility," nevertheless, if the heart is not humbled, all is empty show. 2. Let it be remembered that this grace is needful in every rank and condition of life. 3. Consider the exhortation, "Be clothed with humility," as given by the apostle Peter; and it will direct us to a very particular improvement. "Be clothed with humility." This grace is not only a robe of ornament, but a shield of defence. When it adorns the heart and life, it defends the head also in the day of battle. (*Robert Foote.*) *Humility*:—I. THE NATURE AND THE EFFECTS OF HUMILITY. 1. Humility, as it relates to our own private thoughts and judgment, requires that we should entertain no better an opinion of ourselves than we deserve. To judge too severely of ourselves, and to fancy we are guilty of faults from which we are free, cannot be humility, because there can be no virtue in mistake and ignorance. Only as we have all a propensity to extenuate our defects, and to overrate our good deeds, it is safest to correct this bent by forcing the mind somewhat towards the contrary way, and frequently to review our failings, and the many causes which we have of rejecting all conceited thoughts. The imperfections common to human nature are these: Mortality; a stronger propensity to evil than to good; an understanding liable to be frequently deceived, and a knowledge which at the best is much confined. The infirmities peculiar to ourselves are those defects either in goodness, or in knowledge, or in wisdom, by which we are inferior to other persons. To be sensible of these faults, is humility as it relates to ourselves: to overlook them is pride. 2. True humility, as it influences our behaviour towards our Maker, produces a religious awe, and banishes presumption and carelessness and vainglory. 3. Between an unmanly contempt and disregard of ourselves, with an abject fear and blind reverence of others, which is one extreme, and a conceited, overbearing insolence, which is the other extreme, true humility proceeds, always uniform and decent. The humble person never assumes what belongs not to him; he desires to possess no more power, and to receive no more respect from others than is suitable to his own character and condition, and appointed by the customs of society. He is not a rigid exacter of the things to which he has an undoubted right; he can overlook many faults; he is not greatly provoked at those slights which put vain persons out of all patience. II. THE MOTIVES TO THE PRACTICE OF IT. 1. Humility is a virtue so excellent that the Scriptures have in some sort ascribed it even to God Himself. Humility consists principally in a due sense of our defects, our transgressions, our wants, and the obligations which we have received. Therefore such humility cannot be in God, who possesses all perfections. But there is a part of humility, as it relates to our behaviour towards men, called condescension; and this is sometimes represented in Scripture as a disposition not unworthy of the Divine nature. 2. The example of our Saviour is an example of every virtue, particularly of humility. 3. In the behaviour of the angels, as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures, we find that part of humility called condescension, or a cheerful submission to any offices by which the good of others may be promoted. Hence we learn to think it no disgrace to be, as our Lord says He was, the servant of all. In truth, we cannot be more creditably employed. 4. It is affirmed in many places of Scripture, that humility secures to us the favour of God, and will bring down His blessing upon ourselves and our undertakings. 5. Humility usually gains the esteem and love of men, and consequently the conveniences, at least, the necessaries of life. Since all love themselves, they will probably favour those who never provoke, insult, deride, or injure them, who show them civility, and do them good offices. The humble person, therefore, takes the surest way to recommend himself to those with whom he is joined in society, to increase the number of his well-wishers and friends, and to escape or defeat the assaults of detraction, envy, and malice. 6. The most certain present recompense of humility is that which arises from its own nature, and with which it repays the mind that entertains it; and a very valuable recompense it would be, though it were the only one allotted to this virtue. A humble person neither hates nor envies any one; therefore he is free from those very turbulent vices which are always a punishment in themselves. He is not discomposed by the slights or censures of others. If he has undesignedly given some occasion for them, he amends the fault; if he deserves them not, he regards them as little. He is contented with his condition, if it be tolerable; and, therefore, he finds satisfaction in all that is good, and overlooks, and in some measure escapes, all that is inconvenient in it. He has a due sense of his unworthiness and defects; by which he is taught to bear calamities with patience and submissiveness, and thereby to soften their harsh nature, and to allay their violence. 7. Lastly: from the account which we have given

of humility, we may draw this conclusion, that it is not, as the haughty are inclined to imagine, an unmanly and sordid disposition. It is indeed a virtue so remote from meanness of spirit, that it is no bad sign of a great and exalted mind. On the contrary, if we would know what meanness of spirit is, and how it acts, let us look for it amongst the proud and insolent, and we shall not lose our labour. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *Christian humility*:—I. WHEREIN CONSISTS THE GRACE OF CHRISTIAN HUMILITY. 1. Humility is directly opposed to pride. As pride consists in having high thoughts of oneself, so humility consists in having low apprehensions of ourselves. Pride is the child of ignorance, humility the offspring of knowledge. They are not opposite errors, between which truth and goodness lie, but the former is a vice, the latter is a virtue; the one is the feeling generated by the belief of a lie, the other is the temper of mind produced by the reception of the truth. Humility may be considered in a twofold point of view, as it respects God and as it respects our fellow-creatures, but in these different aspects it is not two virtues, but the same correct estimate of our character and condition influencing our conduct towards God and man. Humility consists in a due sense of our dependence. Pride can only exist in a fancied state of independence; a feeling of obligation wounds; that of constant dependence mortifies pride. Yet man is entirely a dependent being. We derive everything from God: "In Him we live and move, and have our being." If we are humble, it will be a pleasing thought to us, that God has unlimited control over us, that we owe everything to Him, and that He has an indisputable right to order our affairs according to the good pleasure of His will. In the discharge of duty, in prosperity and adversity, in circumstances of perplexity, or in all our plans for the future, we shall not lean to our own understanding, nor rely upon our own strength, but rather trust in the Lord with our whole hearts, we shall acknowledge Him in all our ways, and look up to Him for the direction of our steps. But we are not only dependent on God, we are so in a subordinate sense on our fellow-creatures. While society is formed of different ranks and orders, there is an intimate union between them, and a constant dependence of the parts on each other. The higher cannot do without the lower ranks, and the latter are almost equally dependent on the former. 2. Humility consists of a proper estimate of our relative importance. As it respects God we are as nothing before Him; He is the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity; from everlasting to everlasting He is God; boundless in might, infinite in all His perfections. Humility towards men will consist very much in a due estimate of our relative importance, not only to each other, but in the view of the Divine Being. Whatever nominal distinctions are recognised in the world, humility will feel that God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the earth. What are the mole-hills of distinction, the little elevations of human society, when we contemplate it in the mass? or what are they in the estimation of God, who is no respecter of persons? Humility will not put an extravagant value on the distinctions of earth; it will be kind and courteous to all, and in all the suffering and misery it may be called to contemplate in others, it will feel the irresistible force of the appeal, Am I not a man and a brother? It will be ready to render to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. 3. Humility will also consist in a low estimate of our knowledge. "Be not wise," says the apostle, "in your own conceit." In all the distinctions of society there are none in which vanity and self-conceit are so cherished as in that of human literature. Now humility will moderate our estimate of what we know; it will teach us that literary distinction arises far more from adventitious circumstances, over which we have no control, than from any native superiority of mind; and that many of those whom the providence of God has precluded from the cultivation of their minds would, with equal advantages as ourselves possessed, have far outstripped us in the acquisition of knowledge. Humility will cherish a conviction of the imperfection of our faculties. It will feel on every side the bounds of human knowledge: the voice of God saying, "So far shalt thou go and no farther." 4. Humility consists in a correct estimate of our moral condition. (1) We are not only subjects of the Divine government, but we are guilty creatures, under the condemnation of the law of God. Whatever the pride of man may suggest, "we are all gone out of the way, we are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one." Humility rightly estimates this moral desolation. It thus prepares the mind for the revelation of God's mercy, to welcome the glad tidings of a Saviour, and to submit to the Divine method of forgiving sins. And if through grace we are brought to depend on Christ for salvation, humility will characterise every subsequent estimate of ourselves. (2) A proper estimate of our moral condition will

express itself appropriately towards our fellow-men. II. WE MUST ENFORCE THE CULTIVATION OF HUMILITY UPON YOU BY VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS. 1. It is in its own nature necessary to a reception of Christianity. 2. Humility is also an essential part of religion. Our hearts cannot be right with God until we apprehend His majesty and our own meanness—until we realise our entire dependence on Him—until, with humble and imploring faith, we are looking to the Saviour for salvation, and disposed to say, “Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.” Humility is equally necessary to our perseverance in the Divine life: the dependence on God it generates is the vitality of our religion; the self-diffidence it creates is our best security. 3. God has put peculiar honour on humbleness of mind, while He has expressed His detestation of the opposite spirit. “Every one proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” “A high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.” But, on the contrary, He everywhere commends an humble spirit; it is the disposition of mind He delights to favour. “Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly.” 4. This virtue is enforced by the conduct of our Lord. 5. Humility is an undying grace; it will flourish more perfectly in heaven. All the saints and angels are clothed in this appropriate garb of a creature. Let us, then, cultivate a quality of character which will abide with us through eternity, which will constitute a portion of the bliss of heaven; it will enlarge our happiness on earth, and eminently meeten us for future glory. (*S. Summers.*) *Humility*:—The word itself and its history are interesting. “There are cases,” says Coleridge, “in which more knowledge, of more value, may be conveyed by the history of a word than by the history of a campaign.” Now take this word humility. It was not a new word when the New Testament was written. It had been used for years. Only it is striking that almost without exception the word humility, used before the time of Christ, is used contemptuously and rebukingly. It always meant meanness of spirit. To be humble was to be a coward. Where could we find a more striking instance of the change that the Christian religion brought into the world, than in the way in which it took this disgraceful word and made it honourable? To be humble is to have a low estimation of one’s self. That was considered shameful in the olden time. Christ came and made the despised quality the crowning grace of the culture that He inaugurated. Lo! the disgraceful word became the key-word of His fullest gospel. He redeemed the quality, and straightway the name became honourable. Think what the change must have been. Think with what indignation and contempt men of the old school in Rome and Athens must have seen mean-spiritedness, as they called it, taken up, inculcated and honoured, proclaimed as the salvation of the world, and Him in whom it was most signally embodied made the Saviour and King of men. Ah, it seems to me more and more that it must have been very hard for those early disciples to have believed in Christ. But let us see, if we can, what the change was that Christianity accomplished, and how it came about. The quality that Christianity rescued and glorified was humility. Humility means a low estimate or value of one’s self. But all values are relative. The estimate we set on anything depends of course on the standard with which we compare it. 1. Now Christianity’s great primary revelation was God. Much about Him it showed men, but first of all it showed them Him. He, the Creator, the Governor, became a presence clear and plain before men’s hearts. His greatness, His holiness, His love—nay, we cannot describe Him by His qualities, for He is greater than them all—He, by the marvellous method of the Incarnation, showed Himself to man. He stood beside man’s work. He towered above, and folded Himself about man’s life. He entered into men’s closets and took possession of men’s hearts. And what then? God in the world must be the standard of the world. Greatness meant something different when men had seen how great He was; and the manhood which had compared itself with lesser men and grown proud, now had a chance to match itself with God, and to see how small it was, and to grow humble about itself. Just imagine that when you and I were going on learning our lessons, doing our work, exercising our skill here on the earth, and proud of our knowledge, our strength, and our skill—just suppose that suddenly Omniscience towered up above our knowledge, and Omnipotence above our strength, and the Infinite Wisdom stood piercing out of the sight of our ignorant and baffled skill. Must it not crush the man with an utter insignificance? What is the use of heaving up these molehills so laboriously close by the gigantic mountain-side? But if the revelation is not only this; if it includes not only the greatness but the love of God; if the majesty that is shown to us is the majesty of a father, which takes our littleness into his greatness, makes it part of itself, honours it, trains it, does not mock it, then there comes the true gracious

of humility. It is not less humble, but it is not crushed. It is not paralysed, but stimulated. The energy which the man used to get out of his estimate of his own greatness he gets now out of the sight of his father's, which yet is so near to him that, in some finer and higher sense, it still is his; and so he is more hopeful and happy and eager in his humility than he ever used to be in his pride. This is the philosophy of reverence and humility as enrichers of life and mainsprings of activity. 2. This is one, then, of the ways in which Christ rescued and exalted humility. He gave man his true standard. He set man's littleness against the infinite height of God. The next way that I want to speak of is even more remarkable. He asserted and magnified the essential glory of humanity. He showed us that the human might be joined with the Divine. Thus He glorified human nature. Ah, if a man must be humbled, and is exalted by his humility, when he sees God, surely when he sees the possibility of himself, there is no truer or more exalted feeling for him than to look in on what he is, and think it very mean and wretched by the side of what he might be, what his Lord has shown him that he was made for. Christ makes us humble by showing us our design. There is nothing more strange, and at the same time more truthful, about Christianity than its combination of humiliation and exaltation for the soul of man. If one wants to prove that man is but a little lower than the angels, the son and heir of God, he must go to the Bible. If he wants to prove how poor and base and Satan-like the soul of man can be, still to the Bible he must go. If you want to find the highest ecstasy that man's spirit ever reached, it is the Christian saint exulting in his God. Do you want to hear the bitterest sorrow that ever wrung this human heart? It is that same Christian saint penitent for his sin. I think we cannot but see the beauty of a humility like this if it once becomes the ruling power of a changed man's life, this humility born of the sight of a man's possible self. It has in it all that is good in the best self-respect. Nay, with reference to the whole subject of self-respect this seems to be true, that the only salvation from an admiration of our own present condition, which is pride, is to be found in a profound respect for the best possibility and plan of our being, which involves humility. So it is the sight of what God meant us to be that makes us ashamed of what we are. And it is the death of Christ for us, the preciousness that He saw in our souls making them worthy of that awful sacrifice, it is that which lets us see our own soul as He sees it in its possibility, and so lets us see it in its reality as He sees it too, and put our pride away and be humble. (*Ep. Phillips Brooks.*) *Clothed with humility*:—The image of the "clothing"—a word which is used only in this place in the Bible—is thought to have reference to a particular kind of white vestment which used to be worn by slaves. And it was made very long and large, that it might cover not only all the other dress, but the whole figure; and so it may be considered that the believer, remembering well that he is the follower of Him who "came not to be ministered unto but to minister," should place all he has and all he is under the folds of a mantling "humility," and array himself in a servile robe. But let me caution you not to think that "the clothing of humility" has anything to do with that robe of which the Bible speaks as "the wedding garment." It has nothing to do with it, except that God invariably makes this the lining for that. That is something from without a man; this is from within. That is saving; this is evidential. Now I am persuaded that the first way to grow humble is to be sure that you are loved. The education of almost any child will teach you that if you treat that child harshly, you will make his little heart stubborn and proud; but if he feels that you love him, he will gradually take a gentler tone. So it is with the education through which we are all passing to the life to come. The first thing God does with His child is to make the child feel that He loves him. There is nothing which will stoop a man into the dust like the gentle pressure of the feeling "I am loved." The forgiven David, the woman at Jesus's feet, Peter under the look, John in the bosom. Let me advise you further. If you desire to cultivate that posture of mind, accustom yourself, force yourself to do acts of humiliation—whatever is most against your natural taste. There is a still deeper feeling without which you will never have on that "robe of humility"—you must often sit and receive the droppings of the Holy Ghost. You must meditate with open eye on the meek, humble face of Jesus. You must be in union with Christ. There is a false "humility" than which none can be more destructive to the character. It is of three kinds. There is "humility" of external things—in a mortification of the body. But it is a cloak, not a robe—a look, a posture, a ceremony. There is another counterfeit which Satan makes and calls "humility." It is what St. Paul calls in his Epistle to the Colossians a "voluntary humility"—

people thinking themselves unworthy to come to God. And there are those who do not know it, but who, like Peter, are under an appearance of "humility," indulging contemptuous pride. "Thou shalt never wash my feet." "I am not good enough to be saved. I am not worthy to come to the Lord's Supper. I cannot believe God loves me." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Humility explained and enforced*:—Humility is that Christian virtue without which no other can exist, and by which every other is beautified, for, whilst the flowers of all the Christian graces grow in the shade of the Redeemer's Cross, the root of them is humility. I. HUMILITY BECOMES US AS CREATURES. It may also be remarked that the temptation to pride, and consequently the exercise of humility, has very much to do with a comparative view of ourselves and others. It is not in the superiority which we possess over the inferior creatures that we are apt either to exaggerate the difference or to forget that it is from God, but it is in the little advantage which one man may happen to possess above another, whether in mental endowments, bodily powers, or worldly wealth. It is this minor distinction, the comparative difference between man and man, which excites envy in one party and creates haughtiness in another. But the judgment of humility is according to truth. This is the spirit of humility which, like the flower blooming in the valley, delights the eye of the contemplative, who, forgetting the gaudier plants of the garden, finds nothing to charm him so much as the simple beauties of nature. II. HUMILITY BECOMES US AS SINNERS. III. HUMILITY BECOMES US AS DISCIPLES OF CHRIST. 1. They must retain a humbling remembrance of past sins. Those sins, though forgiven by Jehovah, must not be forgotten by them, that they may see what they are in themselves, and understand how much they owe to redeeming love. 2. The Christian must also continually watch the state of his heart. 3. Whatever measures of holiness the Christian attains to, he must always remember that by the grace of God he is what he is. Thus all boasting is excluded, for he has nothing but what he has received. 4. There will always, whilst we are on the earth, remain much to be done, much to be attained. Every grace will be defective in measure and mixed with infirmity. The most faultless disciple will here find cause for humiliation. Conclusion: 1. What a delightful character is the man of distinguished humility. He may not have the glory in which the patriot, the hero, or the martyr is enshrined, but he is adorned with the beauties of holiness; he carries about with him the majesty of goodness, if not the dominion of greatness. 2. Learn from this subject to beware of false humility. True humility is diffident and retiring; it is not like the scentless flower, which turns its face to the sun throughout his course, as if for the purpose of being seen, but it is rather like the modest violet, which hides itself in obscurity, and sends forth fragrance from its deep retirement. It employs no herald, it unfolds no banner, it blows no trumpet, but, whilst conferring substantial benefits, it desires to be like the angels, who, while ministering to the heirs of salvation, are unseen and unknown by the objects of their attention. 3. Learn also, while you avoid false humility, to labour for that which is real. Let the young labour for this. Christian humility will teach you the most willing obedience, the most genuine affection, the most respectful demeanour towards your parents, and it will excite you to the most anxious endeavours for the promotion of their happiness. Let not the old neglect this spirit of humility. Do not aggravate the sorrows of your evil days by pride, by peevishness, or by discontent. When almost every leaf is gone from the rose of life, let not its thorns remain. Let parents manifest much of this temper in the treatment of their children. Always endeavour to persuade before you attempt to compel. This is the way to grow in grace, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (*T. Gibson, M.A.*) *Christian humility*:—In looking into the nature of humility, we discover that it does not involve meanness or servility. It is not pusillanimity. It contains no element that degrades human nature. It is not the quality of a slave, but of kings and priests unto God. It is a necessary trait in all finite character, and therefore it is perfectly consistent with an inviolable dignity and self-respect. I. In the first place, humility is becoming to man, because he is a CREATURE. Shall a being who was originated from nonentity by almighty power, and who can be reduced again to nonentity by that same power, swell with haughtiness? II. In the second place, humility is becoming to man, because he is a DEPENDENT BEING. 1. All his springs are in God. He is dependent for life, health, and all temporal things. He is dependent, above all, for spiritual life and health and all the blessed things of eternity. 2. Man is dependent not only upon his Creator, but also upon his fellow-creature. III. In the third place, man should be humble because he is a SINFUL BEING. Considering the peculiar attitude in which

guilty man stands before God, self-abasement ought to be the main feeling in his heart, for, in addition to the infinite difference there is originally between himself and his Maker, he has rendered himself yet more different by apostasy. The first was only a difference in respect to essence, but the last is a difference in respect to character. How strange it is that he should forget this difference, and, entering into a comparison of himself with his fellow-men, should plume himself upon a supposed superiority. The culprits are disputing which shall be the greatest at the very instant when their sentence of condemnation is issuing from the lips of their Judge! There is still another consideration under this head which strengthens the motive for humility. We have seen that the fact of sin furnishes an additional reason for self-abasement because it increases the distance between man and God; it has also made him still more dependent upon God. Nothing but pure and mere mercy can deliver him. But nothing interferes with the exercise of mercy like pride in the criminal. A proud man cannot be forgiven. It involves a self-contradiction. If there be self-asserting haughtiness in the heart, God can neither bestow grace nor man receive it. IV. A fourth and most powerful reason why man should be clothed with humility is found in THE VICARIOUS SUFFERING AND ATONEMENT OF CHRIST IN HIS BEHALF. Feeling himself to be a condemned sinner, and beholding the Lamb of God "made a curse for him" and bearing His sins in His own body on the tree, all self-confidence and self-righteousness will die out of his soul. (*G. T. Shedd, D.D.*)

Humility with the fruits of it.—I. TO EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF HUMILITY. Humility consists in a low opinion or esteem. Now the opinion which we form of ourselves is either absolute or comparative, and whichever way we judge it is very certain that a low opinion best becomes us, and is most suitable to our nature and state. 1. First, if we judge of ourselves absolutely, without comparing ourselves with any others, humility and truth too requires that our opinion should be very moderate and low. We know but little, and we live, alas! to little good purpose. What a mixture of corruption is there with every grace, and what a sully of sin in every duty! Again, as to the happiness of our state, what mortal does not feel that he is miserable? Pains and diseases afflict our bodies, crosses and disappointments perplex our circumstances, the gloom of melancholy gathers about the heart, and sorrows overspread the whole world. 2. Humility consisteth in having a low opinion of ourselves as compared with others, whether with God or with our fellow-creatures.

II. TO SET BEFORE YOU THE GOOD FRUITS OF HUMILITY. To this grace we may apply these words of the prophet, "It taketh root downward and beareth fruit upward" (*Isa. xxxvii. 31*), and the deeper the root is laid, the larger and fairer will the fruit be. 1. Meekness is one pleasant fruit which grows upon humility, and to this we may join the kindred grace of peaceableness or quietness of spirit (*chap. iii. 4*). 2. Patience is another good fruit of humility, with which we may join the kindred grace of submission. Now patience has respect either to God or man. (1) Patience in respect to God consisteth in a quiet submission to His afflictive providences without murmuring. (2) If we further consider patience as it respects men, as it is opposite to fretfulness at their faults and follies, this also is the fruit of humility; for if we were as sensible of our own follies as we should be, we should more patiently bear with the faults and follies of others. 3. Self-denial is another good fruit of humility, and how necessary a duty that is you will learn from those words of Christ (*Luke ix. 23*). We surely esteem the body at too high a rate when we pamper it to the hurt of the soul. 4. The last good fruit of humility which I shall here speak of is contentment. The humble man remembers that, be his worldly condition what it will, it is unspeakably better than he deserves. III. To urge upon you the exhortation in our text by A FEW MOTIVES. "Be ye clothed with humility." For—1. Consider how high an approbation God has expressed of this grace, and how hateful pride is to Him. 2. Consider what a lovely and engaging example of humility Christ hath set us. 3. Let me recommend humility as a necessary part of your preparation for heaven. (*D. Jennings.*)

Humility and its greatness.—I. Let us examine THE SOURCE AND GROUND OF HUMILITY. This is drawn from the knowledge of God and from the relation in which we stand to Him. Hence, where the knowledge of God is absent, the exercise of humility becomes impossible. Humility begins with the knowledge of God, and advances to the knowledge of ourselves. Thus we see at our first step that it consists of something we gain, not of aught we lose. The humble man is rich in his humility, for he has gained that which the proud man has not. Pride is the instinct of ignorance. But we must take another step, and ask how it is that the knowledge of God, instead of puffing a man up with the conceit of an acquisition, only produces humility and the most

prostrate lowliness of mind. It might be answered, because the knowledge itself is but a gift freely bestowed; it is a revelation, not a discovery, and therefore implies in itself the obligation of a receiver towards a donor. This is true, but a more complete reply is, that humility is produced by the impressiveness of the majesty and greatness of the Divine Being as revealed to us in His matchless perfections and infinite glory. This knowledge of the glory of God is not a work of nature but a gift of grace. This new knowledge becomes a test whereby we measure ourselves. We cannot help this self-application, since, in knowing God, we have gained a new idea altogether. And it is in the immense difference between what God is and what we are that Christian humility originates and grows. Then, when we read the inspired history of man, lowliness is increased. For there we are told not alone of the immortal spirit breathed into man, but of the Divine likeness in which we were first created, even in the image and similitude of God. And now, standing amid these wonders of revelation, with the wretched experience of ourselves as we are fresh and full upon us, there is not a truth which does not deepen our awe by the very wonderfulness of the realities to which we find ourselves related, and with which we stand in daily contact. For here is the wonder, that true humility grows out of self-respect. No man living has so high a conception of the dignity of human nature as the Christian. II. From the source and nature of Christian humility let us consider ITS PRACTICAL OUTGOING. Here, again, we must take the side turned towards God first; otherwise we shall be out of order. What are the characteristic feelings and what the corresponding acts which a profound humility produces in our intercourse with God? In the first place, it produces an absorbing and unmeasured admiration. In speaking of so great a being as God, adoration may perhaps be the better word, so long as it is understood to be the adoration not of fear but of love—the adoration of desire, of grateful affection, and of fervent praise. And then, out of adoring praise to the redeeming God by whom we live, arises simple trusting faith in Him. From praise and trust combined there will arise also implicit obedience. For admiration and trust exalt to the highest degree the glory of the Being admired and trusted. Then how can God be wrong in any way? and if right, then every word of His must be kept as a seal of our acceptance. And now we shall see how these three sentiments of adoration, trust, and obedience necessarily affect our relation towards our fellow-men. Gentle manners, gentle looks, gentle words ever considerate of other men's feelings, make the true Christian a natural gentleman, and invest him with an intuitive politeness which is but the outgoing of the Divine life within. (*E. Garbett, M.A.*) *Be clothed with humility*:—I. LET US BE CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY BEFORE GOD. God delights in it; it is the “ornament which in His sight is of great price.” A lady applied to a celebrated philanthropist on behalf of an orphan child. When he had bidden her draw on him for any amount, she said, “As soon as the child is old enough I will teach him to thank you.” “Stop (said the good man), you are mistaken; we do not thank the clouds for rain—teach the child to look higher and thank Him who gives both the clouds and the rain.” That was being clothed with humility before God. II. LET US BE CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY BEFORE THE WORLD—the proud and gainsaying world. This is the way in which we are to be lights to it and salt in it. Humility does more than argument. If it irritates, it impresses and convinces. An aged patriarch was tauntingly asked by a boastful young Pharisee, “Do you suppose that you have any real religion?” “None to speak of,” was the dignified answer, and it went sharp as a javelin into that young Pharisee’s bosom. III. LET US BE CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY BEFORE EACH OTHER. “Yea, all of you be subject one to another.” This is hardest of any—this wants more humility than either of the preceding. Mr. Newton’s favourite expression to his friends was, “I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be, but by the grace of God I am not what I once was.” (*James Bolton.*) *The garment of humility*:—No garment sits so well on human nature, and no ornament so gracefully conceals its deformity, as humility. Yet there is no dress which we find it more difficult to assume. There is something in our imperfect and unsanctified nature which revolts at the very idea of submission, condescension, and inferiority. I. WHAT IS MEANT BY BEING CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY. To cultivate this grace we need only contemplate ourselves as we really are, examine our true condition, look at ourselves in the mirror of truth and righteousness, and we shall come away humbled to the dust. II. SOME ADVANTAGES TO BE SECURED BY BEING HUMBLE. God’s commandments have nothing arbitrary about them. Whatever He ordains is for our good. 1. Humility is the great qualification for the reception of knowledge

and for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. A proud man will neither learn anything from his neighbour nor receive anything from his God. If a man thinks he knows enough already upon any given subject, he is not likely to learn much more. Humility opens the pathway to all knowledge. By it our minds become docile so that they are prepared to receive every new form of truth. And if we cherish this spirit, may we not learn from all around us? Humility also prepares for the reception of the Divine kingdom into the heart. 2. Humility is essential to the growth of the soul in holiness and grace. All true spiritual progress is the work of God. If he do not yield to the power and grace of God, how can He fashion him after His own will? Humility, then, prepares us to feel our inability to do any good thing of ourselves, and to look for all in God. 3. Humility opens the pathway to honour and glory (Isa. lvii. 15). 4. Humility is associated with the purest happiness. Humility in man helps him to maintain a serenity and calmness amidst all the storms of life. (*Harvey Phillips, B.A.*)

Two kinds of clothing:—A new suit of clothes! That's a subject in which you all take an interest. When a boy enters the army or navy he puts on a new suit of clothes, blue or red, and that reminds him that he is bound to serve his queen and country, and that he must not disgrace his uniform. I am going to speak to you to-day about some different kinds of clothing, some good, others bad. First of all, let us think of the clothes which God makes for His beautiful world. He clothes the grass of the field. Every tree has a different shaped dress and a different shade of colour. Even in the winter, when the trees look so bare and cold, they are still clothed by God. Trees have two sets of leaves, one set for the summer, the other for the winter. And God clothes the beasts and birds and gives each exactly the sort of dress which he requires. You have all seen the mole-hills in a field, and sometimes you have caught a glimpse of the mole himself. Well, God has clothed him in a dress like black velvet, which is just fitted for his home underground. The animals which live in cold regions have a warm clothing of fur, and those which live among snow and ice are white, so that their enemies may not easily see them. Now let us think about ourselves. In the Bible we hear of two kinds of clothing, the best and the worst. St. Peter says, "Be clothed with humility"; that's the best clothing. In the hundred and ninth Psalm we are told of a wicked man who "clothed himself with cursing as with a garment"; that's the worst clothing. Now I have noticed that very often when children are growing up into big lads and girls, there is a great change in their manners. Did you ever hear the old fable of the donkey who found a lion's skin? The donkey covered himself with the skin, and tried to play the lion and frighten the people. But some of them spied his long ears, and recognised his well-known voice, and he was soon stripped of his lion's skin and driven away. Now, my boys, if you are tempted to put on a suit of clothes which does not become you, if while still boys you put on the habits of a man, and of a bad man into the bargain, remember the fable of the ass in the lion's skin. But when a child has outgrown the good clothing of humility and put on a full suit of pride, there comes another evil from it. He often gives up his prayers and his Bible. I told you that the Bible speaks of the worst kind of clothing; it tells us of a man who "clothed himself with cursing as with a garment." I take cursing there to mean all sorts of bad language. The old Greeks tell us a story about the death of Hercules. That strong hero had shot his enemy, Nessus, with a poisoned arrow, and the garment of the slain man was all stained with poisoned blood. Before he died Nessus gave his clothing to the wife of Hercules, telling her that it would make her husband love her always. It came to pass after a time that she gave the fatal garment to her husband, and no sooner had he put it on than the poison seized upon him, and when, in his agony, he tried to put off the clothing, it clung all the tighter, and so he died, killed by his own poison. So it is with the man who clothes himself with a garment of cursing or bad talk; it clings to him and poisons him, body and soul. There are several other kinds of clothing of which I might warn you. One of these is self-righteousness. I have seen a man with a very glossy black suit of clothes, very carefully buttoned up, and at first sight he looked most clean and respectable. But when I came to look more closely, I found that his linen was anything but white and clean. His respectability was all outside. If your clothes are old and worn out or do not fit you, what must you do? You must get a new suit. Well, there are some kinds of clothing which we should cast off as soon as possible. If any of you have put on bad habits, filthy clothing, such as pride, or falsehood, or bad talk, you must change your clothes. Cast off the old garment, and go down on your knees, and ask God for Jesus Christ's sake to give you a new dress. (*H. J. Wilmot-Burton, M.A.*)

Work tends to humility :—I cannot but think that one of the truest ways in which Christianity has made humility at once a commoner and a nobler grace has been in the way in which it has furnished work for the higher powers of man, which used to be idle, and only ponder proudly on themselves. Idleness standing in the midst of unattempted tasks is always proud. Work is always tending to humility. Work touches the keys of endless activity, opens the infinite, and stands awe-struck before the immensity of what there is to do. Work brings a man into the great realm of facts. Work takes the dreamy youth who is growing proud in his closet over one or two sprouting powers which he has discovered in himself, and sets him out among the gigantic needs and the vast processes of the world, and makes him feel his littleness. Work opens the measureless fields of knowledge and skill that reach far out of our sight. Is not this what you would do for a boy whom you saw getting proud—set him to work? He might be of so poor stuff that he would be proud of his work, poorly as he would do it. But if he were really great enough to be humble at all, his work would bring him to humility. He would be brought face to face with facts. He would measure himself against the eternal pillars of the universe. He would learn the blessed lesson of his own littleness in the way in which it is always learned most blessedly, by learning the largeness of larger things. And all this, which the ordinary occupations of life do for our ordinary powers, Christianity, with the work that it furnishes for our affections and our hopes, does for the higher parts of us. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *Humility* :—There are some sins which have resisted every influence but that of Christianity, and over which even the gospel itself seems to obtain a precarious triumph. One of these is pride. To be proud is not only to be what Christianity condemns, but something essentially inconsistent with the first principles of its teaching, and with the special type of character which it seeks to create. Heathenism showed it no such antipathy. Unless it made itself specially ridiculous by trading on obviously false pretences, it was considered a becoming and reasonable thing. It is not difficult to understand how this should have been so. Pride, to be seen in its objectionable light, must be seen in connection with those truths about God and human nature which Christianity first made known to the world. It is only when it stands in their company it appears as Scripture represents it. How Christianity dethrones this idol of self we know very well. It reminds us that the great thing is not what a man has, but what he is. It reveals in the Person of Christ the true standard of moral excellence. Pride has to come down from its pedestal and take its place in the dust. We see we are not only wrong, but responsible for being wrong. We have been following false ideals. It seems almost impossible to conceive how a proud man can ever have been truly convicted of sin, or brought to receive the salvation of Christ as a free, unmerited gift. It seems more difficult still to believe that such an one is living by the faith of the Son of God, receiving as a sinner daily forgiveness, and as having nothing being indebted to Him for all things. It is hardly to be wondered at that the world should be sceptical of our Christian profession when it sees so much that directly contradicts it. Are we disposed to retract the confession which we made so sincerely when we cried for mercy, that of all sinners we are the chief? Or, are we forgetting what the world really is, as we saw it once in the light of the Cross, when its glory faded till it vanished away, and we cried, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"? Is it assuming its old importance? "Be clothed," says St. Peter, "with humility." And as we read the words we feel how little of this clothing we have been accustomed to wear, how faintly we have realised the nature of the habit in which we should always be found apparelled. The word which the apostle uses here, and which is translated, "Be clothed," is interesting and somewhat rare. It means literally "to tie or gird on," and is so rendered in the Revised Version, but apparently it also refers to the peculiar garment that was worn by slaves, and which was the usual mark or badge of their condition. I. First, St. Peter says, SEE THAT YOUR HUMILITY IS FASTENED TO YOU AS IT WERE SO SECURELY NOTHING SHALL BE ABLE TO DEPRIVE YOU OF IT. He recognises the risk of it being plucked off or laid aside. And among those to whom he wrote the risk was doubtless considerable. In so mixed a community as the Christian Church at that time it would be difficult to subordinate all selfish desires to the common good. And persecution, which was then active, might easily awaken a feeling of resentment or disdain. To be reviled and yet revile not again, to suffer wrong and take it patiently, is never an easy thing. In our case the danger may spring from a different quarter, but it is no less real. Perhaps we feel our

humility to be nothing but a cloak, something put on or assumed which is not natural to us, and in which we pose in a somewhat hypocritical guise. And, of course, a humility which is conscious of itself is no humility at all. It is the most odious of all possible counterfeits. But the girdle or overall of the slave to which St. Peter alludes was his natural dress. It simply indicated his servile condition. There was no inconsistency between the two. And, as we have seen, humility is the natural garb of the Christian, expressing his dependence on Jesus Christ, whose slave he is. Yet the temptation frequently comes to lay it aside, or to give way to a temper which makes it impossible to wear it. It is true, we argue to ourselves, we have much to keep us humble, but not more than these others, or perhaps so much, if they only knew it. Why, then, should we yield to them, or submit tamely to their assumptions? If we give them an inch, they will take an ell, and there is no end to the liberties some may allow themselves, or the length to which they may presume. All this is very natural, but is it Christian? Is it not renouncing the vesture of humility, and finding plausible excuses for the pride that is so ready to assert itself? There are interests that ought to be dearer to us than any personal considerations. Let us be clothed with humility. Let us keep it on firmly. Let our whole life in all its details be ruled by the remembrance that we are not our own, but Christ's slaves, and bound to act in accordance with our condition. II. But, secondly, BEING CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY MEANS THAT, BEING GIRT WITH THIS VESTURE OF SERVITUDE, WE ARE ALWAYS TO BE READY FOR SERVICE. There are some clothes in which a man cannot work. He puts them on for state occasions. So there are some Christians who always seem, so to speak, to be in dress clothes. They would be quite shocked if you asked them to do something that involved even a little hard work. They are much too dainty and refined for that. Or, they strike you as being available only on great occasions. Are we so clothed with humility as to remember that it is not ours to pick and choose, but to be ready at the Master's call? Do we remember that no act of service is too humble or obscure for us; that we are not to think there are some things for which we are too good, and which we are therefore justified in leaving undone? Whenever we do this, we discard our girdle or cloak of humility. We forget what manner of men we are and the character we wear. III. Again, St. Peter reminds us that humility is not only indispensable to our serving Christ, BUT ALSO TO OUR SERVING ONE ANOTHER. The correct text of the passage literally rendered runs thus: "Gird yourselves with humility for the sake of one another." And truly no better specific could be devised for developing the happiness and strength of a community. For a great part of the misery and confusion of the world pride is responsible. It makes joint effort impracticable, and is the creator of constant discord and misunderstanding. Pride is an insoluble particle. It resists fusion and protests against amalgamation. Humility presents no such obstacle. It facilitates union. It is mutual concession, "in honour preferring one another." "Be clothed," therefore, "with humility," writes the apostle, and as the precept is so confessedly difficult to obey, it may be well to suggest one or two directions. 1. Let us get out of the way of making ourselves the centre of everything. If we are Christians, self has been dethroned, and it must be forbidden all acts of usurpation. We have found a larger and nobler centre for life, and other interests that are greater and more commanding than our own. Let us put these first—the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Let us remember that these are the interests that endure. 2. A second suggestion I may offer is, that we should think most of all of Christ, and of pleasing Him. When He receives the proper place in our lives everything else will surely come right. It is only when He is forgotten, or His presence is faintly and fitfully realised, other things assume a disproportionate importance. We lose our standard of value, our justness of perception, and our whole perspective becomes confused. (*C. Moinet, M.A.*) *The shadow shortens*:—Opinion of ourselves is like the casting of a shadow, which is always largest when the sun is at the greatest distance. By the degrees that the sun approaches, the shadow shortens, and under the direct meridian light it becomes none at all. It is so with our opinion of ourselves; while the good influences of God are at the greatest distance from us, it is then always that we conceive best of ourselves; as God approaches the conceit lessens, till we receive the fuller measure of His grace, and then we become nothing in our own conceit, and God appears to be all in all. (*Dean Young.*) *Humility a beautiful dress*:—An Irish preacher named Thady Conellan, who greatly assisted Dr. Monck Mason in his labours connected with the revision of the Hibernian Bible Society's Irish Bible, was eminent not

only as an orator, a wit, and a humble unostentatious Christian, but was unmoved by the splendour and gaiety which surrounded him, and retained his simplicity amid it all. A magnificent duchess having one day asked him, "Pray, do you know Lady Lorton?" was quickly answered, "Yes, madam, I do; and she is the best-dressed lady in Ireland." "How very odd! Best-dressed lady in Ireland." What a strange man! "Pray, how is she dressed?" But her grace's surprise was converted to satisfaction when Thady rejoined, "Yes, madam, Lady Lorton is the best-dressed lady in Ireland, or in England either, for she is clothed in humility." *Vanity*:—Vanity, or love of display, is one of the most contemptible and pernicious passions that can take possession of the human mind. Its roots are in self-ignorance—its fruits are affectation and falsehood. Vanity is a kind of mental intoxication, in which the pauper fancies himself a prince, and exhibits himself in aspects disgusting to all observers. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Humility a preparation for heaven*:—

"Humble we must be, if to heaven we go;
High is the roof there, but the gate is low."

(*Robert Herrick.*)

Clothed with humility:—Humility is the beauty of grace. "Be clothed with humility." The Greek word imports that humility is the ribbon or string that ties together all those precious pearls, the rest of the graces. If this string break they are all scattered. (*T. Brooks.*) **God resisteth the proud.**—*The course of things against pride*:—No one need fail in life, in things temporal or things spiritual, through pride! and yet not be able to know what kept him back. Not temporally, not spiritually, will promotion come—any real progress—while self-conceit is there. The course of the universe is dead against that, and against those who are cursed with it. We do not wonder that the Almighty should "oppose Himself to the proud." Even we must often have thought how strange it is that man should be proud at all. What have we to be proud of. I. GOD "RESISTETH THE PROUD" IN HIS PROVIDENCE. The course of God's Providence, as a general rule, does (as a matter of fact) keep back the proud from positions of eminence. In practice, the most conceited persons one has ever known are those who have been the dearest failures. The pride tended to the failure, no doubt: but where other disqualifications rendered success impossible, the self-conceit alleviated the mortification of failure. For it is more pleasant for a man to think that he has been very unlucky, than to think he has been very incompetent and undeserving. But, setting aside the case of incorrigibles, it is very striking, as a matter of historical experience, how, when the sore discipline had been borne, when the old conceit was fairly taken out, the tide turned and great success came. Aye, the man could stand it now: and that which would once have intoxicated, was now taken with lowly thankfulness. True are the wise man's words, "Before honour is humility!" I know, of course, that the question may be put: Have we not sometimes seen self-conceited people in prominent places? And the answer must be, Not often, but sometimes, no doubt. But it is only in appearance that these cases are exceptions to the principle stated in the text. For God resists such, humbles them in various ways. Perhaps He allows them to get the prominent position and then prove conspicuously unfit for it; which is (to one of any worth) the sorest kind of failure. Or the conceited heart is hourly punished by a host of little mortifications and slights, keenly felt through all its morbidly-sensitive texture, from which the humble-minded are entirely free. Make him chief minister of the State, like Haman: and the proud man has all the enjoyment killed out of his lot by the slighting looks of one unmannerly Jew. Raise the proud man to the throne itself; and he holds his peace of mind at the mercy of any crowd that may raise the shout, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." II. HOW GOD "RESISTETH THE PROUD" IN HIS KINGDOM OF GRACE. "Where is boasting" here? "It is excluded." There is but one lowly gate of humble penitence by which any one can pass into that family of the redeemed in which alone is salvation. And then this repentance is not just once for all: it must be a daily thing, a strengthening habit. Look at the whole design of grace, and see how from first to last it resists all pride, and cuts hard all human self-sufficiency! It sets out by taking it for granted that we are all guilty, all helpless. It goes on to tell that we can be saved only by entire dependence on another. Then, in the design of grace, though we are saved through Christ only, we are called to the highest degree of purity, truthfulness, self-sacrifice, devotion

of heart and of life to God. Only through the communications of the Blessed Spirit are we able to do anything as we ought. He begins, He carries on, He ends our better life! Thus it is that in God's kingdom of grace there is no room for pride. It is not merely resisted, it is shut out altogether. And now we may humbly believe that we can discern the reason why "God resisteth the proud." There is not in our Heavenly Father, in our Blessed Saviour, the faintest infusion of that wretched jealousy of their creatures which old heathenism ascribes to its gods; that wretched jealousy of human power and wisdom,—even of human goodness, which we can trace in ancient classic tragedy. It is not a touchiness about His own importance, such as we should judge petty and contemptible in a man, that makes God resist the proud. It is because the thing is bad; because it is unlike us and our place; because it must be got rid of before we shall be fit either for this life or for a better. It is all for our true good and our true happiness that God opposes the ever-growing self-conceit. Thus He trains us for duty here and for rest hereafter. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *The proud abased and the humble exalted*:—I. THE FOLLY OF PRIDE. 1. Are we proud of our strength? It is far inferior to that of many beasts. 2. Our clothing? It is not so pretty as the peacock's. What is deficient in the head they put outside. 3. Our beauty? It is inferior to many flowers. 4. Our riches? That man is a fool who prides himself upon these, for he is below a chain of pearls or a knot of diamonds. 5. Our birth? He who plumes himself upon this is proud of the blessings of others, not his own. II. THE WICKEDNESS OF PRIDE. 1. It makes a man especially hateful to God (Prov. viii. 13, xvi. 5). 2. It is the most diabolical sin with which we are acquainted (1 Tim. iii. 6). 3. It is the most productive of all sins (Heb. ii. 5; Psa. x. 2; Prov. xiii. 10). III. THE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF PRIDE. It is the forerunner of shame. IV. THE CURE OF PRIDE—humility. 1. Be convinced of its great excellency. 2. Store your mind with knowledge. 3. Its effects. (1) It consists not in railing against yourself. (2) It consists more in feeling than saying. Lessons: 1. Never be ashamed of birth, parents, trade, or poverty. 2. Let others be praised in thy presence; object nothing; his disparagement increases not thy worth. 3. Nay, exalt thy brother, if truth and God's glory need it. Cyrus played only with those more skillful than himself, lest he should shame them by his victory, that he might learn something of them, and do them civilities. (*J. Summerfield, M.A.*) **Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.**—*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God*:—There is nothing which more peculiarly marks the character of the faithful Christian than the manner in which he submits to the dispensations of God. The worldly spirit either repines under misfortune, or is disconsolate; or, at the best, bears up with a mere animal fortitude; it finds no comfort but such as is afforded by the vain world. Religion is the only source from which true comfort can be drawn, and we see her triumphs manifested in the most remarkable manner when the faithful servant of God is overwhelmed with trouble. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." Here we may discover powerful reasons intimated why we should bring ourselves into a state of entire submission to the Divine will, and rest resigned under every dispensation. The hand of God is mighty: He is the sovereign Lord of all; has an absolute right to dispose of His creatures according to His good pleasure, and is alone able both to know and to do what their several necessities require. A wise son yields to an affectionate father, even in points where he cannot comprehend the entire wisdom of his discipline; not only because experience has taught him the benefit of subjection, but also for the sake of obedience to a father, who is entrusted with the guidance of him, and has a right to be obeyed. Another consideration here suggested is that all resistance is vain: "the mighty hand of God" is uncontrollable. Whatever visitation He is pleased to send to a family or to an individual—of sickness, of calamity, of death—there is no keeping it out of the dwelling; it may be softened by resignation, it may be removed, and even blessed by prayer; but we cannot hinder the accomplishment of God's will. Remark the language of the text, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God"; it is not enough that we be humbled, in a worldly sense, by the stroke of misfortune; that is a consequence, which may of necessity ensue: the loss of possession may drive us into needy solitude; the loss of health destroy our energy and activity; the loss of reputation bring us to shame; the loss of friends oblige us to mourn, from the very feelings of nature; but all this while there may be no humility of heart. (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *On humbling ourselves before God*:—I. First, our text is evidently intended to bear

upon us in our Church life. Each one of us should think little of himself and highly of his brethren. 1. True humility in our Church relationship will show itself in our being willing to undertake the very lowest offices for Christ. 2. The next point of humility is that we are conscious of our own incompetence to do anything aright. Self-sufficiency is inefficiency. He that has no sense of his weakness has a weakness in his sense. 3. This humility will show itself next in this—that we shall be willing to be ignored of men. 4. We want humility in our Church life, in the sense of never being rough, haughty, arrogant, hard, domineering, lordly; or, on the other hand, factious, unruly, quarrelsome, and unreasonable. II. Now I will use the text in reference to OUR BEHAVIOUR IN OUR AFFLICTIONS. Frequently our heavenly Father's design in sending trial to His children is to make and keep them humble; let us remember this, and learn a lesson of wisdom. The most hopeful way of avoiding the humbling affliction is to humble yourself. Be humble that you may not be humbled. 1. And do this, first, by noticing whether you have been guilty of any special sin of pride. Usually our sins lie at the roots of our sorrows. If we will repent of the sin, the Lord will remove the sorrow. 2. In your affliction humble yourself by confessing that you deserve all that you are suffering. 3. But, more than that, humble yourself so as to submit entirely to God's will. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in this act of self-humiliation while you meekly kiss the rod. III. IN OUR DAILY DEALINGS WITH GOD, whether in affliction or not, let us humble ourselves under His hand, for so only can we hope to be exalted. It is a blessed thing whenever you come to God to come wondering that you are allowed to come, wondering that you have been led to come; marvelling at Divine redemption, astonished that such a price should have been paid that you might be brought nigh to God. Let grace be magnified by your grateful heart. 1. When you are doing this be very humble before God, because you have not made more improvement of the grace that He has given you. 2. Next, humble yourself under the hand of God by feeling your own want of knowledge whenever you come to God. Do not think that you understand all divinity. There is only one body of divinity, and that is Christ Himself; and who knoweth Him to the full? 3. One point concerning which I should like every one of us to humble ourselves under the hand of God is about our little enjoyment of Divine things. IV. I finish by using my text with all earnestness in reference to the UNCONVERTED IN OUR SEEKING FORGIVENESS AS SINNERS. Do you want to be saved? The way of salvation is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." "But," you say, "I cannot understand it." Yet it is very simple; no hidden meaning lies in the words; you are simply bidden to trust Jesus. If, however, you feel as if you could not do that, let me urge you to go to God in secret and own the sin of this unbelief; for a great sin it is. Humble yourself. Sit down and think over the many ways in which you have done wrong, or failed to do right. Pray God to break you down with deep penitence. When your sin is confessed, then acknowledge that if justice were carried out towards you, apart from undeserved grace, you would be sent to hell. You have almost obtained mercy when you have fully submitted to justice. Then, next, accept God's mercy in His own way. Do not be so vain as to dictate to God how you ought to be saved. Be a little child, and come and believe in the salvation which is revealed in Jesus Christ. "Ah," say you, "I have done this, but I cannot get peace." Then sink lower down. Did I hear you say, "Alas, sir, I want to get comfort"? Do not ask for comfort; ask for forgiveness, and that blessing may come through your greater discomfort. Sink lower down. There is a point at which God will surely accept you, and that point is lower down. "Oh," you say, "I think I have a due sense of sin." That will not do. I want you to feel that you have not a due sense of sin, and come to Jesus just so. "Oh, but I do think that I have been brokenhearted." I should like to see you lower than that, till you cry, "I am afraid I never knew what it is to be brokenhearted." I want you to sink so low that you cannot say anything good of yourself; nay, nor see an atom of goodness in yourself. Come before God a criminal, in the prison dress, with the rope about your neck. You will be saved then. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Submission to Divine dispensation*:—1. We are to submit to the Divine dispensations in reference to our personal condition. Men, for example, of great talents and large opportunities, instead of shrinking from the responsibility they involve, and wishing it had been their lot rather to have been made mere animals or stones, are to be grateful for their distinction, and with the full force of their talent "serve their generation by the will of God." While those whose talents or circumstances, or both, are characterised by mediocrity or poverty, instead of fretting, as though the dispen-

sations towards them of the great Disposer had been unwise or unkind, are to acquiesce in the Divine appointment, and do their best to benefit man and glorify God. 2. We are to submit to the Divine arrangements in social and civil life. In social life, the husband is the head of the wife; parents have authority over children; masters over servants. In civil life, submission is equally imperative. The language of Scripture on this point is singularly precise and unqualified; pity it should have been perverted to purposes of tyranny (Romans xiii. 1-7; 1 Tim. ii. 1-3; 1 Peter ii. 13-15). 3. We are to submit to the Divine arrangements in the Church. Instead of sulkiness, there should be cheerful compliance; instead of envy, generosity; instead of paltry pride, the dignity of humility; instead of fitfulness, patience; instead of insubordination, Christian submission. In the Church, emphatically, we are to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God." 4. We are to submit to the Divine dispensations which operate in the way of moral discipline. Afflictions are of necessity the present portion of the servants of Christ. 5. Our encouragement, even as intimated in this one verse, is great. Submission is rewarded in the present world. From how many mental and other evils does it save its subjects. How great is their peace, and their joy in the light of the Divine countenance. The chief reward will be bestowed in the world to come. (S. J. Davis.) *Humbling of the spirit, in humbling circumstances*:—Objection 1. If we let our spirit fall, we will lie always among folks' feet, and they will trample on us. No: pride of spirit unsubdued will bring men to lie among the feet of others for ever (Isa. lxvi. 24). Obj. 2. If we do not raise ourselves, none will raise us; and therefore we must see to ourselves to do ourselves right. That is wrong. Humble yourselves in respect of your spirits, and God will raise you up in respect of your lot; and they that have God engaged for raising them, have no reason to say they have none to do it for them. Obj. 3. But sure we will never rise high if we let our spirits fall. God will not only raise the humble ones, but He will lift them up on high; for so the word signifies. 1. THE BENT OF ONE'S HEART, IN HUMBLING CIRCUMSTANCES, SHOULD LIE TOWARDS A SUITABLE HUMBLING OF THE SPIRIT, AS UNDER GOD'S MIGHTY HAND PLACING US IN THEM. 1. Some things supposed in this. It supposeth that—(1) God brings men into humbling circumstances (Ezek. xvii. 24). There is a root of pride in the hearts of all men on earth, that must be mortified ere they can be meet for heaven. And God brings men into humbling circumstances for that very end (Deut. viii. 2). (2) These circumstances prove pressing as a weight on the heart, tending to bear it down (Psa. cvii. 12). They strike at the grain of the heart, and cross the natural inclination. (3) The heart is naturally apt to rise against these humbling circumstances, and consequently against the mighty hand that brings and keeps them on. The man naturally bends his force to get off the weight, that he may get up his head, seeking more to please himself than to please his God (Job xxxv. 9, 10). (4) But what God requires is rather to labour to bring down the heart than to get up the head (James iv. 10). Lastly, there must be a noticing of God, as our party, in humbling circumstances. "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it" (Micah vi. 9). 2. What are these humbling circumstances the mighty hand brings them into? These are circumstances—(1) Of imperfection. God has placed all men in such circumstances, under a variety of wants and imperfections (Philip. iii. 2). There is a heap of natural and moral imperfections about us; our bodies and our souls, in all their faculties, are in a state of imperfection. (2) Of inferiority in relations, whereby men are set in the lower place in relations and society, and made to depend on others (1 Cor. vii. 24). Now, God having placed us in these circumstances of inferiority, all refractoriness is a rising up against His mighty hand (Rom. xiii. 2). (3) Of contradiction. This was a part of our Lord's state of humiliation, and the apostle supposes it will be a part of ours too (Heb. xii. 3). Whether these contradictions be just or unjust, God proves men with them to humble them, break them off from addictedness to their own will, and to teach them resignation and self-denial. (4) Of affliction (Prov. xvi. 19). Prosperity puffs up sinners with pride; and oh, but it is hard to keep a low spirit with a high lot. But God by affliction calls men down from their heights to sit in the dust, plucks away their jay-feathers wherein they prided themselves, rubs the paint and varnish from off the creature, whereby it appears more in its native deformity. Lastly, of sin as the punishment of sin (Job xxx. 19). 3. What it is, in humbling circumstances, to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. (1) Noticing the mighty hand, as employed in bringing about everything that concerns us, either in the way of efficacy or permission (1 Sam. iii. 18). "And he said, it is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good" (2 Sam. xvi. 10). (2) A sense of our own

worthlessness and nothingness before Him (Psa. cxliv. 3; Gen. xviii. 27; Isa. xl. 6). (3) A sense of our guilt and filthiness (Rom. iii. 10; Isa. lxiv. 6). It is the overlooking our sinfulness that suffers the proud heart to swell. (4) A silent submission under the hand of God. His sovereignty challengeth this of us (Rom. ix. 20; Psa. xxxix. 9; Job i. 21). (5) A magnifying of His mercies towards us in the midst of all His proceedings against us (Psa. cxliv. 3). Has He laid us low? If we be duly humbled, we will wonder He has laid us no lower (Ezra ix. 13). (6) A holy and silent admiration of the ways and counsels of God, as to us unsearchable (Rom. xi. 33). Pride of heart thinks nothing too high for the man, and so arraigns before its tribunal the Divine proceedings, pretends to see through them, censures freely and condemns. (7) A forgetting and laying aside before the Lord all our dignity, whereby we excel others (Rev. iv. 10; Luke xviii. 11). Lastly, a submitting readily to the meanest offices requisite in or agreeable to our circumstances. Use: Let the bent of your heart then, in all your humbling circumstances, be towards the humbling of your spirit, as under the mighty hand of God. This lies in two things. (a) Carefully notice all your humbling circumstances, and overlook none of them. (b) Observing what these circumstances do require of you as suitable to them. Let this be your great aim through your whole life, your exercise every day. Motive 1. God is certainly at work to humble one and all of us. 2. The humiliation of our spirits will not take effect without our own agency therein; for He works on us as rational agents, who being moved, move themselves (Phil. ii. 12, 13). 3. If ye do not, ye resist the mighty hand of God (Acts vii. 51). And of this resistance consider—(1) The sinfulness, what an evil thing it is. It is a direct fighting against God (Isa. xlv. 9). (2) The folly of it. How unequal is the match? How can the struggle end well? (Job ix. 4). 4. This is the time of humiliation, even the time of this life. "Everything is beautiful in its season," and the bringing down of the spirit now is beautiful, as in the time thereof. Consider—(1) Humiliation of spirit "is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter iii. 4). (2) It is no easy thing to humble men's spirits; it is not little that will do it; it is a work that is not soon done. There is need of a digging deep for a thorough humiliation in the work of conversion (Luke vi. 48). (3) The whole time of this life is appointed for humiliation. This was signified by the forty years the Israelites had in the wilderness (Deut. viii. 2; Heb. xii. 2). (4) There is no humbling after (Rev. xxii. 11). If the pride of the heart be not brought down in this life, it will never be. 5. This is the way to turn humbling circumstances to a good account; so that instead of being losers, ye would be gainers by them (Psa. cxix. 71). (1) Humiliation of spirit is a most valuable thing in itself (Prov. xvi. 32). It cannot be bought too dear. (2) Humility of spirit brings many advantages along with it. It is a fruitful bough, well laden, wherever it is. It contributes to one's ease under the cross (Matt. xi. 30; Lam. iii. 27-29). It is a sacrifice particularly acceptable to God (Psa. li. 17). The eye of God is particularly on such for good (Isa. lxvi. 2). And it carries a line of wisdom through one's whole conduct (Prov. xi. 2), "With the lowly is wisdom." Lastly, consider it is a mighty hand that is at work with us; the hand of the mighty God; let us then bend our spirits towards a compliance with it, and not wrestle against it. Consider—(a) We must fall under it. Since the design of it is to bring us down, we cannot stand before it; for it cannot miscarry in its designs (Isa. xlv. 10), "My counsel shall stand." (b) They that are so wise as to fall in humiliation under the mighty hand, be they never so low, the same hand will raise them up again (James iv. 10). Directions for reaching this humiliation. 1. General directions. (1) Fix it in your heart to seek some spiritual improvement of the conduct of Providence towards you (Micah vi. 9). Till once your heart get a set that way, your humiliation is not to be expected (Hosea xiv. 9). (2) Settle the matter of your eternal salvation, in the first place, by betaking yourself to Christ, and taking God for your God in Him, according to the gospel offer (Hosea ii. 19; Heb. viii. 10). Lastly, use the means of soul-humbling in the faith of the promise (Psa. xxviii. 7). 2. Particular directions. (1) Assure yourselves that there are no circumstances so humbling that you are in, but you may get your heart acceptably brought down to them (1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 9). (2) Whatever hand is, or is not, in your humbling circumstances, do you take God for your party, and consider yourselves therein as under His mighty hand (Micah vi. 9). Men in their humbling circumstances overlook God; they fix their eyes on the creature-instrument, and, instead of humility, their hearts rise. (3) Be much in the thought of God's infinite greatness; consider His holiness and majesty, fit to awe you into deepest humiliation (Isa. vi. 3-5).

(4) Inure yourselves silently to admit mysteries in the conduct of Providence towards you, which you are not able to comprehend, but will adore (Rom. xi. 33). (5) Be much in the thoughts of your own sinfulness (Job xl. 4). (6) Settle it in your heart that there is need of all the humbling circumstances you are put in (chap. i. 6). (7) Believe a kind design of Providence in them towards you. (8) Think with yourselves that this life is the time of trial for heaven (James i. 12). (9) Think with yourselves, how it is by humbling circumstances the Lord prepares us for heaven (Col. i. 12). (10) Give up at length with your towering hopes from this world, and confine them to the world to come. Lastly, make use of Christ in all His offices for your humiliation, under your humbling circumstances. That only is kindly humiliation that comes in that way (Zech. xii. 10).

II. THERE IS A DUE TIME WHEREIN THOSE THAT NOW HUMBLE THEMSELVES UNDER THE MIGHTY HAND OF GOD WILL CERTAINLY BE LIFTED UP. First, a general view of this point. And consider—1. Some things implied in it. It bears—(1) That those who shall share in this lifting up must lay their accounts, in the first place, with a casting down (Rev. vii. 14; John xvi. 33). (2) Being cast down by the mighty hand of God, we must learn to lie quiet under it, till the same hand that cast us down raise us up (Lam. iii. 27). (3) Never humbled in humbling circumstances, never lifted up in the way of this promise. (4) Humility of spirit in humbling circumstances ascertains a lifting up out of them some time with the goodwill and favour of Heaven (Luke xviii. 14). (5) There is an appointed time for the lifting up of those that humble themselves in their humbling circumstances (Hab. ii. 3). We know it not, but God knows it, who has appointed it. (6) It is not to be expected that immediately upon one's humbling himself, the lifting up is to follow. No, one is not only to lie down under the mighty hand, but lie still waiting the due time; humbling work is longsome work. (7) The appointed time for the lifting up is the due time, the time fittest for it, wherein it will come most seasonably. Lastly, The lifting up of the humbled will not miss to come in the appointed and due time (Hab. ii. 3). Time makes no halting, it is running day and night; so the due time is fast coming.

2. A word in the general to the lifting up abiding those that humble themselves. There is a twofold lifting up. (1) A partial lifting up, competent to the humbled in time during this life (Psa. xxx. 1). This is a lifting up in part, and but in part, not wholly; and such liftings up the humbled may expect while in this world, but no more. (2) A total lifting up, competent to them at the end of time, at death (Luke xvi. 22). Then the Lord deals with them no more by parcels and halves, but carries their relief to perfection (Heb. xii. 23). Now there is a due time for both these.

3. The certainty of the lifting up of those that humble themselves under humbling circumstances. And ye may be assured thereof from the following considerations. (1) The nature of God, duly considered, insures it (Psa. ciii. 8, 9). Infinite power, that can do all things. Infinite goodness inclining to help. He is good and gracious in His nature (Exod. xxxiv. 6-9). And therefore His power is a spring of comfort to them (Rom. xiv. 4). Infinite wisdom that does nothing in vain, and therefore will not needlessly keep one in humbling circumstances (Lam. iii. 32, 33). (2) The providence of God, viewed in its stated methods of procedure with its objects, insures it. Turn your eyes which way you will on the Divine providence, ye may conclude thence, that in due time the humble will be lifted up. (a) Observe the providence of God in the revolutions of the whole course of nature, day succeeding to the longest night, a summer to the winter, a waxing to a waning of the moon, a flowing to an ebbing of the sea, &c. Let not the Lord's humbled ones be idle spectators of these things; they are for our learning (Jer. xxxi. 35-37). (b) Observe the providence of God in the dispensations thereof about the man Christ, the most august object thereof, more valuable than a thousand worlds (Col. ii. 9). Did not Providence keep this course with Him, first humbling Him, then exalting Him; first bring Him to the dust of death, in a course of sufferings thirty-three years, then exalt Him to the Father's right hand in eternity of glory? (Heb. xii. 2). (3) Observe the providence of God towards the Church in all ages. This has been the course the Lord has kept with her (Psa. cxxix. 1-4). (4) Observe the providence of God in the dispensations of His grace towards His children. The general rule is (chap. v. 5). Lastly, observe the providence of God at length throwing down wicked men, however long they stand and prosper (Psa. xxxvii. 35, 36). (5) The Word of God puts it beyond all peradventure, which, from the beginning to the end, is the humbled saint's security for a lifting up (Psa. cxix. 49, 50). Consider—(a) The doctrines of the Word which teach faith and hope for the time, and the happy issue the exercise of these graces will have. (b) The

promises of the Word whereby Heaven is expressly engaged for a lifting up to those that humble themselves in humbling circumstances (James iv. 10; Matt. xxiii. 12).

(c) The examples of the Word sufficiently confirming the truth of the doctrines and promises (Rom. xv. 4). Lastly, the intercession of Christ, joining the prayers of His humbled people in their humbling circumstances, insures a lifting up for them at length. Secondly, I proceed to a more particular view of the point. 1. We will consider the lifting up as brought about in time, which is the partial lifting up. And—first, some considerations for clearing the nature thereof. (1) This lifting up does not take place in every case of a child of God. Objection, if that be the case, what comes of the promise of lifting up? Where is the lifting up, if one may go to the grave under the weight? Were there no life after this, there would be weight in that objection; but, since there is another life, there is none in it at all. Question, but then, may we not give over praying for the lifting up in that case? We do not know when that is our case; for a case may be past all hope in our eyes and the eyes of others, in which God designs a lifting up in time, as in Job's (Job vi. 11).

(2) However, there are some cases wherein this lifting up does take place. God gives His people some notable liftings up, even in time raising them out of remarkable humbling circumstances. Lastly, all the liftings up the humbled meet with now are but pledges, samples of the great lifting up abiding them on the other side; and they should look on them so. Secondly, the partial lifting up itself. What they will get, getting this lifting up promised to the humbled. Why, they will get—

1. A removal of their humbling circumstances.
2. A comfortable sight of the acceptance of their prayers put up in their humbling circumstances.
3. A heart-satisfying answer of these prayers, so as they shall not only get the thing, but see they have it as an answer of prayer; and they will put a double value on the mercy (1 Sam. ii. 1).
4. Full satisfaction as to the conduct of Providence in all the steps of the humbling circumstances, and the delay of the lifting up, however perplexing these were before (Rev. xv. 3).
5. They get the lifting up together with the interest for the time they lay out of it.
6. The spiritual enemies that flew thick about them in the time of the darkness of the humbling circumstances will be scattered at this lifting up in the promise.

Thirdly, the due time of this lifting up. The humbling circumstances are ordinarily carried to the utmost point of hopelessness before the lifting up. The knife was at Isaac's throat before the voice was heard (2 Cor. i. 8, 9). Lastly, due preparation of the heart for the lifting up out of the humbling circumstances, goes before the due time of that lifting up according to the promise. (*T. Boston.*)

The benefit of afflictions.—I. THE HAND OF GOD is an expression used in various parts of Scripture to denote the Almighty's interference with the sons of men, in a way both of providence and grace. Thus in Acts iv. 28 it signifies His eternal purpose and executive power. In Psalm civ. 28 it denotes His providential bounty and goodness. In John x. 29 it denotes His mighty power to preserve and defend. It is used likewise with reference to the inspiration of the prophets: "The hand of the Lord was on Elijah." In other places it expresses the help of the Almighty. Nehemiah and Ezra repeatedly acknowledge the Divine aid which was vouchsafed in these words, "according to the good hand of God upon us." The Psalmist uses it to denote God's merciful corrections (Psa. xxxii. 4, xxxviii. 2). It is clearly in this latter sense that we are to regard the expression in our text. Is it asked, then, how God lifts up His heavy hand upon His people, and how they may know that it is lifted up? I answer, in various ways. In all things He consults the spiritual good of His children. He varies therefore the mode of correction, as well as the degree of it, to their peculiar circumstances and situations. Upon some His hand is lifted up in a way which is only known to themselves and to their God. Their comforts are withdrawn. Their evidences are clouded. Perhaps they are reduced to the very brink of despair. But the Lord does not always correct from His own immediate presence. The devil may be the executioner of His chastisement, as in Job's case. The wicked, too, are spoken of by the Psalmist as the Lord's hand (Psa. xvii. 13). They may oppose, they may persecute. Worldly losses, pain, sickness, disappointments, interruptions of domestic happiness, the death of friends and beloved relatives, are all tokens of the uplifting of the mighty hand of God.

II. OUR DUTY UNDER THE UPLIFTED HAND OF GOD. Humble yourselves, that is, be lowly. Yield to the hand which smites you. Say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." The precepts of the gospel go directly counter to our depraved nature. Were it not for the restraining grace of God, there is no length of repining which we should not run. But the believer has been made

a new creature in Christ Jesus. Grace has called him back to that Sovereign from whom he had revolted. The expression in our text, "humble yourselves," seems to imply three things; consciousness of a necessity for the trial, patience under the pressure of it, and a believing expectation of deliverance. III. THE HAPPY EFFECTS RESULTING FROM THIS DUTY OF HUMBLING OURSELVES. "That He may exalt you in due time." This expression may denote the removal of the trial when it has effected its purpose; or the esteem which the believer frequently obtains, even from an ungodly world, by his firmness and consistency of conduct; or that eminence in the graces and blessed fruits of the Spirit which beautifies his soul and renders him really exalted. For holiness, or, in other words, conformity to the image of the Saviour, is alone true greatness. (*W. C. Wilson, M.A.*)

Self-abasement and Divine exaltation:—I. THE KIND OF SUFFERING WHICH THE TEXT REPRESENTS IS THAT FROM WHICH THERE IS NO PRESENT ESCAPE. Peter is not referring to very light suffering—to sorrow, that is here during this moment and that will be gone the next. Incurable sickness—incurable disease in the body, is "the mighty hand of God" on a man. Confirmed weakness or infirmity of the body or mind, is "the mighty hand of God" on a man. Inflexible poverty. Persecution, continued and unavoidable. The hand of God is always upon us, but it is not always equally felt, or upon us in the same form. The hand of God is in all our circumstances. Is it not in persecution, where the hand of man is most evident? "If Shimei curse, let him curse, for God hath sent him." Unless it were better for you to be persecuted for your religion's sake, God would not permit you to be persecuted. Your wisdom is cheerfully to submit. II. The text prescribes OUR BEHAVIOUR IN SUFFERING, AND SUGGESTS THE STRONGEST MOTIVES FOR THE ADOPTION AND PURSUIT OF SUCH CONDUCT. Do you notice how in Bible-teaching God deals with us as wise parents treat little children? Good parents direct little children about everything, for they need such direction. Recognise this, and instead of seeking to have your own way about anything, try to find out God's way, and follow that way by the leading of the Saviour and by the grace of the Holy Ghost. There is a kind of submission which we cannot avoid. If God put His "mighty hand" upon us, intending to keep us under it, we know of a surety that we cannot escape. But with this inevitable submission there may be great pride of heart, expressing itself in murmuring and unholy rebellion; expressing itself in sinful efforts to get away from the suffering and in a determination not to realise it, and not to be thoroughly loyal in our thoughts and feelings as to our circumstances. A contrary behaviour is prescribed here. We are required to be still, silent. Aaron held his peace. Humility is that chastened emotion which we feel when conscious of our inferiority, our sinfulness, our weakness, our poverty, our helplessness, and our nothingness. Many motives might be suggested. 1. There is one motive springing from the words, "the hand of God." That sorrow from which I cannot escape is a "hand." It is not a chance, it is not an accident, there is a "hand" in it. It is connected with thought, feeling, purpose, plan, intention, wisdom. 2. "The hand of God, the mighty hand." "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." God has a good intent in your depression. He is intent upon exalting you. His love for you involves this. His sending His Spirit to take possession of your nature, to regenerate and sanctify and enlighten, shows that He desires to exalt you. Already, so far as character is concerned, God has lifted you up. But His aim is to exalt your entire humanity, to lift it up in all its states, and in all conditions. And God is making all things work together for this. God desires to exalt, and the exalting must be with Him. It must not be your attempt, your effort. 3. For this exaltation there is a season of which God can only judge. There is a "due time." This lifting up is never too soon. There is a season for it, and that season is in the soul. The advent of the exaltation is, without doubt, dependent on our self-humiliation. You must mourn, to have your sorrow turned into joy. 4. Some men are ashamed of suffering. That is very much like being ashamed of Christ. Oh, what a change in men's notions and feelings would be effected if the poverty of Joseph the carpenter's son were more before them, and if they lived more as in His presence and under His eye. "The mighty hand of God," is on some of you. Is there not a cause? May not that cause be in certain faults and defects? (*S. Martin.*)

Humiliation of soul under God's mighty hand:—I. THE TEXT INSISTS UPON THE RECOGNITION OF THE AGENCY OF GOD IN ALL OUR AFFLICTIONS. "The mighty hand of God." 1. Now, observe that this recognition embraces, not second causes, but the immediate hand of God. We must go at once to the First Cause; or else we dishonour God under every trial. 2. Then observe, again, that this recognition must

be of the hand, from which there is no escape: "the mighty hand of God." I see His "mighty hand" in creation, forming the beautiful world in which I live; and in providence I see that same hand regulating every event in the universe. And if I recognise that hand aright, I shall see it no less in, and bringing to pass, every affliction with which I am assaulted. It could not have come to me without a "mighty hand." And while I see this, it is in vain to resist it. 3. But, then, this recognition must be of the hand of God, "the mighty hand of God." And how sweet is this! "the hand of God." Power alone would make me afraid, but it is not the hand of a tyrant—it is the hand of God; my covenant God; my God, who gave His dear Son for me; my God, who has promised to keep and to bless me, and to take me eventually to His kingdom of glory. What infant feels alarmed when its mother's hand is upon it? II. THE TEXT SHOWS US THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THAT DIVINE AGENCY IS TO BE RECOGNISED. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." This includes a deep sense of the malignity and evil of sin, which brings all our sorrows, as committed against a holy God and a righteous law, and also especially its aggravation, as against a God of love and of grace, as revealed in the gospel. III. A PROMISE TO ENCOURAGE AND TO ENFORCE THIS RECOGNITION OF THE HAND OF GOD: "That He may exalt you in due time." There is a threefold exaltation, of which the Scripture speaks. 1. The first is an exaltation in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. To stand complete before my God, with a justification in which His own eye can see no fault; to feel that I am an "heir of God," a "joint heir with Christ," and that eternity with all its blessings is my own for ever. 2. But, secondly, there is an exaltation also from the deepest woe and trial into which we can be brought, and of which the Scriptures speak. David says, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me and heard my cry; He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings; and He hath but a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." 3. And then there is exaltation to the throne of glory. And the first is connected with the last; he that is exalted by the imputed righteousness of Christ, shall eventually be exalted to the throne of glory. (*James Sherman.*) *The mighty hand of God*:—We might have thought that such a command as this was somewhat unnecessary. We might have supposed that it needed but for God to stretch out His hand, and every creature would go down into the dust before Him. But no one who has accurately watched the working of any affliction upon his own or another's heart will say this. There are three ways in which the chastening hand of God may be wrongly received. You may not see it all. This is what Israel did when Isaiah put up his plaint—"Lord, when Thy hand is lifted up, they will not see"—but he sternly adds, "They shall see." Or you may see—but you may think but very little of it. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." Or, at a lower point than both—you may see, and estimate the judgment, and the very sense you have of it may harden your heart into pride and rebellion, irritating your temper and making you more resolute for evil. This is what Pharaoh did, and Ahaz. Strange that it should be so! Yet all history bears witness to the fact that times of national suffering, of famine, or plague, have been times of extraordinary wickedness: for "the sorrow of the world worketh death." All evil that is in the world is traceable at last to one primary cause; the right relationship has been interrupted between God and His creatures. If man goes up too high, or God is put down too low, then evil is sure to follow. Therefore the first thing is to rectify this. We must be lower, and God must be higher. Hence the primary law of all affliction, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." Now it is quite certain that no man does really "humble" himself under anything which he does not recognise and feel to be "the hand of God." No one "humbles" himself to an accident. No one "humbles" himself to a punishment; but to "the hand" which deals it. And the more that "hand" is admired and loved, the deeper will be the abasement, and the easier it will be to make it. Therefore it is all-important, in every trial that comes upon you, nationally or individually, that you should at once see—not natural causes, not even the scourge itself—but only "the hand of God" is upon you. It is a grand image—"the mighty hand of God." Very "mighty" must it be, when "He measures the water in its hollow, and meets out the heaven with its span." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Bending without breaking*:—It was an "ice time" in New England. One of those rare days which come once or twice every winter, and, sometimes, even in April, in northern climes, when every bush and every twig of every stately tree-trunk is thickly coated with glistening crystals. The whole country is transformed into fairyland, and Aladdin's cave is

outdone by each patch of scrubby oak trees. We noticed, as the engine whirled us through this enchanted land, that the slenderest of all our northern forest-trees, the white birch, was prostrated to the very earth, and that thousands of these trees were lying prone, as if felled by the woodman's axe. "What a pity!" we involuntarily said to ourselves; but on going over that same line of road the next day, we saw that it was not the birches that needed our pity, but the sturdy oaks and the upright elms and the heavily-clothed pines. The birches were bent to the earth, to be sure, but the statelier trees were broken and maimed, and sometimes rent in two, by the burden of the ice. The birches bowed their backs, but sprang up again when the burden was removed. The trees of the forest are typical of certain characters. He who bows submissively before God's providences is not the one who is broken by them. He may be prostrated by heavy grief for a little time, but he soon springs up when the sun shines again. Only he who strives to bear by his own might, and in his own strength, the grievous ills of life is broken by them. To obsequiously prostrate one's self before earthly power may be the part of the craven. To bow before the will of God is a sign of inherent strength rather than of weakness, of manliness rather than of pusillanimity. Pride misses the blessing that is always in store for humble submission. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Casting all your care upon Him.—*The pride of care*:—The two parts of the text, taken together, state this truth, that anxiety carries with it a division of faith between God and self, a lack of faith in God proportioned to the amount of care which we refuse to cast on Him; an excess of self-confidence proportioned to the amount which we insist on bearing ourselves. Therefore the apostle says, "Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand. Confess the weakness of your hand. Do not try to carry the anxiety with your weak hand. Cast it all on Him." The Revised Version has brought out a very important distinction by the substitution of "anxiety" for "care." Anxiety, according to its derivation, is that which distracts and racks the mind, and answers better to the original word, which signifies a dividing thing, something which distracts the heart and separates it from God. The word "careth," on the other hand, used of God, is a different word in the original, and means supervising and fostering care, loving interest, such care as a father has for a child. I want to show how the spirit which refuses to give up its dividing anxiety to God is allied to pride, and unbecoming a child in the household of a Divine Father who cares for him. Pride, I say—subtle, unconscious pride—is at the bottom of much of this restlessness and worry. The man has come to think himself too important, to feel that the burden is on his shoulders only; and that, if he stands from under, there must be a crash. And, just to the degree in which that feeling has mastered him, his thought and faith have become divided from God. Let us give him his due. It is not for his own ease or reputation that he has been caring. It is for his work. And yet he has measurably forgotten, that, if his work be of God, God is as much interested in his success as he himself can be; and that God will carry on His own work, no matter how many workmen He buries. He divides the burden, and shows whom He trusts most by taking the larger part himself, when God bids him cast it all on Him. God, indeed, exempts nobody from work. We may cast our anxiety, but not our work, on Him. There are few men in responsible positions who have not felt the force of a distinguished Englishman's words, "I divide my work into three parts. One part I do, one part goes undone, and the third part does itself." That third part which does itself is a very expressive hint as to the needlessness of our fretting about at least one-third of our work, besides giving a little puncture to our self-conceit by showing that, to one-third of our work, we are not quite as necessary as we had thought ourselves. And as to the third, which the God-fearing man cannot do, and which therefore goes, or seems to go, undone, there is a further hint that possibly that third is better undone, or is better done in some other way and by some other man. A young lady had consecrated herself to the work of missions, and was about to go to India. Just at that point an accident disabled her mother, and the journey had to be deferred. For three years she ministered at that bedside, until the mother died, leaving as her last request that she should go and visit her sick sister in the far west. She went, intending to sail for India immediately on her return; but she found the sister dying with consumption, and without proper attendance; and once more she waited until the end came. Again her face was turned eastward, when the sister's husband died, and five little orphans had no soul on earth to care for them but herself. "No more projects for going to the heathen," she wrote. "This lonely household is my mission." Fifteen years she devoted to her young charge; and, in her forty-fifth year, God showed her why He had held her back

from India, as she laid her hand in blessing on the heads of three of them ere they sailed as missionaries to the same land whither, twenty years before, she had proposed to go. Her broken plan had been replaced by a larger and a better one. One could not go, but three went in her stead: a good interest for twenty years. But there is a class of cases where anxiety is clearly prompted by self-interest, vanity, and worldly ambition. Self cannot cast such anxiety on God, because God will not take it. When God bids us humble ourselves, He surely will not minister to our pride. God does not hold out His arms to our burdens unconditionally; He is willing to take the burden on His hand, if we ourselves will come and stay under His hand, not otherwise. He refuses to take the care without the self. If we will put the self into His hand absolutely, He will take it, care and all. But many a one would like to cast the care on God, and keep the self in his own hand. Casting all our care on God is casting self on God, for self is our worst care. It is not merely coming to God with our failures, and asking Him to make them good, but it is confessing also that our unaided self is the worst failure of all, and saying frankly to our heavenly Father, "Without Thee I can do nothing." God has different ways of teaching this lesson. You know how a schoolmaster will sometimes shut himself up with a dull pupil, and hold him down to a problem. So God sometimes shuts a man up with himself and his own helplessness. Even then He does not force the man's will; but He means that he shall for once look squarely at the impotence of self, that he shall for once confess to himself the fact that self has exhausted its resources, that the world cannot help him, that he has nothing in heaven or earth but God. That, as men see it, is a terrible blow to pride. The bitterest draught that ever a man is called on to drink is the confession that he cannot help himself. The world says a man is at his worst then. I am not sure of that. The Bible would say that he is just within reach of his best. The result of this humbling of self, and throwing it with its anxiety on God, is quite contrary to human logic. The world says the man who is humbled is the crushed man, the defeated man. The world is right, if the man is simply crushed into submission by overwhelming power; but the world is quite wrong if the man has voluntarily bowed the high head of his pride, and has cheerfully yielded up his will with his care to God. Such humbling, if Scripture is to be believed, is the way to exaltation: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." You see something of the same kind in ordinary matters. Now and then you find a man with more conceit than ability, with more self-confidence than resources, who attempts to lead a great movement, or to conduct a great business; and the very position brings out his weakness, and the more men say he is a fool and a weakling. And yet not a few men have had the sense or the grace to see the true state of the case in time, and to swallow pride, and frankly to confess weakness by retiring from a place for which they were unfit. From that moment they began to rise. They never rose to the high position which they coveted at first, but they rose to a true position which they could hold; and that was really higher than the false position which they could not hold. They became respectable and useful men, doing good work in lower places. What is true in some cases in society is true always of men in relation to God. The man is always in a false position, a position he cannot fill, when he ignores God and tries to take care of himself. He is a better man, a more efficient man, by humbling himself under God's hand and letting God take care of him. Read on a little farther in this same chapter, and you find that thought again: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Ah! that is exaltation indeed; security, steadfastness, mastery over that which burdens the world, peace which the world cannot give nor take away. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*)

A cure for care:—Very comforting has such an exhortation been to suffering saints in all ages. Possibly Peter had in his mind when he penned it Psalm lv. 22. The Jewish Church on many a dark and cloudy day entered into the spirit of our text. Luther, we are told, in the trying times of the Reformation, used to say to Melancthon, "Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm, and let them do their best"; and so they sang in their own German tongue that grand old psalm. Thus they "cast all their care on God." Let us consider this subject of care or anxiety, first, in some of its negative aspects. 1. Christians ought not to make cares for themselves. How many business men, with limited capital and little experience, rush into difficulties. 2. Neither ought Christians to conjure up imaginary troubles, or to anti-date their troubles. How very miserable some people are because of that dreadful to-morrow. 3. Neither ought we to be careless in reference to the future.

Approaching the positive aspect of our subject, and taking it for granted that men are not making cares for themselves, the question presses upon us, "Is there a remedy for care?" 1. So far as many are concerned, the text might just as well have read, "Cast none of you your care on God, for God does not care for you." So far as even many professing Christians are concerned, the text might have run thus: "Casting your great cares upon God, and so far as daily cares are concerned, do the best you can to bear them." So far as the burden of sin is concerned, the believing, trusting soul says, "Thank God all is well. I have realised that my blessed Saviour 'bore the huge burden away'; but it is the little cares of everyday life." Yes, these little cares and daily worries bring the careworn look, and leave behind the wrinkles. Now, here in this text we have God's own remedy, for, observe, it is not "some of your cares," or "your great cares," but "all your care."

2. Observe the blessed assurance here given, for "He careth for you." (*W. Halliday.*) *Casting care :—*I. **MAN'S CARE.** The sources from whence our cares arise. 1. There are frequent misunderstandings with our fellow-men. 2. There are our business and family claims. 3. And there are the religious claims that press upon us. Few of us have as much care from this source as we ought to have. II. **GOD'S CARE.** "He careth for you." His care cannot be quite like ours. There can be no fretfulness in it, and no sort of fear and despair. 1. His care of all the creatures He has made, and all that is involved in giving to each his "meat in due season." 2. But we may further think of God's precise knowledge of our anxieties. 3. But there is something more and better than even this; there is God's care of us in the midst of our anxieties. He cares for the influence of things on our characters rather than for the things, as the goldsmith cares for his gold rather than for the fire. III. **GOD'S CARE OF US IS A PERSUASION TO CAST OUR CARE ON HIM.** He cares, why should we? Why should we not be as calm as the sailor boy in the wild storm who knew that "his father held the helm"? But it is easier to speak in general terms about our "casting care on God" than it is to explain precisely what it involves. A very simple illustration may help our apprehension. A small tradesman had a case coming on in the county court, on which, for him, everything depended. A decision given against him meant ruin. Worrying over it day and night, he had become thin, looked haggard, lost appetite and sleep. One day there came into his shop a friend of his boyhood, whom he had not seen for years. This friend was much distressed at his appearance, and said, "Why, whatever is the matter with you? I am sure you must have some grave anxiety weighing on your mind." The tradesman poured out to his friend all the story of his troubles; and then that friend said, "Don't you trouble any more about it. I am a lawyer, and practise at the courts, and I have had just such cases as yours. I see where the point of difficulty in your case is, and I have no doubt we shall be able to get you through all right. You trust the matter entirely to me. I will appear for you, and all will be well." What a relief that tradesman felt! He had lost his burden, for he had cast it on his friend. "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake Thou for me." (*The Weekly Pulpit.*)

*Cast care on God :—*I. **WHO THE PERSONS ARE TO WHOM THE EXHORTATION MAY PROPERLY BE ADDRESSED.** He writes to those "who are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." He addresseth believers in Christ Jesus, "who loved Him though unseen," whom he distinguished as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." These are the objects of God's paternal care, and they only are qualified to cast their care upon Him. You cannot cast your care upon God till your acquaintance with Him be begun. II. **THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE DUTY ITSELF.** It differs entirely in its nature from that carelessness and insensibility which the bulk of mankind too generally indulge. The character of the persons to whom this exhortation is addressed doth likewise serve to limit the extent of the duty. It is not every sort of care that we are invited to cast upon God, but only the care of those things which the Christian dare avow in the presence of his Father, and humbly ask of Him by prayer. We must first examine the object of our desire, whether it be good in itself and fit for us; whether it be subservient to our spiritual interest; and if not, we must neither cast the care of it upon God nor keep it to ourselves, but throw it away altogether. 1. A steadfast persuasion that all events are ordered by God; that we and all our interests are continually in His hand, and that nothing can befall us without His permission. 2. To cast our care upon God is to make His will the guide and measure of ours. 3. That we renounce all confidence in the creature, and place our trust in God alone. A divided trust between God and the creature is as

foolish and unsafe as to set one foot upon a rock and the other upon a quicksand. 4. To cast all your care upon God implies a full and unsuspecting dependence upon His wisdom and goodness; such a dependence as quiets the mind, disposing it to wait patiently upon God, and to accept with thankfulness whatsoever He is pleased to appoint. (*R. Walker.*) *Earthly and heavenly care* :—The first difficulty in ridding ourselves of irreligious care is in distinguishing it from that better kind of care which is a duty. While St. Paul bids the Philippians “be careful for nothing,” he commends the Corinthians for their carefulness, classing it with the graces of self-purification and zeal. He says he would have the disciples “without carefulness”; yet there is plainly a limit to this recommendation, for he exhorts them to “be careful to maintain good works,” and takes upon himself the “care of the churches.” How shall we at once have care and cast care away? There must be a principle that reconciles these apparent disagreements. It will not do to answer that the difference is one of quantity. It is common to say that the great mistake about earthly care is in allowing too much of it; that it is innocent in moderate measures. But there are kinds of care so purely selfish, so earthly, so poisoned with envy, avarice, or the passion for admiration, that they are evil irrespective of all questions of more or less. Christ does not form souls into His likeness by such rules. He breathes into them new desires, baptizes them into a new spirit. Equally vain is it to undertake to strike out a Christian course, by saying we will distinguish between the objects of our anxiety—as by being careful for the spirit and negligent of the body; careful for faith and hope and charity, but negligent of daily business, household, and society. This is not Christ’s righteousness. Jesus shows us the Father Himself taking care of the fowls of the air, of sheep and oxen, and of the little fibres of our bodily frames. Whatever care is right at all is right here, as well as hereafter. And the burden that we are to cast on the Lord is the burden of the life that now is. At this point precisely we strike the true distinction and the Christian doctrine. All right and lawful care is just that which we can at all times, and in all places, carry with us to our Lord, to rest it on that sympathising heart in Him which has already carried our griefs, and healed the disorder of the world by the stripes of His sacrifice. It is the care which keeps the responsibility of life without despairing under it. It is willing suffering, and unwillingness is the only intolerable burden. Rid of that, my future care is gone. The forbidden care is that which we cannot carry with us to God or cast contentedly into His keeping. It hinders the affections when they try to rise heavenward. It doubts whether Christ is still near at hand and His grace sufficient. This is earthly care, unprofitable, unreasonable, unholy care—the care that wears out men and women before their time. We can take this principle with us into each of the three great regions where anxiety is most apt to become excessive. We have a world without us, a world within us, and a world before us, where our responsibility is accompanied at every step with care. 1. In the world without us we have seen how carefully we are called to live. Blessed is the man who, having done his best, can settle himself calmly into God’s order for him, put anxiety behind him at the end of each day’s work, reckon results as God’s alone, believe that God takes care of ships and harvests as well as of rituals and revelations, and so cast every burdensome care on Him. 2. There is a world before us. The very mystery of that veiled country seems to tempt the imagination to people it with alarms. Take no thought for the morrow as to-morrow, as something lying outside of our control, held by God’s hand for purposes of His own. Accept the heavenly order. Behold the lilies how they grow. 3. There is a world within us, where the spiritual formation of us goes on and our eternity is making for us every hour. Doubtless there are some minds that never thought of it as possible that any care about their spiritual salvation and the things of religion could be wrong. Yet if you would come to the heights of holy living with Christ and His saints, you must learn that impatience does not cease to be impious because it goes to church, nor does a complaining spirit honour the Redeemer though it uses the vocabulary of piety. If your anxiety is only about your salvation as a selfish and exclusive thing, it is earthly care, and needs to be cast off. (*Bp. Huntington.*) *Trust in God* :—I. SOME PLAIN ILLUSTRATION OF THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED. 1. A firm persuasion of His infinite perfections, of His all-governing providence, and of His watchful care. 2. A calm and constant reliance on Him, through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator. 3. An unreserved resignation of our lot to the disposal of that God and Saviour on whom our hopes for eternity are placed. 4. Casting our cares on God not only implies referring our present and future lot to the unerring disposal of His wisdom,

but holding delightful intercourse with Him in the various occurrences of our daily pilgrimage through life. II. SOME PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR ENABLING YOU RIGHTLY TO CAST YOUR BURDENS ON THE LORD, EVEN IN THE TIME OF SEVEREST DISTRESS. 1. Be sure that you are interested in Christ, and that you rely on His merits and mediation. 2. Live daily by faith on God Himself, as your all-sufficient portion through the Redeemer; and then you may cheerfully leave it with Him either to wound or to heal, to exalt or to lay low. 3. For enabling you to cast all your cares on the Lord, and, in all the trials of life, to maintain a steady trust in Him who reigns omnipotent, live daily by faith on the great and precious promises of His Word; let these promises be your support. 4. If you would live without anxious care, and would maintain habitual trust in God amidst the dangers and trials of life, look on this life as your pilgrimage, and long for heaven as your home. This will prevent your indulging in immoderate attachment to the things of time, and will preserve you from many mortifying disappointments which produce fretfulness and depression. Conclusion: 1. Learn how foolish and arrogant those persons are who trust for safety and success in themselves, independently of God; who rely on their own wisdom, talents, or exertions. 2. Learn that equally foolish and arrogant is confidence in the arm of flesh, or placing your trust in fellow-mortals. 3. Learn how well it becomes us to unite in the devotional triumph of David, "Happy is he who hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." 4. Let me now direct my exhortation to those who have taken the glorious Jehovah for their refuge and their trust. (1) Mark with care the daily dealings of Providence towards you and yours; treasure them up in your memory for a time of need, and diligently observe the frame of your own mind, both under mercies and trials. (2) Remember that your trials are all necessary, and are sent in love, to purify you from sin, to wean you from the world, to bring you near to God, and to prepare you for heaven. (3) Cast all your burdens on the Lord, and both hope and quietly wait for His time and manner of deliverance. (*A. Bonar.*) *How to dispose of care*:—There is such a thing as care. Who does not know it by experience? It is a burden, and it has also a sting. There is care both for ourselves and others, which God Himself has cast upon us; and of which it were sinful to attempt to make any other disposition. But over and above this, there is a large amount of anxiety which is unnecessary, useless, injurious. But what shall we do with it? Divide it with others we may to some little extent. There is such a thing as sympathy. Yet the very etymology of the word "sympathy" evinces that it is no remedy. It is, after all, a suffering together. Mixing tears does indeed diminish their bitterness. There is a better way of disposing of care than to cast it on our fellow-creatures. Indeed, what fellow-creatures can we find who have not enough of their own to bear? There are some who cast off care without reference to what becomes of it. They sing, "Begone, dull care." These are the reckless. Care may go at their bidding, but the worst of it is it is sure to return again, and it comes back a heavier burden. This is not the way to dispose of care. Yet there is a way whereby all excess of anxiety may be effectually removed. It is to cast care on God. He can take the burden, however heavy. You do not doubt that; but you ask, "Will He?—may I cast it on Him? Will such greatness stoop to such littleness?—such holiness come down to such vileness?" Yes, it will, for condescension is one characteristic of greatness. So far is it from being presumption to cast your care on God, it is a sin not to do it. There is a reason given by Peter for casting care on God, that is inexpressibly touching. He follows no flourishing of rhetoric, but says, "He careth for you." Why should you care for yourself, since God cares for you? What a thought to carry through this vale of tears, and to go down with into the deeper valley of death, that God cares for me! Some poor saints think nobody cares for them. But God does. Is not that enough? (*W. Nevins, D.D.*) *A cure for care*:—I. THE DISEASE OF CARE. 1. Care even when exercised upon legitimate objects, if carried to excess, hath in itself the nature of sin. Anything which is a transgression of God's command is sin, and if there were no other command, the one in our text being broken would involve us in iniquity. Besides, the very essence of anxious care is the imagining that we are wiser than God, and the thrusting of ourselves into His place, to do for Him that which we dream He either cannot or will not do; we attempt to think of that which we fancy He will forget; or we labour to take upon ourselves that burden which He either is not able or willing to carry for us. 2. But, further, these anxious cares very frequently lead to other sins, sometimes to overt acts of transgression. The tradesman who is not able to leave his business with God, may be tempted to indulge in the tricks of

trade; nay, he may be prevailed upon to put out an unholy hand with which to help himself. Now this is forsaking the fountain to go to the broken cisterns, a crime which was laid against Israel of old, a wrath provoking iniquity. 3. As it is in itself sin, and the mother of sin, we note again that it brings misery, for where sin is, sorrow shall soon follow. 4. Besides this, these anxious cares do not only lead us into sin, and destroy our peace of mind, but they also weaken us for usefulness. When one has left all his cares at home, how well he can work for his Master, but when those cares tease us in the pulpit, it is hard preaching the gospel. There was a great king who once employed a merchant in his service as an ambassador to foreign courts. Now the merchant before he went away said to the king, "My own business requires all my care, and though I am always willing to be your majesty's servant, yet if I attend to your business as I ought, I am sure my own will be ruined." "Well," said the king, "you take care of my business, and I will take care of yours. Use your best endeavours, and I will answer for it that you shall be nothing the loser for the zeal which you take from yourself to give to me." And so our God says to us, as His servants, "Do My work, and I will do yours. Serve Me, and I will serve you." 5. These carking cares, of whose guilt perhaps we think so little, do very great damage to our blessed and holy cause. Your sad countenances hinder souls who are anxious, and they present a ready excuse for souls who are careless. 6. I close the description of this matter by saying that in the most frightful manner cares have brought many to the poisoned cup, the halter, and the knife, and hundreds to the madhouse. What makes the constant increase of our lunatic asylums; why is it that in almost every country in England new asylums have to be erected, wing after wing being added to these buildings in which the imbecile and the raving are confined? It is because we will carry what we have no business to carry—our own cares, and until there shall be a general keeping of the day of rest throughout England, and until there shall be a more general resting of our souls and all we have upon God, we must expect to hear of increasing suicides and increasing lunacies. II. THE BLESSED REMEDY TO BE APPLIED. Somebody must carry these cares. If I cannot do it myself, can I find any one who will? My Father who is in heaven stands waiting to be my burden-bearer. 1. One of the first and most natural cares with which we are vexed is the care for daily bread. Use your most earnest endeavours, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God; if you cannot do one thing do another; if you cannot earn your bread as a gentleman earn it as a poor man; if you cannot earn it by the sweat of your brains do it by the sweat of your brow; sweep a crossing if you cannot do anything else, for if a man will not work neither let him eat; but having brought yourself to that, if still every door is shut, "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." 2. Business men, who have not exactly to hunt for the necessities of life, are often tormented with the anxieties of large transactions and extended commerce. I say, "Brother, hold hard here, what are you doing? Are you sure that in this you have used your best prudence and wisdom, and your best industry, and given it your best attention?" "Yes." Well then, what more have you to do? Suppose you were to weep all night, will that keep your ship from going on the Goodwin sands? Suppose you could cry your eyes out, will that make a thief honest? Suppose you could fret yourself till you could not eat, would that raise the price of goods? One would think if you were just to say, "Well, I have done all that is to be done, now I will leave it with God," that you might go about your business and have the full use of your senses to attend to it. 3. Another anxiety of a personal kind which is very natural, and indeed very proper if it be not carried to excess, is the care of your children. Mother, father, you have prayed for your children, you trust you have set them a holy example, you labour day by day to teach them the truth as it is in Jesus; it is well, now let your souls quietly expect the blessing, leave your offspring with God; cast your sons and daughters upon their father's God; let no impatience intrude if they are not converted in your time, and let no distrust distract your mind if they should seem to belie your hopes. 4. But each Christian will in his time have personal troubles of a higher order, namely, spiritual cares. He is begotten again unto a lively hope, but he fears that his faith will yet die. As yet he has been victorious, but he trembles lest he should one day fall by the hand of the enemy. I beseech thee, cast this care upon God for He careth for you. Never let anxieties about sanctification destroy your confidence of justification. What if you be a sinner! Christ died to save sinners. What if you be undeserving! "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Grace is free. The invitation is still open to you; rest the whole

burden of your soul's salvation where it must rest. 5. There are many cares not of a personal but rather of an ecclesiastical character, which often insinuate themselves and plead for life, but which must nevertheless be put away. There are cares about how God's work is to be carried on. We may properly pray, "Lord, send labourers," and with equal propriety we may ask that He who has the silver and the gold may give them for His own work; but after that we must cast our care on God. Then, if we get over that, there will be another anxiety—one which frets me often enough—which is, the success of God's work. Husbandmen, your Great Employer sent you out to sow the seed, but if no grain of it should ever come up, if you sowed the seed as He told you, and where He told you, He will never lay the blame of a defective harvest to you. And sometimes there is another care, it is the care lest some little slip made by ourselves or others should give cause to the enemy to blaspheme. A careful jealousy is very well if it leads to caution, but very ill if it leads to a carking, weak anxiety. III. THE SWEET INDUCEMENT TO LEAVE YOUR BURDEN: "He careth for you." 1. Believe in a universal providence, the Lord cares for ants and angels, for worms and for worlds; he cares for cherubim and for sparrows, for seraphim and for insects. Cast your care on Him, He that calleth the stars by their names, and leadeth them out by numbers, by their hosts. Let His universal providence cheer you. 2. Think next of His particular providence over all the saints. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." 3. And then let the thought of His special love to you be the very essence of your comfort. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." God says that as much to you as He said it to any saint of old. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *On solicitude*:—Man is made up of soul and body. To accomplish the happiness of such a being it is necessary that both of these should be free from disquietude. It is therefore the great aim of religion to point out the most amiable views of the character of God, and to inculcate the exercise of perpetual hope, and trust in His most beneficent providence as the only effectual instrument of our present felicity. I. Such a precept as this CANNOT BE SUPPOSED TO INCULCATE AN ENTIRE NEGLIGENCE, OR A TOTAL INATTENTION, TO OUR EXTERNAL SITUATION IN LIFE. Religion expressly forbids us to be slothful in business. It calls us to action. God is concerned for your good, and careth for all your interests. II. TO OFFER SOME ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE THIS PRECEPT. 1. All immoderate care is highly criminal and impious in its nature. Weak must be that faith, and little must that mind have learned of the nature of its Creator, which can observe that He dispenses His bounty in such abundance through all the works of His hands, and still entertain the secret thought that His love is exhausted on the minutest objects, and that there is nothing in reserve for the sons of men. 2. All inordinate care about the events of life is offering an affront to the love and goodness which we have formerly experienced, and deeply partakes of the nature of ingratitude to God. 3. An anxious, a discontented temper of mind, must prove a source of misery, must subject the soul to perpetual uneasiness and pain in all the situations of life. He is blind to every comfortable circumstance that may enter into his lot. His imagination ever dwells upon some disagreeable point; and it is not in the power of all the enjoyments of this world to give it any sort of solace. 4. All such peevish care is utterly unprofitable and impotent, and totally incapable of ever accomplishing its end. The stream of providence perpetually rolls on with an impetuous current; and he who ventures to oppose it shall only fatigue himself and waste his strength and spirits in vain. (John Main, D.D.) *A sermon to ministers and other tried believers*:—The verse preceding is, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." If we are truly humble we shall cast our care upon God, and by that process our joy will be exalted. Oh for more humility, for then shall we have more tranquillity. Pride begets anxiety. The verse which follows our text is this—"Be sober, be vigilant," &c. Cast your care upon God, because you need all your powers of thought to battle with the great enemy. He hopes to devour you by care. I. First, EXPOUND the text—"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." The word used in reference to God is applied to caring for the poor, and in another place to the watchfulness of a shepherd. Our anxiety and God's care are two very different things. You are to cast your care, which is folly, upon the Lord, for He exercises a care which is wisdom. Care to us is exhausting, but God is all-sufficient. Care to us is sinful, but God's care of us is holy. Care distracts us from service, but the Divine mind does not forget one thing while remembering another. "Casting," says the apostle. He does not say, "laying all your care upon Him"

but he uses a much more energetic word. You have to cast the load upon the Lord; the act will require effort. Here is a work worthy of faith. You will have to lift with all your soul before the burden can be shifted; that effort, however, will not be half so exhausting as the effort of carrying your load yourself. Note the next words: "Upon Him." You may tell your griefs to others to gain their sympathy; you may ask friends to help you, and so exercise your humility; but let your requests to man be ever in subordination to your waiting upon God. Some have obtained their full share of human help by much begging from their fellow Christians; but it is a nobler thing to make known your requests unto God; and somehow those who beg only of God are wondrously sustained where others fail. Cease, then, from man; cast all your care upon God, and upon Him only. Certain courses of action are the very reverse of casting all your care upon God, and one is indifference. Every man is bound to care about his life-duties, and the claims of his family. Casting care upon God is the very reverse of recklessness and inconsiderateness. It is not casting care upon God when a man does that which is wrong in order to clear himself; yet this is too often tried. He who compromises truth to avoid pecuniary loss is hewing out a broken cistern for himself. He who borrows when he knows he cannot pay, he who enters into wild speculations to increase his income, he who does aught that is ungodly in order to turn a penny is not casting his care upon God. How, then, are we to cast all our care upon God? Two things need to be done. It is a heavy load that is to be cast upon God, and it requires the hand of prayer and the hand of faith to make the transfer. Prayer tells God what the care is, and asks God to help, while faith believes that God can and will do it. When you have thus lifted your care into its true position and cast it upon God, take heed that you do not pick it up again. Henceforth let us leave worldlings to fret over the cares of this life; as for us, let our conversation be in heaven, and let us be anxious only to end anxiety by a childlike confidence in God.

II. TO ENFORCE the text. I will give you certain reasons, and then the reason why you should cast all your care upon God. 1. First, the ever blessed One commands you to do it. If you do not trust in God you will be distinctly sinful; you are as much commanded to trust as to love. 2. Next, cast all your cares on God, because you will have matters enough to think of even then. There is the care to love and serve Him better; the care to understand His Word; the care to preach it to His people; the care to experience His fellowship; the care so to walk that you shall not vex the Holy Spirit. Such hallowed cares will always be with you, and will increase as you grow in grace. 3. And, next, you must cast your care upon God, because you have God's business to do. 4. You ought to do it not only for this reason, but because it is such a great privilege to be able to cast your care upon God. 5. Let me add that you ministers ought to cast all your care upon God, because it will be such a good example for your hearers. Our people learn much from our conduct, and if they see us fretting they will be certain to do the same. 6. But the reason of reasons is that contained in our text—"He careth for you." Because He hath set His love upon us we can surely cast our care upon Him. He has given us Christ, will He not give us bread? See, He has called us to be His sons, will He starve His children? See what He is preparing for you in heaven, will He not enable you to bear the burdens of this present life? We dishonour God when we suspect His tenderness and generosity. We can only magnify Him by a calm faith which leans upon His Word. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*The wisdom of God in His providence:—*I. CONSIDER THE NATURE OF THE DUTY HERE REQUIRED, WHICH IS TO CAST OUR CARE UPON GOD. 1. That after all prudent care and diligence have been used by us, we should not be farther solicitous about the event of things which, when we have done all we can, will be out of our power. 2. Casting our care upon God implies that we should refer the issue of things to His providence, which is continually vigilant over us and knows how to dispose all things to the best. II. THE ARGUMENT WHICH THE APOSTLE HERE USETH TO PERSUADE US TO THIS DUTY OF casting all our care upon God, because it is He that careth for us. 1. That God taketh care of us, implies in general that the providence of God governs the world and concerns itself in the affairs of men and disposeth of all events that happen to us. 2. The providence of God is more peculiarly concerned for good men, and He takes a more particular and especial care of them. And this David limits in a more particular manner to good men: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." III. Let us now see of WHAT FORCE THIS CONSIDERATION IS, TO PERSUADE TO THE DUTY ENJOINED. 1. Because if God cares for us, our concernments are in the

best and safest hands, and where we should desire to have them; infinitely safer than under any care and conduct of our own. 2. Because all our anxiety and care will do us no good; on the contrary, it will certainly do us hurt. (*Abp. Tillotson.*)

What to do with care:—What is care? The word has two shades of meaning. It means simply attention when it is said: "He took care of him." But it signifies anxiety in the expression: "Ye shall eat bread with care." Now it is possible to begin with that kind of care which signifies attention, and to go on to that which signifies anxiety. It is there that our danger lies. Attention is an advantage; anxiety is an evil. It is our duty to be attentive; and it is equally our duty to avoid anxiety. A young man, for instance, who has just closed his school life and gone to business, finds himself surrounded by things new and strange. He applies himself with earnestness to understand his duties, and to meet the approval of his employer. While impelled by a conscientious desire to do right and well, he is in the line which conducts to success; but if he allows a harsh word to discourage him, or a failure or two to throw him into despair, he passes into a state of mind presenting the greatest obstacles to progress. A person conducting his own business must give it attention, or it will cover him with dishonour. It says little for a man's Christianity if he comes to poverty by his own negligence. But how easily he may pass across the line which leads to over-solicitude! Look, again, to the mother of a family. Is there any human sentiment more disinterested, pure, and fervent than a mother's love? Have you not known it to grow into an agitating and almost selfish apprehension? What can be said about the care due to the soul? Can that be excessive? In a world which is full of temptations to negligence and hardness of heart, what can be done without intense diligence and application? So long as care is just and healthful, it cannot be too great on this subject. But for this right state of mind many substitute a state made up of doubt and terror. Now how are we to be freed from a burden which is so embarrassing? What are we to do with it? We are desired to cast it all upon God. But how do we know that He will accept our care? From His own assurance that "He careth for us." "He careth for us." He has not forsaken the world He made; how is it possible that He should have ceased to think of the creatures He has so wonderfully endowed? The same wisdom which made us capable of perception, judgment, and forethought, watches over all our mental operations. While all men are under this providential charge, there are some whom He has brought into a special relation to Himself. He takes the deepest interest in them. Nothing can affect them which does not affect Himself. How strange that any of them should be crushed with anxiety! It is this confidence in God's care for us which leads us to cast our care on Him. This assurance will prompt us to tell Him, with all openness of heart, whatsoever oppresses us. We know how much in a time of sorrow we are relieved by the mere communication of our grief; we seem to have parted with much of it when we have simply transferred the knowledge of it to another mind. With much greater reason may we expect such a result to follow from looking to our Father in heaven, and recounting to Him the cause of our dread, and seeking from Him the needed succour. This trust in Him who careth for us, imparts not only relief from oppression and new power for duty, but leads us into the position most honouring to a creature. It brings us into immediate fellowship with God; it establishes an interchange of thought and trustful love between our hearts and His. We then give Him proof of our confidence, and He responds to the sentiment which His own Spirit had awakened with all the fulness of His nature. (*C. M. Birrell.*)

Human cares and the Divine care:—I. THERE ARE THOSE WHO DECLARE THAT THE WORDS HAVE NO MEANING. They see no "He" in the universe. True, they speak of nature, not only with deep reverence, but in terms so warmly personal, that we are sometimes tempted to think that their science has found what their faith had lost; but, if we may trust their own assertions, it is not so, for they find no evidence in nature of a living God. Such men can have no resource outside of themselves in times of sorrow and anxiety. No man can cast his care upon an "it." The materialist's creed fosters an inhuman quite as much as an ungodly type of character. If ever the pressure of care becomes too heavy for him to bear it alone, one of two results will follow: either the creed will break down or the man will. II. Although atheism may be no temptation to us, WE MAY STILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO REALISE THAT GOD REALLY CARES FOR US. 1. Easier to believe that He cares for the universe at large, or even for this world and the human race as a whole, than that He takes any interest in us, as individuals. Too prone to think of Him as exercising some kind of care over us as a general does over his troops.

But He is not a general, but a Father, and has room in His infinite heart for each one of us. "He cares for me." 2. Some one may say, "I cannot think God cares very much for me, or He would not allow me to suffer as I do, and give me this weary burden of care to bear day by day." Like a child complaining of having hard lessons to learn. But are we not assured that our very trials are the pledge of God's love? If we had no care, we might begin to doubt whether God cared for us. III. Then the practical lesson of the text is this, THAT IF WE LIFT THE BURDEN OF OUR CARE AT ALL, WE ARE TO LIFT IT FOR THE LAST TIME, THAT WE MAY CAST IT UPON GOD. Once there it becomes God's care, not ours. Because God cares for us, He will care for it. IV. THE LITTLE WORD "ALL" INCLUDES EVEN THE TRIVIAL AND PASSING ANXIETIES OF EACH DAY. (*G. S. Barrett, B.A.*) *Confidence in God lubricates life* :—There is nothing in the teachings of the Bible that tends to remove the stimulus to industry, or to take away the necessity of enterprise. It is neither industry nor enterprise that ever hurts anybody. They are pleasurable and wholesome, and we shall not wish the motive which inspires them taken away. It is with men as it is with machinery. Everybody that knows anything about machinery knows that it wastes faster when it is allowed to stand still than when it is worked, if it is worked aright. If a watch stands still a year, it wears out as much as it would in running properly two years. But where machinery runs without oil, and squeaks and grinds, it gets hot, and wears out speedily. Now anxiety is in human life just what squeaking and grinding are in machinery that is not oiled. In human life, trust is the oil. Confidence in God is that which lubricates life, so that industry and enterprise develop the things we ought to have, and do it in such a way that they bring pleasure with them. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Invented worries* :—Mosquitoes are not nationalised everywhere, but worries are. Their sting is not outwardly perceptible, but it is painful enough within. Some of our foreign friends want to know, as they retire to rest themselves, "How to make outdoor life attractive to mosquitoes?"—a humorous enough puzzle. We know, however, one thing—that mosquitoes come without our consent; but that we are foolish enough to invent worries—to entertain worries—and to do everything else with them but cast them where we know that all our cares may and ought to be cast. (*W. M. Statham, M.A.*) *Casting all your cares upon Him* :—"In the summer of 1878," says Mrs. Sarah Smiley, "I descended the Righi with one of the most faithful of the old Swiss guides. Beyond the service of the day, he gave me unconsciously a lesson for life. His first care was to put my wraps and other burdens upon his shoulders. In doing this he asked for all; but I chose to keep back a few for special care. I soon found them no little hindrance to the freedom of my movement; but still I would not give them up until my guide, returning to me where I sat resting for a moment, kindly but firmly demanded that I should give him everything but my Alpine stock. Putting them with the utmost care upon his shoulders, with a look of intense satisfaction he again led the way. And now in my freedom, I found I could make double speed with double safety. Then a voice spoke inwardly: 'O foolish, wilful heart, hast thou, indeed, given up thy last burden? Thou hast no need to carry them, nor even the right.' I saw it all in a flash; and then, as I leaped lightly from rock to rock down the steep mountain side, I said within myself, 'And even thus will I follow Jesus, my Guide, my Burden-bearer. I will rest all my care upon Him, for He careth for me.'" (*Ibid.*) *Nursing cares* :—Men do not avail themselves of the riches of God's grace. They love to nurse their cares, and seem as uneasy without some fret as an old friar would be without his hair girdle. They are commanded to cast their cares upon the Lord; but even when they attempt it, they do not fail to catch them up again, and think it meritorious to walk burdened. They take God's ticket to heaven, and then put their baggage on their shoulders, and tramp, tramp the whole way there afoot. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *He careth for you.—Divine care* :—He careth for all. "He careth" for the inorganic creation. His care embraceth the smallest atom and the mightiest globe. "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down." All the changes in the atmosphere are with Him. "He covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth." The sea is under His care. "Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them" (*Psa. lxxxix. 9*). He careth for vegetable existence. "He causeth grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man. He sendeth forth His spirit, and reneweth the face of the earth." He careth for irrational creatures. "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." He feedeth the fowls of the air. Most assuredly, then, "He

careth" for man, His intelligent offspring. He careth for you; the race, the nation, the family, the individual; and especially for you, the individual. I. IT IS A DEMONSTRABLE FACT. 1. Antecedent reasoning bears testimony to this fact. He is our Creator. Does the artist, who has exerted his genius to the utmost in the production of that which he considers his masterpiece, watch over it with care? That which he produced, is he not anxious to preserve? He is our Proprietor. With what care do men watch over their own property. Is the Eternal indifferent to what becomes of His property? He is our Father. He is our Redeemer. Will He who "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," cease to watch over us every moment with the utmost care? The very relations which He sustains to us urge the conclusion. 2. The condition in which we were born into this life. We come into this world the most helpless of all helpless creatures. We find the world exquisitely fitted to our organisation in every point. The fitness of the world to us shows that He careth for us. 3. The unequivocal teaching of the Bible. "Can a woman forget her sucking child," &c. The consciousness of the Christian. Every Christian feels that God careth for him. II. IT IS A GLORIOUS FACT. 1. It encourages the most unbounded trustfulness. Who is He? One who is infinite in wisdom, goodness, and power. 2. It encourages adoring gratitude. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *God's care*:—I. ITS OBJECTS. II. ITS NATURE. 1. Cordial and tender. 2. Active and efficacious. 3. Patient and unwearied. 4. Permanent and lasting. III. ITS EVIDENCES. 1. The relationship He acknowledges. 2. His own testimony and promises. 3. Our own experience. 4. The undertaking for our salvation. IV. ITS INFERENCES. 1. The wonderful nature of our God. 2. The duty and obligation which devolve upon us—to love Him in return. 3. The acknowledgment. (*Homilist.*) *He careth for you*:—He careth for you, He careth for us all, for man and for all animate creation. How has God helped humanity to comforts through the ages! If we look at the contour of continents, at ocean currents, at mountain heights and ranges, at plateaus, at rivers as they run, at lake-chains, at animal life, at vegetable growth, at rock formation, or at prevailing winds and calms, all of these things speak of a Father's care for His children, and all of design, as plainly as the intricate mechanisms of loom, or watch, or machine tell of a master mechanic's plans and work. God loves man. He cares for you and for me, and proves it by climate and soil and by all the aids to commerce and society. Given a little more or less atmospheric pressure, a little more or less of God's holding, which men have dared to nick-name gravity, a few more or less degrees of heat, a variation from God's physical laws by so much as a fraction of a degree in direction or of a single mile a year in velocity, and wreck and ruin would result. He careth for us, and cradles us carefully, and fans us with pleasant breezes, and feasts us with delicacies, and wafts pleasant odours to us, and makes us glad with beauty and a thousand joys. We are His children. Not a mountain is too high, not a river too swift, not a plain too arid, not a wind too penetrating; for our Father made it so. Not a ray of light, or a flake of snow, or a crystal of frost, or a degree of heat from all eternity, but it hath been His messenger, His loving messenger to our race. Not a bird's song, not a blossom or fruitage, not a blade of grass but it tells God's care. May we not go further and trust enough to say, not a poisonous reptile, or devouring beast, or noxious plant, not even sorrow, or pain, or death, but some way He makes it do His will for good to humanity. (*H. E. Partridge.*) *Christ the Care-bearer*:—I. THERE IS NO ONE TO WHOM THESE WORDS SHOULD NOT COME AS A MESSAGE OF COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT. For care is one of those things which fall to the lot of everybody, young and old. Poverty and wealth alike entangle us in the meshes of anxiety. This arrangement of Providence by which every man succeeds to a heritage of care has been ordained by God for the wisest and most gracious ends. There is a story told of an ancient king that he stood one day before the door of a husbandman, and called upon the husbandman to come out to him. But being busy with something else he refused to come out, or even to open the door so that the king might come in. And so, to bring the man to his senses, the king lit a firebrand and cast it into the husbandman's granary. And that brought him out. Now that is the function of our cares. They lead us out to God, and they bring God into us. They show us the poverty of our own resources, and they reveal to us the unsearchable riches of Christ. II. The great question is, WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH OUR CARE? We are to cast our care upon God. Two thousand years ago, this same question was very much debated by the learned men of Greece and Rome. Some of them thought that the remedy for care was to

banish from their minds all thought of future trouble, and to enjoy the pleasures of the passing moment as long as they were capable of enjoying them. But what a pagan doctrine that is. It tells a man to enjoy life while he can; but it has no word to say to those who are under the cloud of trouble, and are enjoying it no more. There was another school of those ancient moralists who tried to remedy that defect. They taught that poverty and wealth are the mere accidents of life. If a man becomes poor, the man himself, in his own true nature, is no worse; and if he becomes rich, he is no better. So it is with sickness and health. They are the mere accidents or appendages of life. Man himself is greater than they. The true wisdom of life, therefore, is to be indifferent to them. That doctrine is very much like Dr. Johnson's cure for toothache—to treat it with contempt—a very good cure when we are not suffering from toothache. Now Peter, in the text, is no speculator nor theoriser. He knows that it is not in human nature to be insensible to these things, and he comes forward, like a practical man, with a definite direction as to how we are to treat a real evil which we cannot ignore, and that direction is that we are to cast our care upon God. But now, how is this to be done? Our cares are manifold, and there are different ways of transferring them to Him who has promised to bear them for us. Some people find that they can best get rid of their cares by carrying them to God through the avenue of prayer. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." Some cares will best be escaped by rising above them on the wings of praise. For songs are not always the expressions of gladness, and if you read the Psalms of David you will find that many of them were wrung out of his soul by the visitations of care. There is one other method which will hardly fail to dispel them, and that is, to allow God to speak to us. This is done by reading the Word of God, and the effectiveness of this exercise as a care-remover is one of the commonest experiences of the Christian life.

III. THE KIND OF CARES WHICH GOD WILL BEAR FOR US. And we learn from the text that they are not confined to any particular class: for we are enjoined to cast all our care upon Him. Many of our cares are trivial. The greatest care that a man can feel is the burden of sin. God careth for you (Isa. i. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 24). If God frees us from the greatest care of all, you may rest assured that He will also free us from every lesser care (Matt. vi. 25-34).

IV. We have to notice THE REASON WHY WE SHOULD CAST OUR CARE UPON GOD. It is stated in the text, and is both intelligible and satisfactory. Peter boldly asserts that we are the objects of the Divine solicitude. There is no truth of which men of faith have been more firmly assured than this same truth of the loving-kindness of God, and of His tender care for His children. It sheltered Abraham when, in the greatest trial of his life, he said calmly to his son, "The Lord will provide." It was to Moses the secret-place of the Most High when, in the prospect of death, he exclaimed, "The Eternal God is a refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." And nowhere more than in the Psalms of David do we trace the cheering, and soothing, and strengthening influence of a firm faith in God's loving care. (*J. L. Fyfe.*) *God not an abstraction* (with Eph. iv. 30):—The first of these texts speaks of the Spirit of God as being hurt by frivolous speech, or wrathful passion, or irritable temper in Christians; so that He would be grieved into silence or distance by such offences. The second text speaks of God as entering into all the anxieties of our life. Thus we see that each of these great apostles, St. Paul and St. Peter, was accustomed to think of God, not as a Being too distant or impassive to be affected by our conduct or emotions, but as an ever-present, sensitive, Almighty Spirit—a living Holiness and a living Love. Such a notion of God thus disseminated throughout Europe and Asia by the apostles of Christ was new to both continents. As for the Greeks, Aristotle, the very chief thinker amongst them, says that any one would laugh if a man were to say that he loved Jupiter. The work of Jupiter was to shake the heavens as the Thunderer, not to draw near to men, to enter into their joys or woes. What the Greeks did not know, the Romans knew not. Equally unknown to Asia was the idea of a God with feeling, one who could be grieved by men, one who could suffer with and help us. In Brahminism, the grand old religion of India, the Supreme God is always represented as lost to man in the depths of His own infinity, absorbed in the dreams of His own glory, too high and too holy to have the slightest concern for the vile universe which lesser gods had called into existence between them. In Buddhism, a comparatively modern reformation, God is removed still further from man; He loses even His personality. There is no living God at all, says to-day the religion of two hundred millions of mankind—only one eternal order; and the final reward of right-doing is to lose one's personal existence and

become impersonal parts of the Eternal Force. Just as debased a belief in necessity, in the form of extreme Augustinianism, has prevailed among the common people of Europe. But why this reference to Asia with its errors? Because the very same influence which has been the ruin of Asia is at work around us in Europe, in Christendom. The far larger part of English thought respecting God is affected by the very same delusions as to the insensibility of the Divine nature; for is not the prevailing notion among all the ranks of our people, especially when they wish to be philosophical, that all the popular and Scriptural language respecting God as a living person near at hand, and full of active thought and feeling respecting ourselves, is only an accommodation to the weakness of the lowest order of mind? Now, if this be true, it is obvious to remark, first of all, how uninteresting a thing the worship of such a God must be! One to whom you bring thought, anxiety, emotion, passion, praise, affection, gratitude, the agonies of prayer, and who in return looks upon you as might a great marble colossus, with one calm eternal gaze of infinite power, but without the slightest approach to a responsive sympathy or fatherly love. Now, the whole of the Divine revelation which culminates in Christ is directed to the establishment of a better knowledge of Him who is not far from any one, and who is "acquainted with all our ways." "Truly, our communion is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Now, consider how strange it would be if God were not such a Being as this; if He, the Creator of all sensibility, were the only Spirit who was devoid of earnest sense and feeling. Is this world the work of a Father who has no delight in His children, in their work, in their play, in their troubles, or in their joy? Is His goodness only such an attribute as withered theologians might talk of, like a dry flower in a traveller's book, only a mockery of the beautiful living reality? Is it nothing better than an abstraction? Then consider next what an effort seems to be made in nature to convey to our minds on all sides the impression of there being feeling in God. Does not every beautiful form in plants or flowers breathe forth the very feeling of some great work of art? But the senses do not reveal enough for the soul; the heart asks for a richer and fuller communion. We have it in Christ. Christ calls on us to unlearn that false lesson of the impassive God. Now you cannot fail to notice the bearing of such thoughts as these on all our views of God's work, both in nature and in redemption. The English pagan, the modern Buddhist, with his exalted conception of a Deity who transcends thought, and soars in his infinity far above any genuine feeling, takes what comes of outward benefit as the result of so much physical machinery guided by man's intelligence. He feels no more thankful to God for his daily blessing than he would feel thankful to a cotton engine for pouring out its endless yarn. But let a man once see through the hateful falsehood of this philosophy, and learn to believe in the all-sensitive nature which pervades the world, then how differently will he recognise the source of his daily blessings! Just as we should appreciate any entertainment given us by a friend—as a table covered with fruit or flowers—so shall we then acknowledge the ever-present love which is daily loading us with benefits. And, as we should abhor a crowd of English vagrants who might hurriedly snatch up the benefactions of some cheerful giver, and depart from his door without even a word of thankfulness or affection, so hateful will then appear the conduct of mankind who take God's gifts in daily life and depart without a look of gratitude. Much more in all that relates to Christ, the unspeakable gift. The whole lesson of the Atonement by the death of Christ is lost for those whose philosophy leads them to disbelieve in the sensibility of God to pain or to sacrifice. "He that spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him for us all." Every word here speaks of a self-crucifying compassion, a self-exacting benevolence. Once more, it is easy to see the bearing of this line of thought on our own habitual feeling towards God if we live surrounded by this all-sensitive Spirit. (*E. White.*) *He careth for you:—I. I prove that God takes care of you by showing WHAT HE HAS ALREADY DONE.* 1. He has created us. 2. He has died for us. 3. He has, also, risen from the dead for us. 4. He has called us to be His children. 5. He has redeemed us. 6. He has changed our nature. 7. He has cleansed us. 8. He has directed the steps of our life. II. Let us prove that our Father cares for us BY WHAT HE IS NOW DOING. 1. He is living for us. 2. He is dwelling in us. 3. He is showing mercy to us. Is not the preservation of your life a proof that God careth for you? 4. He is bearing with you. III. I would prove that God careth for you BY WHAT HE HAS UNDERTAKEN TO DO. The Lord has undertaken to be your Father. (*W. Birch.*) *The Lord careth for you:—*"One very hot summer's day I was driving along a dusty road, when I overtook a woman with a heavy basket on her arm. I did not want

to feel like the priest in the story that Jesus told, who 'passed by on the other side,' so I offered her a ride. She gladly accepted it, but as she rode still carried the heavy basket on her arm. 'My good woman,' I said as kindly as I could, 'your basket would ride just as well in the bottom of the trap, and you would be much more comfortable.' 'Ah, so it would, sir, thank you; I never thought of that,' she said, as she put her burden down. 'That is very much like what I often do,' I remarked after a little while. 'Like you do, sir?' and the woman looked up inquiringly. 'Yes; I, too, often carry heavy burdens when there is no need for it.' She waited for my explanation. 'The Lord Jesus has taken me up into His chariot, and I rejoice to ride in it, but very often I carry a great burden of care on my back that would ride just as well if I put it down, for the Lord would carry me and my cares too.' 'Yes, bless the Lord!' said she, with a joy that told that she had found the cure for care. 'It is true, sir, when He takes us up in His chariot, He takes cares and all.' Here is the cure for your cares, for all the little daily worries and the burdens of anxiety that oppress you—the Lord careth for you." (*M. Guy Pearse.*)

Cared for:—Away in my native town lived an old woman, very poor and very wretched. Sickness and poverty and age together had made her as wrinkled and soured as she could be. Everybody had heard her long tale of troubles over and over again, and she made the most of them, as folks generally do, and invariably ended with the doleful moan, "I'm old, and lone, and poor, and I've got nobody in all the world to give me a bit of care." One day she came hurrying up to our house as fast as her stiff joints could carry her; her face seemed to have lost half its wrinkles, her eyes actually shone with delight. "What can have happened?" she thought everybody, as she came near. Everybody soon knew. "Bless ye," she cried, "I've got a letter from my boy in California—and I thought he was dead years ago—and he's doing well, and he says I mustn't fret, for he'll care for me as long as I live." She had lost her care—somebody cared for her. (*Ibid.*)

God's regard for individuals:—It is said that the great Duke of Wellington, before one of his earliest campaigns, had a soldier, with his full marching accoutrements, accurately weighed. Knowing what one soldier of average strength had to carry, he could judge how far his army might be called to march without breaking down. Our God does not deal in averages. He, with infinite wisdom, knows the powers of each individual and all the events which affect us. (*A. Reed, B.A.*)

God's care for us:—When a tiny boy, trying to help his father move his books, fell on the staircase beneath the weight of a heavy volume, his father ran to his aid and caught up in his arms boy and burden both, and carried them in his arms to his room. And will God deal worse with us? He cannot fail or forsake. He can smite rocks, and open seas, and unlock the treasuries of the air, and ransack the stores of the earth. Birds will bring meat, and fish coins, if He bid them. He takes up the isles as a very little thing; how easily, then, your heaviest load, while there is nothing so trivial but that you may make it a matter of prayer and faith. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

The Divine oversight:—The seaman is in the storm; he has furled the sails and thrown out the anchor; he has done what he could—the rest is with God. Nor will anxious thought, or foreboding care, save him; fresh effort itself may only land him on the rocks—his strength is in sitting still. There is a story told of John Rutledge, sailing on the American lakes, when the ice gathered around the ship, and destruction seemed inevitable, for the immense masses were gradually closing in, and the captain told them that no human effort could save them; how that he knelt down and prayed, and as he prayed, the wind which had been against them changed, and blew behind, and opened a way through the ice, pushing it back from the ship and widening a passage, so that she was saved. And when they came to the captain and said, "Shall we put on more canvas?" his reply was, "No! don't touch her! Some one else is managing this ship." We need to learn that lesson daily. Some one else is managing these lives of ours. Do we believe in God? Shall we not live and act, then, as if we did so?

Vers. 8, 9. **Be sober, be vigilant.**—*The advantages of moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure*:—Christianity in its precepts and commands, as well as in its doctrines, is precisely suited to our nature and our necessities. 1. The temperate man preserves his health of body, health of mind, and alacrity and vigour both of the one and of the other. 2. Moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure enhances the very enjoyment of that pleasure in various ways. The moderate man knows nothing of that languor and disgust which generally treads on the heels of the voluptuary, so frequently embittering his pleasures, rendering them insipid to

him, and so seldom allowing him to enjoy them completely. How much more taste does the moderate, the industrious man find in the simplest meats, in the most natural drinks, than the intemperate have in all the delicacies of luxury! And how completely he enjoys the innocent pleasure it offers! He has no need artificially to prepare nor previously to devise means for sharpening his pallid appetite and render himself susceptible of pleasure. 3. Moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure exalts and dignifies the mind. It in a manner spiritualises it; by divesting it of the degrading that is connected with mere animal gratification; by teaching us to use it as a means to higher ends. Thus may we connect spiritual and sensual pleasures together, and give a value to the latter by the former. All then becomes to us the gift of our gracious Father in heaven, the effect and demonstration of His all-comprehending love, and the pledge of still greater benefits and pleasures in the world to come. (*G. J. Zollikofer.*) *Christian sobriety* is all that duty that concerns ourselves in the matter of meat, and drink, and pleasures, and thoughts; and it hath within it the duties of—1. Temperance. 2. Chastity. 3. Humility. 4. Modesty. 5. Content. (*Bp. Jeremy Taylor.*) *Ready for temptation*:—"I fell in an unguarded moment; the temptation came so suddenly." How often such excuses are made! But why were we off our guard? Because we live in spiritual things too much like the Saxon king who earned for himself the inglorious surname of the Unready. (*King's Highway.*) *Our vigilance must be comprehensive*:—"Many a city has been taken on its strongest side, which was counted so strong that no watch was kept, even as no danger was dreaded there. We think that we are not exposed to one particular form of temptation; let none be too sure of this; and in resisting one form of evil, never let us forget that there are others in the world. Fleshly sins may be watched against, and yet room be given in the heart for spiritual wickedness, pride, self-righteousness, and the like. The victories gained over the lusts of the flesh may minister to those subtler mischiefs of the spirit: and our fate may be like that of the hero in the Maccabees, who was crushed by the falling elephant himself had slain. There is a white devil of spiritual pride as well as a black devil of fleshly lusts; and if only Satan can ruin us, it is all the same to him by what engines he does it; it is all the same to him whether we go down into hell as gross and carnal sinners, or as elated self-righteous saints. Set a watch, therefore, all round your heart; not on one side only, but on all; for you can never be sure on which side temptation will assail. (*Archbp. Trench.*) *Watch against little sins*:—"The truly pious is never at rest in his mind but when he stands upon his guard against the most minute and unobservable encroachments of sin, as knowing them upon this account more dangerous than greater; that the enemy that is least feared is usually the soonest felt. For as in the robbing of a house it is the custom for the sturdiest thieves to put in some little boy at the window, who being once within may easily open the doors and let them in too, so the tempter, in rifling the soul, despairs for the most part to attempt his entrance by some gross sin, and therefore employs a lesser, that may slide into it insensibly; which yet, little as it is, will so unlock the bars of conscience that the most enormous abominations shall at length make their entrance and take possession of it. Let no man measure the smallness of his danger by the smallness of any sin; for the smaller the sin the greater may be the stratagem. Some have been choked by a fly, a crumb, a grape-stone; such contemptible things carry in them the causes of death; and the soul may be destroyed by sinful desires, idle words, officious lies, as well as by perjuries, blasphemies, and murders. Those who consider in how many ways a soul may be ruined, will not count it scrupulosity to beware of the least and slenderest instruments of damnation. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Watch against our old sins*:—"The embankment is weak where it once gave way; and though the breach has been repaired, it must be diligently watched. The flames have been put out, but the ashes are still smouldering; and, if the wind rises, the fire may burst forth anew. The rebellion has been put down; but though its armies have been scattered and its prince dethroned, many traitors lurk in secret places, watching for opportunities to renew the struggle. Our old sins are conquered, but not quite killed. (*Newman Hall.*) *The devil, as a roaring lion*.—"The devil a roaring lion":—"There is a lion at your doors—such an one as hath none to equal him in power and in fierceness. Are they active in pursuit of prey? He is infinitely more so. They go but a little distance from their dens, but his circuit is the world itself. Other lions roam abroad at certain seasons only—night is their busy time; but "when the sun ariseth they gather themselves together and lay them down in their dens" (Psa. civ. 22). But this spiritual lion is perpetually in motion. The

day and night are both alike to him. Other lions are bloodthirsty and savage; but he hath no measure in his fury. He cannot possibly be satisfied unless all men are his prey. But mark some other points of contrast which show how far more terrible this lion is than the lions of the forest. They are visible—can be more easily avoided; but he is an invisible being. He springs upon his prey unseen and unsuspected. The natural lion attacks his prey by open violence; but this spiritual lion deals rather by secret craft. The natural lion seeks only to devour the body; the spiritual lion aims at the destruction both of soul and body in hell. The natural lion's strength is far greater than the strength of man, yet man has found out ways of overcoming him; but no power, no skill, no contrivances of man can enable him to overcome the spiritual lion our text speaks of. How then may this roaring lion be resisted and overpowered? Our text returns an answer to it. St. Peter is evidently speaking to believers, who, having been snatched already out of Satan's jaws, have now only to resist him to the end. How is a poor sinner, who "has been carried captive by Satan at his will," to "escape out of the snare"? Now to this the whole gospel is an answer. Why, you must look to the Cross. "For this cause the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." It is a most important question for the true believer, "How am I to resist this fearful adversary of my soul? Though I must not hope, on earth, to be free from his temptations, yet how am I to tread him under my feet?"

1. He exhorts us to sobriety—"Be sober." "Be moderate—be self-denying—make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Let the Christian but entangle himself in things of this life, and Satan has him at a great advantage.
2. "Be vigilant." They then who have such a watchful and unwearied enemy have need to be upon the watch themselves. Let your eye but rove a little towards some forbidden object, and he will take occasion from it to inflame your heart with evil passions. Once say of any sin, "Is it not a little one?" and suffer yourself, on that ground, to indulge in it—immediately the lion is upon you! He will make this breach much wider, and it will "increase unto more ungodliness." We must not go to sleep ourselves under the notion that the Lord will guard us. It is the wakeful, not the slothful servant who has a warrant for God's protection.
3. But the apostle's third direction is one of such immense importance that we can neither be "sober" nor "vigilant" without it. He bids us be "steadfast in the faith." Let us keep but faith within our bosoms, and we keep Satan at a distance off. We are proof against the lion. Yet a little while and we shall remove out of the lion's reach. In the meanwhile, if there is a lion seeking to devour, there is another Lion standing on our part; for it is under such an emblem that our mighty Saviour hath vouchsafed to represent Himself. He is "the lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. v. 5). (*A. Roberts, M.A.*)

The roaring lion:—I. SATAN'S PERPETUAL ACTIVITY. Only God can be omnipresent; hence, Satan can only be in one place at one time. Yet, if you consider how much mischief he doeth, you will easily gather that he must have an awful degree of activity.

1. We know that he is to be found in every place! Wherever the breath of life is inhaled, the poisonous miasma of temptation is a thing familiar.
2. Then, remember, that as he is found in all places, so you have often found him in all your duties. You have sought to serve God in your daily avocations, but strong temptations, furious suggestions of evil, hath followed you there. When we wished to be wrestling with the angel of God, we have had to contend with the fiend of hell.
3. We must observe also how ready Satan is to vent his spite against us in all frames of heart. When we are depressed in spirit—perhaps some bodily illness has brought us low, our animal spirits have ebbed and we feel ready to sink, then that old coward Satan is sure to attack us. On the other hand, if we are joyous and triumphant, then Satan knows how to tempt us to presumption—"My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved"; or else to carnal security—"Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years"; or else to self-righteousness—"My own power and goodness have exalted me." Or else, he will even attempt to poison our joys with the spleen of evil forebodings.
4. And ah! remember how well he knows how to turn all the events of Providence to our ill. Here comes Esau, hungry with hunting; there is a mess of pottage ready, that he may be tempted to sell his birth-right. Here is Noah, glad to escape from his long confinement in the ark; he is merry, and there is the wine-cup ready for him, that he may drink. Here is Peter; his faith is low, but his presumption is high; there is a maiden ready to say—"Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." There is Judas, and there are thirty pieces of silver in the priestly hand to tempt him, ay, and there is the rope after-

wards for him to hang himself withal. II. SATAN'S ROARINGS. 1. Perhaps Peter here alluded to the roaring of persecution. How Satan roared with persecutions in Peter's days! There were racks and gibbets; there was the sword for beheading and the stake for burning; there was dragging at the heels of the wild horse; there was smearing over with pitch and then setting the body still alive to burn in Nero's garden. There was nothing for the Christian then but banishment and imprisonment; these were the lowest penalties. 2. But there is another kind of furious attack, the roaring of strong and vehement temptation. This some of us have felt. Do you know what it is to be caught hold of by some frightful temptation which you detest, and yet the clutch of the hand is seconded by an arm so terrific in its strength that it drags you right on against your will. 3. Satan can roar also in the Christian's ears with blasphemies. Oh! the terrors which Satan has sometimes caused to God's people by saying, "Ah, you are not a child of God, or you would not have so vile a nature." Whereas you never thought it at all. It was his suggestion, not yours; and then, having laid his sin at your door, he has turned accuser of the brethren, and has sought to cast down your faith from its excellency, by making you imagine that you had committed the unpardonable sin. Now, if he roars against you, either with persecution or with temptation, or with diabolical insinuations, take the language of our apostle here—"Whom resist steadfast in the faith," &c. III. SATAN'S ULTIMATE AIM—"Seeking whom he may devour." Nothing short of the total destruction of a believer will ever satisfy our adversary. If the battle were between Satan and man, then, indeed, woe to us! We might quit ourselves like men and be strong, but before this giant all the host of Israel must flee. But the battle is not ours; it is the mighty God's. Yea, and Christ Himself must be defeated, the glory of His Cross must be dimmed, the crown of sovereignty must be snatched from His head, ere one of those for whom He died should ever be given up to the power of His adversary. IV. WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN ORDER THAT WE MAY OVERCOME THIS ADVERSARY. 1. "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith." But how resist him? "Steadfast in the faith." Seek to obtain a clear knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, and then get a good grip of them. This will make you strong. Then take hold of the promises of God, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. 2. But there is another word added for our comfort—"Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." This is well sketched by John Bunyan. "As Christian was going along the exceedingly narrow pathway, with a deep ditch on one side, and a dangerous quag upon the other, he came to a stand, and he had half a thought to go back; and then again he thought he might be half-way through the valley; so he resolved to go on. And while he pondered and mused, he heard the voice of a man as going before him, saying, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' Then he was glad, and that for these reasons. He gathered from thence that some who feared God were in this valley as well as himself; that God was with them, though they perceived Him not; that he hoped to have company by and by. So he went on, and called to him that was before, but he knew not what to answer for that he also thought himself to be alone." "I did not think that anybody ever felt as I feel." And though I tell you these things, and know that many of you have heard Satan roar, I am compelled to confess that I have frequently said in my own heart, "I do not believe that any other man ever had this temptation before me." Well, this text stands to refute our supposition, "The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The personality and agency of evil spirits*:—When an army is on active service, there is no effort which its commander will spare, to get accurate information about the army which is opposed to him. He uses all the means in his power: and his emissaries are content to run the most fearful risks; that he may learn what is the number of the force arrayed against him; what is its position, what its probable movements. And if any skilful spy could so far penetrate the councils of the hostile commander, as to be able to procure a sketch of his plan for conducting the campaign, we can all understand that such a plan would be worth almost any price. For to be forewarned is to be forearmed. It is part of our religious belief, that a host of beings, with power and skill far more than human, are hourly exerting all their power and all their skill for our eternal ruin. It is a part of our religious belief, that at the head of this host of foes there is one miserable, yet powerful being: a being inconceivably malignant, crafty, wretched: whose great desire is to dishonour God, and to make us human beings as sinful and as wretched as himself. Now there is no doubt at all, that we have all to contend with a certain

amount of lurking unbelief in regard to those evil spirits of which we are to think. You will find men who will tell you that the existence of Satan and his angels is an antiquated doctrine, fitted for a ruder age, but not suited to our growing intelligence: they will tell you that it is not to be supposed that God would suffer such beings to exist and to assail us: and that all that was said by Christ and His apostles with regard to evil spirits must be understood as having been said in compliance with the vulgar way of thinking. As to the notion that the Almighty would not suffer such, why, there is no greater difficulty in understanding why He permits evil spirits, than in understanding why He permits evil men. And we know that God not only allows evil men to exist; but allows them to tempt and mislead other human souls to evil. And as for the notion that Christ and the apostles in speaking of evil spirits were merely complying with the vulgar way of thinking—merely to put that notion plainly before our minds is enough to set it aside. See what it comes to. That there are no evil spirits: that people, however, generally fancied there are: and that our Saviour, for fear of shocking their prejudice, gave in to that foolish error, and countenanced it. Now, is that conceivable? Would that have been worthy of Him who is the Truth? In leading our spiritual life, we have to contend with real, personal beings, striving to lead us wrong: there is something more against us than merely the force of circumstances, and the current of events in a fallen world; these are seconded and used by real persons of the greatest power and craft. Ought we not to seek to know something of the nature and the wiles of our great adversaries? We all know that the Bible contains many references to evil spirits, unclean spirits, or devils: and in the New Testament there is very much more frequent mention of evil angels than of good angels. For whatever advantages we may ever derive from the aid of good angels, we gain by the direct intervention of God: and we are not to think of making any application to any good spirit for his help. But it is different with evil spirits. Against them we are called personally to guard. We may, by our own evil thoughts and ways, tempt them to tempt us. To them we may open our hearts. And them we may by God's grace resist, and drive away. We are exposed to great perils from them, against which we need to be guarded. But the thing of practical moment for each of us, is the manner in which they make their attack upon us. And it is not too much to say that we may be quite sure that they will attack us in the most crafty way. And will not the most crafty way of an evil spirit be the way in which we least expect him? Satan is too cunning to present himself in his own black colours when he can veil himself in a more engaging form. Do you think a fraudulent trader would go about proclaiming that he was a rogue, and that if you dealt with him he would be sure to cheat you? If a man were trying to get you to buy his bad wares, would he be likely to take pains to tell you how bad they were? No: the evil one and his angels are not weak enough to announce to us how evil they are, and how bent upon our destruction. It is in our own growing worldliness of spirit—our own disposition to put off the care of religion to the more convenient season which never comes—in our own temper of careless easy-mindedness, forgetful of the awful realities of heaven and hell, and vaguely trusting that through God's mercy things will somehow go right for eternity with little thought or pains on our part—it is in symptoms like these that we may read the fearful indications that the devil and his angels are working too successfully upon our hearts. I do not mention the stimulus of unholy passion, of covetousness, of envy. You fancy that the bitter, angry spirit that grows up within you at some slight offence is but the working of your own natural temperament: ah, you do not know how it may be encouraged by some dark being, specially devoting himself to the task. In brief, it is reasonable and right for us to suspect the presence and influence of an evil spirit, in every temptation we ever feel to sin or error: in every intellectual process that would cast doubt upon God's revealed religion, in every impulse that would prompt to any deed or any thought that varies from the mind and example of our blessed Saviour Himself. Not by the mere natural working of our fallen mind does the evil suggestion arise: but weaving in with that, mysteriously co-operating with that, reinforcing and aggravating that, comes the baneful influence from the prince of perdition! And yet, though this truth be most awful, it is salutary: it is one which it is good for us to reflect upon. Is there not something here to fill us with the greater detestation of sin: to lead us to the more resolute battling with temptation? Think that every time you sin, you are doing the very thing that your most malicious enemy wishes you to do! Is not that a motive to hate sin: to battle with temptation? (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *Of the being, enmity,*

fierceness, and cunning of the devil:—Satan allows you as much religion as you please for the carrying on of his designs; and yet, if you please, you may have none at all. Some who are easily to be won, he tempts to downright villainy, only helping out their dull wits to more exquisite and genteel achievements. Others who are more cautious of notorious sins he draws to offences which seem less, but are equally serving his interest. I. THAT THERE IS A DEVIL was the opinion of the heathen themselves that ever acknowledged a God. But most commonly they were mistaken in the nature of his being, and altogether as to his origin and power. Now as the agreement of all nations in the confession and worship of a God is a powerful argument to prove the same, so the same agreement in the general notion of this malignant being may be of the like force. And truly it seems agreeable to reason that since there is so much evil in the world there should be some sovereign patron of it. He also that shall consider the impetuous current of wickedness which has run down throughout all ages from the beginning of the world, which could never flow from infinite mercy and goodness, hath reasons sufficient to convince him that there must of necessity be some powerful being which manages this kingdom of darkness; some chief promoter of evil and subtle contriver of our ruin. II. THAT SATAN IS OUR INVETERATE ADVERSARY, with the origin of his malice, and the reasons of God's permission and sufferance. It is very natural to those that are ambitious, when their designs of rising are thwarted, but much more when they are also degraded from that high and happy estate they once enjoyed, to fall into the deepest extremity of malice and eagerness of revenge, not only towards that power that frustrated their ends, but also with an endeavour to hinder all those who are in any possibility of obtaining that felicity which they by their rebellion have lost. And this is the case of the angels that fell. But since their power is still subject to God, how comes it to pass that He tolerates so vehement an adversary both to His honour and the works of His hands? Besides His unsearchable will and pleasure, I may presume to offer two reasons. 1. In relation to the lapsed spirits themselves. God determining not to inflict His utmost wrath upon them till the great day of judgment (2 Peter ii. 4; Jude vi). 2. In relation to mankind. God purposing to advance those only to His kingdom whom neither the principalities nor powers of the air could shake, nor any subtle allurements could draw aside. III. FROM EXPERIENCE AND ORDINARY OBSERVATION we may conclude, THAT THERE MUST OF NECESSITY BE SOME SUCH ENEMY by whose instigation chiefly and not altogether by the propensity of our own natures we commit most sins. 1. If we consider the nature and quality of most sins, how unanswerable to that earnestness with which men commit them, we shall find that the incitement proceeds, not so much from their own inclinations, or the fairness of the objects, as the secret subtle suggestions of Satan. 2. From that general and otherwise unaccountable averseness to religion, and other miscarriages in the duties thereof, which we cannot but charge ourselves withal. (*J. Cooke, M.A.*) *The devil*:—I have heard divines say that it is very hard to convince men of the existence of a devil, that they scarcely know whether they are convinced of it themselves. I think they are mistaken. An opinion, a fear, a fancy—call it what you will—must have prevailed long, must have taken possession of men's minds, before it could find its way so readily to their lips. Are there no other signs? Does not each man complain of some incubus which he wants to throw off? One may find it outside of him; if he could have better or less stupid beings to work with, all would be well. Another feels as if it were altogether within him. It is a miserable solitary strife, of which no one knows anything but himself. Intelligent travellers and zealous missionaries know that in barbarous countries the difficulty is not to convince men of this doctrine, but of any other. We may acknowledge that our Lord's words were none of them directed to prove the existence of evil spirits. He found their existence acknowledged. Sickness, pain, death, were the demonstrations to the hearts of men of their presence. What has been said of Christ's words is true also of His acts. He who encountered sickness, madness, death, was certainly not setting forth the power of evil spirits. He was proving their weakness. He was, say the Evangelists, "casting them out." When the apostles went forth to preach, they too had no occasion to persuade men of the existence of evil powers. That was assumed; the Jews and Gentiles were agreed so far. Their theories were different; the witness which the facts of this world and of their own experience bore to their consciences was essentially the same. Can there be a deliverer from these evil powers?—that was the only question which it was important to get answered. The apostles went into all lands to proclaim that there was such a Deliverer. They said that Christ had overcome the diseases

of men here upon earth; that by death He had overcome death; that He was every hour overcoming some principality and power in high places, which was claiming men as subjects and captives. This was their gospel. Having such a one, they spoke of necessity concerning the principalities and powers. But the apostles, like their Master, used the singular number as well as the plural. They too were obliged to speak of an adversary, of a tempter. The moment the complete unity of the Divine Nature was proclaimed—the unity of the Father with the Son in one Spirit; the moment that men had been baptised into this perfect, loving, all-embracing Name, they must be told, "There is an adversary of this Name, a self-seeking, self-concentrated, self-worshipping adversary, who is seeking to draw you out of communion with it, and therefore out of communion with each other. You must be sober, for he seeks to make you drunk with the pleasures of this life, with your own self-conceit, that you may lose all thoughts of your Father's house. You must be vigilant, for he seeks to stupefy you with opiates, to keep you asleep." St. Peter felt that a picture as living as this was necessary, that his next words might not be idle words: "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith." Once believe that you have an adversary—that the conflict is not a sham one, and you can repulse him. You have not to win a position, but defend one. You belong to God. You can tell the adversary that you owe him no allegiance; that you scorn his promises and his threats; that it is your Father's good pleasure to give you His kingdom of heaven, and that you do not choose to exchange it for the kingdom of hell. The members of the Christian Church were very likely to take up the notion that they and the world around them were under quite different laws; that they were not subject to the passions which other men were subject to; that they were out of the range of the influence of the evil spirit. A more plausible delusion, or a more perilous one, cannot be imagined. An apostle had no higher duty than to shatter it. He was to assure his disciples that the privilege of their brotherhood in Christ exempted them from no assault which threatened those who had not asserted that privilege. This advantage he had, that being one of a society, of a brotherhood, he felt that his enemy was the enemy of his brethren, and the enemy of that world which he wished to claim as part of his family. He was fighting for all men when he was fighting for himself. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The roaring lion*:—Dr. Livingstone tells us of an African native who was struck down and torn by a lion, that periodically the dreadful pains returned to the old wound, as if again the monster gnawed at the bone. So was it, I think, with Peter. The old lion had struck him down and fixed his teeth in his prey. Snatched from the jaws of the destroyer by David's greater Son, yet the scar throbbled with vivid reminders of the peril, and brought again before him the memory of his great deliverance. Let us turn and look upon this terrible man-slayer. I. HERE IS A VERY REAL ENEMY. He is an old doctor, as Latimer calls him, and well versed in arts and crafts; but his master-stroke has been reserved for these times. There is a fable of a fox that caught its prey by pretending to be dead. That is the last of Satan's devices. A hundred years ago everything was put down to him—storms, earthquakes, eclipses, plagues, diseases; there was ascribed to him a power and activity that were almost infinite. Thanks to science, she has cast the devil out of the hailstorm and the thunder-cloud, and has taught us at least some of the laws which regulate these things. So he has altered his tactics, and with a humility which his betters might imitate he has announced his own decease. "I am dead"—saith the devil—"indeed there is no devil. I am passed away with witchcraft and ghosts and all the silly nonsense of the dark ages." No, no. We have a more sure word of prophecy to which we do well to give heed. This old adversary is as real for you and for me as he ever was. As real for us as he was for Adam, or for Job, or for Judas. Your adversary—says the apostle, as if he had marked us out for his prey. We dare not ignore him. We dare not make light of him. He tracks our steps and seeks us as his prey. Be sober, be vigilant. II. HE IS A MIGHTY FOE. The glimpses we have of him in the Bible reveal one of vast dominion and of amazing power; probably of all God's creatures one of the first in the order of time and highest in rank; amongst the foremost of the angels that do excel in strength. There is a majesty about him as of one conscious of vast power. Think of his triumphs. Away up in the mountain caves is the den of the lion, the mouth and floor of it all strewn with the bones of his victims; skulls and ribs lie thickly scattered. But what a sight it were to look into the den of this old lion the devil, and to see the mischief that he hath wrought! III. HE IS A SUBTLE FOE. Think of his knowledge of human nature. How perfectly he understands us! As an old Puritan says, "He taketh the measure of

every man's foot; and then he fitteth him instantly." Therefore let us put up a double guard on the side of our weakness. Be sober, be vigilant, and, most of all, be sober and be vigilant where the peril threatens most. It is then that the devil can do most harm when he finds a traitor-wish within the soul—into whose ear he can whisper, a traitor that he can bribe. And not only of our besetments does he make use. Our very virtues he tries to turn into handles for his malice. Here is a pleasant, genial, good-hearted fellow—ah! the devil leads him on and tumbles him into the ditch of self-indulgence, or fetcheth him away by evil company. This man is thrifty and saving: and the devil elbows him on year after year until he casts him into that horrible pit of miserliness. This man is generous, but the devil puffs him up with the sense of his importance. This man is very humble, and the devil pushes him down so far in the valley of humility that he begins to climb up the other side and is proud of being so humble. This man is resolute and determined, and the devil eggs him on until he is overbearing and tyrannical. And this man is modest and retiring, and the devil keeps him lazy and useless by assuring him that he has no gifts. He can do almost as much with our virtues as with our vices. For all conditions and for all circumstances the tempter has his attack. Turn to the great temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, again, he seeks to turn our very mercies to our mischief. The lusciousness and beauty of the fruit in Paradise is made to awaken Eve's desire; and when she wished for it, lo! there it was hanging within reach. He is a cruel foe. A lion for his might, he is also a lion for his savage cruelty. His name is Apollyon, the destroyer. To worry if he cannot overthrow; to annoy if he cannot destroy. "Oh, sir," said one to me one day, as gentle and loving a man as ever lived, "I loved my wife better than my life, but when I was drunk it was as if the devil was in me, and I always began knocking her about. I beat her one night so that she could eat nothing but spoon meat for eleven days. And then when I saw what I had done I had to get drunk again just to forget it." He is a cruel monster, a hard master, driving his poor slave to lowest depths. IV. LASTLY, THIS OLD LION CAN BE OVERCOME. "Be sober, be vigilant." The first word suggests our peril from over-eagerness. People who go rushing into anything and everything, rush into the lion's den and thrust their heads into his very mouth. There are some people that the old lion must hunt for, but the over-eager he can get by lying still. Be sober. Take a right estimate of things. Measure things by God and by eternity. Don't be too thirsty—that is the meaning of the precept—too thirsty for pleasure; too thirsty for money; too thirsty for honour; too thirsty for your own way in everything. Travellers tell us that there are certain places where you may generally trace the steps of the old lion and expect to find him waiting about. They are the drinking places, where he can spring upon his prey in a moment. Be sober. And yet be vigilant. The too anxious are in peril; but so are the too careless. Be vigilant. But is that all? What is the good of telling the little lamb to be sober and vigilant when the old lion is about? We must go further back and further forward for the instructions as to our safety. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." Be so little and so weak that you have no faith in yourself at all—and creep for your safety in under that mighty hand. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Beneath that hand I cannot know a fear. Here am I as within a fortress whose walls can neither be scaled nor undermined. That Presence alone is our safety. "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith." Be bold because thine hand is in the hand of thy God. (*M. G. Pearse.*) *The devil and humanity:*—I. We have here the devil AT WORK IN HUMANITY. He is "going about," not outside men, but in men, going about in the regions of human thoughts, human passions, human impulses, human activities. "He worketh in the children of disobedience." As a worker—I. His inspiration is malignant. "He is a roaring lion." He is not a sleeping lion, nor a lion crouching down, satiated with food, but a lion roaring with hunger, savage for food. 2. His purpose is destruction. "Seeking whom he may devour." The devil is a devourer physically. The devil is a devourer spiritually. He is a devourer of purity of heart, peace of conscience, confidence in and fellowship with the everlasting Father. The devil is a devourer socially. He is a devourer of domestic harmony, social order, prosperity, and peace. The devil is a devourer politically. He is a devourer of civil freedom, national progress, international harmony. II. We have the devil here COUNTERACTED BY HUMANITY. Three things are necessary to counteract him—I. Thoughtfulness—"Be sober." This does not mean mere physical sobriety, although, of course, it includes that—it means sobriety of soul, a state of mind opposed to all volatile excitement. Were

men to think whence they came, what they are, whither they are tending, the devil would not easily influence them. 2. Diligence—"Be vigilant." Be vigilant in building up moral fortresses around your soul, so as to resist his entrance. 3. Steadfastness—"Whom resist, steadfast in the faith." Is it wise in a town to ignore the pestilence that has entered its streets and carried death to its homes? How infinitely more unwise is it to ignore this roaring lion! (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The devil and humanity*:—I. WHAT THE DEVIL REALLY IS IN RELATION TO MEN. First, He is an "adversary." Secondly, He is a malignant "adversary," ravenous and savage. Thirdly, He is a prowling adversary. "Walketh about." He is always on the move. He walks about the markets, the governments and churches of the world; about the public streets and secluded alleys, and about the chambers of every human soul. He has no rest. II. WHAT MEN REALLY SHOULD BE IN RELATION TO THE DEVIL. 1. They should be serious. "Be sober." As calm, serious, and self-possessed as a soldier who waits the blast of the trumpet for war. 2. They should be watchful. "Be vigilant." He is wily, always plotting. 3. They should be resisting. "Whom resist." Do not yield an inch, but advance. 4. They should be reflective. "Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren." (*Ibid.*) **The same afflictions are accomplished.**—*The wide diffusion of trials a motive to steadfastness*:—Ordinarily, if we speak of afflictions, or sufferings, you presently think of the bereavements or sorrows which fall to us through the dispensations of Providence. But the apostle, when he here uses the term, is speaking only of spiritual assaults—of the attacks of Satan, acting on the corruptions of our nature, and soliciting us to sin. Are these indeed afflictions to us? Happy the man who, though he have to reckon among his sore things "persecution, and peril, and nakedness, and sword," can yet say, "The sorest thing of all is, that I am continually wrought upon by an invisible foe, who, seconded but too readily from within, places me in peril of deserting my profession and dishonouring my Saviour." Yes, the greatest affliction to us should be the not finding affliction in sin. What is there to encourage the Christian warrior in the knowing that the same afflictions are the lot of others as well as himself? Really at first sight, and with reference more especially to the assaults of the devil, it might be said that this was calculated to discourage us. It seems almost like investing Satan with omnipresence, to exhibit him as afflicting simultaneously the whole body of Christians. Suppose it were the registered course of God's proceedings that there should be comparative freedom from the assaults of Satan, so that the "roaring lion" were not allowed to come against the Christian. What a fearful thing it would then be for a believer to find himself attacked by the devil! It would not be the amount of the attack, so much as the unusualness, that would distress him. His inference would be—"Surely I am not one of the people of God: if I were, He would not deal with me in so uncommon a way." Or, if again, in place of exemption generally from spiritual assault, there were any one form of temptation which was seldom allowed to visit the righteous; would not the being invaded by this form distract the godly man, not because the form itself might be more terrific than he had known before, but because, being novel, it would seem to bring proof that he had deceived himself with regard to his spiritual condition? But now take the opposite, which is the actual case, namely, that the Christian has nothing strange to undergo. Do you not perceive that this very circumstance will do much to encourage him to resist the devil and keep steadfast in the faith? The believer has perhaps to undergo a large measure of domestic trial; death makes frequent inroads into his family; his circumstances become straitened; his children requite him with ingratitude; but he looks into the history of the righteous, and he finds that there is nothing singular in his portion. Or again—and here, it may be, Satan has the greatest advantage—the believer has seasons of spiritual darkness; and he loses all comfortable sense of love of God and the atonement made by Christ. But is he peculiar in this? Has nothing like this been experienced by the believer? He turns to the Book of Psalms. What does he find? Unmingled joy? unclouded assurance? Oh, no! he finds constant alternations, as though night followed day—depression succeeded in necessary order to exultation. There is, however, one more, and an equally important view, which may justly be taken of the passage before us. If we are to resist the devil with good prospect of success, we must prepare to resist the devil; and, in order to this preparation, we should be observant of what has happened and is happening to others. An old writer justly says, "Things certainly fall the lighter upon us when they first fall upon our thoughts." It is the being taken by surprise which makes sorrow so hard; and we

want you not to be taken by surprise. Oh, the experience of the Church is not an experience which merely proves the frequency of trouble; it proves also the advantage of trouble; it proves that affliction "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby"; it proves that the devil may be resisted; that, with all his subtlety, and malice, and might, he is more than matched by the believer, who takes to himself the whole armour of God. And for this simple truth we would gain, if we could, a strong hold upon your minds. The devil is not irresistible—not one of his temptations is irresistible. Will ye, then, yield, as though it were useless to withstand? Your brethren, in whom the same afflictions have been accomplished, met the devil and vanquished him, but not in their own strength; and you, too, may vanquish the devil. The promised aids of the Holy Spirit—aids which no Christian seeks in vain who seeks in faith—will always suffice to carry you safely, yea, triumphantly through the conflict. What warning, then, is there, that we slumber not at our post! what encouragement that we shrink not from conflict! (*H. Melwill, B.D.*) *Sympathy with saints and martyrs*:—When people are sick, and in bad pain, we know how apt they are to imagine, Surely never any one was so afflicted as I am. Thus St. Peter encourages his suffering brethren, when a time of trouble was coming on; much as St. Paul had before encouraged the Corinthians. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man": nothing that is beyond human strength, assisted by the grace of the Holy Ghost, to bear. This is the answer to those who think the commandments of the gospel too strict, too pure to be obeyed. "Your Father which is in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." And if that be not enough, look at the lives of the saints: look and see how good and penitent persons, from time to time, have really been helped to keep these commands which you think too hard, and to resist these temptations which you think too strong. On the other hand, that roaring lion, who is ever seeking whom he may devour, will be busy encouraging in you just the contrary of these good thoughts. If you are in trouble he will try to make you feel as if no other person was ever in so bad a condition. If he can, he will persuade you that all or a great part of your trouble arises from such and such a person's ill-usage, and so he will make you spiteful and envious. Other persons, who are not so ill-used, may do well to be forgiving and meek: but your case, he will whisper, is really too hard, too bad. What is the use, they will say, of such exact goodness? you may as well give it up; for you see it does not save you from ill-usage and suffering. Thus the enemy moves us to discontent, when we are afflicted or ill-used: but still more does he encourage us to sin, when we are in strong temptation from our own passions, or the evil example of others. He will at such times set us on thinking, that surely our passions are stronger than other men's, and therefore there is more excuse for our giving way to them. This is how the devil would beguile us, and a very serious temptation it is: he would have us believe, either that there never were any saints, any persons really good and holy, or that if there have been any, they were such by a kind of miracle. To be afflicted, then, is a mark of Christian brotherhood: it is a token that we belong to God's family. If any one were quite exempt, he would almost feel it unfair: might he choose, he would rather take his share, relieving, if so it might be, his brethren. Or take the case of comrades and fellow-soldiers—what sort of a spirit is he thought to have who draws back and spares himself when the rest are entering upon labour and danger? And here comes in the other word, by which, as I said, St. Peter in the text would stir us up to a godly jealousy of the saints. The word I mean is "accomplished." Their afflictions are accomplished, ours but just beginning. To conclude: whereas the apostle's word is, that whatever we suffer, the same afflictions are accomplished "in our brethren that are in the world," we understand that when they are once out of the world, there is an end of their affliction and care for ever. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to the "Tracts for the Times."*)

Ver. 10. **The God of all grace.**—*Triple perfection*:—The Revised Version makes two changes of some importance in this passage. The word "settle" is removed to the margin. And the form of the whole passage is changed from that of a prayer to that of an assurance: "The God of all grace shall Himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you." It may be taken as a revelation. I. First of all, **WHAT GOD ACTUALLY IS**—a "God of all grace"; that is, of grace for all men, and of every kind of grace. Its contents may perhaps be defined best as unmerited good-will, showing itself in act or waiting in perpetual eagerness for an opportunity to show itself.

Now it is one of the peculiarities of the Christian religion that it represents God as in eternal possession of such grace, and as always ready and disposed to exercise it towards man. Other religions are apt to confine the good-will of the God within the limits of the country, or the tribe, or the association of tribes, or to represent the God as gracious only to some men, although ungracious and His heart entirely closed against others. To all our dull questionings whether God really loves us, the one reply the New Testament makes is simply that He is "the God of all grace," in such a sense that no higher degree of grace on the one hand, and on the other no defect or arbitrary restraint of grace, can be conceived of Him. 1. That reply is worth lingering upon, in order that we may teach ourselves more confidently to adore. Through all nature it is easy to trace God's grace or effective good-will towards man, nor is it necessary to suppose that it is altogether confined to man. That He Himself feels pleasure at the beautiful things He makes, whether they spring into being as the product of a fresh creation or evolve their glories out of some "closely-packed germ," may be inferred from the phrase in Genesis (He "saw that it was good.") In the shapes of the leaves, the colours of the flowers, and all the fragrance of the garden, it is possible to see not only the skill of the Creator in providing for the vital purposes of nature, but His generosity also in weaving beauty and use in His processes and decking His handiwork with glories that are almost superfluous but for pleasure. 2. It is much the same with history, God's providential administration of the world. Grace of every kind and degree, of patience, and discipline, and spiritual help, may be traced all through it, vindicating the interests of righteousness, leading men on to ever clearer moral perception and completer moral attainment. To that statement it is questionable whether any exception can be taken. On the part of some men, indeed, it is customary to hold that the testimony is divided, that whilst in certain places the race has declined and fallen, in others only has it risen and advanced. But there is a distinction, of primary importance in human affairs, which does not seem to warrant such a conclusion. Man's progress through the centuries appears at times to be confused and slow. But that is exactly what might have been expected from man; and if any long period is taken, and his condition at the close compared with his condition at the beginning, as far as morality and the highest and innermost interests of the man are concerned, it will not be easy to question either that the progress has been very real and great, or that the cause of it all has been the overflowing grace of God. 3. But no manifestation of that grace in any other sphere can compare with its manifestation in religion. "Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." This states that the grace is so great as to be able to satisfy itself with nothing less than that we should be with God, partakers of His nature and sharers through eternity of His glory. Of course the apostle added "by Christ Jesus," for no Christian with the thought of God's grace in his mind can keep it separate long from its companion thought of the Saviour. For that there are at least two reasons. Whenever a man wants to know the heart of God, the best mode is to dwell upon the kindliness and patience and love of the Saviour amongst men, to trace them all back to the Divine source from which they come, and to regard them as but sparks and emanations, dulled in their passage earthwards, of the ever-glowing Love that sits upon the throne of the heavens. Secondly, and chiefly, the gift of Jesus Christ is at once the most magnificent and the most irrefragable proof Jehovah could give that His grace is like His justice, without defect and without limit. II. Let us turn now to the revelation the verse contains of WHAT MAN MAY BECOME. 1. The same second phrase, "called to His eternal glory," sets it forth in part, but is almost too ideal and even inconceivable for exposition. For what the glory of God is, in the sense in which the word is used here, His own state of blessedness, the eternal beatitude that fills and surrounds Him, of necessity no man can tell. It must include all the gratifications that pure spirit is capable of receiving, with no liability to interruption or loss, and with all kinds of associated joys, each of which exceeds man's highest imagination. And all this glory is to be ours—the discord and strife of our natures for ever quieted; the whole moral nature beatified, perfected, assimilated to God. In that respect, too, the Christian religion does not believe in limitations. 2. The other part of the revelation of what man may become can be more easily understood. God "shall Himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you," writes the apostle; and he may also have added "settle you." The first word implies such adjustment as issues in exact fitness to relationship—the making a man precisely what he ought to be in regard of his attitude towards God, towards his fellow-men, towards his own conscience and sense of duty. The

second word means radically power to resist and stand firm; and the third, power of effective strength by means of which conquests are made and obstacles overcome. The last word, "settle," denotes the laying of a firm foundation, like the rock of which our Saviour speaks, whereon if a man build, his house will be able to defy the vehemence of wind and weather. There is thus a triple perfectness, set before us and even pledged to us in this verse, as the revelation of what man may become; fitness to all moral relationships, strength to resist every assault of Satan, power of progress and triumph which nothing can hinder, and all this resting upon, nay, built into a foundation so firm that the might of hell cannot shake it. There are, however, two or three facts frequently familiar to the thought of every one, which make the prospect opened up by St. Peter very blessed, but sometimes very dubious. The one is our almost constant consciousness that the motives of our best acts are mixed, some right, but others in every way unworthy. That "alloy of impure motive"—at times it seems to be a defect we cannot escape from, "tainting our best moments," turning men's mistaken praise into the parent of humiliation and self-reproach. But that is not the worst. Moralists teach that the range of man's duty is "co-extensive within the range of his moral consciousness"; or, in other words, that the standard at which he aims should contain the completeness of everything, which his conscience when most sensitive recognises as dutiful and right. Two miserable results immediately follow. Every one knows that his performances day after day insist upon lingering a great way behind his standard; and every one must occasionally fear that the standard itself has shrunk, because the conscience has been dulled by past trifling and sin. The emphatic positiveness of this verse will not, however, permit itself to be overlooked. And instead of giving way to doubt and questioning the possibility of our perfecting, it is better that we should set ourselves to find out how such a blessing may be certainly ensured and enjoyed. St. Peter does not hesitate in his teaching or qualify his words in any way. He says distinctly that only God can do it for us, and that He will do it because His grace is complete and full. We must therefore get the Spirit of God into our hearts by trust in Him, and become possessed of Him, or the thing remains of necessity hopeless. There are indeed at the present day, as there have ever been, strong tendencies to look in other directions for the power that will confer the greatest benefit upon society and upon the individual. Sometimes it assumes the shape of the study of some form of art or branch of science, of devotion to an impossible equality or an unreasonable hierarchy, of a kind of progress that slaughters the unit and passes on to a remote and general triumph, of culture, or combination, or the coercion of the will. Doubt, however, is long-lived and hard to kill; and still it may be our fears are whispering to us, Can He perfect me, and will He? It is almost certain that Peter was an old man when he wrote these words; and an old man's counsel and assurance, especially when they are based upon his own actual experience, are not to be despised. In his youth and earlier manhood he had lacked steadfastness. If, therefore, reason and experience have any validity at all, there is no room left for doubt. It is an argument in which no possible flaw can be found; the grace of God is not liable to exhaustion or abatement, and therefore whatever it has actually done for others it can do for us. The God of all grace will do it for us. That grace of His will go with us wherever we go, constantly compassing us about, sustaining our hearts, preparing us for blessedness. (*R. W. Moss.*) *The God of all grace*:—Our first experience in reading this verse is amazement that borders on bewilderment. The whole is a perfect blaze of diamonds. Keep your eyes upon the verse, and see what words we have: "God," "all grace," "called," "eternal glory," "Christ Jesus," "dominion for ever." And, as if these were not enough, we find also perfection thrown in as well: "make you perfect." And these marvellous words daze us all the more because of their contrast to that which has gone before. "The devil," "a roaring lion," "suffering," "adversary," "God," "grace," "eternal glory," "perfection." Now we will seek to put the words in order, and link them together. And observe that, though this text reads as a prayer, it is really a promise. Instead of the first word being "but," it should be "and." In the previous verses the Holy Ghost has been telling us what we have to do. Now He tells us what God has promised to do. We must never separate the things that God has joined together. If God says in one line, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," He says in the next, "for it is God that worketh in you." And so, if here I am told that I am to be sober and vigilant, and that I am to resist a roaring devil, and I say, "How can it be? It is more than I can

do." He who bids me do it tells me what He will do: "And He Himself shall perfect, strengthen, and establish you." The words, you see, are beginning to fall into order. But there is one important point which I question whether many of you have seen, because in nine cases out of ten that sentence, "after that ye have suffered a while," is linked with the last clause of the verse, whereas it belongs to the first; and if you look you will see what a difference it makes. The God of all grace who hath called us, after that we have suffered a while, to His eternal glory, will Himself, whilst we are suffering—during this little interval that lies between the grace and the glory—so sanctify the suffering, that it shall perfect, establish, strengthen, settle us. The sufferings come between the grace and the glory. I. Who shall rise to the height of this first expression, "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE"? It does not mean that God is gracious in His tendency, or simply gracious by His nature, but that He Himself is the reservoir, the home, the source, the supply, of grace in all its manifestations. Need I recapitulate them to you? Divine choice with all its inscrutable mysteries. Redemption by a dying Christ. Justification also in all its wondrous harmony between mercy and perfect equity. Yes, and regeneration too, with its heaven-born purity, and its new-created tendencies within the soul. All these are covered by the word "grace." These things are only different manifestations of one and the same sublime attribute. But, when I mention these, I have only just touched the spray of the wave. There are depths that lie beneath in this expression, "the God of all grace," for it contains all the graces which the soul must possess before it can enter eternal glory. Most certainly there must be the grace of repentance. The cry of "God be merciful to me" is a cry that comes down from heaven before ever it can break from my lips. "The God of all grace." But repentance must ever be followed by faith. It is the gift of God. Then there are other graces yet to be manifested. "Faith worketh by love." But love is born of God, for God is love, and if I love Him, it is because He first loved me. But no man can see the Lord apart from holiness. How can this poor, sin-stained man become holy? And the answer is, that it is the Spirit of the Lord that worketh holiness; and so, whilst He is the God of all manifestations of grace, He is the God of all the graces that I possess. But I have hardly begun yet with this enumeration. This text covers much more, for it includes all the supplies of grace that are needed along the road. It is a weary road: I need refreshing grace. It is a sorrowing path, because it is a sinful one: I need comforting grace. As a wandering sheep, I need restoring grace. Being weak as a babe, I need upholding grace. And everything that a saint can need from the moment of my new birth to that ecstatic instant when I stand before His eternal glory, without spot or wrinkle, lies centred in God. II. THIS GOD OF ALL GRACE CALLS US TO ETERNAL GLORY. Let us begin at the beginning. He has called you. The call that is intended here is, as Archbishop Leighton beautifully puts it, that call which goes deeper than the ear, touches the heart within, throws open the door, and admits the Christ. And consequently you will find that the word "called" becomes the title of the true Christian. A man of God is one who has been called. But how is he called? It is "unto His eternal glory in Christ"; not simply, mark you, for Christ's sake. That is true, but it is not the truth here taught. He has called us to eternal glory "in Christ." He called Christ into glory, and, when He called Christ into glory, He called me, because I am in Christ. The call that I receive is a call that sounds in the Son's ear. It is a call "to His glory." We share His blessedness. God's glory is Himself. There is nothing more glorious about His glory than Himself. The only way in which God can glorify Himself is to reveal Himself. Come, lave thy spirit in the eternal blaze of Deity. Come, be at home with Me. That one word "glory" covers all joy, all blessing, all bliss. God has called us unto His eternal "glory." But this is only the beginning of the theme. You have to put the word "eternal" into the scale. It is not a call for an age or for a millennium. Oh, fools that we are to weep our eyes out over earth's sorrows, and to grumble our spirits into wretchedness because of a passing moment of care! III. HE ALLOWS A LITTLE INTERVAL OF SUFFERING WHICH IS ITSELF FULL OF BLESSING. Ah, we too often want to leave that bit out, "After that ye have suffered a while." The call comes, but the glory does not come immediately after the call. The suffering is part of the call, as well as the glory. It is not a haphazard thing that comes in. It is all a part of the plan. When God calls you to glory, He calls you to come to glory through a little while of suffering. How this takes away all the acidity of one's sorrows! It is part of the road to the eternal glory. It is just as much included in the plan as all the rest. And then, you see, it says that it is only a

"little" while. Really the word "while" is not there. It is "after ye have suffered a little"; and you can choose, if you like, whether it means degree or duration. You say, "But why can I not go to heaven at once?" The answer is found in the last line of our text. He Himself will "make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." He will do it through this little interval of suffering. He will perfect you. Ah, there is nothing about us that is not imperfect. There are many little rents in us, and the Lord allows us to go through this little while of suffering so that He may repair the imperfections. Bad as you are, you would be worse if you had less trouble. There is not here, to-day, a child of God who is not the richer and the holier for the little while of suffering. The next word is "stablish," and that implies fixity. Oh, we are very prone to fluctuation. Sometimes nothing but a heavy heart will give weight to a character, and so God says, "I cannot let that light and frivolous child remain like a piece of thistledown floating at the dictation of every breath of air. I must pass him through a little while of suffering." That is stablishing. The word "settle" does not appear in the R.V. The last word there is "strengthen," and the meaning of the word is "made powerful to resist attack." There is the devil. He is roaring. Do you think you can resist the great adversary? Never! But the Lord steps in, and says, "If I bid you meet the roaring lion, I will pass you through a little season of suffering which shall repair and stablish you, and put spiritual thews and sinews into you, so that in My strength you may overcome." (*A. G. Brown.*) *Grace all in all*:—I. First, we are taught that THE TRUE CONVERSION OF THE SOUL TO GOD IS A DIVINE WORK, a work which the mercy of Heaven must begin, and the power of heaven carry forward, otherwise it never can be performed. 1. As to the source from whence conversion proceeds. St. Peter distinctly acknowledges it to be of God; he refers expressly to Him as the Author of that great change which had taken place in his own soul, and in the souls of those to whom he was writing. Consider in how many ways grace must be bestowed upon us in order to our salvation: we want grace to draw us, grace to enable us to believe, grace to strengthen us, grace to make us persevere; grace was wanting to contrive the scheme of our redemption; grace to carry it into execution, and grace to finish that glorious work. 2. As to the manner in which we are made partakers of this inestimable mercy: it is by calling "God, who hath called us." Here is another proof that this change is "not of the will of man, but of God." He makes ready, and He invites; we ourselves have no more to do with the preparing of that rich provision which is made for our souls in the gospel, than the guest has with the feast set before him by some hospitable entertainer. Nay, we have not naturally even the wish to partake of it. 3. As to the means by which it is accomplished: it is "by Jesus Christ." That the children of God are called, that they are converted, that they are justified, that they are sanctified, that they shall be glorified, is all owing to, is all accomplished by, our blessed Lord and Saviour. 4. As to the end to which it leads: that end is God's eternal glory. It is "His," His own glory, His brightest gift, His choicest possession: it is that gift of God which Christ shed His precious blood to purchase. It is "eternal"; it is not like our poor fleeting pleasures; not like earthly riches, which make themselves wings and flee away; not like the pomps of this world, of a fashion which is always changing; but a glory which is without change, without end; a sun of brightness which shall never set. II. That THEY IN WHOM THIS WORK OF GRACE IS GOING ON, called as they are to eternal glory, ARE BY NO MEANS TO CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS FREE FROM SUFFERINGS OR TRIAL; on the contrary, the apostle seems to speak of these things as if they were certain to befall them; or rather, I should say, he addresses his converts as being, for the present, actually under tribulation. 1. They find their spiritual good thereby promoted. 2. They find that when trouble is nigh, God is also present. 3. They find not only that their troubles will soon be over-past, but far over-paid. III. That WHAT GRACE HAS BEGUN WE SHOULD BE VERY EARNEST THAT THE SAME GRACE WILL PERFECT. This is the blessing which the apostle asks for in his prayer. And now let me address—1. Those who are under the influence of that grace of which the apostle is speaking; who have felt its power in turning them from their sins, in drawing them to Christ for salvation. (1) Learn to prize the grace you have received; remember from whom it cometh; at what a price it was purchased; remember how it is conveyed to your souls by that blessed Spirit whose office it is to sanctify all the elect people of God. (2) Be careful how you quench or slight it; do nothing contrary to its suggestions; endeavour to do all things according to its guidance. (3) Endeavour to improve it; strive to show that you have not received the grace of God in vain; do not "take

the beginning of a Christian life for the end of it, and sit down at the entrance," when you ought rather to be pressing forward on the way; go on from strength to strength; aim high. 2. I would address myself to those whose consciences tell them they are as yet strangers to this grace, or, at least, are not living under its power. (1) Oh, I will not endeavour to set before you the vanity of a life spent in search of things temporal; there must be some moments of seriousness. Point to that glory which you think so little about, and in preference to which you choose earthly things as your portion. (2) Let me also remind you that to this glory, with all its brightness and all its reality, and all its eternity, you are invited. (*F. Lear.*) *The God of all the graces*:—You know that the word "grace" has many meanings, both in the original language of the verse and in our own language. As we use it familiarly, it is often "beauty." So that we have it, "The God of all beauty." And when you are admiring the gracefulness of some human form, in its finished delicacy; or looking upon the loveliness of nature—never forget that He is "the God of beauty." Let us look at it in another of its meanings. "Grace" is, properly, a free gift, and since every good thing is utterly undeserved by us, every good thing is of "grace." All that raises and gladdens life—all goes to make "the grace of God." But we generally accept the word as having reference to spiritual good. For instance, we take it as relating to the Christian virtues, "the fruits of the Spirit"; and we call them "the graces." And He is "the God of all the graces." Now, there are some "graces" that, at this moment, you feel that you particularly need. Remind yourself, and remind God, that He is the God of that "grace"; that it is all His: His to give; a part of His province; an attribute of His sovereignty. But "grace" is more distinctly the pardon of sin. The pardon of sin is a "grace"; a privilege; not purchased—by anything we can say, or do, or think, or pray, or believe. But pardon is not all you want. From the spiritual cradle to the gate of heaven, it is all of "grace." You may safely, then, reason thus: "Lord, Thou didst call me. Thou didst it of Thy free favour. Therefore carry on, and perfect Thine own work." And in life, as it goes on, your providences want their "graces." And every providence requires its own appropriate and comforting "grace." Sorrow and joy, bodily health and sickness, successes and disappointments—all want their own proper, rectifying, effectual "grace." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) **Who hath called us unto His eternal glory.**—*Glory*:—I. **WHAT, THEN, IS THE DESTINY OF THE SAINTS?** God has "called us unto His eternal glory." "Glory!" does not the very word astound you? Think of glory for us who have deserved eternal shame! Glory for us poor creatures who are often ashamed of ourselves! 1. This glory has been promised. What said David? (*Psa. lxxiii. 24.*) 2. It is to this glory that we have been called. We are called to repentance, to faith, to holiness, we are called to perseverance, and all this that we may afterwards attain unto glory. We have another Scripture of like import in *1 Thess. ii. 12.* 3. And we are not only called to it, but glory is especially joined with justification (*Rom. viii. 30.*) If you are justified by the righteousness of Christ, you shall be glorified through Christ Jesus, for thus hath God purposed, and so must it be. Do you not remember how salvation itself is linked with glory? (*2 Tim. ii. 10.*) The two things are riveted together, and cannot be separated. 4. The saved ones must partake of the glory of God, for this are they being prepared every day (*Rom. ix. 23.*) This is the process which commenced in regeneration, and is going on in us every day in the work of sanctification. We cannot be glorified so long as sin remains in us; we must first be pardoned, renewed, and sanctified, and then we are fitted to be glorified. 5. Thus, then, it seems we are called to glory, and we are being prepared for it; is it not also a sweet thought that our present fellowship with Christ is the guarantee of it? (*Rom. viii. 17.*) "No cross, no crown": but he that has shared the battle shall partake in the victory. 6. I have not yet done, for there is a text, in *Heb. ii. 10,* which is well worthy of our consideration: we are to be brought to glory. We might despair of ever getting into the glory land if we had not One to bring us there, for the pilgrim's road is rough and beset with many foes. 7. This glory will be for our entire manhood, for our body as well as for our soul. It will be rendered perfect. The body of a child will be fully developed, and the dwarf will attain to full stature. The blind shall not be sightless in heaven, neither shall the lame be halt, nor shall the palsied tremble. The deaf shall hear, and the dumb shall sing God's praises. II. **WHEREIN DOETH THIS DESTINY CONSIST?** 1. Reckon that glory to a saint means, first of all, purified character. God's Holy Spirit, when He has finished His work, will leave in us no trace of sin: no temptation shall be able to touch us, there will be in us no

relics of our past and fallen state. 2. Next, I understand by "glory" our perfected manhood. Here we are but in embryo: our minds are but the seeds, or the bulbs, out of which come the flower and glory of a nobler manhood. Your body is to be developed into something infinitely brighter and better than the bodies of men here below: and as for the soul, we cannot guess to what an elevation it shall be raised in Christ Jesus. 3. Further, by "glory" and coming to glory I think we must understand complete victory. 4. An invaluable ingredient in true glory is the Divine approval. One approving glance from the eye of Jesus, one accepting word from the mouth of the Father, will be glory enough for any one of us. 5. But this is not all: children of God will have the glory of reflecting the glory of God. When any of God's unfallen creatures shall wish to see the greatness of God's goodness, and mercy, and love, they that dwell in heaven will point out a glorified saint. Whenever any spirit from far-off regions desires to know what is meant by faithfulness and grace, some angel will reply, "Go and talk with those who have been redeemed from among men." Oh, this shall be our glory, that God shall shine through us to the astonishment of all. 6. In certain cases a man's glory lies in his relationships. If any of the royal family should come to your houses you would receive them with respect; yes, and even as they went along the street they would be spied out, and passers-by would say, "That is the prince!" and they would honour the son of our good Queen. But royal descent is a poor business compared with being allied to the King of kings. 7. Then there will be connected with this the fact that we shall be connected with Jesus in everything. For do not you see it was because of our fall that Christ came here to save men; when He wrought out a perfect righteousness, it was all for us; when He died, it was all for us; and when He rose again, it was all for us? And what is more, we lived in Christ, we died in Him, we were buried in Him and rose in Him, and we shall ascend into heaven to reign with Him. 8. And yet this is not all, for there in heaven we shall dwell in the immediate presence of God. We shall dwell with Him in nearest and dearest fellowship! All the felicity of the Most High will be our felicity. 9. Highest of all our glory will be the enjoyment of God Himself. He will be our exceeding joy: this bliss will swallow up every other, the blessedness of God. "The Lord is my portion," saith my soul. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Our God shall be our glory. 10. Yet bear with me, I have left out a word again: the text has it, "Unto His eternal glory." Ay, but that is the gem of the ring. The glory which God has in reserve for His chosen will never come to an end: it will stay with us, and we shall stay with it, for ever. It will always be glory, too; its brightness will never become dim; we shall never be tired of it, or sated with it.

III. WHAT INFLUENCE SHOULD ALL THIS HAVE UPON OUR HEARTS? 1. I think it ought to excite desire in many here present that they might attain unto glory by Christ Jesus. 2. This ought to move us to the feeling of fear. If there be such a glory as this, let us tremble lest by any means we should come short of it. 3. If we are right, how this ought to move us to gratitude! What a contrast to our deserts! 4. It should move us to a dauntless courage. If this glory is to be had, do we not feel like the heroes in Bunyan's picture? Before the dreamer there stood a fair palace, and he saw persons walking upon the top of it, clad in light, and singing. Around the door stood armed men to keep back those who would enter. Then a brave man came up to one who had a writer's ink-horn by his side, and said, "Set down my name"; and straightway the warrior drew his sword, and fought with all his might, until he had cut his way to the door. Will you not draw your swords and fight against sin till you have overcome it? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **After that ye have suffered a while.**—*The consolations and sufferings of the believer, and their effects upon his character*:—I. THE CONSOLATION HERE SET BEFORE US. "God hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." In such wonderful terms the Word of God expresses the blessed remedy which His mercy hath provided for the evils of man's fallen state; and you cannot fail to observe how much more they express than a mere relief from such evils. It is a call to a state of actual happiness. It is a call to a state of positive excellence or holiness. It is, finally, a call to a state which we have no language to describe, nor material of thought to imagine—namely, a state of "glory." II. THE COURSE THROUGH WHICH YOU MUST PASS. "After that ye have suffered a while." Men have sometimes made it an objection against the goodness of God, that there is so much suffering in this world. This they might do with more reason if they could show that men are innocent in this world and deserve no correction, or even that they are willing to be prepared for

the happiness of another world and need no such calls to serious consideration; but, in the present sinful state of fallen man, the very goodness of God requires that there should be suffering. That suffering is indeed, in justice, the punishment for sin, but at the same time it is, in mercy, the corrective of our wanderings. "God hath called us to His eternal glory"; but how little do men naturally care even for eternal glory, so long as they can find their pleasure elsewhere? The very bounties of their Creator unhappily rather drive them to a greater distance from Him, instead of drawing them nearer. He needs to wither these comforts, or to interrupt our enjoyment of them, before we can see their insufficiency and remember the better blessings awaiting us. It is generally, in short, only after we have "suffered a while," that we think of "the eternal glory" to which God hath called us. You cannot indeed be supposed to wish for afflictions, or to welcome them as your choice. This is always your best consolation under them, that they are neither sent idly nor borne uselessly. They not only serve to show you more clearly the true value of the eternal glory which awaiteth you, but also to prepare your souls the better for its enjoyment. In this view they bring a blessing which compensates for their evil. III. THE EFFECT TO BE PRODUCED BOTH BY YOUR CONSOLATIONS AND SUFFERINGS AS CHRISTIANS, viz., that you may be "made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled." (*J. Brewster, D.D.*) *The Church's present and future*.—I. THE CHURCH'S PRESENT LOT. "After that ye have suffered a while." It seems a strange thing to say that there is a necessity for suffering while here. The Church's lot is not here intended to be anything else; not that it is always the same in amount of suffering, but that it never is wholly free from it. The suffering may be inward or it may be outward. But mark, the apostle says it is "a little while." We read of "much" tribulation and "great" tribulation, but here it is for a little. "Our light affliction which is but for a moment." Perhaps it may seem long to us. II. THE CHURCH'S PERFECTION, COMPLETION, OR CONSUMMATION THROUGH MEANS OF SUFFERING. "Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." "Make you perfect." As if thus—"Make you perfect": that is to say, "stablish, strengthen, settle you." "Perfect." The word is, literally, "fully equip you," equip you as a soldier is equipped for warfare. There are many things that go to equip a soldier: not merely his armour, not merely his sword and his shield, but his bodily frame. Now the word first of all is a full fit out, and a full equipment, so that he shall in the end, when the process is completed, be fully ready for that which is before him. "Make you perfect" is the meaning of every trial. 1. "Stablish" is more exactly rendered by "firm," "consolidate," "make firm." This, I should say, is the first part of the threefold part of the process which these three words describe: the consolidation of the Christian character, making him firm in all parts of his spiritual frame. 2. Strength. There is strength as well as consolidation needed. There are many things that are firm and consolidated that are not strong. God's object is to make us strong. 3. The third thing here specified is settling, that is, firmly rooting and grounding, so that we shall not be moved. These words describe the process that is going on through the discipline which God is exercising through every son that He receiveth. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Suffering and perfection*.—Peter speaks of our "having suffered a while," and then being made "perfect." What a consolatory juxtaposition have we here—suffering first, and perfection afterwards. To make me enjoy heaven, He causes me to weep a while here. Music is all the more delicious when preceded by discord; peace is the more prized after war; health after sickness; and life, in all its beauty and vigour, will be only truly enjoyed "after that we have suffered a while." Thanks to Peter for that little word "awhile." It is not always "night." It shall be day when the sun gets up. It shall not be always suffering with us. No—no; already the handkerchief is shaken out, wherewith tears are to be wiped away. (*John Macfarlane, D.D.*) *An apostolic prayer*.—It is the first duty of a Christian minister to endeavour to convert sinners to God. The second object of the Christian ministry is the improvement of those already converted. Those trees of righteousness are not only to be planted in the garden of the Lord, but to be watered also. I. THE CHARACTER OF JEHOVAH. He is called "the God of all grace." II. AN OPERATION. "Who hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." This glory is eternal. A future state of being is intended to develop all our spiritual excellences, and therefore it is called glory. III. We have here a PRAYER. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Peter here has a pleonasm which shows how earnestly

he felt it in his own mind; he was deeply impressed, but could hardly find words to express his meaning and desire. "Do for you exceeding abundantly above all that ye can ask or think." There are, however, in this prayer three things which we may distinctly observe. 1. First, it includes much progress in religion: "Make you perfect." Christians should never be satisfied. In your secular affairs you wish not only to go on, but to prosper. Why not show the same concern in your religious affairs? A little does not satisfy you in temporals, why should it in spirituals? especially since the latter is much more necessary and desirable; and you are commanded not only to have the Spirit, but to be "filled with the Spirit." 2. Another thing to be observed in this prayer is confirmation. For it is to little purpose to gain unless you retain also. "Stablish, strengthen, settle you." 3. But observe, thirdly, the Divine agency necessary for this. Peter not only admonishes, but prays for them. Who is to make them so? "Why," said he, "the God of all grace, who hath called us to His eternal glory." Who is to be the finisher but He who is the Author? "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." "He shall fulfil in you all the good pleasure of His will, and the work of faith with power." IV. Consider THE CONCESSION. "After that ye have suffered a while." First, a suffering state is to precede their finishing their course with joy. Yes, before you reign with Him you are to suffer with Him. In the beginning of the gospel the sufferings of Christians arose much from persecution. I have known persons who have probably suffered more than many of the martyrs. The martyr has had public excitement; these have suffered in obscurity: the martyr's sufferings have soon ended; but here the melancholy experience stretches out from week to week, and even from year to year. These sufferings are needful: God, who loves His people infinitely, would not allow them to suffer without some gracious design. Yes, the fallow ground requires the ploughshare to prepare it for the seed. Even the vine needs the pruning-knife, that it may bring forth fruit. (*W. Jay, M.A.*) **Stablish, strengthen, settle you.**—*The good and means of establishment*:—Some think these words are spoken in the way of a promise from God; others think they are spoken in the way of prayer to God. I. THE MERCY AND BLESSING PRAYED FOR. It is expressed in four words: "Perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you." The first word, which we render "perfect," should, I think, be translated otherwise. It is the same word that is used in Matt. iv. 21 and Mark i. 19 for mending of their nets; and the same that is used in Gal. vi. 1: "You that are spiritual 'restore' such an one with the spirit of meekness"; and it signifies such a restoring as is of unjoined members. Now these Christians being scattered, the apostle prays that God would please to joint them again. Thus the God of all grace, after you have suffered and been shattered, bring you into order, restore and repair you. It is a great blessing of God, and worthy of all our prayer, to be established and settled in the truth and good ways of God. Settling grace and mercy, in opposition both to outward and inward trouble, is a great mercy and well worth praying for. 1. First, it is a great mercy and blessing for a nation or kingdom to be in a settled state and condition outwardly; for it is the mercy promised, and promised mercies are no small mercies (*Jer. xxiv. 6, xxxii. 37, 41; 2 Sam. vii. 16*). 2. Secondly, as it is a mercy for a nation to be settled and established, so for the Church of God; for when the Church hath this rest, then it is edified, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost (*Acts ix. 31*). Establishment is the mercy promised to the Church also (*Isa. ii. 2*). It is that mercy and blessing which the apostles laboured for continually (*Acts xiv. 21*). This they also prayed for; and therefore as the Apostle Peter shuts up his Epistle with this prayer for the dispersed Christian-Jews, so the Apostle Paul doth close up his Epistle to the Corinthians with the same desire and prayer for them (*2 Cor. xiii.*). And *Rom. xvi. 25*. And as it is the mercy prayed for, so sometimes it is made the signal mercy whereby the Church is declared to be the Church of Christ: "Whose house ye are," saith the apostle to the Hebrews, "if you hold fast the confidence of your rejoicing stedfast to the end." 3. But especially it is a great mercy for a particular soul to be settled in the truth and established in the good ways of God. It is the ground of all our fruitfulness: ye know how it is with a tree or plant, though in itself it be never so good, yet if it be not settled in the earth it bringeth forth no fruit: if the plant be good and the soil good, it may bring forth good fruit; but if you be always removing it from one place to another, it cannot bring forth fruit. It is the bottom of all our praises. The birds do not ordinarily sing till they be set; they do not usually sing flying; but when they are fixed: so saith David, "My heart is fixed,

O God, my heart is fixed"; and what then? then saith he, "I will sing and give praise"; but not till then. And what is the reason that many pass so many years of their lives in doubtings and fears, never praising God for any love or mercy to them? but because they are unsettled in their spiritual estate and condition. It is the beginning of our perseverance: then I begin to persevere when I begin to settle and to be established. As instability is the beginning of apostasy, so settledness is the beginning of perseverance. It is that good thing which pleaseth God exceedingly. God was so pleased with Jehoshaphat upon that account that He passed by his infirmities, even because his heart was fixed and established (2 Chron. xix. 2). And it is also the character of a good and gracious person, whereby he is distinguished from the ungodly of the world. A good man lives and dwelleth at the sign of a settled conversation; he is planted by the rivers of water (Psa. i.); the wicked are as the chaff that is driven to and fro, not settled, not planted. II. IT IS WORTHY OF ALL OUR PRAYERS. It is a great blessing, and worthy of all our prayers, to be settled and established in the good ways of God. It is that mercy, grace, and blessing which we all need. It is God only who doth give out this grace, it belongs unto Him alone to establish nations, churches, and persons. He is able to establish those who do come to Him for it: "Now to Him that is of power to establish you," &c. (Rom. xvi. 25). He is willing to do it: "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and keep you from evil" (2 Thess. iii. 3). He is engaged to do it, for He hath promised to do it, as hath been proved already, and it is His prerogative: "Now He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God" (2 Cor. i. 21). What shall we do, then, that we may be established? 1. As for a nation or Christian state. It must first settle religion, for religion is the mainmast, and if that be not strengthened all the tackling will be loose (Isa. xxxiii. 23). Then must there be care taken for a succession of godly magistrates. And therefore let them and all the people remember the good counsel of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 20). 2. As for a Church. If particular churches would be settled and established, they must have all the officers and ordinances of Christ then; as a ship under sail, with all its sails out, is beautiful and doth move evenly, so shall they also do. Oh, that churches therefore would take heed of these great sins, pride, and covetousness, which will always keep them in an unsettled condition. But especially it is the duty of all the churches to pray much for this great mercy of establishment (Isa. lxii. 6). 3. As for particular persons. Wouldst thou be established in the truth and good ways of God? Then observe what those things are which do make others unsettled, and take heed thereof. Surely either it is because they do want primitive breakings; for the stony ground comes to nothing at the last, though it hath much joy at the first, because it wants depth of earth. The stick that is thrust into the earth is more easily pulled up than the plant which is rooted in the earth. So are all those who have no root in themselves. Or because they take up great resolutions without answerable pre-deliberations; whereas we know that the needle must play about the polar point before it comes to stand and settle; he that would hit the mark must take his level before he parts with his arrow. And if men resolve before they have fully considered, they will ere long be unresolved again. Or because men do not walk by a settled rule: he can never be settled that doth not walk by a settled rule. So long as I want the Divine counsel of the Word, my heart is like a vagrant that is most unstable, said Bernard; for whilst I am not subject to God, I am contrary to myself. Or because they are divided in their own hearts. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways—a heart for the world, yet a good mind to Christ; how is it possible but they should be most unsettled? Or because they are too confident of their own strength and judgment: whereas the only way to be firm and stedfast is to be sensible of one's own infirmity. Or because men do forsake the ministry which Christ hath given to the churches for their edification, perfection, and establishment (Eph. ix. 11–14). Or because they have too fair an opinion of those that are erroneous, thinking that they may be godly, though they be never so unsound in their judgments. Or because that men do not improve their Christian communion for the life and power of godliness, but for light only, and discoursing notions: whereas Paul saith (1 Tim. vi. 20, 21). Or because they have not been built on the rock Christ, but on some sandy foundation: whereas the Psalmist saith, "He set my feet on a rock, and established my goings" (Psa. xl. 2). But what shall I do that I may be more settled in regard of my judgment, and that I may be established in the present truth? Get a clear and distinct understanding in the things and truths of the gospel: labour, not only to know, but to get a clear

and judicious apprehension and clearness in the truths of Christ. Be sure that you do not make any impression the rule and square of your judgment; judge not doctrines by impressions. "We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye shall do well that you take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place" (chap. i. 19). The Word of God without is my rule, the light within is my help to understand that rule; but if I judge of doctrines by impressions of the Word on my heart I can never be settled; therefore take heed of that. Get into the house of God; God's house is an house of establishment; there He commandeth His blessing, and life for evermore; there the Lord hath promised to make men pillars for stedfastness (Rev. iii. 12). Whatever truth you know do not only know it in a spiritual way, but put the same into practice; the way to be established in the truth is to walk therein (Col. ii. 6, 7). But what shall I do that I may be more settled in my life and established in the good ways of God? You must be very sensible of your own unsettledness, and be humbled for it; he is not far from establishment that is very sensible of his own unsettledness. Labour for a solid and a serious spirit: a serious spirit and an established heart go together (Prov. iv. 26). Be sure that you do not live upon your condition itself, but on the God of your condition; that is perpetual which hath a perpetuating cause. The more delight and contentment that you find in the good ways of God, the more your hearts will be fixed, established, and staked down to them; comfort and establishment go together (2 Thess. ii. 17). Do you desire to be fixed and established? labour more and more, then, to make your way to heaven easy and comfortable to you. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*) *Christian stability, strength, and establishment*:—Through "suffering," and after the "suffering" will come four things: "Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." 1. By the first, I understand that God will knit you together, one part with another. So that, as we say of anything which is entire and unbroken, "It is perfect," so it will be with you. Your mind, your affections, and your soul, and your body one—living for the same end, living the same life, by the same Christ. Yourself one man, a whole, "perfect." 2. Then, made one with yourself, His one Spirit animating the whole being, He will "stablish" you, give you firmness and stability. Now is not it exactly what you want? Not feelings, principles—"stability." You shall feel your foundation under you deeper than the everlasting hills! 3. He will fulfil His beautiful promise. "Will He plead against me with His great power? No; but He will put strength into me." You will become—that which in such a world as this you need—that which is the secret of all peace, of all decision, of all usefulness in life—a strong character. 4. And so we travel to the highest, the last, and the best—"He will settle you." He will give you rest. Heaven has been beautifully defined "the rest of desire." But how is "settling," rest? To "settle," is to repose upon your foundation; to "settle," is to have an attraction, and to that attraction always to point. The ship "settles" to her anchor; the mountains "settle" to their base; the magnet "settles" to its pole. So God will "settle" you on Christ. And not only that. Every brick put into the wall, every storey added to a well-built house, "settles" the whole structure. In like manner God, enabling you to add work to work and usefulness to usefulness, will so "settle" you, by your increase, while He "builds you up in your own most holy faith"; and then "settled" on Christ, in Christ, to Christ, for Christ, with Christ, you will not be the restless creature you once were; you will not need to go about here and there for satisfaction, for you have a resting-place, and in that place of your rest you will understand the wisdom and the order of the arrangement and the exquisite completeness of the Divine plan. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *A New Year's benediction*:—Peter turns from exhortation to prayer. Having exhorted believers to walk steadfastly he bends his knee and commends them to the guardian care of Heaven, imploring upon them one of the largest blessings for which the most affectionate heart ever made application. I. WHAT THE APOSTLE ASKS FOR ALL TO WHOM THIS EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN. He asks for them: perfection, establishment, strengthening, settling. 1. Perfection. Indeed, though this be a large prayer, and the jewel is a diamond of the first water and of the finest size, yet is it absolutely necessary to a Christian that he should ultimately arrive at perfection. What were a Christian if he were not perfected? Have you never seen the human face divine starting out from the chiselled marble? You have seen the exquisite skill of the sculptor, and you have said within yourself, "What a marvellous thing will this be! what a matchless specimen of human skill!" But, alas! it never was completed, but was left unfinished. And do you imagine, any of you, that God will begin to sculpture out a perfect being and not complete it? Hath God taken us as unhewn

stones out of the quarry, and hath He begun to work upon us and show His Divine art, His marvellous wisdom and grace, and will He afterwards cast us away? Oh, the prayer shall be fulfilled. After that ye have suffered a while, God shall make you perfect, if He has begun the good work in you. But it must be after that ye have suffered a while. There is no way of ridding you of your dross and your tin but by the flames of the furnace of affliction. 2. Let us now proceed to the second blessing of the benediction—establishment. What is a Christian man better than the flower of the field, which is here to-day, and which withers when the sun is risen with fervent heat, unless God establish him? Oh, may God fulfil to you this rich benediction, that your goodness may not be as the morning cloud and as the early dew which passeth away; may every good thing that you have be abiding. May your character be not a writing upon the sand, but an inscription upon the rock. But mark, we cannot have this blessing until after we have suffered a while. It is of no use our hoping that we shall be well-rooted if no March winds have passed over us. The young oak cannot be expected to strike its roots so deep as the old one. 3. Now for the third blessing, which is strengthening. Ah, this is a very necessary blessing too for all Christians. There be some whose characters seem to be fixed and established. But still they lack force and vigour. Oh, may God strengthen you this year! But remember, if He does do so, you will then have to suffer. "After that ye have suffered a while," may He strengthen you. There is sometimes an operation performed upon horses which one must consider to be cruel—the firing of them to make their tendons strong. Now, every Christian man before he can be strengthened must be fired. He must have his nerves and tendons braced up with the hot iron of affliction. 4. And now I come to the last blessing of the four—"settling." I will not say that this last blessing is greater than the other three, but it is a stepping-stone to each; and, strange to say, it is often the result of a gradual attainment of the three preceding ones. "Settle you!" Oh, how many there are that are never settled! The tree which should be transplanted every week would soon die. Nay, if it were moved, no matter how skilfully, once every year, no gardener would expect fruit from it. How many Christians there be that are transplanting themselves constantly, even as to their doctrinal sentiments! Stand firm and steadfast by that which ye have been taught, and ever seek the spirit of the Apostle Paul, "If any man preach any other gospel than that which we have received, let him be accursed." If, however, I wished you to be firm in your doctrines, my prayer would be that you may be especially settled in your faith. You believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and you rest in Him. But sometimes your faith wavers, then you lose your joy and comfort. I pray that your faith may become so settled that it may never be a matter of question with you whether Christ is yours or not, but that you may say confidently, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded," &c. Then I pray that you may be settled in your aims and designs. See what niche it is that God would have you occupy. Stand in it, and don't be got out of it by all the laughter that comes upon you. If you believe God has called you to a work, do it. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not. Be ye settled. But you will not be settled unless you suffer. You will become settled in your faith and settled in your aims by suffering.

II. THE REASONS WHY THE APOSTLE PETER EXPECTED THAT HIS PRAYER WOULD BE HEARD. 1. Did not unbelief whisper in Peter's ear, "Peter, thou askest too much. If thou hadst said, 'Lord, make them holy,' had it not been a sufficient prayer?" "No," saith Peter, "I am sure I shall receive what I have asked for, for I am in the first place asking it of the God of all grace." Not only the God of the little graces we have received already, but the God of the great boundless grace which is stored up for us in the promise, but which as yet we have not received in our experience. "The God of all grace"; of quickening grace, of convincing grace, of pardoning grace, of believing grace, the God of comforting, supporting, sustaining grace. Surely when we come to Him we cannot come for too much. 2. Unbelief might have said, "Ah, Peter, it is true that God is the God of all grace, but He is as a fountain shut up, as waters sealed." "Ah," saith Peter, "get thee hence, Satan; thou savourest not the things that be of God. It is not a sealed fountain of all grace, for it has begun to flow." "The God of grace hath called us." Calling is the first drop of mercy that tricketh into the thirsty lip of the dying man. Calling is the first golden link of the endless chain of eternal mercies. If God has called me, I may ask Him to establish and keep me; I may pray that the bush may burn, but not be consumed. Dare I ask that to life's latest hour I may be faithful to God, because God is faithful to me? Yes, I may ask

it, and I shall have it too; because the God that calls will give the rest. 3. But I think there is a stronger reason coming yet: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory." Has God called me to heaven, and is there anything on earth He will deny me? If He has called me to dwell in heaven, is not perfection necessary for me? May I not, therefore, ask for it? If He has called me to glory, is it not necessary that I should be strengthened to fight my way thither? May I not ask for strengthening? 4. The last reason why the apostle expected that his benediction would be fulfilled was this: "Who hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." It is not a hard thing to believe that Christ's blood was sufficient to purchase every blessing for me. If I go to God's treasury without Christ, I am afraid to ask for anything, but when Christ is with me I can then ask for everything. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 12. *Silvanus*.—*Silvanus*:—I. THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBORDINATE WORK. A chief man "accustomed to pull the stroke oar," yet content in his relation to an apostle to occupy a lower position. *Silvanus* could not write letters like Peter, but he could carry them when written. Those who can do great work in the Church are but units, those who are fitted for subordinate work millions. It is difficult to say what is important and what subordinate. The tiny rivet is just as important as the piston. The folks in the rear looking after the supplies, of whom one never reads in the despatches, are just as essential as those in the front. Be not too proud to be subordinate. *Silvanus* was content to be a satellite of somebody all his life long. II. THE IMPORTANCE AND OBLIGATION OF PERSISTENTLY DOING OUR WORK THOUGH NOBODY TAKES ANY NOTICE OF IT. *Silvanus* did not sit still with his "hands in his pockets" simply because nothing was said about him, no notice taken of him. Keep "pegging away," noticed or unnoticed. This man did so through years of oblivion. And yet after all his services were noticed: we are talking about them nineteen centuries afterwards. III. AN EXAMPLE OF A CHARACTER WE CAN ALL EMULATE. "A faithful brother." A great genius, a wise philosopher, an eloquent preacher? No, a faithful brother. It may be a foolish brother, but faithful. We can all emulate that, whatever our opportunities. If we are faithful, men will know where to have us, will know we shall not shirk obligation, will not scamp our work. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) Exhorting and testifying.—*Testimony and exhortation*:—I. In that the apostle testified by sound arguments that they were in the right way, note that IT IS NEEDFUL FOR EVERY ONE TO KNOW AND BE WELL ASSURED OF THE RELIGION HE PROFESSETH, THAT IT IS THE TRUTH OF GOD, for there be many religions, yet but one truth; miss that, and perish. We must not go by guess in our religion. 1. This rebukes those that take occasion, because there be so many religions, therefore they will meddle with none, but take their ease and tarry till all agree. 2. It rebukes those that profess a religion, as all do, but know not whether it be truth or not, and have no ground from the Word for the same. 3. As it is our duty to testify and prove our religion, so it is yours to know and acknowledge it, that if an angel should come and inform you otherwise, you might not give ear to him. II. THEY THAT KNOW THE TRUTH OUGHT SO HIGHLY TO ESTEEM IT, AND BE SO THANKFUL TO GOD FOR IT, AS THEY NEVER SUFFER THEMSELVES TO BE REMOVED THEREFROM, whether for hope of gain or fear of trouble, &c. We must buy the truth, nor sell it. III. In that the apostle takes such care with those that now stood in the truth to hold them therein, note that IT IS A HARD MATTER FOR THOSE TO HOLD OUT STEADFAST THAT HAVE BEGUN TO DO WELL, for our heart is deceitful, the devil is subtle and strong, and there are also many seducers, many baits, many discouragements, &c. IV. In that his Epistle consists in testifying by sound reasons for the confirmation of their judgments, and then of the exhortation for the whetting on of their affections, note that BOTH PARTS ARE NECESSARY TO PREACHING, THE ONE STILL TO ACCOMPANY THE OTHER. People must make use and account of both, regard doctrine for knowledge, and suffer exhortation for practice. (John Rogers.) An apostolic testimony and exhortation:—"I have written briefly," says Peter. But his letter, in comparison with the other epistles of the New Testament, is longer than many of them. He regards it as short when measured by the greatness of its theme. For all words which are devoted to witnessing to the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ must be narrow and insufficient. So in that word "briefly" we get a glimpse of the apostle's conception of the transcendent greatness of the gospel which he had to proclaim. I. PETER'S TESTIMONY. Now there is a very beautiful, though not to superficial readers obvious, significance in this testimony. "This is the true grace of God." What is meant by "this"? Not merely the teaching

which he has been giving in the preceding part of the letter, but that which somebody else had been teaching. Now these churches in Asia Minor to whom this letter was sent were in all probability founded by the Apostle Paul, or by men working under his direction. And here Peter puts his seal on the teaching that had come from his brother apostle, and says, "The thing that you have learned, and that I have had no part in communicating to you, this is the true grace of God." We have an interesting evidence, all the stronger because unobtrusive, of the cordial understanding between the two great leaders of the Church in apostolic times. But, apart altogether from that thought, note two things—the one the substance of this witness-bearing, and the other Peter's right to bear it. As to the substance of the testimony—"grace" is properly love in exercise towards inferior and sinful creatures. And, says Peter, the inmost significance of the gospel is that it is the revelation of such a love as being in God's heart. Another meaning springs out of this. That same message is not only a revelation of love, but it is a communication of the gifts of love. And the "true grace of God" is shorthand for all the rich abundance and variety of the sevenfold perfect gifts for spirit and heart which come from faith in Jesus Christ. Thus this gospel of the Divine Christ that died for our sins, and lives to give His Spirit to all waiting hearts—this is the true grace of God. It is very needful for us to keep in view always that lofty conception of what this gospel is, that we may not bring it down to the level of a mere theory of religion, nor think of it as a mere publication of dry doctrines. Further, what right had this man to take this position and say, "I testify that this is the true grace of God"? He was no great genius; he did not know anything about comparative religion, which is nowadays supposed to be absolutely essential to understanding any one religion. Well, there are two or three answers—one peculiar to him, and others common to all Christian people. The one peculiar to him is, as I believe, that he was rightly conscious that Jesus Christ had bestowed upon him the power to witness, and the authority to impose his testimony upon men as a word from God. In the most inartificial and matter-of-course way Peter here lets us see the apostolic conception of apostolic authority. We Christian people have a right to authority based on personal experience. If we have plunged deep into the secrets of God, and lived closely in communion with Him, and for ourselves have found the grace of God, His love, and the gifts of His love coming into our lives, then we too have a right to go to men and say, "Never mind about me; never mind about whether I am wise or foolish. I do not argue, but I tell you I have tasted the manna, and it is sweet; I have drunk of the water, and it comes cool and fresh from the rock. One thing I know—that whereas I was blind, now I see." If we testify thus, and back up our witness with lives corresponding, some who are wholly untouched by a preacher's eloquence and controversialist's arguments will probably be led by our attestation to make the experiment for themselves. II. Further, notice PETER'S EXHORTATION. According to the right rendering, the last clause is, "in which stand fast." The translation in the Authorised Version, "in which ye stand," gives a true thought, though not the apostle's intention here. For, as a matter of fact, men cannot stand upright and firm unless their feet are planted on the rock of that true grace of God. It is no use talking to men about steadfastness of purpose, stability of life, erect independence, resistance to antagonistic forces, unless you give them something to stand upon. And the only standing ground that will never yield, nor, like the quicksand with the tide round it, melt away—we do not know how—from beneath our feet, is "the grace of God." However, that is not what the Apostle Peter meant. He says, "See that you keep firmly your position in reference to this true grace of God." The text exhorts us against ourselves and against the temptations of the world, which are always present with us, and are far more operative in bringing down the temperature of the Christian Church and of its individual members than any chilling that arises from intellectual doubts. And how are we to obey the exhortation? Well, plainly, if "this" is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, "the true grace of God," which alone will give stability to our feet, then we "shall not stand fast" in it unless we make conscious efforts to apprehend, and comprehend, and keep hold of it in our minds as well as in our hearts. Again, try to keep heart and mind in contact with it, amidst distractions and daily duties. Try to bring the principles of the New Testament consciously to bear on the small details of everyday life. Be sure that you desire, and put yourself in the attitude of receiving, the gifts of that love, which are the graces of the Christian life. And when you have got them apply them, "that you may be able to withstand in the evil day; and,

having done all, to stand." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **The true grace of God.**—*The gospel of the grace of God*:—I. THE ECONOMY OF THE GOSPEL IS, THROUGHOUT ITS CONSTITUTION AND INFLUENCE, A GRAND DISPLAY OF DIVINE GRACE. 1. We must first direct you to the announcements of the gospel as to the methods by which blessings are meritoriously secured. 2. We have also to direct you to the announcements of the gospel as to the influence by which blessings are actually imparted. 3. We are also to notice the announcements of the gospel as to the nature of the blessings themselves which are enjoyed. 4. We must also notice the announcements of the gospel as to the extent to which these blessings are to be diffused. II. THE ECONOMY OF THE GOSPEL, AS A GRAND DISPLAY OF DIVINE GRACE, IMPRESSES IMPORTANT DEMANDS UPON ALL TO WHOM IT IS PROCLAIMED. 1. The gospel, as "the true grace of God," should be cordially believed. 2. The gospel, as "the true grace of God," must be steadfastly adhered to. 3. The gospel, as "the true grace of God," must be zealously diffused. (*James Parsons.*) *True grace*:—Grace, in scriptural language, denotes, in general, free favour to the unworthy, to the guilty. Accordingly the gospel, which proclaims salvation freely to all, is here denominated "the grace of God." Now the gospel may be considered in three views. First, and most characteristically, it may be contemplated as a promise of life and salvation through Jesus Christ, fraught with the richest blessings. Again, the gospel may be viewed as a testimony, in which the messengers of the Lord of Hosts, as faithful witnesses, announce certain great facts, appealing to the judgment of God as that which shall confirm the truth of their testimony, as well as avenge the guilt and disobedience of such as slight or gainsay it. Lastly, the gospel is frequently represented as a promulgation of privilege, involving, of course, a prescription of duty, pointing to the hope of man, explaining the plan of salvation through the Cross of Christ, and inculcating upon all the necessity of immediately embracing this way of life, and availing themselves of that "grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Obviously the apostle, in our text, while he doubtless includes the first of these considerations, is viewing the gospel immediately in the two last as an exhortation inculcating duty, and as a testimony proclaiming truth and inviting men to improve it. And he employs both expressions to indicate his own earnestness in the address, as well as the deep interest which they had in acting upon it. We exhort and testify, then, with Peter, and with all the apostles, that the method of redemption proclaimed in the gospel, by sovereign mercy reigning through the Cross of Christ, is the "true grace" by God, that alone which is founded in fact, which can yield satisfaction to the reflecting mind; and that all other plans of salvation which men have invented, however specious they may appear or confidently they may have been put forward, as calculated to honour God and magnify His mercy, will prove delusory, and, if persisted in, destructive.

I. THERE ARE THOSE WHO EXPECT ULTIMATE SALVATION ON THIS PRINCIPLE, THAT GOD FROM HIS GREAT GOODNESS WILL OVERLOOK SIN, AND DECLINE TO PUSH IT AS A MATTER OF COURSE. This is an opinion which hardly any of you will avow, and perhaps none of you will advocate. Yet it is congenial to the corrupted mind, has been not only adopted, but argued by others, and, there is reason to fear, is secretly entertained by very many. "The sinners of My people say," is the testimony of God concerning the Jews in the time of Amos, "the evil shall not overtake or prevent us." And, again, saith God by Zephaniah, "The men that are settled upon their lees say in their hearts, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil." And, at an earlier period of their history, this is represented by Moses as language which might be justly ascribed to them, though equally indicative of sottishness and of impiety, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, and add drunkenness to thirst." Such impunity, indeed, would be amazing "grace" on the part of God—i.e., free favour to the guilty. But is it "true grace"? Is it such grace as can be imputed to Him without impiety? Assuredly not. It is totally incompatible with His revealed characters. For if He be "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, longsuffering and slow to wrath, abundant in goodness," it is also testified of Him that He is "abundant in truth, and will by no means clear the guilty." It is irreconcilable with the dictates of right reason; for, as the poet says, "A God all mercy is a God unjust." And it is opposed to the honour and interests of the Divine government. What would be the consequences? How fearful, how sweeping, how disastrous! II. There are many who would not be thought to adopt this hypothesis of necessary impunity to the unbelieving and impenitent transgressors of every class, arising from the goodness of God, AND YET CONCEIVE THAT HE WILL ACCEPT

OF EXTERNAL RITES AND OBLATIONS, OF RELIGIOUS FORMS AND OBSERVANCES, AS A COMPENSATION FOR THE NEGLECT OF DUTY, AND FOR THE VIOLATION OF HIS HOLY LAW. Upon this principle, it is obvious, every institute of paganism is constructed. Nay, the Jews, who ought to have known better things, were impressed with this belief. Accordingly, amid the perpetration of their crimes and the denunciations of their prophets, they cried out, not only without trembling apprehension, but with boastful confidence, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we!" And is there not reason to fear that there is too great a leaning to forms, under the clearer light of the gospel, and among all parties of Christians? Do you not see, from day to day, some of one class, for example, though sunk in carelessness or addicted to vice, deluding themselves with the hope that penance and prayer, the confession and the mass, rites and ceremonies the most frivolous and unintelligible, can atone for guilt, propitiate God, and save the soul? Nay, among the disciples of a purer faith and simpler institute, may we not detect an undue dependence upon the mere ceremonial of service? Now were Jehovah to accept of appearances instead of realities, of forms instead of actual services, and of heartless obedience instead of holy conduct, this might be accounted grace indeed. But is it such grace as we dare impute to God? Is it "true grace"? Is it such that you would venture to rest your eternal all upon it? I hope not. And if you did you would act a part the most foolish, and entirely contrary to the most explicit testimonies of Scripture. The very question is proposed, and the answer given, in the Book of Micah (vi. 6-8). III. But, abandoning the hope of salvation exclusively by external rites, there are some who think that this is to be attained by HUMAN OBEDIENCE ALONE, AND BY SUCH OBEDIENCE AS MAN CAN RENDER IN HIS PRESENT SINFUL AND IMPERFECT STATE. That God prefers the obedience of life to mere ecclesiastical rites is certain. But the obedience of man—in its best form, you know—is greatly defective. How little is there of enlightened view, how little of holy principle, how little of filial love, how little of disinterested regard, how little of Godlike aim, is there in the services of the best! Verily they are sinfully imperfect in every view. Were God, then, to condescend to accept these sinful and imperfect services as the ground of hope, how liberal, how generous would He appear! But would this, I ask, be "true grace"—grace such as we may ascribe to Him, and as the Scriptures represent to be the principle of His moral government? Unquestionably not. Can God accept that which is greatly or altogether without holy principle, without godly spirit, without honourable aim? Much more, can He render immortality as the recompense of obedience so essentially and criminally defective? IV. Some, however, conceive that, though they dare not depend upon their own righteousness alone, yet, AS AIDED AND SUPPORTED BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST, IT MAY JUSTLY BECOME THE GROUND OF THEIR HOPE, AND BE CONSIDERED AS THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD. And were this foundation conceded, were this plea admitted, there would be grace on the part of God—grace in the appointment of the Saviour—grace in the obedience and atonement of the Saviour, and grace in the acceptance of human merit (if so proud a name may be attached to so poor a thing), as the price of "eternal redemption." But this is not the "true grace" of God; for, I ask you, where in Scripture is our Saviour's righteousness spoken of as only a secondary thing, subordinate to human worth? Where is it represented under the degrading character of a make-weight, of a certain supplementary provision to human infirmity, of a sort of accessory to human goodness, of an authorised appendage to human merit? Is it not, on the contrary, uniformly asserted to have done all—to have, in the emphatical language of the prophet, "finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, sealed the vision, and confirmed the covenant?" V. Finally, there are those who, rejecting this heterogeneous admixture, and every other ground of dependence that is human, RELY FOR ACCEPTANCE AND SALVATION SOLELY UPON THE GRACE OF GOD, AS IT "REIGNS THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE." This is the view given in Scripture. Hear how the Apostle Paul speaks on this subject, in a way greatly analogous to the passage before us, and calculated to throw light upon it: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This is, indeed, "the true grace of God"—the grace of redemption pure, and free, and rich, and high, and infallible: pure, without any intermixture of human merit; free, springing from the sovereign good pleasure of Jehovah alone, and from no necessary impulse of His nature, or controlling necessity or incidental exigency of His government; rich, exceedingly abundant in every

respect, applicable to all, adequate for each, and fraught with the noblest blessings to our fallen race; high, grand in its conception, glorious in its character, admirable in its provisions, heavenly in its results; infallible, on which we may rest without the fear of disappointment, and in which we can rejoice without the dread of delusion. In particular, this is the only plan of salvation which places the Divine generosity in the most unexceptionable and attractive light, while it satisfies justice, condemns sin, secures the honours of the Divine law, extends the reign of goodness, and brightens the glories of the moral empire of God. (*John Mitchell, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you.—*The Church in Babylon*:—The Revised Version omits “the Church,” and substitutes “she”; explaining in a marginal note that there is a difference of opinion as to whether the sender of the letter is a community or an individual. All the old MSS., with one weighty exception, follow the reading, “she that is at Babylon.” That the sender of the letter is a church, symbolically designated as a “lady,” seems the natural meaning. Then there is another question—Where was Babylon? An equal diversity of opinion has arisen. In my own opinion “Babylon” means Rome. We have here the same symbolical name as in the Book of Revelation, where it is intended primarily as an appellation for the imperial city, which has taken the place filled in the Old Testament by Babylon, as the concentration of antagonism to the kingdom of God. I. WE HAVE HERE AN OBJECT LESSON AS TO THE UNITING POWER OF THE GOSPEL. Just think of the relations which, in the civil world, subsisted between Rome and its subject provinces: the latter, with bitter hatred in their hearts to everything belonging to the oppressing city, having had their freedom crushed down and their aspirations ruthlessly trampled upon; the former, with the contempt natural to metropolitans in dealing with far-off provincials. The same kind of relationship subsisted between Rome and the outlying provinces of its unwieldy empire as between England, for instance, and its Indian possessions. And the same uniting bond came in which binds the Christian converts of these Eastern lands of ours to England by a far firmer bond than any other. The separating walls were high, but, according to the old saying, you cannot build walls high enough to keep out the birds; and spirits, winged by the common faith, soared above all earthly-made distinctions and met in the higher regions of Christian communion. Now our temptation is not so much to let barriers of race and language and distance weaken our sense of Christian community, as it is to let even smaller things than these do the same tragical office for us. And we, as Christian people, are bound to try and look over the fences of our “denominations” and churches, and recognise the wider fellowship and larger company in which all these are merged. II. We note, further, THE CLEAR RECOGNITION HERE OF WHAT IS THE STRONG BOND UNITING ALL CHRISTIANS. Peter would probably have been very much astonished if he had been told of the theological controversies that were to be waged round that word “elect.” The emphasis here lies, not on “elect,” but on “together.” It is not the thing so much as the common possession of the thing which bulks largely before the apostle. In effect he says, “The reason why these Roman Christians that have never looked you Bithynians in the face do yet feel their hearts going out to you, and send you their loving messages, is because they, in common with you, have been recipients of precisely the same Divine act of grace.” By the side of these transcendent blessings which they possessed in common, how pitifully insignificant all the causes which kept them apart looked and were! And so here we have a partial parallel to the present state of Christendom, in which are seen at work, on one hand, superficial separation; on the other, underlying unity. The splintered peaks may stand, or seem to stand, apart from their sister summits, or may frown at each other across impassable gorges, but they all belong to one geological formation, and in the depths their bases blend indistinguishably into a continuous whole. Their tops are miles apart, but beneath the surface they are one. III. Then, lastly, WE MAY FIND HERE A HINT AS TO THE PRESSING NEED FOR SUCH A REALISATION OF UNITY. “The Church that is in Babylon” was in a very uncongential place. Thank God, no Babylon is so Babylonish but that a Church of God may be found planted in it. No circumstances are so unfavourable to the creation and development of the religious life but that the religious life may grow there. An orchid will find footing upon a bit of stick, because it draws nourishment from the atmosphere; and they who are fed by the influx of the Divine Spirit may be planted

anywhere, and yet flourish in the courts of our God. But it also gives a hint as to the obligation springing from the circumstances in which Christian people are set, to cultivate the sense of belonging to a great brotherhood. Howsoever solitary, and surrounded by uncongenial associations any Christian man may be, he may feel that he is not alone, not only because his Master is with him, but because there are many others whose hearts throb with the same love, whose lives are surrounded by the same difficulties. If thus you and I, Christian men, are pressed upon on all sides by such worldly associations, the more need that we should let our hearts go out to the innumerable multitude of our fellows, companions in the tribulation and patience and kingdom of Jesus Christ. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Marcus my son.—*Marcus my son*:—I. THE WORKING OF CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY. Mark was a full-blooded Jew when he began his career. "John, whose surname was Mark," like a great many other Jews at that time, bore a double name, one Jewish, "John," and one Gentile, "Marcus." But as time goes on we do not hear anything more about "John," nor even about "John Mark," which are the two forms of his name when he is first introduced to us in the Acts of the Apostles, but he finally appears to have cast aside his Hebrew, and to have been only known by his Roman name. And that change of appellation coincides with the fact that so many of the allusions which we have to him represent him as sending messages of Christian greeting across the sea to his Gentile brethren. And it further coincides with the fact that his gospel is obviously intended for the use of Gentile Christians, and, according to an old and reliable tradition, was written in Rome for Roman Christians. All of which facts just indicate two things, that the more a man has real operative love to Jesus Christ in his heart the more he will rise above all limitations of his interests, his sympathy, and his efforts, and the more surely will let himself out, as far as he can, in affection towards and toils for all men. This change of name, though it is a mere trifle, and may have been adopted as a matter of convenience, may also be taken as reminding us of a very important truth, and that is, that if we wish to help people, the first condition is that we go down and stand on their level, and make ourselves one with them, as far as we can. And so Mark may have said, "I have put away the name that parts me from these Gentiles, for whom I desire to work, and whom I love; and I take the name that binds me to them." You must become like the people that you want to help. II. The history of Mark suggests the POSSIBILITY OF OVERCOMING EARLY FAULTS. We do not know why he refused to bear the burden of the work that he had so cheerily begun. When he started he did not bargain for going into unknown lands, in which there were many toils to be encountered. He was willing to go where he knew the ground. At all events, whatever his reason, his return was a fault, or Paul would not have been so hard upon him as he was. And the best way to treat him was as the apostle did; and to say to Barnabas' indulgent proposal, "No! he would not do the work before, and now he shall not do it." That is often God's way with us. It brings us to our senses, as it brought Mark to his. We do not know how long it took to cure Mark of his early fault, but he was thoroughly cured. The man that was afraid of dangers and hypothetical risks in Asia Minor became brave enough to stand by the apostle when he was a prisoner, and was not ashamed of his chain. And afterwards, so much had he won his way into the apostle's confidence, and made himself needful for him by his services, that the lonely prisoner, with the gibbet or headsman's sword in prospect, feels that he would like to have Mark with him once more, and bids Timothy bring him with himself, for "he is profitable to me for the ministry." Let no man set limits to the possibilities of his own restoration, and of his curing faults which are most deeply rooted within himself. Hope and effort should be boundless. So we may win victories on the very soil where formerly we were shamefully put to the rout. III. Take another lesson—THE GREATNESS OF "LITTLE" SERVICE. We do not hear that this John Mark ever tried to do any work in the way of preaching the gospel. His business was a very much humbler one. He had to attend to Paul's comfort. That needed some self-suppression. It would have been so natural for Mark to have said, "Paul sends Timothy to be bishop in Crete, and Titus to look after other churches; Epaphroditus is an official here, and Apollos is a great preacher there. And here am I, grinding away at the secularities yet. I think I'll 'strike,' and try and get more conspicuous work." Or, he might perhaps deceive himself and say, "more directly religious work," like a great many of us that often mask a very carnal desire for prominence under a very saintly guise of desire to do spiritual service. That was self-suppression. But it was a clear recognition of what we all ought to

have very clearly before us, and that is, that all sorts of work which contribute to one end are one sort of work; and that at bottom the man that carried Paul's books and parchments, and saw that he was not left without clothes, though he was so negligent of cloaks and other necessaries, was just as much helping on the cause of Christ as the apostle when he preached. IV. Take as the last lesson THE ENLARGED SPHERE THAT FOLLOWS FAITHFULNESS IN SMALL MATTERS. What a singular change! The man that began with being a servant of Paul and of Barnabas ends by being the evangelist, and it is to him, under Peter's direction, that we owe what is possibly the oldest, and, at all events in some aspects, an entirely unique, narrative of our Lord's life. For quite certainly, in God's providence, the tools do come to the hand that can wield them, and the best reward that we can get for doing well our little work is to have larger work to do. The little tapers are tempted, if I may use so incongruous a figure, to wish themselves set up on loftier stands. Shine your brightest in your corner, and you will be "exalted" in due time. (*Ibid.*)

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

II. PETER.

THE
BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

OR

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

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

SECOND PETER



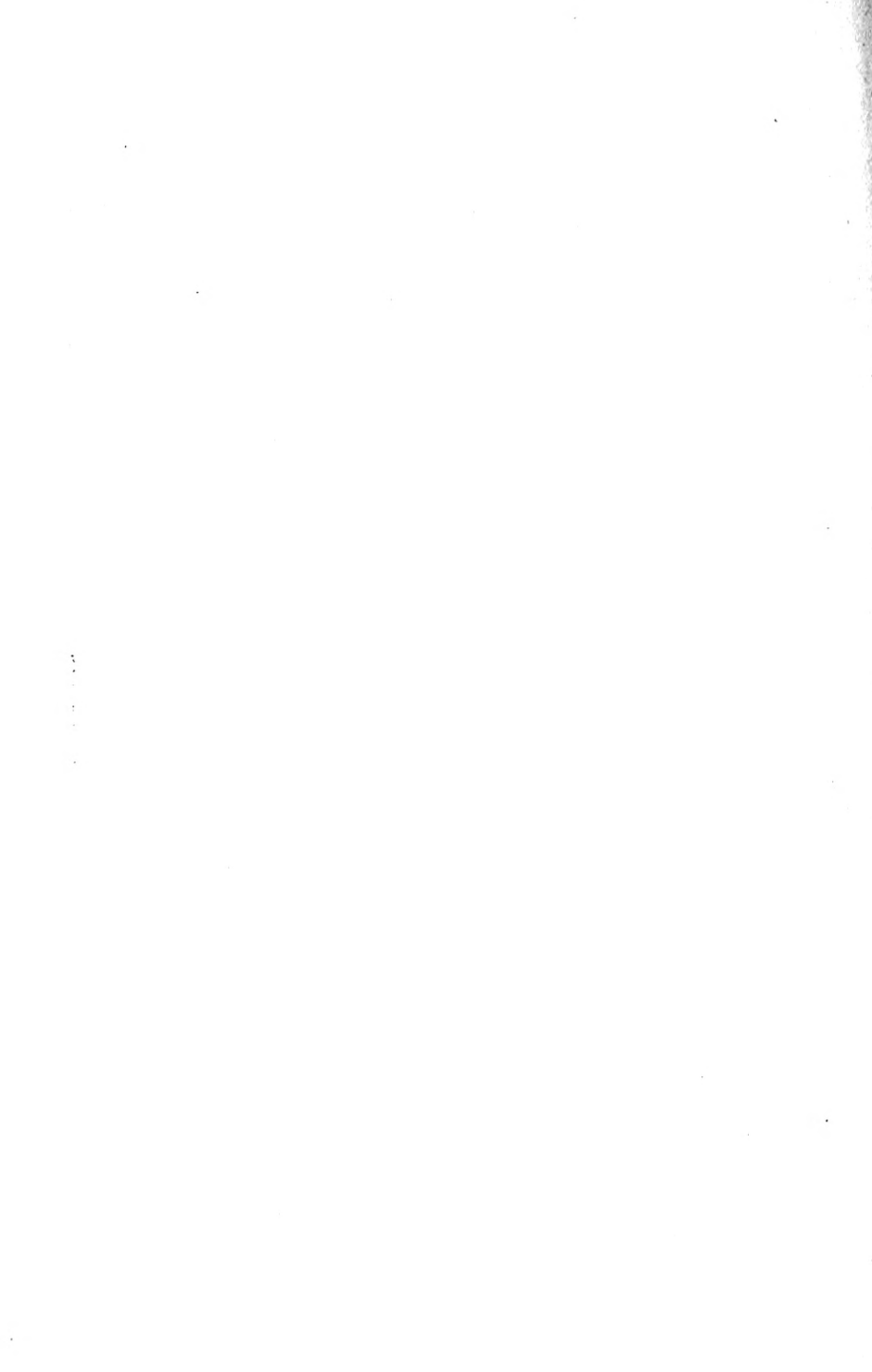
NEW YORK

CHICAGO

TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

Publishers of Evangelical Literature



INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE.—The external evidence in favour of the First Epistle of Peter is as strong as for any other writing in the New Testament. We cannot make the same remark in reference to the Second Epistle; the testimonies in its favour among the writings of the Fathers are rare, of a comparatively late date, and indefinite. The allusions in the works of the Apostolic Fathers, Clemens Romanus and Hermas, adduced by Lardner and Kirchofer, are too vague and slight to be founded on. Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) observes: "We understand that the saying, 'The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,' belongs to this matter" (Dial. cum Tryph. 81), which is possibly a quotation from 2 Pet. iii. 8, though it may also be taken from Psalm xc. 4. The same reference is made by Irenaeus (A.D. 178, Adv. Haer., v. 23, 2). Eusebius informs us that Clemens Alexandrinus (A.D. 180) in the work called Hypotyposis, has given us abridged accounts of all the canonical Scriptures, not even omitting those that are disputed, namely, the Book of Jude and the other catholic Epistles (H. E., vi. 14); and from this it has been inferred that the Second Epistle of Peter was known to Clemens, although there is no reference to that Epistle in his extant works. There appear to be allusions to this Epistle in the writings of Hippolytus (A.D. 200). "They, abashed and constrained by the truth, have confessed their errors for a short period, but after a little time wallow again in the same mire" (2 Pet. ii. 22; Adv. Haer., 22). "You shall never have to breast the boiling flood of hell's eternal lake of fire, and the eye ever fixed in menacing glare of wicked angels chained in Tartarus as punishment of their sins" (2 Pet. ii. 4; Adv. Haer., x. 30). "For the prophets did not speak by their own power, nor did they preach what they themselves wished; but in the first place they were truly enlightened by the Word, then they were taught by visions in respect to future events, and, being thus influenced, they uttered things which God had revealed to them alone" (De Anti-christo, chap. ii.). Origen (A.D. 250), in passages found in the Latin translation of his works by Rufinus, several times expressly ascribes this Epistle to Peter. "And Peter says, Ye are made partakers of the Divine nature." "And as the Scripture says in a certain place, the dumb ass with man's voice forbids the madness of the prophet." "Peter speaks aloud through the two trumpets of the prophet" (Opp. tom., ii. pp. 200, 231, 412). These testimonies are, however, to be taken with reservation, as it is well known that Rufinus made additions to the works of Origen. Eusebius gives the following quotation from Origen: "Peter, upon whom the Church of Christ is built, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, has left behind one Epistle undisputed, perhaps a second, but on this there is some doubt" (H. E., vi. 25); which shows that Origen was acquainted with the Second Epistle of Peter, but doubted its genuineness; nor is the Epistle quoted in any of his extant authentic works. Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea (A.D. 250), in his Epistle to Cyprian, writes: "Abusing also the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, as if they had delivered this doctrine; though they in their Epistles, have anathematised heretics, and admonished us to avoid them" (cf. Cyprian, 75). By the term Epistles Firmilian may allude to only one epistle of Peter; but what he here says can only refer to the Second Epistle, for in this Epistle alone is there any reference to heretics. The Epistle is not quoted nor referred to in the writings of Cyprian and Tertullian. Eusebius does not appear to have recognised its genuineness. He

writes: "As to the writings of Peter, one of his Epistles, called the First, is acknowledged as genuine. But that which is called the Second, we have not indeed understood to be embodied with the Sacred Books; yet as it appeared useful to many, it was studiously read with the other sacred Scriptures" (H. E., iii. 3). And in another place he classes it among the disputed writings: "Among the disputed books, although they are well known and approved by many, is reported that called the Epistle of James and Jude, also the Second Epistle of Peter and the Second and Third Epistles of John" (H. E., iii. 25). The Epistle is not found in the Muratorian canon, and is omitted in the Peshito and, most probably, in the Old Latin. After the time of Eusebius, it was received into the canon, and is attested by the succeeding Fathers. The internal evidence in favour of the Epistle is stronger than the external. It is such an Epistle as we would suppose Peter would have written. The earnestness of its tone, the repeated exhortations to holiness, the solemn warnings against apostasy, and the references to the last things, all remind us of that apostle, who knew by experience the danger of hypocrisy and the necessity of perseverance, and whose glance was always towards the future. There are also references to incidents in the life of Peter; as, for example, his presence at the Transfiguration and our Lord's notification of his martyrdom. There is also a similarity in style and sentiment to the First Epistle. In both Epistles the word *ἀναστροφή*, *conversation*, is frequently employed. The word *ἀρετή*, *virtue*, which is elsewhere restricted to man, is in both Epistles applied in an unusual manner to God; as in 1 Pet. ii. 9, "That ye should show forth the virtues of Him who hath called you"; and in 2 Pet. i. 3, according to the correct reading, "Through the knowledge of Him who has called us through His glory and virtue." The word *ἀπόθεσις*, not elsewhere used in the New Testament, is found in 2 Pet. i. 14, of the putting off the earthly tabernacle, and in 1 Pet. iii. 21, of the putting off the sins of the flesh. So the phrase "spots and blemishes" is found in both Epistles (1 Pet. i. 19; 2 Pet. ii. 13). The adjective *ἴδιος* is employed in both in the sense of the possessive pronoun. So also the sentiments in both Epistles are similar. Both dwell upon the inspiration of the prophets; both mention the Deluge and the small number who were saved; in both the eschatological element is prominent; in both there are similar references to the coming of Christ; and in both the last things are dwelt upon. It has also been observed that there are undesigned coincidences between this Epistle and the speeches of Peter as recorded in the Acts. These coincidences, however, are neither numerous nor important. In both there is reference to rioting and drunkenness in the daytime (Acts ii. 15; 2 Pet. ii. 13). In both the rare word, *εὐσέβεια* for holiness is employed (Acts iii. 12; 2 Pet. i. 7). In both the unusual word *ἁεσπότης*, instead of *κύριος*, is used for Lord (Acts iv. 24; 2 Peter ii. 1). In both the enemies of the faith are accused of denying Christ; in the Acts, of denying the Holy One and the Just (Acts iii. 14); and in the Epistle of denying the Lord that bought them (2 Pet. ii. 1). Another internal argument in favour of this Epistle is its marked superiority to the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. In this Epistle there is nothing at variance with the spirit or dignity of the sacred Scriptures; there is a marked inspiration and loftiness in its sentiments; an absence of everything that is frivolous or trivial. "Who," observes Dean Farrar, "will venture to assert that any Apostolic Father—that Clement of Rome, or Ignatius, or Polycarp, or Hermas, or Justin Martyr—could have written so much as twenty consecutive verses so eloquent and so powerful as those of the Second Epistle of Peter? No known member of the Church in that age could have been the writer; not even the author of the Epistle to Diognetus. Would a writer so much more powerful than any of these have remained uninfluential and unknown? Would one who could wield his pen with so inspired a power have failed to write a line in his own name, and for the immediate benefit of his own contemporaries?" In consequence chiefly of the weakness of the external evidence, no writing of the New Testament has been more disputed by theologians of all phases of opinion. Even Calvin, in a remarkable passage, expresses his doubts of its genuineness. "What Jerome writes," he observes, "influences me that some, induced by a difference in the style, did not think that Peter was the author. For though some affinity may be traced, yet I confess that there is that manifest difference which distinguishes different writers. There are also other probable conjectures by which we may conclude that it was written by another rafter than by Peter. At the same time, all agree that it contains nothing unworthy of Peter, as it shows everywhere the power and dignity of the apostolic

spirit. If it be received as canonical we must allow Peter to be the author, since it has his name inscribed, and he also testifies that he lived with Christ; and it would have been a fiction unworthy of a minister of Christ to have personated another individual. I therefore conclude, if the Epistle be regarded as worthy of credit, it must have proceeded from Peter; not that he himself wrote it, but that some one of his disciples set forth in writing, by his command, those things which the necessity of the times required." Luther also appears to have doubted the authorship of Peter, and so also did Erasmus. 1. The chief internal objection brought against this Epistle is its difference in style and sentiment from the First Epistle. This was first dwelt upon by Jerome, who solved the difficulty by supposing that a different interpreter was employed in translating the Second Epistle; that whereas Mark or Silvanus was Peter's interpreter when he wrote the First Epistle, he employed another person when he wrote the Second. The chief points of dissimilarity in sentiment insisted upon are the following: "The keynote of the First Epistle is hope, whilst the keynote of the Second is knowledge. In the First Epistle, our Lord's name is used without any appellation; in the Second, the word Saviour or Lord or both are added. In the First Epistle there are frequent references to the Old Testament; in the Second these references are remarkably rare. Whilst in both Epistles the coming of Christ is alluded to, in the First it is mentioned as a *revelation* (*ἀποκάλυψις*), in the Second as a *presence* (*παρουσία*). In the First Epistle the sufferings of Christ are dwelt upon; in the Second they are not mentioned." This objection does not seem at all formidable. Whatever force is in it is counterbalanced by the points of similarity of style and sentiment which are undoubtedly to be found in both Epistles. Besides, these writings are too short to judge from them of the style of the author; more especially as Peter has no such definite and marked style as the Apostles Paul and James. Most of the linguistic peculiarities are to be found in the second chapter, which bears such a remarkable resemblance to the Epistle of Jude. And as to the difference of sentiment in the Epistles, this may in a great measure be accounted for by the different designs of the Epistles, the one being chiefly hortative and the other polemical. 2. Mayerhoff objects to the Epistle because the author shows a manifest solicitude to make himself known as Peter. He is continually bringing forward himself as if he wished to impress upon his readers that it was Peter who wrote this Epistle. Thus in the address he calls himself "Simon Peter." He reminds his readers that the Lord Jesus Christ had revealed to him that he must soon put off his earthly tabernacle. He alludes to his presence with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, when he heard the voice from the excellent glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He identifies himself with the author of the First Epistle. And he speaks of Paul as his beloved brother, thus claiming an equality with him. But this objection is as frivolous as it is weak. These references may as well be adduced as arguments in favour of the authorship of Peter, being reminiscences of what happened to him. Besides, if we attend to the context, we shall find that there are special reasons for these references, that they are natural and not designedly and artificially introduced. 3. The manner in which he mentions the Epistles of Paul is also regarded as evidence of spuriousness. Mention is made of all Paul's Epistles, as if a collection of them had already been formed; and they are put on the same footing with the other scriptures, that is the Jewish scriptures, as if they were possessed of equal authority: both of which particulars did not occur until after Peter's death. But there is no reason to suppose that the phrase "all his Epistles" denotes a collection of Paul's Epistles, but merely those which were known to the readers of Peter's Epistle; and we know that several of Paul's Epistles were written to the churches addressed by Peter. It certainly appears that Peter places Paul's Epistles in the same rank with the Jewish Scriptures; but there is nothing objectionable in this, as Paul himself makes the same assertion, and requires that his Epistles be received as a revelation from the Lord. 4. It is further objected that the expression "Holy Mount" betrays a post-apostolic age, when a degree of sacredness was imparted to the scenes of gospel history. The phrase "Holy Mount" in Peter's time could only be applied to Mount Zion. But Peter uses the epithet holy merely because such a wonderful incident as the Transfiguration occurred upon that mount: it was holy because on it the Lord displayed His glory. Nor does it appear that afterward any particular mountain was ever known by the appellation the "Holy Mount," as being the Mount of Transfiguration. 5. Another objection strongly insisted on is the use which is made in this Epistle of the Epistle of Jude. The resemblance between

these two canonical Epistles is certainly remarkable, and is too strong to be regarded as accidental. Without determining which Epistle was written first, taking the case that Jude's Epistle was the earlier, though remarkable, it does not appear to us to be opposed to Peter's authorship that he should incorporate into his Epistle what was already written by another sacred writer. We know that Paul sometimes quotes even from heathen writers. It is highly probable that Peter in his First Epistle, which is undoubtedly genuine, quotes from the Epistle of James; and Jude himself quotes from the Apocryphal book of Enoch; and therefore the use of the Epistle of Jude, though surprising, is not to be regarded as a proof of spuriousness. 6. An entirely new objection has recently been brought forward by Dr. Abbott, namely, that the author of the Second Epistle of Peter was acquainted with the writings of Josephus, and that consequently he could not be the Apostle Peter. Dr. Abbott grounds his argument chiefly on a comparison between the Epistle and two passages from the works of Josephus—the one the preface to the Antiquities, and the other the account of the last words of Moses—and he endeavours to prove from the similarity of words and phrases that the author of the Epistle was acquainted with these passages. Such a comparison of words and phrases as is here made, however plausible, fails to carry conviction. It is highly improbable that a Christian writer of the second century, even although he were acquainted with the writings of Josephus, should, in a short Epistle, slavishly imitate particular passages contained in them; and it is still more improbable that Josephus should take the trouble of studying a short Epistle of the Christians, in whose religion he did not believe, with a view to the composition of his history—an Epistle also which had nothing to do with the subject he had undertaken to write upon. Taking a conjunct view of the whole evidence, we admit that the external evidence is weak; there is no positive testimony in favour of the Epistle until the middle of the third century. We consider that the internal evidence is stronger, especially the undoubted similarity in style and sentiment to the First Epistle, even in the midst of differences—a similarity which cannot possibly be accounted for from a design of the author to palm off his writing as the Epistle of Peter; and the marked superiority which there is in this Epistle over the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Nor do we think the internal objections brought against the Epistle of much weight, with the possible exception of that arising from the use made of the Epistle of Jude. On the whole, the balance of evidence is in favour of the authenticity of the Epistle. Besides, it is to be remembered that the Fathers of the fourth century, when the canon was fixed, had much more evidence than we possess; and that it was only as the result of careful examination that any writing was admitted as part of the sacred Scriptures. (*P. J. Gloag, D.D.*)

CONTENTS OF THE EPISTLE.—The Epistle is both prohibitory and hortative, and these two elements pervade it throughout; the first part is an exhortation to make progress in the Divine life; the second part is a warning against heretical teachers. The apostle, having saluted his readers, prays that grace and peace may abound to them through the knowledge of Christ. They must remember their high and holy calling: they were partakers of the Divine nature; they were delivered from the corruptions of the world. They must then make progress in the Divine life; grace must be developed within them; they must add to their faith all the other virtues of the Christian character; and thus, by the exercise of faith and holiness of life, they are to make their calling and election sure. He was now aged, and his death, revealed by his Lord, was close at hand; but he was anxious, before his decease, earnestly to exhort them to persevere in the faith; they had not followed cunningly devised fables; he himself heard Christ proclaimed by the audible voice from heaven to be the beloved Son of God, and they had the predictions of the prophets on which to rely (chap. i.). From exhortation he turns to warning. False teachers had arisen among them, who had introduced damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them, bringing destruction on themselves and their followers. Their destruction was certain; the examples of the fallen angels, of the world before the Flood, and of Sodom and Gomorrah, were all warnings and proofs that misery followed on the footsteps of crime. They were spots and blemishes in their feasts, a disgrace to their community, the seducers of the unstable, the servants of corruption, the heirs of wrath. If his readers suffered themselves to be seduced by them, if they were entangled in their errors and overcome, they were in a far more perilous condition than those who had never heard of Christianity, and had never been rescued from the pollutions of the world (chap. ii.). These scoffers,

who called in question the coming of the Lord, were not unforeseen : their coming had been foretold by the holy prophets and by the apostles of Christ. The advent of Christ might, according to their view, appear to be delayed ; but they must remember that time in the eyes of God was very different from time in the eyes of man : one day was with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord was not in reality slack concerning the fulfilment of the promise of His coming. They must exercise patience and persevere in a course of holy living. The day shall assuredly come when this present world and all that it contains shall be burnt up ; but new heavens and a new earth shall spring from the ashes of the old. They must prepare for this solemn day ; the delay is an evidence of God's long-suffering, as Paul had written to them. The apostle then concludes the Epistle with a brief summary of its object ; that they should avoid the errors of the wicked, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*)

II. PETER.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1, 2. Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.—*The author and his readers*.—I. THE AUTHOR DESCRIBES HIMSELF BY—1. His name. (1) "Simon." Commonly a happy name in the Scriptures. Not that grace is tied to names; for there was a Simon Magus, a sorcerer. Whatsoever thy name be, let thy heart be Simon's. It is said to signify hearing or obeying; so do thou confess, profess, love thy Master. (2) "Peter" was his surname, given him by Christ Himself. 2. His condition. "A servant." (1) This extols the dignity of Christ that so famous an apostle creeps to Him on the knees of lowliness. Many arrogant great dignity to themselves, because so famous men are their servants. Ahasuerus might vaunt of his viceroys; but let all sceptres be laid down at the foot of Him who is crowned with unspeakable glory for ever. (2) This is a clear demonstration of St. Peter's humility. The godly are no further ambitious than to belong to Christ. 3. His office. "An apostle." (1) He joins together service and apostleship. (a) To distinguish and exemplify his calling (Heb. v. 4). (b) To show that apostleship was a matter of service; as an honour, so a burden (Matt. ix. 38). (2) It was the custom of the apostles to magnify their office (Rom. xi. 13), to weaken the credit of false intruders (1 Cor. ix. 1). 4. His Master. "Of Jesus Christ." (1) They were apostles of Christ, for none ever called themselves apostles of God the Father, because Christ Himself only was the Father's Apostle. (2) Christ only hath authority to make apostles. He chose them to the work, who could enable them to the work. (3) They came not in their own name, but in Christ's (2 Cor. v. 20; xi. 2).

II. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS EPISTLE IS WRITTEN. 1. The generality of the person. "To them," all them. This is called a "general epistle"—(1) Not only because the doctrine contained in it is orthodox and catholic. (2) Nor because the use of it is general. (3) But because it was directed to all the saints and worshippers of Jesus Christ, howsoever, wheresoever dispersed, or whensoever despaired. For with God is no respect of persons. 2. The qualification of this generality. "That hath faith." 3. The excellency of this qualification. "Precious faith." As Athens was called Greece of Greece, so faith may be called the grace of grace. (*T. Adams.*) **Them that have obtained like precious faith.**—*Apostolic faith*.—Let us first of all glance at the FAMILY THAT IS HERE ADDRESSED. The letter is directed plainly, and to deal honestly with Scripture, and to deal honestly with souls, we must do as an honest postman would do. When he takes his budget of letters from the office, he does not take pains to tear off the envelopes and directions, and scatter them in the streets for any one to pick up. This should be the case with regard to this Epistle. It is not addressed to us individually, but it is "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." In order to ascertain if the letter belongs to me, I must ascertain if I have like precious faith with the author. The fraternity to whom all this Epistle is addressed, they have obtained like precious faith—apostolic faith. How is this? Did they buy it? Did they earn it? Did they trace it out by dint of study? Verily not. Those who really have it, have it inspired in their souls, implanted in their experience as a living grace, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. And this leads me to observe that this precious faith obtains and maintains a holy intimacy with God in all the persons and perfections of the Trinity. There is another point I must press upon you, and that is the basing of faith upon truth, as its solid bottom. If the faith of God's elect has taken possession of your heart, I know that the testimony of Scripture with regard to all the doctrines of grace, will be received in your creed. II. ASCERTAIN THE EVIDENCE OF OUR AFFINITY. "Like faith in us." "Like!" How am I to know it is "like"? Now I really think it will be quite fair to ascertain what is like the apostles'; let us appeal to the apostles' preaching, and

to their practice. Now I think their preaching consisted of three things chiefly—affirming, admonishing, and advising. They were accustomed to affirm. Says the apostle—“opening and alleging that Jesus Christ must needs suffer and enter into His glory.” Well, then, they went on to admonish, and they could say to the rejectors of the gospel, “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish.” And this led on to their advising them to continue steadfast to the truth, to flee the very appearance of evil, to gird up the loins of their minds, and so on. Moreover, I should like all such to ask the question, whether their practice is at all like the apostles’. Like precious faith will produce like precious practice. And we find the apostles active in the cause of God. So also we find that the apostles’ practice was very affectionate—that they spoke in love to those who surrounded them. I want more of this affectionate deportment, as well as activity, and zeal, and vigilance in the cause of God. And then, mark, their lives were of an inspiring nature. They did not content themselves with earth—they wanted not its gaudy toys, but they waited for that crown of righteousness which was laid up for them. Well, just go on to mark that the apostles’ faith was immovable and invulnerable. Now, I ask whether this faith that we profess is so much like the apostle’s that it is unmovable. Can you stand a cannonading from the enemy? Can you stand a good volley of reproach and insult from the world? Just pass on to mark that this like precious faith, which thus appeals to the apostles is necessarily fixing its attention upon the name and perfect work of Christ, its object is to glorify Christ. III. THE VERY WONDERFUL APPELLATION GIVEN TO THIS FAITH. It is “like precious faith.” One of the first features of its preciousness is that it takes hold of all the stores of the covenant of grace, and appropriates them as its own. But there is one point in the preciousness of faith which appears to me more precious than all the others, and that is its habitual war. “Why we thought that, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” So we have, and yet there is habitual war. There is old Satan, with his roaring like a lion, seeking whom he may devour. What is to be done with him? “Whom resist steadfast in the faith.” That is war, at any rate. (*J. Irons.*) *Like precious faith.*—I. THE OBJECT OF FAITH as here defined. Revised Version reads more accurately, “faith . . . in the righteousness.” Faith is trust, and the object of trust must be a person. We may say that we trust a promise, but that really means that we trust him who has made it. We may believe a creed, but for trust we must have a living Christ of whom the creed speaks. II. THE WORTH OF THIS FAITH. 1. You remember that in one verse we read about the door of faith. What is the worth of a door? It is only a hole in a wall. The value of the door is that which it admits into. So faith is precious, not because of anything in itself, but because of what it grasps, and of what it admits into your heart. Just as the hand of a dyer that has been working with crimson will be crimson; just as the hand that has been holding fragrant perfumes will be perfumed; so my faith, which is only the hand by which I lay hold upon precious things, will take the tincture and the fragrance of what it grasps. A bit of earthenware piping may be worth a few pence in intrinsic value, but if it is the means by which water is brought into a beleaguered city, which else would perish of thirst, who will estimate its worth? 2. Then again, we may consider the worth of faith as a defence. We read of the shield of faith. I do not become safe by believing myself to be so, however strong may be the imagination or the fancy. All depends upon what it is that I am relying on. Your faith is precious because it knits you to Christ’s immortal stability. 3. And in like manner we may consider the worth of faith as a purifier. But how does faith purify? Is there anything in my confidence which will make me pure? No! there is no moral efficacy in the mere act of trust. All depends upon what it is that you are trusting to. You will get like what you are trusting to. The only faith that purifies is faith in Him that is pure. III. THE SUBSTANTIAL IDENTITY AND EQUAL PRECIOUSNESS OF FAITH IN ALL VARIETIES OF FORM AND DEGREE. The deepest thing in every man that has it is his faith in Jesus Christ, and likeness in that brings him near all others who have it, however unlike on the surface their characteristics may be. All manner of differences in opinion, in politics, in culture, in race which may separate men from men, are like the cracks upon the surface of a bit of rock, which are an inch deep, while the solid mass goes down a thousand feet. But I am not going to pretend that the man whose Christ did not die for him, and whose Christ gives him no righteousness in which he can stand before God, possesses “like precious faith with us.” To say that he does is to worship charity at the expense of truth. The poor man’s half sovereign which stands between him and want is made of the same gold as

Rothschild's millions. And so the smallest and the feeblest faith is one in character, and one in intrinsic value with the loftiest and superbest. Only as is the measure of the man's faith, so will be the measure of his possession of the precious things. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Of faith*.—I. AS TO ITS NATURE. It doth involve knowledge, knowledge of most worthy and important truths, knowledge peculiar and not otherwise attainable, knowledge in way of great evidence and assurance. 1. Truth is the natural food of our soul. What light is without, that is truth within, shining on our inward world, illustrating, quickening, and comforting, exciting all our faculties to action, and guiding them in it. Faith, therefore, as implying knowledge is valuable. 2. But it is much more so in regard to the quality of its objects, which are the most worthy that can be, and most useful for us to know, the knowledge whereof doth indeed advance our soul into a better state, doth raise us to a nearer resemblance with God. Thereby we understand the nature or the principal attributes of God. By it we are fully acquainted with the will and intentions of God, relating both to our duty and our recompense. By it we are informed concerning ourselves. It enableth us rightly to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong. It prescribeth us an exact rule of life. It proposeth the most valid inducements to virtue. It discovereth the special aids dispensed to us for the support of our weakness against all temptations. The knowledge of these things is plainly the top of all knowledge whereof we are capable; not consisting in barren notion, not gratifying idle curiosity, not serving trivial purposes, but really bettering our souls. 3. Faith also hath this excellent advantage that it endueth us with such knowledge in a very clear and sure way, it not being grounded on any slippery deduction of reason, nor on slender conjectures of fancy, nor on musty traditions or popular rumours; but on the infallible testimony of God conveyed unto us by powerful evidence. II. IT HATH ALSO DIVERS INGREDIENTS, OR INSEPARABLE ADJUNCTS, WHICH IT DOTH IMPLY, RENDERING IT COMMENDABLE AND ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. As—1. Faith implieth a good use of reason. This is that which commendeth any virtue, that a man acting after it doth act wisely, in conformity to the frame and design of his nature. 2. Faith implieth a compliance with the providence and grace of God. 3. Faith doth imply good opinion of God and good actions toward Him. III. THUS IS FAITH PRECIOUS, CONSIDERING ITS NATURE, AND THOSE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OR INSEPARABLE ADJUNCTS WHICH IT DOTH INCLUDE OR IMPLY. It will also appear to be so if we consider its rise and those good dispositions which concur in its production. 1. To the engendering of faith there is required a mind sober, composed, and wakeful; ready to observe what befalleth, apt to embrace what is offered, conducive to our good; a mind not so drowned in worldly care, sensual enjoyment, or impertinent sport as to neglect the concerns of our eternal state. 2. Faith doth require much diligence and industry. 3. Faith must needs proceed from sincerity and soundness of judgment. 4. To the begetting faith there must concur humility, or a readiness to entertain sober and moderate opinions of ourselves, together with suitable affections and desires. 5. To faith much fortitude, much resolution must conspire, for he that firmly persuadeth himself to be a Christian doth embark in a most difficult warfare. 6. The noble virtue of patience is likewise accessory to faith. 7. With faith also must concur the virtue of prudence in all its parts and instances; therein is exerted a sagacity, discerning things as they really are in themselves, not as they appear through the masks and disguises of fallacious semblance. 8. In fine, the embracing Christian doctrine doth suppose a mind imbued with all kinds of virtuous disposition in some good degree. IV. ITS EFFECTS are of two sorts: one springing naturally from it, the other following it in way of recompense from Divine bounty. I shall only touch the first sort, because in this its virtue is most seen, as in the other its felicity. Faith is naturally efficacious in producing many rare fruits. Even in common life faith is the compass by which men steer practice, and the mainspring of action, setting all the wheels of our activity on going; every man acteth with serious intention, and with vigour answerable to his persuasion of things, that they are worthy his pains, and attainable by his endeavours. In like manner is faith the square and the source of our spiritual activity, brooking pains and hardships. What but faith, eyeing the prize, will quicken us "to run patiently the race that is set before us"? We are told that faith doth "purify our souls and cleanse our hearts"; that is, our whole interior man, all the faculties of our soul; disposing them to an universal obedience and conformity to God's holy will; and so it is, for faith not only doth clear our understanding from its defects, but it cleanseth our will from its

vicious inclinations, it freeth our affections from disorder and distemper, in tendency toward bad objects, and in pursuit of indifferent things with immoderate violence; it purgeth our conscience or reflexive powers from anxious fear, suspicion, anguish, dejection, despair, and all such passions which corrode and fret the soul; how it effecteth this we might declare; but we cannot better set forth its efficacy than by considering the special influence it plainly hath in the production of each virtue, or on the performance of every duty. "Add to your faith virtue," saith Peter, implying the natural order of things, and that if true faith precede virtue will easily follow. In fine, it is faith alone which can plant in us that which is the root of all contentedness and all patience; a just indifference and unconcernedness about all things here; it alone can untack our minds and affections from this world, rearing our souls from earth and fixing them in heaven. (*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*)

The nature of saving faith:—In the sacred oracles five objects especially are called precious. The redemption of the soul is precious. The blood of Christ is precious. Christ is precious to His ransomed people. The promises of the gospel are great and precious. And in our text faith is called precious. That is accounted precious which is of an excellent quality, especially if it be rare. Gold is preferred to brass, moral virtue to gold; but the faith of God's elect infinitely surpasseth these, and every acquisition below the sun. And in its operations and effects it is most excellent. What tends farther to raise the value of saving faith in our esteem is—1. The manner in which we are made partakers of it, namely, by the gracious and sovereign disposal of heaven. 2. That the weakest real believers share the blessing together with the strongest apostles themselves, greatly magnifieth our idea of its worth. I. First, saving faith consists in THE CREDIT THE HEART YIELDETH TO THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS, "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness." This testimony we have delivered to us in the law and the gospel. 1. In believing the soul is persuaded of the power of Christ to save it, guilty and wretched as it is; for God hath laid help upon One that is mighty to save. 2. In saving faith the soul gives full credit to this great gospel truth, that the mercy of Christ is equal to His power to save. 3. In believing the heart fully confides in the faithfulness of Christ to perform His promise of eternal life to all those who believe on Him. 4. Take notice of the light or evidence by which true believers discern, and yield their assent to the truths of the gospel. Now this is wholly supernatural. The full credit given by the heart to the testimony of the Spirit in His Word, is peculiar to saving faith; there is therefore an essential difference between this and the assent of mere common professors. This difference chiefly consists in three things. (1) The transcendent glories of faith's object are truly discerned by the one; the other has only some dark ineffectual notices of them. The difference is as real and as great as that of seeing an object and hearing of it only. (2) The objects of faith are most agreeable to the faculties and condition of true believers. In them they perceive everything for their entertainment and profit. (3) They differ widely in the effects they have upon the minds of their respective subjects. The impressions the objects of faith make upon the mind of temporary believers, are as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away, leaving their hearts still unchanged. But sincere believers with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.

II. Explain the nature of TRUST IN CHRIST, the second constituent of saving faith. This act of faith is called a receiving Christ, embracing Him, accepting Him, coming to Him, leaning upon Him, and resting on Him for salvation. 1. It implies a hearty approbation of the scheme of redemption in the blood of Christ, as originating from, and infinitely worthy of, the wisdom, mercy, and love of God. 2. Trust in Christ more specifically consists in the hearty acquiescence of the soul in Him for salvation. Its leading exercise is a rest in His propitiation for pardon, and then, being accepted in the Beloved for grace, for glory, and for every mercy. He is all in all to believers. (1) The gospel offers Christ fully in all His offices, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. And faith corresponding fully with the offer, accepteth Him as the only remedy for ignorance, guilt, slavery, and every misery to which sin hath subjected a fallen world. (2) The gospel offers Christ in due order—Christ Himself first, and then His gifts. It inviteth us to come to Him, and promiseth rest upon our coming. (3) The gospel offers Christ and all the blessings of His purchase freely, without money and without price; and faith disclaiming all goodness wrought in or done by the creature, as a ground of trust. Lessons: 1. What ground of lamentation is it, and how surprising that the far greatest part of those who profess the name of Christ, and the Scriptures to

be His Word, have, notwithstanding, so little of Him in their religion, and are such strangers to the doctrine of faith in His blood for salvation. 2. From what hath been said, many professors of religion might be easily convinced, did they yield to the evidence of it, that they have not the true faith of the gospel, but are still held in the chains of unbelief and condemnation! For he that believeth not is condemned already. 3. I most earnestly beseech unbelievers of every description to acknowledge your character fully and freely. Admit the conviction of your guilt and danger, fall at the feet of mercy, and beg for the life of your souls. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The value of faith*:—1. Faith, considered intellectually, is valuable. 2. The value of faith appears in its power, of realising in our minds the existence and presence of God. 3. Faith appears pre-eminently precious when we remember that by it we obtain a part in the great work of redemption which our Lord Jesus Christ has effected. 4. The preciousness of faith appears in its beneficial influence on character. 5. The value of faith is felt in the power it has to sustain and comfort the mind when no other help is available. (*The Congregational Pulpit.*) *Faith and life*:—Faith and life! these are vital points to a Christian. They possess so intimate a connection with each other that they are by no means to be severed. You shall never find true faith unattended by true godliness; on the other hand, you shall never discover a truly holy life which has not for its root a living faith upon the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Woe unto those who seek after the one without the other! I. OBSERVE WHAT HE SAYS CONCERNING THE CHARACTER AND THE ORIGIN OF FAITH, AND THEN CONCERNING THE CHARACTER AND ORIGIN OF SPIRITUAL LIFE. Let us begin where Peter begins, with the faith. You have here a description of true saving faith. 1. First, you have a description of its source. He says, "To them that have obtained like precious faith." It is not a matter which springs up by a process of education, or by the example and excellent instruction of our parents; it is a thing which has to be obtained. Now, that which is obtained by us must be given to us; and well are we taught in Scripture that "faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." 2. Peter having described the origin of this faith, proceeds to describe its object. The word "through" in our translation might, quite as correctly, have been rendered "in"—"faith in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." True faith, then, is a faith in Jesus Christ, but it is a faith in Jesus Christ as Divine. Who but a God could bear the weight of sin? Who but a God shall be the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"? Remark, that the apostle has put in another word beside "God," and that is, "of God and our Saviour." As if the glory of the Godhead might be too bright for us, he has tempered it by gentler words—"our Saviour." Now, to trust Jesus Christ as Divine, will save no man, unless there be added to this a resting in Him as the great propitiatory sacrifice. A Saviour is He to us when He delivers us from the curse, punishment, guilt, and power of sin. 3. Notice the word "righteousness." It is a faith in the righteousness of our God and our Saviour. I have not received Jesus Christ at all, but I am an adversary to Him, unless I have received Him as Jehovah Tsidkenu—the Lord of our righteousness. There is His perfect life; that life was a life for me; it contains all the virtues, in it there is no spot; it keeps the law of God, and makes it honourable; my faith takes that righteousness of Jesus Christ, and it is cast about me, and I am then so beautifully arrayed, that even the eye of God can see neither spot nor blemish in me. 4. Our apostle has not finished the description, without saying that it is "like precious faith." All faith is the same sort of faith. 5. He tells us too that faith is "precious"; and is it not precious? for it deals with precious things, with precious promises, with precious blood, with a precious redemption, with all the preciousness of the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Well may that be a precious faith which supplies our greatest want, delivers us from our greatest danger, and admits us to the greatest glory. Well may that be called "precious faith," which is the symbol of our election, the evidence of our calling, the root of all our graces, the channel of communion, the weapon of prevalence, the shield of safety, the substance of hope, the evidence of eternity, the guerdon of immortality, and the passport of glory. So much, then, concerning faith. Now we shall turn to notice the life. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God," &c. 1. Here we have, then, the fountain and source of our spiritual life. Just as faith is a boon which is to be obtained, so you will perceive that our spiritual life is a principle which is given. A thing which is given to us, too, by Divine power—"according as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

The selfsame power which is required to create a world and to sustain it is required to make a man a Christian, and unless that power be put forth the spiritual life is not in any one of us. 2. You will perceive that Peter wished to see this Divine life in a healthy and vigorous state, and therefore he prays that grace and peace may be multiplied. Divine power is the foundation of this life; grace is the food it feeds upon, and peace is the element in which it lives most healthily. 3. Observe, again, that in describing this life he speaks of it as one which was conferred upon us by our being called. He says, "We were called unto glory and virtue." I find translators differ here. Many of them think the word should be "By"—"We are called by the glory and virtue of God"—that is, there is a manifestation of all the glorious attributes of God, and of all the efficacious virtue and energy of His power in the calling of every Christian. He says there was in that calling, the Divine glory and virtue; and, doubtless, when you and I shall get to heaven, and see things as they are, we shall discover in our effectual calling of God to grace, a glory as great as in the creation of worlds, and a virtue as in the healing of the sick, when virtue went from the garments of a Saviour. II. In the fourth verse HE DEALS WITH THE PRIVILEGES OF FAITH, AND ALSO WITH THE PRIVILEGES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. Notice the privilege of faith first. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." 1. Note here, then, we have received by precious faith the promise and pardon. 2. Then comes the righteousness of Christ: you are not only pardoned, that is, washed and made clean, but you are robed in garments such as no man could ever weave. The law was great—this righteousness is as great as the law. The law asked a precious revenue from man, more than humanity could pay—the righteousness of Christ has paid it all. Is it not great and precious? 3. Then next comes reconciliation. You were strangers, but you are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Is not this great and precious? 4. Then comes your adoption. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," &c. "And if children, then heirs," &c. Oh, how glorious is this great and precious promise of adoption! 5. Then we have the promise of Providence: "All things work together for good to them that love God," &c. 6. Then you have the promise too, that you shall never taste of death but shall only sleep in Jesus. "Write, Blessed are the dead," &c. Nor does the promise cease here—you have the promise of a resurrection. "For the trumpet shall sound," &c. Now, beloved, see how rich faith makes you!—what treasure!—what gold-mines!—what oceans of wealth!—what mountains of sparkling treasures has God conferred upon you by faith! But we must not forget the life. The text says He has given us this promise, "that"—"in order that." What then? What are all these treasures lavished for? Is the end worthy of the means? Surely God never giveth greater store than the thing which He would purchase will be worth. We may suppose, then, the end to be very great when such costly means have been given; and what is the end? Why, "that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature." We are, by grace, made like God. "God is love"; we become love—"He that loveth is born of God." God is truth; we become true, and we love that which is true, and we hate the darkness and the lie. God is good, it is His very name; He makes us good by His grace, so that we become the pure in heart who shall see God. Nay, I will say this, that we become partakers of the Divine nature in even a higher sense than this—in fact, in any sense, anything short of our being absolutely Divine. Do we not become members of the body of the Divine person of Christ? And what sort of union is this—"members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones"? Then the other result which follows from it is this, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Ah, beloved, it were ill that a man who is alive should dwell in corruption. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" said the angel to Magdalene. Should the living dwell among the dead? Should Divine life be found amongst the corruptions of worldly lusts? (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Precious faith*:—Those he describeth here from their faith, which is amplified, first, from the certainty of it, they had obtained it. Secondly, from the quality and worth of it; it was of like price with the faith of the apostles, worthy of the same respect that theirs was. Thirdly, from the means whereby they did obtain it, even the righteousness of Christ, that is, His fidelity and truth in keeping His promises. True justifying faith is of great price and worth, styled here a precious faith. First, from the causes of faith. Secondly, from the effects of faith. Thirdly, from the subject of faith, or persons which have faith; those are not every one, for all men have not faith. Fourthly, from the properties or qualities of faith. It is a saving faith; it is a justifying faith; it is a sanctifying faith. It is the faith of God's

elect. It hath great boldness in it. Fifthly, from the object of faith, which is Jesus Christ; styled, therefore, the faith of Jesus Christ. Sixthly, by comparing faith with other graces, hope, love, humility, and the like, they are precious. Therefore is faith (the mother grace, the lady and mistress on whom the rest wait) of great price and worth. Seventhly, by comparing it with things external which are accounted precious, gold, silver, precious stones, and the like. For instruction, first, that faith is diligently to be inquired and searched for. Secondly, that faith is much to be respected and honoured. Thirdly, that such as have obtained faith, are possessors of a jewel of great price. (*A. Symson.*) *Like precious faith*:—Faith in all God's children is alike precious. Alike, I say, in price, in worth, in nature, in substance, in kind, though not in extent and measure. There is a weak faith and there is a strong faith, and yet both alike precious. Peter no doubt had greater faith than all or most of those had to whom he wrote, yet doth he acknowledge that they had obtained like precious faith. Some attain unto a great faith, which may be compared to a great flame, a great fountain, a strong man's holding or gripping of a thing; some again have but a weak faith, like a sparkle, like a drop of water, like a child holding of a thing; the sparkle is as truly fire as the flame is; the drop as really water as the fountain is; the child's gripping, as the strong man's. Even so faith in the least child of God, though it were but as a "grain of mustard seed," is as truly faith as the faith of the apostles, the faith of the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. So that faith is alike precious to all. (*Ibid.*) *The preciousness of faith*:—

I. FAITH IS PRECIOUS IN ITS OBJECT. II. FAITH IS PRECIOUS IN ITS TESTIMONY. III. FAITH IS PRECIOUS IN ITS BENEFITS. IV. FAITH IS PRECIOUS IN ITS INFLUENCES. Faith produces—1. A living spiritual influence. 2. A comforting influence. 3. An enriching influence. 4. An establishing and conquering influence. 5. A joyous triumphing influence. 6. A meetening influence for eternal glory. (*J. Burns.*) *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.*—*The salutation*:—I. THE MATTER. "Grace and peace." 1. We are here taught the Christian use of salutations; such godly compliments are not to be neglected. 2. We are further taught here to use good forms in saluting. "Grace and peace," gracious, not grievous; holy, not hollow; blessings, not curses. (1) "Grace." By this is generally meant the receiving of the sinner into the covenant of mercy, into God's favour by Christ. (a) Many prophets and holy men of the first times lived in grace, but not under grace. (b) Many in our times live under grace, but not in grace, hearing the gospel and receiving the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. vi. 1). (c) The unbelieving Gentiles were neither in grace nor under grace. (d) They that now believe are both under grace and in it. Under it, as released from the damning power of sin (Rom. viii. 1); in it, as delivered from the reigning power of sin. (2) "Peace." I take it specially for the tranquillity of conscience; that which follows righteousness. (3) I come from considering this sweet pair of graces asunder, to join them again together.

(a) It is not enough to wish grace to the souls of our friends, but also peace; that is, health to their bodies, and other temporal blessings. (b) The apostle puts grace before peace. (c) The apostle wisheth to us the best things, grace and peace. There be two fiends that torment us—sin and a bad conscience. Now grace delivers us from sin, and peace doth quiet the conscience. II. THE MEASURE OF HIS WISH: the increase and multiplication of these blessings. For the goods of this world, the best point of arithmetic is division: it is a better thing to give than to receive, said our Lord. But for heavenly graces, the best point is multiplication. 1. There is no plenary perfection in this life, for we must still be in multiplying our graces. 2. We must seek to multiply our grace and peace. He hath nothing that thinks he hath enough. III. THE MANNER. "Through the knowledge," &c. This means not a mere knowledge, but an acknowledgment, a reflective and doubling knowledge. There is knowledge mental, sacramental, and experimental. The first is by the light of nature; the second by the power of grace; the third by the practice of life and continual proving the favour of God. 1. The means of multiplying grace and peace in our hearts is knowledge of God (John xvii. 3; Psa. ix. 10). 2. There is something in grace and knowledge still wanting, that must be multiplied and increased; for we know but in part. 3. There is no knowing of God with comfort, but through Jesus Christ (Matt. xi. 27). Without Him, he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth his own sorrow (Eccles. i. 18). (*Thos. Adams.*)

Multiplied grace desired for others:—1. Such as have experience of the worth of grace and peace in themselves, desire also that others may be partakers of the same. 2. The preachers of God's Word ought by their labours and endeavours, by their wishes and prayers, to point out unto their people those

things for which they should especially labour and endeavour. 3. The grace and favour of God is the chiefest good thing to be sought after, to be wished and desired above all things in the world next to God's glory. 4. God doth bestow His graces upon His own children, not all at once, but by degrees as He findeth them fit and capable to receive them. This I gather from the word "multiplied." 5. Grace and peace may be obtained, continued, and increased through the knowledge of God and His Son Jesus Christ. That the main reason why so many complain of the want of peace of conscience, and of their not profiting in grace, is their not growing and increasing in saving knowledge. (*A. Symon.*) **Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.**—*Life through the knowledge of Christ*:—The advancement in the Divine life of those in whom it is begun is the aim of this Epistle. Solemn and earnest, yet animating and assuring, are these his farewell words. It is a voice from the borders of eternity—from the threshold of glory—the voice of one who has all but reached the goal. The Christian life is life that springs up and grows through the knowledge of Christ. **I. ASPECTS OF LIFE IN CHRIST.** The delineation of life in Christ by the hand of the apostle here is one of marvellous richness and completeness. First your eye is directed to heavenly birth—the Divine source of the holy life which we enjoy through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. You see it coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God stamped on it. "His Divine power (ver. 3) has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness." If with your own hand you must tend and trim the lamp, that the flame of holiness may burn on and burn even brighter, God ministers the oil of grace wherewith it is fed. But next, if we ask, What are the essential elements and characteristic features of this life from on high? we have a clear answer. Worthy of its Divine source is its noble expression, in those Christian excellences which the apostle in the three following verses (5-7), commands us to acquire. A fair and glorious edifice this which you are called to build. Survey it well from base to cope, if you would know what it is to build yourself up on your most holy faith. In the change which every day is making on you, is there discernible any trace of the gradual advancement towards completion in your daily deeds and words of such a structure as this? **II. LIFE THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.** The dawn of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus is the dawn of spiritual life in your heart—its noon is life eternal in the heavens. That life and that light are really one. Till you know God revealing Himself in Christ, and in Christ reconciling Himself to you, you have not begun the Christian life. To know Jesus is to master the science of salvation—it is to know God. To know Jesus is to receive the life of God into our souls. To see farther into the heart of Jesus, to see in His face the ever-blessed Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—with whom in eternal bonds you are linked, and for whose blissful communion you are prepared—this is to make progress in the life of faith. Each new step of advance in that life is the fruit and the forerunner of new discoveries of Christ. (*W. Wilson, M.A.*) *The knowledge of God in Christ*:—The fires of the sun in the distant heavens are not more necessary to ripen the wheat or to perfect the grace of the wild-flower than are the great revelations of Christ concerning God to create and sustain the characteristic Christian virtues. The religion of Christ regulates, inspires, and sustains the morals of Christ. The morals are part of the religion. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **His Divine power hath given unto us all things.**—*The Divine liberality*:—**I. THE FOUNTAIN.** 1. The hope of the petitioner. The experience of former mercy works a persuasion of future mercy. (1) Let us pray in confidence that God will hear us, because He hath heard us. A noble princess asked a courtier when he would leave begging; he answered, when she left giving. (2) Seeing that God gives more where He hath given much, let us be thankful; for how should God bless us with that we have not if we do not bless Him for that we have? 2. The ability of the Giver. Here is power, yea, Divine power; not only great, but good. For mercy and majesty must meet together in the donation of all things that pertain to life and godliness. The knowledge of this Divine and giving power may comfort the most dejected heart. (1) Concerning the salvation of others and ourselves; how desperate soever we judge their estates, by reason of their continual habit of sinning, yet this Divine power is able to convert them. (2) This comforts us in the midst of all afflictions. We are weak in ourselves, unable to stand under the lightest cross; but there is a Divine power that strengthens us. Though it doth not nullify our sorrows, yet it doth fortify our patience (Col. i. 11). (3) This

comforts us in prayer. (4) This comforts us against all opposition, even those principalities that wrestle against us (1 John iv. 4; Rev. xii. 11). (5) Let this hearten us to cheerful liberality; because, whatever we lack or lose, there is a Divine power able to requite it (2 Cor. ix. 8). 3. The liberty of the action. God does not set, nor let, nor sell, nor lend, but give. (1) How to judge of all we have; as the Lord's gifts, not our own merits (1 Cor. iv. 7, xv. 10). (2) Follow God's example, in being evermore giving good things. 4. The necessity of the receivers. (1) We had nothing; miserable beggars. (2) We deserved nothing. 5. The universality of the gift. "All things that pertain"—(1) To life. (a) Natural. He put a soul to our flesh, gave birth to the child, nourishment after birth; bread when we were hungry, drink when we were thirsty, &c. To the wise man his wisdom, to the strong his might, to the wealthy his riches, &c. (b) Spiritual; whereby we live to Him, and in Him, and whereby He lives in us. (2) To godliness. By His grace we come to godliness, and by godliness to life. II. THE CISTERN. The ever-flowing and over-flowing conduit is Christ, in whom dwells all fulness (Col. i. 19). The more capacious a vessel of faith we bring, the greater measure of faith we shall receive. 1. The water of life, which is an effectual calling to glory and virtue. (1) Who hath called us. Christ alone can call home sinners. (2) The action. There was a time when Christ came personally to call. He went out from His majesty that is invisible, to His mercy that is manifested in His works. Now He calleth at divers times, in divers places, and after divers manners. (a) In all ages of the world, and of men's lives. (b) Some from their ships, others from their shops, &c. (c) After divers manners. First, by the preaching of the Word; and herein He useth two bells to ring us to church, the treble of mercy and the tenor of judgment. Next, in His sacraments. (3) Whom hath He called? "Us"—miserable sinners, that were deaf and could not hear Him, lame and could not meet Him, blind and could not see Him, dead and could not answer Him. (4) To what? "To glory and virtue." (a) In present being. We must understand by "glory" the honour of being Christians; by "virtue" the good life that becometh Christians. (b) Hereafter we shall come to a perfect and plenary possession. The virtue there is a pure white garment without spot, and the glory a golden crown of eternity. 2. The pipe and bucket to draw and derive all to us. "Through the knowledge," &c. One was of opinion that a philosopher excels an ordinary man as much as an ordinary man excels a beast; but every true Christian excels a philosopher as much as a philosopher does a dunce. They scarce knew God in His creatures; we know God in His Christ. There is no pleasure so sweet as knowledge, no knowledge so sweet as that of religion, no knowledge of religion so sweet as that of Christ; for this is eternal life, &c. (John xvii. 3). Let us therefore use the means to get knowledge. (1) Read the Scripture; that is God's will, there is knowledge (John v. 39). (2) Frequent the temple; that is God's house, there is knowledge (Psa. lxxiii. 16, 17). (3) Resort to the Communion; that is God's maundy, there is knowledge (1 Cor. xi. 26). (4) Consult His ministers, for the priest's lips preserve knowledge. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The wonders of Divine grace*.—I. THE GREATNESS OF DIVINE GRACE. "His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." The reference here is to our Saviour Jesus Christ. 1. Grace comes by Divine power. It is no angelic effort or human invention. Its wisdom is Divine omniscience. Its power is Divine omnipotence. Its activity is Divine omnipresence. Its resources infinite. Its love the eternal love of God. 2. It supplies every real need. Life is the state and godliness the activity. In the gift of the Holy Spirit every possible want of the soul is met. II. THE METHOD OF DIVINE GRACE. It comes through the knowledge of Him that calleth us by His own glory and virtue. In knowledge is the spring of life. Our actions are governed by our volitions, our volitions by our emotions, our emotions by our knowledge or belief. Thoughts of Christ's love set our hearts all aglow with love to Him, and that love becomes the spring of a new and holy life. III. THE CONSOLATION OF DIVINE GRACE. "Exceeding great and precious promises." IV. THE GLORY OF DIVINE GRACE. That through these ye may become partakers of the Divine nature. V. THE FOE OF DIVINE GRACE. The corruption that is in the world by lust. There are two great spiritual cities: in the one there is corruption by lust, in the other life by godliness. The Divine new life is in peril in the poisoned air, that life which to the believer is infinitely more precious than all besides. (*The Freeman.*) **All things that pertain unto life and godliness.**—*All things pertaining to life and godliness given unto the saints*:—I. THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE TO LIVE GODLY LIVES. II. THAT FOR THIS LIFE AND GODLINESS, DIVINE POWER BESTOWS EVERYTHING NECESSARY. 1. It is

necessary that He should give us all things, for we have nothing in ourselves. 2. It is very gracious of Him to give all things. We were told that during the first winter campaign in the Crimea, our armies were subject to many sufferings and privations on account of inadequate provisions. This might have been so; it often has been so in times of war, and no human power can prevent it. But it can never be so with the armies of the Cross. Divine power is our guarantee. III. THE TEXT TEACHES US THAT ALL THINGS ARE IN CHRIST, AND OBTAINED THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. IV. THAT AMONG THE "ALL THINGS" WE HAVE IN CHRIST THE PROMISES ARE ESPECIALLY TO BE PRIZED. V. THAT THE POSSESSION OF THESE HEAVENLY GIFTS MAKES US PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE. (H. Quick.) *Christ the complement of our life*:—In the sunshine there is a colour for every plant that seeks its own hue out of sunshine, and in Jesus Christ there is every possible hue which the heart could want. All things that pertain to godliness are in Christ—in other words, Christ is the complement of our nature. When I use that word complement—a mathematical term—I infer that just as a segment of a circle may be a very small thing, and may need the rest of the circumference to be its complement, so, whatever be the segment of your life, Jesus Christ is the complement of all the rest. He just fills out your deficiency and makes you a complete thing. It is no use a man saying he was born deficient in patience, because there is all the patience of Jesus to complete his impatience; no use for a man to complain of weakness or cowardice, when any kind of want comes, which has been permitted to come into his life that he might learn to appropriate the fulness of Christ. So the apostle gloried in his infirmity, because he said—the smaller the segment is the more of a complement I get, and a man may even be proud in a sense of the natural deficiencies of his nature, because he is thrown back upon Jesus Christ, in whom everything is stored to make him a saint. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) **Called us to glory and virtue.**—*A glimpse of glory*:—I. THAT WHEREBY A CHRISTIAN MAY HAVE TITLE, INTEREST, AND COMFORT, IN LIFE AND GLORY. It is not a knowledge of calling in general, but of that particular calling of ourselves to glory and virtue. This doth interest us in the promises of God (Acts ii. 39). No calling, no promise. Nay, further, without this there is no encouragement to holiness (1 Tim. vi. 12). By our calling, which is by an eternal purpose and grace of God in time, changing and renewing us unto holiness of life, we come to know the eternal decree of God, which otherwise were presumption to look unto. For, as a prince's secret mind is made known by edicts and proclamations, which before we durst not search into, neither could know, so when God's secret counsel to execution is manifested, by changing our hearts, by calling us from the world to an holy calling, in a sanctified life: this, then, is no presumption, but duty in us, by our calling, to judge of our election, and so of our calling to glory and virtue. If you look for an example of this, see that of St. Paul (Gal. ii. 20). II. THAT THIS KNOWLEDGE OF OUR PARTICULAR CALLING IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST MOTIVES UNTO ALL GOODNESS. So we see the apostles in their opinions still urge holiness and sanctification from this ground of the assurance of calling and election (Gal. v. 13; Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 12). He that hath no assurance of this calling can have little comfort in performing of holy duties. A fearful, doubting soul lives in much vexation. Use 1: The first is against all such as oppose this doctrine, chiefly the Papists, who are for that, that a man should not inquire after the assurance of his salvation. Use 2: The second is, that every man then must try his title, what calling he hath. Use 3: The third is for instruction. If this be so, let not then any man dare to confound the external calling of men with the internal calling of God. Further, how precious this calling should be unto us, we may see (Luke x. 20). Here is only cause of true joy. By this then be sure to take thy warrant of rejoicing, fetch it out of this calling, that God hath called thee to glory and virtue, which is the next thing to consider of; our calling to glory and virtue; I mean a consideration of these things whereunto we are called, glory and virtue. 1. Glory. Glory is the end of all. The glory of God is the furthest reach and end of all things, and virtue is the way leading unto glory. This glory then we speak of is the reward of goodness, and is ever attended with virtue. For as shame and sin still go together, so do glory and virtue, even by the testimony of the consciences of all good and ill men. The glory then we speak of is an eternal glory. It is not meant, when he says "called to glory," that a Christian is only called unto that, and unto nothing else by the way, but by the way he is called unto virtue, and by occasion unto afflictions. But God's end of calling us is unto glory; as 1 Thess. ii. 12. This glory is only of His mercy, from whence glory floweth unto us; mercy is the ground thereof. What shall I say of

glory (Rev. xix. 9)? Here shall be glory, and surpassing glory, as it is written (1 Cor. i. 9), then to be "called unto fellowship with Christ"; yet more, as Rom. viii. 17, to be heirs; nay, yet a step more, to be co-heirs with Him together in glory. And, finally, what use the faithful make of this glory against all the crosses, afflictions, and tempests of this life, the apostle showeth (2 Cor. iv. 17). What can be said more? If yet you desire to hear more of glory, consider—1. First, for the place. It is heaven, the proper seat and mansion of all glory, where Christ is. So Christ speaketh in the prayer of His (John xvii. 24). So also 1 Thess. iv. 17. 2. The second thing is the company, with whom. No unclean thing shall enter therein (Rev. xxi. 27). 3. Thirdly, the title, what. Not of creatures, or of servants, not so only, but of sons and heirs, and co-heirs with Christ. This, one would think, were sufficient; and yet the Scripture gives us others to the like effect, as that we shall be kings and priests unto God. But as those spies who went to view the land of Canaan, by some of the grapes and fruits which they brought did judge of the fertility of the land, so, I say, if by the Word of God those first-fruits of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, those beginnings of grace, the divers working and operation of the same Spirit, those feelings and joys of the faithful raised thereby, peace of conscience, and all that which shines in the glory of the gospel, we may think of the same. 4. Now we want but the time, how long. What can be said of eternity? Think that we can, this is ever beyond the reach of all our thoughts, only I may say thereof as it is (Psa. lxxxiv. 10). The uses. 1. If this, then, as is proved, be the only calling that we are called unto, unto glory and virtue, let us labour to acknowledge the excellency of the calling of God, and set a due price upon the same. 2. The next is, to value the children of God highly for the graces of God in them, so judging of them. 3. The last is for consolation, a man that hath this calling unto glory. Oh, how marvellously may such an one be joyful in all tribulations, sorrows and crosses! (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*)

Spiritual life: its origin and true development:—I. GOD CALLS US; that is the origin of all spiritual life. It is His good pleasure to bless and to save. In the exercise of this sovereignty God calls all men not to judgment and sorrow, but to glory and virtue. II. HAVING GLANCED AT THE ORIGIN OF ALL SPIRITUAL LIFE, NOW LOOK AT ITS DEVELOPMENT: God calls us to glory and to virtue. 1. God calls us to glory. The most obvious meaning of this word is honour, dignity, or illustrious rank; such is the idea of this word in chap. ii. of this Epistle, and ver. 10, where it is rendered "dignities." The idea of Peter in saying that God has called us to glory appears to be that the spiritual life to which God calls us is one of renown and dignity. God calls us not to dishonour, mortification, and degradation. Religion is the elevation of the whole nature of man. 2. God has called us to virtue. In this word virtue there is great meaning. The old Roman empire, based on power, knew no virtue but valour. *Vir* was the Latin for man, and *virtus* was that which a man was expected to put forth in opposition to effeminacy and weakness. The Roman had no idea of virtue in one sense of the word as signifying morality. His idea of virtue was one, and no more: a brave man was a virtuous man. God calls us all to fortitude. (*W. G. Barrett.*)

Virtue and religion enforced:—Sir Walter Scott left a solemn and weighty legacy to others than his son. On his death-bed "his eye was clear and calm," we are told; "every trace of the wild fire of delirium extinguished. 'I have not a moment to speak,' he said; 'be virtuous—be religious. Be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to die.'" Exceeding great and precious promises.—*The Christian's privileges*.—I. A CONVEYANCE. 1. The instrument. This "whereby" stands like a Janus, looking both to the matter past and to come. The matter past was the knowledge of Christ. Let us use all the means to get knowledge; yet, after all this, glory not in thy knowledge. Knowledge without truth is like Uriah's letters that contained his own death. To know good, and do ill, makes a man's own mittimus to hell. 2. The materials. The law gave menaces, the gospel gives "promises," and brings mercy to our houses and our hearts. 3. The latitudes of these promises. (1) "Great." They promise a thing no less than greatness itself: the love of God, an immense kingdom, the world invisible. (2) "Precious" (Psa. lv. 22; Matt. xi. 28; Rom. viii. 28). (a) If God so promise, let us trust Him (Heb. x. 23). (b) Seeing these promises are so precious, store thy heart with them; that which way soever the blow comes it may assault thee without fear, not without foresight. 4. The form of the conveyance—a deed of gift. All worldly things are but lent; only spiritual graces are given. The Lord's bounty requires of us some duty. (1) Call upon the Giver, as the beggar frequents the gates of bounty, and that in faith (James i. 6).

(2) Be thankful to the Giver, not only for spiritual, but even for temporal things. It is not enough to take the whole loaves, but let us even gather up the fragments. And if God gives all to us, let us give something to Him. Not only my goods, but myself. (3) Be not proud, arrogate not that to thyself which is God's gift. 5. These promises are signed, sealed, delivered, and bound with an oath. (1) God hath put His hand to them in the gospel. (2) The two sacraments are the seals. (3) They are delivered to us (Rom. viii. 15). Use: From the stability of God's promises to us let us learn to be constant in the performance of our promise, both to God and to man. II. AN INHERITANCE. God's nature may be participated two ways, of quality and of equality. 1. For equality: this is only proper to the three Persons of the Trinity. 2. Our participation must be only qualitative: by nature we understand not substance, but quality, by grace in this world and by glory in the world to come. This communication of the Divine nature to us is by reparation of the Divine image in us (Heb. xii. 10; Eph. iv. 24; Rom. viii. 29). (1) As servants of a Master; not merely as creatures; so all men partake (Acts xvii. 28). (2) As subjects of a Prince; and thus we partake with the King of heaven in many benefits. (3) As sons of a Father: thus we partake many things of the Divine nature. (4) As members of a Head (1 Cor. xii. 27). (5) As branches of a Vine (John xv.). III. A DELIVERANCE. 1. The discovery of great danger. (1) The infection, corruption of lust. It gets into the thoughts, senses, tongue, hands, &c. (2) The dispersion through the world. Consider the villainy, misery, inconstancy, insufficiency of it. 2. The recovery. We have escaped, not by our power, but by His grace that hath delivered us (Psa. cxxiv. 7). There is a fourfold manner of freeing captives. (1) By manumission (John viii. 36). (2) By commutation. Christ was killed; we escaped. (3) By ransom (1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 19). (4) By violence (2 Tim. iv. 17). God did all this for us, and shall we do nothing for Him, for ourselves? (*Thos. Adams.*) *The promises of God*:—I. THE EXCELLENCY OF THE DIVINE PROMISES. The promises of Scripture are generally declarations which God has made of His intention to bestow blessings upon His faithful people. Under the Old Testament dispensation the promises mainly related to the future advent of the Messiah. The Christian covenant is, in fact, one comprehensive promise (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; xxxii. 40; Heb. viii. 6-12). So that illumination, pardon, holiness, and union with God—that is, all imaginable mercies—are included in this one rich and overflowing promise. II. THE DESIGN FOR WHICH THESE PROMISES ARE GIVEN—"that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The two designs of the promises, then, are a deliverance from the corruptions of the world and a participation of the purity of God. What this corruption is need scarcely be described. Men by their concupiscence and ungoverned passions corrupt each other. The Divine nature stands opposed to all this corruption. We are to be holy as God is holy. 1. That this is the direct tendency of the Divine promises may appear, first, from the consideration that it is in the view of His love and grace as displayed in the gospel of His Son, which God is pleased chiefly to employ to win the heart to His service. 2. The assurances of assistance offered to us in the promises tend also directly to promote holiness. The promise of forgiveness excites us to forsake sin; the promise of inward grace to mortify it. 3. Again, the condition annexed to the promises make them the powerful means of producing in us conformity to the Divine nature. These are frequently expressed. To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God. The meek will He guide in judgment. 4. But I ask once more, What is the matter of God's promises—what are the blessings themselves which they hold out to us? Do they not all either imply holy obedience or directly include it? Repentance, faith, love, joy, hope, peace, strength, communion with God, are subjects of the promises; and what are these but parts of sanctification? 5. I ask, again, what are the direct and necessary effects of such promises, when they are received? They are the nutriment of faith which worketh by love. They inspire hope which purifies the heart even as God is pure. They work therefore not as an opiate to stupefy, but as a medicine to restore. And all this they do, not by a mere natural process, but by the gracious appointment of God. III. THE TEST WHICH IT FURNISHES OF OUR STATE BEFORE GOD. If men will put a general notion of God's mercy in the place of His promises; if they will substitute a form of godliness for a Divine nature, and a mere decency and good order before others, for an "escape from the corruption which is in the world through lust," they must perish. (*D. Wilson, M.A.*) *Great and precious promises*:—Did you ever hear the story how, once upon a time, a dove moaned and mourned to her fellow-birds of the tyranny

of the hawk—the dove's great foe? One advised her to keep below; but the hawk can stoop for his prey. Another said, Soar aloft; but the hawk could soar as high as she could. Another said, Fly to the woods; but the woods are the very palace and court of the cruel hawk; safety could not be found there. And another said, Fly to the towns; but there she was in danger of being caught by man, who might even make her a sport for the hawk. At last one said, Fly to the holes of the rocks. Violence cannot surprise the dove there. Thus it is with the soul of man—distressed and fearful. Come to me, says Riches, and I will shelter you. No, Wealth is only the devil's lure, and, by and by, his rein and his spur. Come to me, says Pleasure; but she is the very Delilah of the soul, to betray you to the Philistines. Honour says, Come to me; but there is no assurance in any of these. No. Oh, ye that dwell in cities and repose in wealth or pleasure or honour, there is safety in Jesus or nowhere. "Leave the cities and dwell in the rock—in the Rock of Ages—fly to the promises, and be like the dove that maketh her nest by the side of the hole's mouth." I. CONSIDER THE PROMISES. Ah, if we practically realised the might, the majesty, and the meaning of God's promises, how happy they would often make us! The astronomer, when he knows that the hour of the planet draws nigh, prepares his glasses and climbs his highest towers, and through its bright far-seeing eyes he watches and he waits till he beholds it come labouring along its infinite way. And when it has shone through the darkness its hour or its season, then it fades down again into the darkness till another season shall come, and, perhaps, another astronomer hails its beams. So the promises of God are made to conditions, and they shine like constellations. Oh, sweet garden of the promises! But are they not rather like trees—exceeding great and precious promises? It seems to me, when I study the life of the promises, I come as into a vast and stately forest, planted by the glorious men of God in old time by His will and word; and they are, "the fir tree, the pine, and the box together." There are the cedars of Lebanon, which He hath planted; and, like all trees, they are fit for meditation and fruit and use. How cool it is to walk amongst the promises! They are quiet places, and sacred and secret ways, where God, in an especial manner, meets with man's soul. When the glorious sun strikes down, how the promises stretch out their cool arms; and when storms are in the heavens they cannot strike through these boughs. And so every promise conceals or reveals some biography—some way of God in a human soul. Poor Bilney, that noble martyr, lost all comfort after he had recanted till he found the words, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Beza found the life of his hope in words which I can never forget: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I will give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Some of the fathers divided the promises into *Pabulum fidei*, and *Anima fidei*—"Food of faith," and the "Soul of faith." "Oh, thou of little faith," see yonder is the state; but do you not see the sunshine falling over it?—those arrowy flakes of gold, they are the promises—the exceeding great and precious promises: when you come to that darkness, fear not, but you shall inherit that light.

II. EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS. Do but think how wonderful it is that God should make Himself known by man. And all God's works are promises. They are tokens of holiness, and wisdom, and faithfulness. Why do you plant an acorn? Does it not contain a promise? Infinite value is placed here. And methinks if we did but read the works and ways of God in nature aright we should see everywhere the promise of our future. Oh, when I can stand on the great mountain chains of the Bible, what a view I have! And do not promises strengthen? Our whole life is maintained by promise. Without promise we should sink into the deepest places of despair. We need spiritual tonics. We need them to destroy our unhealthy consciousness, which is only another name for weakness. And how glorious that, by these promises, we are able to look beyond the tomb; yes, by them we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust and see our fair inheritance there. But remember one great condition by which you know your relation to the promise—"escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust." Here, you see, is the great condition. Have you escaped the corruption? Till you breathe in purer air you cannot expect to breathe the sweetness of this promise. Obedience first, then recompense. (E. P. Hood.) *The promises of God*:—I. Their greatness will appear if we consider THEIR AUTHOR. They derive importance and value from the holiness of God in all its glory, from His justice in all its inflexibility. Finally, they must derive importance from His infinite benevolence and mercy in which they

originated, of which they are the magnificent expression and all the resources of which they open. Is there not an important sense, then, in which these promises are as precious, as great as God is glorious? Those, therefore, who neglect them despise Jehovah Himself when making the most interesting appeals to their hearts, and involve themselves in guilt and wickedness proportionable to the glories of the Divine character. II. The greatness and value of the promises will appear if we consider them in their OWN NATURE AND PROPERTIES, or, if we attend to THEIR INTRINSIC WORTH. In estimating the value of promises, this is the chief consideration. No matter what may be the rank or character of the promiser, or what the relation in which he stands to us. The promise cannot be denominated great and precious if it relates to an insignificant object or to one that does not meet our exigencies. The great consideration here is: suppose the promises to be accomplished, and all the good that is contained in them enjoyed, will all our capacities be filled? Shall we be completely delivered from all dangers and enemies? Shall we be raised to the perfection of our nature? If so, but not otherwise, the promises, the value of which we are endeavouring to estimate, are exceeding great and precious. Now, tried by this criterion, the promises to which the apostle refers will appear to be fully entitled to the epithets under consideration. For when they are all accomplished in heaven, what want will remain unsupplied? what capacity unfilled, even to overflowing? what danger or enemy will threaten, what desirable good will not be possessed? What will then be wanting to complete the dignity and happiness of human nature? III. Consider THE MEDIUM through which these promises have been made, or the way in which these blessings are secured and conferred, and they, too, will show that they are indeed exceeding great and precious. "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," and, therefore, making all the promises through Him. "All the promises of God are in Him yea, and in Him Amen." They are all made and confirmed in Him. In Him who, though He was the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person, the Lord, the Creator of angels, and the object of their worship, became the Babe of Bethlehem, the sufferer on the Cross. In Him who, by the exercise of every grace of which innocent human nature is capable, and the performance of every duty in their very perfection, and that in the most difficult circumstances, met all the demands of an absolutely perfect law. In Him, who, by making His life, His blood, His soul an offering for sin by drinking, to the very dregs, the bitter cup of Divine wrath, secured all the blessings contained in the promises. IV. Consider THE NUMBER AND VARIETY of the promises. We have given to us not an exceeding great and precious promise merely, but exceeding great and precious promises relating to all the endless variety of the believer's wants and circumstances and dangers and duties: to prosperity and to adversity, to the body and to the soul, to time and to eternity, to earth and to heaven. V. Consider next THE SUITABLENESS of these promises, and this, too, will prove that they are exceeding great and precious. A promise may be valuable in itself, and as it regards the blessing which it exhibits; and yet it may be to the individuals to whom it is made of no importance because it is not suitable to their circumstances. How valuable to some would be the promise of a large sum of money, of a rich and extensive estate, of a crown! What are they to the man who is the victim of a mortal disease, who has only a few moments longer to live? "Behold, he is at the point to die," and what are riches and crowns to him? How valuable is a promise of pardon to a convicted and condemned malefactor! But what is it to the man who glories in his innocence and virtue and claims the protection of the law, and the blessings of life as his right? But the promises of the gospel are as suitable to our circumstances as they are great and wonderful in themselves. They secure light to those who are in darkness, and rich supplies to those who are perishing of hunger, and pardon to those who are guilty and condemned. VI. Consider THE IMMUTABILITY of these promises, and this will show that they are exceeding great and precious. How inexcusable, then, is unbelief! VII. On account of THEIR INFLUENCE the promises may well be denominated exceeding great and precious. The promises of men often exert an injurious influence on those to whom they are made. They dazzle the eyes of the mind, enkindle a flame of unhalloved feelings, lead astray from the path of duty, and thus prove the most dangerous temptations to sin. How many have been led by them to act a foolish, a base, a disgraceful part! By seeking the honour that comes from men they have lost all the honour that comes from God. But the influence of the promises of the gospel is always beneficial. They ever enlighten and sanctify and stimulate to act a wise and noble part. This must be the case, for they make those who embrace

them partakers of the Divine nature and keep from the corruption that is in the world through lust. Now we may infer from what has been advanced—1. That the Bible is an exceedingly great and precious book, for it contains all these promises. 2. We may learn whether or not we are personally, actually interested in these promises. 3. How great the folly and guilt, how wretched the state of those who despise all these promises and reject all these blessings! 4. Remember that the Bible contains not only exceeding great and precious promises, but exceedingly great and terrible threatenings, and the latter are as dreadful as the former are glorious. (*W. Scott.*) *Divine promises* :—I. THE MEANS whereby God conveys His grace to us, viz., the promises of the gospel. 1. Their excellency is set forth by two adjuncts. They are “exceeding great and precious.” The one noteth their intrinsic worth and value; they are “exceeding great.” The other, our esteem of them; they deserve to be “precious” to us. 2. Their freeness: “given,” made freely, made good freely. II. THE END and use of them: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature; that is, the communicable excellence of God. 1. Because these are communicated to us by God; they are created in us by His Divine power. We have them by virtue of our communion with Him. They flow from God, as the light doth from the sun. 2. Because by these perfections we somewhat resemble God. Therefore it is said (1 Pet. ii. 9), “We show forth His praises,” His virtues or Divine attributes, His “wisdom, goodness, bounty, holiness”; for in these we most resemble Him. III. THE WAY, METHOD, AND ORDER how we receive this benefit of the Divine nature. “Having first escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” As we die to sin, the Divine nature increaseth in us. There is a putting off before there can be a putting on (Eph. iv. 22–24). 1. What is to be avoided: “The corruption that is in the world through lust.” Observe, sin is called “corruption” as often in Scripture, because it is a blasting of our primitive excellency and purity (Gen. vi. 12; Psa. xiv. 1). Observe, the seat of this corruption is said to be in the world, where lust and all uncleanness reigneth, therefore called “the pollutions of the world” (chap. ii. 20). The generality of men are defiled with them, corrupted in their faith, worship, and manners; therefore conversion is called for under these terms (Acts ii. 40). Lastly, observe that this corruption is said to reign in the world “through lust.” Besides the bait there is the appetite; it is our naughty affections that make our abode in the world dangerous. 2. The manner of shunning, in the word escaping. There is a flying away required, and that quickly, as in the plague, or from a fire which hath almost burned us, or a flood that breaketh in upon us. We cannot soon enough escape from sin (Matt. iii. 7; Heb. vi. 18). No motion but flight becomes us in this case. Doctrine: That the great end and effect of the promises of the gospel is to make us partakers of the Divine nature. I. Let us consider the effect or end. 1. That it is a natural, not a transient effect. There may be such a sense of the goodness, wisdom, and power of God as may produce a sudden passion; as suppose of fear or love. It may only affect us for the present, but inferreth no change of heart and life. But the promises of the gospel are to breed in us such a temper of heart as may be a second nature to us, a habit or constitution of soul that may incline us to live to God. A habit serveth for this use, that a man may act easily, pleasantly, and constantly. (1) To act easily. There is an inclination and propensity to holiness. (2) To act pleasantly. They have not only a new bias and tendency, but it is a delight to do what is holy (Psa. xl. 8), as being in their element when they are thus employed. (3) It is a constant principle of holy operations, so that a man doth not only obey God easily, but evenly, and without such frequent interruptions of the holy life. 2. It is a Divine nature; that is, not only such as floweth from God, but may carry some resemblance with Him or to Him. It floweth from God, for we are “partakers”; it is but a ray from His excellency, and it carrieth a likeness to Him, or cometh nearer to the nature of God Himself than anything that a man is capable of. Now this is said for two reasons—(1) To show the dignity of it. Nothing known to man is so like God as a sanctified soul. The saints have their Maker’s express image; therefore if God be excellent and holy, they are so. The image and picture of God and Christ is in them, not made by a painter or carver, but by the Holy Ghost (2 Cor. iii. 18). (2) To show the quality and condition of it. You must have a new nature, and such a nature as may be a Divine nature. If you have nothing above natural men or corrupt nature, you are strangers to the promises of the gospel. 3. This Divine nature may be considered three ways. Either—(1) As begun; when we are first “renewed in the spirit of our minds,” and regenerated “according to the image of

God" (Eph. iv. 23, 24). (2) As increased; when more like God in a conspicuous degree. (3) As it is perfected in heaven; for there we have the nearest communion with God, and so the highest conformity to Him that we are capable of (1 John iii. 2).

II. Let us now see the means by which God doth accomplish this effect: "To us are given great and precious promises." 1. It is an instance of God's love, that He will deal with us in the way of promises. (1) A promise is more than a purpose; for the purpose and intention of a man is secret and hidden in his own bosom, but a promise is open and manifest. Thereby we get the knowledge of the good intended to us. (2) It is more than a doctrinal declaration. It is one thing to reveal a doctrine, another to promise a benefit; that maketh a thing known, this maketh a thing sure, and upon certain terms; that gives us notice, but this gives us interest. (3) It is more than a prophecy or simple prediction. Scripture prophecies will be fulfilled because of God's veracity; but Scripture promises will be fulfilled, not only because of God's veracity, but also His fidelity and justice; for by God's promise man cometh to have a right to the thing promised. 2. The promises of the new covenant are of a most glorious and valuable nature. They are not about small things, or things of little moment, but about worthy and dear-bought blessings. 3. They are precious promises, worthy of our esteem; for they are not about things that we have nothing to do with, but such wherein we are deeply and intimately concerned. In God's promises there is due provision made for the desires, necessities, and wants of mankind. 4. All this is given to us wretched men without any desert of ours; nay, we had deserved the contrary.

III. The influence of the one upon the other; or, how do these promises promote the Divine nature? 1. From their drift, which is, to draw us from the creature to God, and the world to heaven; to mortify the esteem of the false happiness which corrupteth our natures; and to raise us to those noble objects and ends which dignify and adorn the soul, and make it in a sort Divine. It breedeth an excellent spirit in us, which is carried above the world, and the hopes and fears of it (1 Cor. ii. 12). 2. The matter of the promises. Many of which concern the change of our hearts, the cleansing or healing of our natures (Heb. viii. 10; Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26; Jer. xxxiii. 8). 3. The conditions or terms on which our right is suspended. Not pardon without repentance (Acts iii. 19). Not heaven or eternal life without holiness (Heb. xii. 14). 4. The power with which the promises are accompanied (chap. i. 3). The Divine nature is communicated to us by virtue of the promises; for the Spirit is our sanctifier, and He works by congruous means. Use 1. Believe the promises, for they are most sure and certain. God's testimony of the good things He will bestow upon us cannot deceive us, or beget a vain and uncertain hope. Use 2. Esteem them (Heb. xi. 13). Use 3. Labour to improve the belief of every promise for the increase of holiness, that we may be like God, pure and holy as He is (2 Cor. vii. 1). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) "*Exceeding great and precious promises*":—I. First, THE SOURCE of all the promises is shown by this same apostle to be "the abundant mercy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 3-5). By whatever name called, in whatever dispensation or method made known, the "abundant mercy" of the ever-blessed God has been the great original, only source of promise to man. II. THEIR CHARACTER. They are "exceeding great," or, as the Rhemish version literally translates it, "most great." As the announcements of Divine mercy concerning the provisions of redemption for man, we may expect the promises to be so great as to meet all the wants and woes of our fallen nature. 1. One wide, deep, and long-felt want of our spiritual nature is—"light." The most enlightened Pagans but guessed at immortality, and felt after the true God among a rabble of false ones. Need I point out to you how Jesus Christ is thus "the Desire of all nations"? "To Him," as the true Light, "gave all the prophets witness." Pleasant to the eyes, cheering to the heart, indispensable to labour, assuring to the traveller, longed for by the watchman, an indispensable condition of all healthy growth, and therefore of life, light is in every language the symbol of truth; and as Jesus Christ is "the brightness of the Father's glory," so His gospel is "the light of lights" in all these respects to believing souls. 2. Another deep-felt want of the human soul is the craving for "peace with God." Wherever the religious instincts have been awakened, their most poignant consciousness has been that of guilt, a dread of the Invisible, and "a fearful looking for of judgment." Hence all the self-torments of superstition, and the altars and offerings of Paganism, past and present. And of all the promises of God, none are more "exceeding great and precious" than those which invite, intreat, "beseech men to be reconciled unto God," on the ground of the great propitiation of Jesus Christ for

sin. They are more precious than the royal warrant that releases the death-doomed culprit; they are our passport and safe-conduct into present safety and eternal life. 3. Thus we might proceed in regard to every want of the human spirit. Does the quickened soul pant for self-harmony and purity, crying, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me"? Then one of a thousand promises uttered from the heart of God replies, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you." 4. Does the heart, pre-designed for Divine love and fellowship, feel restless for its adapted element—a good which it knows not, and without which it must inly burn and pine for ever? To all this multitude of weary, feverish souls there comes from the Father of spirits such exceeding great and precious promises as these: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he that hath no money, come." 5. Again, does the universal soul of man believe in and anticipate immortal life? Does the savage from his instincts, and the sage from his reasonings, expect to live for ever? Does even the bad man inly shudder at the prospect of annihilation, and the good man long for immortality? Then the certainty, the nature, and the path of endless life are the subject-matter of transcendently "great and precious promises." 6. Finally, as to the wants of the soul and their Divinely promised supply. The life and immortality—rather incorruptibility—brought to light by the promises of the gospel meet another demand of our nature—"the resurrection from the dead." And are they not "precious"—"precious" as the free pledges of sovereign, paternal, everlasting grace?—"precious" as the fruits of Jesus' death-enduring love?—"precious" as the subject of the Comforter's ministry to the heart, and the medium of His sanctifying energy therein? They are precious for their past beneficent history in healing wounded spirits and raising fainting hearts. Their greatness and preciousness have been in part realised by the first advent of Christ and this present "dispensation of the Spirit." This, however, is but the introduction to the vast volume of "good things yet to come." The sons of God are now adopted, but not manifested. III. This is rendered still more evident by THE DESIGN of the promises: "That we might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 1. This declaration inevitably implies that man has lost that participation in the Divine nature which is called "the image of God," and which consisted in "spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." 2. It also implies that there is in man's nature, however fallen, a constitutional capacity (though we know, alas! a deep disinclination) to receive back and reflect the moral character of God. 3. It suggests that all the needful influences are given by the God of the promises, and lie within our reach for the recovery of the Divine nature; and that God holds us responsible for the earnest, prayerful use of those gracious means whereby we may grow into His likeness, and ascend to fellowship with Himself. 4. And this involves most inspiring views of what redeemed humanity may attain even on earth, much more in heaven. 5. This fellowship with God is the only means of escaping the infectious pollutions of moral evil that abound in the world on every side, and that spring from the desires of the heart turned from God to impure and forbidden objects. 6. The promises, then, are indispensable to the attainment of this end. They reveal the "Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," and assure the gift of the Holy Spirit to renew and inhabit the soul. (*John Graham.*) *The efficacy of the promises*:—What is the "whereby" with which the passage commences? designating, as it appears to do, some channel of communication. There are here several antecedents to which the "whereby" may be grammatically referred; but, without examining a variety of critical opinions, it appears to me the most obvious course to take the concluding words, "glory and virtue," as the antecedent which we are in search of; "the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue; whereby"—that is, through which glory and virtue—"are given to us exceeding great and precious promises." We are called to glory and to virtue—to a warfare that is full of honour, but at the same time full of difficulty, requiring much wisdom and vigour in the combatant. If we obey this calling, and throw ourselves into the conflict, then the struggle in which we are engaged will be the best witness that we are the elect of the Most High. Having this witness, we possess an assurance that the promises of the Bible are spoken specially to ourselves. Now, having thus cleared up the connection between the text and the context, it still remains that I vindicate the description that is here made of the promises given in the Bible. Yet, can this be necessary? If there be a spiritual solicitude for which the Bible

contains not a word in season; if there be a doubt which is left without a message to disperse it; if there be an anxiety which is passed by without a whisper to soothe it; and if there be a tear which it dries not; then I will give up the description, and pronounce it overdrawn. But in nothing has God so manifested His wisdom as in the precision with which His Word meets the wants of His people. It were idle to attempt to descend into particulars. Exceedingly great are the promises of the Bible; great in their sweep, for they leave no circumstance unattended to; great in their power, for they bring all the magnificence of eternity to bear on the solitudes of time. And precious are the promises, as well as great. He who can appropriate them has blessings which no arithmetic can reckon, a security which no contingency can shake, and a help which never can be without use. But there is no need that I insist further on the character that the text gives of the promises. Those who have proved them acknowledge them to be "exceeding great and precious"; they who have proved them not, want, alas! the spiritual ardour by which their character is to be discerned, and are therefore not to be convinced by the most elaborate description. We all profess to believe that once on the earth the spectacle was exhibited of the human nature adopted into union with the Divine. There was the perfect instance of one of our race being made partaker of the Divine nature: I need scarcely add that the instance will stand for ever by itself; and that the sense in which we alone can share in the nature of God differs from that in which Christ Jesus had share. He had it in essence—we in conformity; He by being God—we only by being renewed after the image of God. The Greek might more strictly be rendered "partakers of a Divine nature," and not of *the* Divine nature. Now, the point which yet remains to be investigated, is the agency of the promises in effecting such a change; for, you will observe, that whilst partaking of the Divine nature is the result, the promises are the means through which it is brought about. "Exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature." The machinery exhibited in the Bible when a spiritual transformation is in question, is the influence of the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the blessed Trinity. We may be assured, therefore, that when any other machinery is brought on the stage, we are to understand that it is effectual, not through its inherent energies, but only through its being actuated by that Agent. The promises in themselves have no power to animate; but if I believe in the promise, then the promise becomes a quickening thing; and that which as spoken was merely sound that melted into air, is now a radiant star which rules me and guides me by the brilliancy of its light. We shall take for granted, in all we say of the power of the promises, that the power is derived from faith, and faith from the Holy Ghost; and we go on to show in the first place the power which promises wield over men in ordinary things, and in the second place, the influence which they exert over Christians in particular. If you took a rapid survey of the various classes and occupations of men, you would find that almost every one is submitting himself to the power of promise. If you enter the crowded marts of commerce, or pass through the courtly circles of ambition, or sit with the student in his secluded chamber, or accompany the dissolute into the haunts of pleasure, the same pursuit is in each case carried on; they are all hunting after some fancied good, which, though it may cheat them at last, engages them at present. Some busy spirit has been whispering into the ear of every man whom you meet, that if he will but follow this course, or that course, he shall attain the object of his desire. And the greatest marvel is, that although the experience of successive ages has shown there is a lie in each of these promises, they nevertheless attain the same credit as ever. If it could, however, come suddenly to pass that an arrest was put on this circulation of promise, there would be an instant standstill in the busy scenes of human occupation. And I need hardly point out how amplified would be the power of promise if there were anything like an assurance of fulfilment. If men can do such things on chance, what will they do on certainty? Now I turn from this rapid survey of the power which promise wields over men in general; and I ask you whether, if you turn the uncertainty of promise into certainty, you may not expect to find the power a thousand times greater which is wielded over Christians in particular? The defects in promise are here done away with; the result which is desired not only may take place, but shall take place. And if a promise, which is both indefinite in its terms and insecure in its pledges, be the efficient thing we have already described, who shall marvel that where the terms are the noblest, and the pledges are the strongest, it shall lead those who believe to work out their salvation with the fear and trembling of men who know

themselves to have eternity at stake? I will seek, however, to dissect this point a little more nicely; for it is both of interest and importance. Escaping the pollution that is in the world, we account to be the same thing as being made partakers of the Divine nature. It is by escaping pollution, by withdrawing from the trammels and habits of sinfulness, that this partnership in the celestial character is procured; and if we can show that it is by the promises that pollution is escaped, it will follow that it is through the promises that conformity to the Divine nature is attained. But whether it be by promises or by threatenings that the work is commenced, assuredly it is by promise that the work is carried on. Is the believer disheartened when he considers the might of his spiritual enemies? the promise is kindly whispered, "God shall bruise Satan under thy feet shortly." He takes courage, and wrestles with the enemy. Is he confounded at the view of indwelling corruption? "God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear." Are kinsmen and friends alienated from him on account of his profession of godliness? What sustains him but this?—"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Does prayer seem unanswered? "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." Do sorrows seem multiplied? "All things work together for good to them that love God." Is his progress in the life of faith scarcely perceptible? Where God hath begun a good work, He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. You see, then, that promises are mighty engines in the hands of God's Spirit. It is by these souls are animated to prayer; it is by these they are prepared for warfare; it is by these they are warmed in love; it is by these they are cheered on in their way after holiness. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Precious promises:—What makes a promise precious? 1. The thing promised must be valuable. 2. He who promises must be truthful. 3. He who promises must be able to perform. (*W. Lawson, D.D.*)

The Divinely assimilating force of Divine promises:—Christianity is a system of promises. Even its doctrines and precepts may be regarded as promises. These promises are "exceedingly great" in their nature, variety, and influences; they are exceedingly "precious" too;—precious essentially and relatively in themselves and in their bearings on man. I. THESE PROMISES TEND TO ASSIMILATE US TO GOD BY GIVING US AN ATTRACTIVE VIEW OF HIS CHARACTER. Two thoughts will illustrate this point:—1. Man's moral character is formed on the principle of imitation. There are two wrong developments of this instinct. (1) When it is directed to the natural peculiarities of others. (2) When directed to the moral faults of others. 2. Man's imitation is ever directed to that which seems to him beautiful. He will not copy that which appears to him unamiable, unlovely, repulsive. If the Infinite appear to us supremely lovely, He will by the laws of our imitative nature mould us into His own image. Now His promises give us this attractive view of Him. A sincere promise reveals the author's disposition. If the promise is trifling where there are large resources, it indicates a niggardly soul, and the reverse. A sincere promise reveals the author's resources. If great things are promised, the possession of great things are implied. According to these criteria, what infinite kindness and inexhaustible resources do the promises of God reveal! II. THESE PROMISES TEND TO ASSIMILATE US TO HIM BY BRINGING US INTO PERSONAL CONTACT WITH HIS CHARACTER. We must be with a being to become like him. Fellowship is absolutely indispensable. There is on the one hand a giving, and on the other a perpetual receiving. Thus the two are brought together. Both minds meet, as it were, in the promise. III. THESE PROMISES TEND TO ASSIMILATE US TO HIM BY GIVING US A LIVING INTEREST IN HIS CHARACTER. (*Homilist.*)

The design of the promises of God:—I. IN THE DIVINE NATURE ARE ATTRIBUTES PROPERLY INCOMMUNICABLE; SUCH AS CANNOT, IN THE NATURE OF THINGS, BE IMPARTED; SUCH AS CANNOT BE EVEN IMITATED BY CREATURES. It is peculiar to Him to exist in and from Himself; while a creature is a dependent being, and ever must remain so. It is peculiar to Him to be from everlasting to everlasting. It is peculiar to Him to have supreme dominion. Absolute perfection, that which is liable to no injury, admits of no diminution, is capable of no advancement, is peculiar to Him. Finite cannot equal infinite. It is, then, in moral attributes that we are to look for this participation of the Divine nature; in those which, indeed, constitute the very glory of that nature; the others being adorable as they are exercised and employed by a perfect wisdom, rectitude, and love. But let it be here observed that the promise is not that we shall be raised into something like God; some mere imitation of what is morally perfect in Him. We are to be partakers of the Divine nature. There is to be a communication on the part of God, and a reception on our own, of those

principles on which all that is pure and holy in God may be said to depend; a communication continued to us, on which the growth and permanency of those principles rest. The moral nature of God, thus to be participated by believers, may be summed up in the three terms. 1. Knowledge. The power of knowing is the property of spiritual beings. It is not merely to perceive in the low degree which belongs to irrational animals, but to apprehend, to remember, to compare, to infer, and from particular to bring out general truths, which are to be laid up in the mind for meditation or action. This knowledge is the knowledge of things as good or evil, as right or wrong, as tending or not tending to our own happiness, and that of the whole creation. Infinitely perfect is this knowledge in God. And by the indwelling of His teaching Spirit, opening these truths to our mind, and rendering us discerning to apply them, He makes us partake, in our degree, of His own knowledge, His infallible judgment of things. Then it is that we walk in the light. We find a sure way for our feet, and so are enabled to escape the snares of death.

2. Holiness. This is essential to God. It is that principle in Him, whatever it may be, which has led Him to prescribe justice, mercy, and truth, and to prohibit their contraries under penalties so severe; that principle, which is more than a mere approval of the things which He enjoins; which makes Him love righteousness. The holiness of a creature as to actions is, conformity to the will of God, which is the visible declaration of His holy nature. That conformity implies justice, a rendering to all their due; a large duty, referring not only to man, but likewise to God, to whom are to be given the honour and worship He requires from us; perfect truth and sincerity in everything, so that all outward acts shall concur with the heart, and the heart with them; and the strict regulation of every temper and appetite, so that they may be kept within the bounds prescribed, beyond which they become impurity and sin. But there must be principle from which all this must flow, or it is only external and imitative; and that principle is found only in the new man, that which comes from this participation of the Divine nature.

3. But the Divine nature is love. Who can doubt this when he sees the happiness of the creatures so manifestly the end of their creation? when we can trace all misery to another source? when we see the mercies He mixes with His judgments, always bringing some good out of evil? when He spared not His own Son, but gave Him freely for us all? II. We observe, THAT THE VALUE OF THE PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL IS SPECIALLY DISPLAYED BY THEIR CONNECTION WITH THIS END. "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature." To raise men to this state is matter of promise, and therefore of grace. We might have been left to the sin and degradation we had sought. And the promises thus given to us, all of them suppose the covenant of grace. And when we consider their great design to make us partakers of the Divine nature, how clearly and brightly does it display their value! They appear to us of unspeakable value; "exceeding great and precious."

1. They are so in respect of the honour which this great attainment puts on man. 2. Consider this value in respect to interest. What is the real interest of man but the attainment of the favour and image of God? 3. Consider this value in respect of peace. There can be no peace to the wicked. Every evil brings its own punishment with it in the disquietude which it occasions. 4. Consider this value in respect of usefulness. Knowledge is a powerful instrument of God when prompted by benevolence and sustained by consistency of character. And where there is this participation of the Divine nature, there we find all these elements of usefulness, knowledge, holiness, and love. 5. And lastly, consider this value in reference to hope. (*R. Watson.*)

That by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature.—*Partakers of the Divine nature*:—The keynote of the passage is the word "Divine," which occupies so conspicuous a place at the commencement and the close. To the momentous questions, What is the source and what the nature of true religion? the sum briefly is—It is a Divine life. Its source is traced to the Divine power of the Mediator, and on its features are stamped the impress of the Divine image. 1. Life and godliness is a comprehensive and practical description of true religion. Life alone, in Scripture, often describes the state of grace, and sums up all the blessings of salvation (1 John v. 12; Acts v. 20). Godliness, also, by itself, often denotes the whole of religion—the whole life of faith (1 Tim. iii. 16; iv. 7). Employed together they modify each other's meaning, and give completeness to the delineation of the Christian life. Life points out its inward source in the heart, godliness its outward manifestations in conduct and character. Be it ours to seek this life. Filled with it, it will show itself in the blossoms and fruits of godliness. And, let

us not forget, that if there is no godliness of conduct or character, we want the only sure evidence that life from on high has descended into our souls. 2. Have I escaped from the corruption that is in the world? Worldly life apart from God, and opposed to God, is moral and spiritual death; in its most refined as well as in its grosser forms, in its intellectual as well as in its sensual enjoyments, it has the taint of corruption. Its maxims and morality are unsound. The tie that binds us to the world and its corruption is the corruption of our own hearts. That removed, the magnetic attraction of evil is broken. The world and the renewed nature have no affinity, but repel each other. Like the occupant of the diving-bell, breathing air which is replenished and purified by constant supplies from above, and which, by its elastic force, keeps out the water which presses on every side; so the Christian, breathing the vital air of a heaven-derived life, moves unharmed in the midst of the world's corruption; surrounding him on every side, it cannot overwhelm. 3. Partakers of the Divine nature! At that momentous change, variously spoken of as a resurrection from the dead, as a new creation, as regeneration, there is communicated to the soul a Divine principle of life which, through grace, gradually transforms the whole man. Nothing less will do as a commencing point for the Christian life as a foundation on which to build a new and Godlike character. By God's overruling providence and restraining grace and favourable circumstances the worst outbreaks of sin are often prevented, as by the physician's skill the maladies of an unsound constitution may be mitigated. But only by a renewal of the soul, by the communication of the life of God, can we obtain true spiritual health and vigour. Christ then becomes our life. We are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and thus are made partakers of the Divine nature in the only sense possible for creatures. But the fellowship of the renewed soul with God is also embraced in that participation of the Divine nature of which the apostle speaks. Converse with God is the highest bliss of which we are capable. The life that has descended from God into our hearts rises up to Him again in desire and love, and the new nature in us subsists by communion with the source whence it is derived. (*W. Wilson, M.A.*) *The promises designed to make men holy*:—I. THE SCRIPTURES OFTEN DECLARE THIS TO BE A PRINCIPAL DESIGN OF THE DIVINE PROMISES. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Whatever is necessary to encourage, to cheer, to strengthen, to prompt in the course of holy obedience, is derived by constant appeals and illustrations from the promises of God. II. WE ARGUE THE SAME THING FROM THE CHARACTER OF MAN AS A MORAL BEING, AND THE PURPOSE OF GOD TOWARD HIM. The great purpose of God toward man is to perfect his moral character through moral influence. But where is this influence furnished? in what are these motives presented, if not in the blessings promised as the reward of obedience? If God by these promises intended merely to comfort His people by quieting their fears and awakening their hopes, why are not His promises absolute and unconditional securities? III. FROM THE DIRECT PRACTICAL TENDENCY OF THE PROMISES OF GOD. There is no higher evidence of the design to be answered by the appointments of God than the true tendency of such appointments. 1. Such is the tendency of the Divine promises, as they remove every obstacle to personal holiness. To rouse man to holy activity the promise of God is indispensable. You may show him an opening hell, but without a promise revealing a pardoning God and opening heaven he will never stir. With such promises all the hopelessness and despair of escaping the curse is taken away by the assurance of favour and reward to obedience. Without the promises there would remain also another obstacle of paralyzing influence—the impracticability of obedience without the grace of God. But with the promise of a faithful God sounding in his ears, "My grace is sufficient for thee," how will he rise, as it were, in the consciousness of that strength, which shall be perfected in his weakness, and enter the career of obedience with the inspiration of hope! 2. This tendency is apparent in the nature of the blessings promised. Whether we look at the general or specific nature of the Divine promises we see that they cannot become effectual as motives without producing holiness. What are the promises of God? Peace of conscience is promised. But who can think of escaping the reproaches of this inward monitor except by the practice of holiness? Is justification unto life promised? But who can be influenced by this blessing as a motive, and still wish to incur the guilt and the condemnation of sin? Is heaven promised? but what is there in heaven but an influence of transformation into the likeness of the God who reigns there? 3. The same tendency is apparent in the

circumstances or mode of the Divine promises. Such is the manner of God's promises as to secure to the utmost their full energy on the soul. While the holiness of man is their ultimate end, there is no sensibility or interest of man to which they do not appeal, and aim to render subservient to that end. They create no interference, but insure a perfect coincidence between man's temporal and eternal well-being. 4. The same tendency is apparent from the number and magnitude of the blessings promised. Remarks: 1. We see the error of those who aim to derive comfort only from the Divine promises. To say nothing of the prostration of the Divine law thus involved, the notion is a direct perversion of the very promises of God, which are pleaded as its warrant. Where is the promise of life except to patient continuance in well-doing? Others there are who make the application of the promises to depend on the belief of their own personal interest in them, as if to believe one's self to be interested in the promises of God really made us so. This perversion is equally gross. The promises of God given to promote holiness, and made to nothing but holiness, do these secure an interest in their blessings to him who has no holiness? There is yet another error nearly allied to these, and still more common. There are those who, though they deny not that the only warrant for the hopes of the gospel is obedience to the gospel, yet seem practically to disregard the conviction. Their concern is to discover the evidence of an interest in the promises, rather than to create that evidence, by increasing their holiness. 2. How great are the obligations of the people of God to holy obedience! (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *The influence of the promises of the gospel*.—Not that we can partake of the essence and nature of God, as some have blasphemously affirmed. For this would be for men to become gods, and to be advanced to the state and perfection of the Deity. I. BY WAY OF INTERNAL EFFICACY AND ASSISTANCE. And this influence the promise of God's Holy Spirit, and of His gracious help, hath upon the minds of men, inclining them to that which is good, and enabling them to do it. For the Holy Spirit is promised to us, in consideration and commiseration of that impotency which we have contracted. II. BY WAY OF MOTIVE AND ARGUMENT, to encourage us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God." For—1. A full pardon and indemnity for what is past is a mighty encouragement for us to return to our duty, and a forcible argument to keep us to it for the future. 2. The promise of God's grace and Holy Spirit is likewise a very powerful encouragement to holiness, encouraging us hereto by this consideration, that we have so unerring a guide to counsel and direct us, so powerful an assistant to "strengthen us with all might in the inner man." 3. The promise of eternal life and happiness, if duly considered, hath a mighty force in it, to take us off from the love and practice of sin, and to encourage our obedience and patient continuance in well-doing. All that now remains is to make some useful reflections upon what hath been discoursed upon these two heads. 1. If we expect the benefits of these exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, we must be careful to perform the conditions which are indispensably required on our parts. 2. From hence we learn that if the promises of the gospel have not this effect upon us, to make us partakers of a Divine nature, it is our own fault, and because we are wanting to ourselves. 3. If the promises of the Christian religion are apt in their own nature to work this great effect upon us, to make us like to God, to make us good, and just, and merciful, how doth this upbraid the degenerate state of the Christian world at this day, which does so abound in all kind of wickedness and impiety; so that we may cry out, upon reading the gospel: "Either this is not the gospel which we read and the Christian religion which we profess, or we are no Christians." (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *Partakers of the Divine nature*.—"Partakers of the Divine nature," which is to say, taking part in the Divine nature. Not simply like God, but in a way shareholders in Him; something, possibly, as the waves of the sea are partakers in the sea, something, it may be, as the leaves of a tree share in the life of the tree. We are not afraid of widening out the area of our humanity along the line of its upward frontier. Man differs in one very peculiar regard from the brute; not only in moving in a higher range of life and experience, but in not being tethered to any fixed condition. The brute is a brute, and always a brute. Improve your dog, and he will still be brutal; debase your dog, and he will still be brutal, and evince no symptoms of dropping to a lower grade of being. Once a dog, always a dog! On the contrary, there is a just sense in which you can say of humanity, that it is not so much a condition as it is a position of poise between two alternative conditions. It is like standing at the halfway point on the Gemmi Pass in Switzerland. **You**

look down to the profound depths beneath you, or you turn and look up to the superb heights above you, but you are not going to stop there, nor to live there. It is not a place to remain, but a place from which to look off. You are either on your way down the pass to Leuker-Bad, or you are on your way up the pass to the Wild-strübel; it is merely a position of poise between two alternative destinations. Ye are partakers of the Divine nature. Our thought now is particularly up the pass, not down. There is more danger in a theology that differences man from God than in one which assimilates man to God. There is, as a rule, more quickening stimulus in the prospect of victory than there is in the danger of defeat. Few men ever become great through fear of remaining small. There is more incentive in trying to get to the top of the class than in trying to keep away from the bottom of it. If God can humanise the Divine to the point of its becoming man, as in the instance of Jesus, what is to hinder Him, in the exercise of the same omnipotence, from deifying man to the point of his becoming Divine? It is no farther from the bottom of the mountain to the top than it is from the top to the bottom. Now that, as we read the gospel, is exactly what the blessed Spirit is trying to do with us. God became like us that we might become like God. He is seeking to lead us back over the same road that He came down. "Partakers of the Divine nature." "Now are we the sons of God." It is all in that word "sons." There is community through identity. You cannot get sonship in any other way. A loyal son is governed by his father; but it is the best element of that loyalty, not that the son does what the father bids him do, or makes him do, but that the son has his father's spirit so reproduced in himself, and so become a part of himself and he so a partaker in his father's nature, that his one act is at the same instant both his act and his father's act. And when we pray that God will control us by His Spirit, we certainly hardly expect that He is going to put His personality behind us, so as to push us onward; or put His personality in front of us, so as to hold us backward. We would rather mean, would we not, that as children of His, we are bound in the bundle of one life with Him, moving therefore at the impulse of energies that are ours without their ceasing to be His—somewhat, perhaps, as each separate storm-wave rolls in the expression of its own might, which is at the same time a part of the might of the sea; somewhat, perhaps, as each separate leaf or branch grows green in the expression of its own life, which is at the same time a part of the life of the vine. I in you, you in me. Frontier lines gone. One in each other. A single bundle of life, human or Divine, either or both; a shareholder in God; up the Gemmi Pass toward the indistinguishable summit. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*)

Partakers of the Divine nature :—I. Look, first, at this LOFTY PURPOSE which is here presented as being the very aim and end of God's gift in the gospel. The human nature and the Divine are both kindred and contrary. There are no gods of the heathen so far away from their worshippers, and there are none so near them, as our God. The arched heaven, though high, is not inaccessible in its cloudless beauty, but it touches earth all round the horizon; and man is made in the image of God. True, that Divine nature of which the ideal man is the possessor has faded away from humanity. But still the human is kindred with the Divine. The tiniest spark of flame is of the same nature as those leaping, hydrogen spears of illuminated gas that spring hundreds of thousands of miles high in a second or two in the great central sun. But that kindred, belonging to every soul of man, abject as well as loftiest, is not the "partaking" of which my text speaks, though it is the basis and possibility of it; for my text speaks of men as "becoming partakers." What, then, is it? No mere absorption, as extravagant mystics have dreamed, into that Divine nature, as a drop goes back into the ocean and is lost. There will always be "I" and "thou," or else there were no blessedness, nor worship, nor joy. We must so partake of the Divine nature as that the bounds between the bestowing God and the partaking man shall never be broken down. But that being presupposed, union as close as possible is the great hope that all Christian men and women ought consciously to cherish. Only mark, the beginning of the whole is the communication of a Divine life which is manifested mainly in what we call moral likeness. Partakers we shall be in the measure in which by our faith we have drawn from Him the pure and the hearty love of whatsoever things are fair and noble; the measure in which we love righteousness and hate iniquity. And then, remember also that this lofty purpose which is here set forth is a purpose growingly realised in man. The apostle puts great stress upon that. He is not talking about a being, but about a "becoming." That is to say, God must ever be passing, moment by moment, into our hearts if there is to be anything

godly there. Cut off the sunbeam from the sun and it dies, and the house is dark; cut off the life from the root and it withers, and the creature shrivels. The Christian man lives only by continual derivation of life from God; and for ever and ever the secret of his being and of his blessedness is not that he has become a possessor, but that he has become a partaker, of the Divine nature. By daily increase we shall be made capable of daily increase. II. Look, next, at THE COSTLY AND SUFFICIENT MEANS EMPLOYED FOR THE REALISATION OF THIS GREAT PURPOSE. "Promises" here must necessarily, I think, be employed in the sense of fulfilment of the promises. And so we might think of all the great and wondrous words which God has spoken in the past, promises of deliverance, of forgiveness, and the like; but I believe that by these "exceeding great and precious promises" is meant the unspeakable gift of God's own Son, and the gift therein and thereafter of God's life-giving Spirit. For is not this the meaning of the central fact of Christianity, the incarnation—that the Divine becomes partaker of the human in order that the human may partake of the Divine? Contrariety vanishes; the difference between the creature and the Creator disappears. III. Let me say, lastly, that this great text adds A HUMAN ACCOMPANIMENT OF THAT DIVINE GIFT, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Corruption is initial destruction, though of course other forms of life may come from it; destruction is complete corruption. The word means both. A man either escapes from lust and evil, or he is destroyed by it. And the root of this rotting fungus "is in lust," which word, of course, is used in a much wider meaning than the fleshly sense in which we employ it in modern times. It means "desire" of all sorts. The root of the world's corruption is my own and my brothers' unbridled and godless desires. So there are two states—a life plunged in putridity, or a heart touched with the Divine nature. Which is it to be? It cannot be both. A man that has got the life of God, in however feeble measure, in him, will flee away from this corruption like Lot out of Sodom. And how will he flee out of it? By subduing his own desires; not by changing position, not by shirking duty, not by withdrawing himself into unwholesome isolation from men and men's ways. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **HAVING ESCAPED THE CORRUPTION THAT IS IN THE WORLD THROUGH LUST.—Depravity:—I. THE SOURCE OF A TREMENDOUS EVIL.** Lust—of flesh, eye, and pride of life. II. THE NATURE OF THIS EVIL. 1. Corruption of the physical nature—health damaged, disease engendered. 2. Corruption of the intellect—judgment biased, mental powers enfeebled. 3. Corruption of the moral nature—heart polluted. 4. Corruption of the life—the corruption of the intellect and heart having its full development. III. THE ESCAPE FROM THE EVIL. 1. From its tyrannical power and authority. 2. From its baneful effects, both in time and eternity. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 5-7. **Giving all diligence.**—*Christian diligence*:—It is not fit that heaven should take all the pains to bring earth to it; earth must do somewhat to bring itself to heaven. God's bountifulness is beyond our thankfulness; yet thankfulness is not enough; there is matter of labour in it. If the lord of a manor have given thee a tree, thou wilt be at the charges to cut it down and carry it home. He who works first in thy conversion hath in wisdom made thee a second. Thou seest God's bounty; now look to thine own duty. I. DILIGENCE. Here, first, for the quality. There is no matter wherein we hope for God in the event, accomplished without diligence in the act. He that expects a royalty in heaven must admit a service on earth. The good man is weary of doing nothing, for nothing is so laborious as idleness. Satan's employment is prevented when he finds thee well employed before he comes. It is observable that albeit the Romans were so idle as to make idleness a god, yet they allowed not that idle idol a temple within the city, but without the walls. There are four marks and helps of diligence: 1. Vigilance. A serious project, which we can hardly drive to our desired issue, takes sleep from our eyes. 2. Carefulness (*Eccles. v. 1*). 3. Love. This diligence must fetch the life from affection, and be moved with the love of virtue. 4. Study (*2 Tim. ii. 15*). II. GIVE DILIGENCE. Not a pragmatistical business in others' affairs; but rectify thy diligence, confining it principally to thyself. Dress thine own garden, lest it be overrun with weeds. III. ALL DILIGENCE. Here is the quantity—"all." 1. The working up of salvation is no easy labour; thereto is requirable all diligence. Such a diligence respects so great an object, and such an object requires so great a diligence. Refuse no labour for such a reward. The best things are the hardest come by (*Matt. xi. 12*). Spare no invention of wit, no intention of will, no contention of strength about it. Will we adventure our estates, our lives, to find out new lands

where may be gold, and spend no diligence for that where we are sure there is gold, and such as cannot perish? 2. God requires "the whole duty of man" (Eccles. xii. 13); that is God's due. What, nothing left for this world? Yes, moderate providence; the saving of souls hinders not provision for bodies, but furthers and blesses it (Matt. vi. 33). Follow thou Christ; the rest shall follow thee. IV. BESIDE THIS . . . ADD. Thus much for the addition: now to the addition, wherein we find a concession, an accession that He requires—"add." You have done something, yet there is a "besides." I yield a beginning, I ask a proceeding (Heb. vi. 1). God's arithmetic principally consists in addition. To give every man his own is but equity; but the addition of charity makes blessed. And as addition teaches us to add grace to grace, so there is a multiplication required to increase the effects of those graces in a multiplicity of good works. Knowledge not improved will be impaired. If there be no usury, we shall lose the principal. As in generation, so in regeneration, we must be growing up to a full stature in Christ (Eph. iv. 13). As a traveller passes from town to town till he come to his inn, so the Christian from virtue to virtue till he come to heaven. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The power of diligence*:—I. Now as to THE HOMELY VIRTUE ITSELF, "giving all diligence." We all know what "diligence" means, but it is worth while to point out that the original meaning of the word is not so much diligence as haste. It is employed, for instance, to describe the eager swiftness with which the Virgin went to Elizabeth after the angel's salutation and annunciation. It is the word employed to describe the murderous hurry with which Herodias came rushing in to the king to demand John the Baptist's head. It is the word with which the apostle, left solitary in his prison, besought his sole trusty companion Timothy to "make haste so as to come to him before winter." Thus, the first notion in the word is haste, which crowds every moment with continuous effort, and lets no hindrances entangle the feet of the runner. When haste degenerates into hurry, and becomes agitation, it is weakness, not strength; it turns out superficial work, which has usually to be pulled to pieces and done over again, and it is sure to be followed by reaction of languid idleness. But the less we hurry the more should we hasten in running the race set before us. But, with this caution against spurious haste, we cannot too seriously lay to heart the solemn motives to wise and well-directed haste. The moments granted to any of us are too few and precious to be let slip unused. The field to be cultivated is too wide and the possible harvest for the toiler too abundant, and the certain crop of weeds in the sluggard's garden too poisonous, to allow dawdling to be considered a venial fault. Little progress will be made if we do not work as feeling that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." The first element, then, in Christian diligence is economy of time as of most precious treasure, and the avoidance, as of a pestilence, of all procrastination. "Now is the accepted time." "Wherefore, giving all haste, add to your faith." Another of the phases of the virtue, which Peter here regards as sovereign, is represented in our translation of the word by "earnestness," which is the parent of diligence. Earnestness is the sentiment, of which diligence is the expression. So the word is frequently translated. Hence we gather that no Christian growth is possible unless a man gives his mind to it. Dawdlers will do nothing. There must be fervour if there is to be growth. The engine that is giving off its steam in white puffs is not working at its full power. When we are most intent we are most silent. Earnestness is dumb, and therefore it is terrible. Again we come to the more familiar translation of the word as in the text. "Diligence" is the panacea for all diseases of the Christian life. It is the homely virtue that leads to all success. If you want to be a strong Christian—that is to say, a happy man—you must bend your back to the work and "give all diligence." Nobody goes to heaven in his sleep. No man becomes a vigorous Christian by any other course than "giving all diligence." It is a homely virtue, but if in its homeliness we practised it, this church and our own souls would wear a different face from what it and they do to-day. II. Note THE WIDE FIELD OF ACTION FOR THIS HOMELY GRACE. First, note that in our text, "giving all diligence, add to your faith." That is to say, unless you work with haste, with earnestness, and therefore with much putting forth of strength, your faith will not evolve the graces of character which is in it to bring forth. He has just been saying that God has "given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, and exceeding great and precious promises." The Divine gift, then, is everything that will help a man to live a high and godly life. And, says Peter, on this very account, because you have all these requisites for such a life already given you, see that you "bring besides into" the heap of gifts, as it

were, that which you and only you can bring, namely, "all diligence." The phrase implies that diligence is our contribution. "Diligence" makes faith fruitful. Diligence makes God's gifts ours. Then, again, the apostle gives an even more remarkable view of the possible field for this all-powerful diligence when he bids his readers exercise it in order to "make their calling and election sure." If we desire that upon our Christian lives there shall shine the perpetual sunshine of an unclouded confidence that we have the love and the favour of God, and that for us there is no condemnation, but only "acceptance in the beloved," the short road to it is the well-known and trite path of toil in the Christian life. Still further, one of the other writers of the New Testament gives us another field in which this virtue may expatiate, when the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts to diligence, in order to attain "the full assurance of hope." The last of the fields in which this virtue finds exercise is expressed by our letter, when Peter says, "seeing that we look for such things, let us be diligent, that we may be found of Him in peace without spot, and blameless." If we are to be "found in peace," we must be "found spotless," and if we are to be "found spotless" we must be "diligent." What a beautiful ideal of Christian life results from putting together all these items! A fruitful faith, a sure calling, a cloudless hope, a peaceful welcome, at last! (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Diligence:—1. That it is not enough to flee and abstain from our fleshly lusts, and so perform the duty of mortification, unless also we add unto the same, faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, and the like Christian graces. 2. That naturally we are sluggish, slothful, and dull in the performance of holy duties, and therefore have need to be often roused up, admonished, and warned to perform our duty with all diligence. 3. That we cannot attain unto any of the graces of God's Spirit without diligence, painful labour, and travail. 4. That the gifts and graces of God's Spirit are worth the pains taking, worthy I say, both in regard of their nature and in regard of the recompense which we receive by them. 5. That neither the unlawful pleasures of this world are to be sought at all with any diligence, or the lawful pleasures and profits thereof with all diligence. 6. That this diligence which is required must be total, both inward and outward—outward in every member of the body, inward in every faculty of the soul. To the first I answer, that God doth require this great diligence in the apprehension and application of His benefits. 1. Because of the worth and excellency of His benefits. 2. Because of their inefficacy unto us if not apprehended and applied by us. 3. Because of the great profit which we shall reap thereby, being by us rightly apprehended and with all diligence applied. 4. Because of the great diligence which Satan and his adherents, the world and the flesh, do use to deprive us of the same. 5. Because the work is great, we unwieldy, our time both short and uncertain, yea, and not being diligently apprehended as they are diligently offered, they are not afterward so easily attained. (*A. Symson.*)

Christian diligence:—I. THE GRACES WHICH WE ARE HERE EXHORTED TO CULTIVATE. II. THE CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THESE EXHORTATIONS ARE ENFORCED. By cultivating these various graces we shall show—1. That our piety is not merely speculative and nominal. 2. They will contribute materially to our spiritual illumination. 3. A consciousness of our personal acceptance. 4. Perseverance in the face of temptations and difficulties. 5. A joyful and triumphant death. (*Expository Outlines.*)

A downright Christian:—It was the saying of a shrewd thinker: "If it is worth while being a Christian at all, it is better to be a downright Christian." *Activity necessary to piety*:—To purity activity seems essential. Fill your room with the purest air, and shut it up for one month, and when you open it the air is foul. Its stagnation has made it impure. The same is true of water; no matter how pure it may be, let it become stagnant, and it grows fetid and deleterious. The spiritual world presents an analogy. Idleness is the stagnation of the mind, and, like that of the air and water, it breeds impurity. (*Christian Armour.*)

Connection with preceding verses:—"As He hath given us ALL things needful for life and godliness (so), do you give ALL diligence," &c. The oil and flame are given wholly by God's grace, and "taken" by believers; their part is to trim their lamps. (*A. R. Fausset, M.A.*)

Practice necessary to perfection:—A neighbour near my study persists in practising upon the flute. He bores my ears as with an auger, and renders it almost an impossibility to think. Up and down his scale he runs remorselessly, until even the calamity of temporary deafness would almost be welcome to me. Yet he teaches me that I must practise if I would be perfect; must exercise myself unto godliness if I would be skilful; must, in fact, make myself familiar with the Word of God, with holy living, and saintly dying. Such practice, moreover, will be as charming as my neighbour's flute is intolerable. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Exercise develops*

strength :—As in the body so is it in the soul, exercise develops strength. The Laplanders and the Patagonians are in climates almost equally cold. The Laplanders are a small race, the Patagonians a large one. What makes the difference? The Laplanders, supported by their reindeer, spend most of their time in indolence; the Patagonians are an active race, and spend much of their time in fishing and hunting. Hence the stunted development of the one, and the large dimensions of the other. It is thus grace expands by the activity of love. (*C. Graham.*) **Add.**—*Religion a principle of growth* :—Our age is writing “progress” on its banners. It bids us to forget the things that are behind, as incomplete and unsatisfactory, and to press toward those which are yet before us. We believe that the gospel, and it alone, adequately meets this deeply-seated craving of our times. Religion is a principle of perpetual progress. Setting before us, as the great end of our existence, and as the only perfect model of moral excellence, the Infinite Jehovah, it requires, and it also ministers an ever-growing conformity to Him. “Grow in grace,” is the apostle’s injunction to all recipients of that grace. It is the secret and rule of personal reform, constantly advancing, and of social amelioration, enfranchisement and elevation. 1. The Church needs in this age to be kept in mind of the great truth, that there remains yet much land to be possessed. 2. And if, from the peculiar state and needs of the churches, we turn to review the present aspect of the world, we seem to discover similar reasons why the churches should not, now at least, overlook the fact that the gospel is, to its obedient disciples, a principle of continuous advancement, a law of expansion and moral elevation. The world, falsely or with justice, is shouting its own progress, and promising in the advancement of the masses, the moral development of the individual. It is an age of rapid discovery in the physical sciences. The laws and uses of matter receive profound investigation, and each day are practically applied with some new success. Yet physical science can certainly neither create nor replace moral truth. The crucible of the chemist cannot disintegrate the human soul, or evaporate the moral law. But besides these advances in physical science, our age is one of wondrous political revolutions. It is again, even in lands and governments where political revolution is not needed or is not desired, an age of social reform. 3. And now, having seen how in the aspects, both secular and ecclesiastical, of our age, Christians were especially summoned to evolve what of progression there was in their own faith, let us see how in the inspired presentations of that faith, the fullest provision is made for man’s moral growth. Were there no other precept: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” would be sufficient to show how a limitless expansion of our intellectual and moral stature was set before us in the gospel. To man, the heir of immortality, it prescribes the law and warrants the hope of an immortal progression. There are stages in Christian attainment; and one but prepares for another, and, without all, the Christian cannot be fully useful or perfectly blessed. 4. From the word “add,” a heedless reader might infer that all the graces thus clustered were independent each of the other, and might be selected or omitted as each disciple saw fit; and that a man might at least be safe in having but the first, though in his negligence lacking all the rest. But such is not the apostle’s meaning. The believer is called upon to furnish not a single and isolated grace, but to supply “adding” one to another, the whole consenting train, and harmonious interwoven troop, the complete sisterly choir of Christian graces. He is to look upon the one in this cluster of Christian excellences as fragmentary and untuned without the others. The one grace is the supplement and complement indispensable to the symmetry and melody of all its sister graces. Now in this choir or train Faith is the elder born, and upon it all these other graces depend. It alone justifies, but as the old theologians were fond of saying, not being alone. It comes singly to the task of man’s justification, but in the heart and life of the justified man it does not come as a solitary, building there its lonely hermitage. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Christian growth* :—The word which has been translated “add” is a very pictorial term, and refers to a choir of well-trained musicians. The musical illustration of Christian growth is a very profound and far-reaching one. Keats says that “heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter,” implying that there is a music which appeals to the soul finer than anything that can be expressed by human voice or musical instrument. Beethoven was deaf, heard no outward sounds, but the soul of music was in him, and therefore with the deeper inner ear he heard continuously the Divine music to which all things are attuned. Music is the great principle of order. It enters into the essence of all things. The music of the spheres is not a mere poetic, but a

scientific phrase. Everything speaks to the ear of the thoughtful of the wonderful rhythm of the universe. What nature does unconsciously and will-lessly, we are to do consciously and willingly. We are to keep step and time to the music of the universe—and to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity—and thus practically make the statutes of the Lord our song in the house of our pilgrimage. There are two ways in which we may add to our faith all the graces which the apostle enumerates. We may add them as a builder adds stone to stone in his wall; or we may add them as a plant adds cell to cell in its structure. Whether, therefore, we take our illustration from architecture or from plant life, the essential point, as implied by the significance of the word "add" in the original, is that growth should be harmonious. Architecture is said to be "frozen music." This is true of the commonest wayside wall. What is it that makes the sight of a well-built wall so pleasing to the eye? What is it that makes building a wall such an interesting employment that children take instinctively to it? Is it not the love of symmetry—the delight in shaping large and small, rough and smooth, pieces of stone, adapting them one to the other, and placing them in such a way that together they make a symmetrical structure? And if we see this curious harmony in the humblest rustic building, how grandly does it come out in the magnificent Gothic cathedral, where every part blends faultlessly and carries out the design of the architect; and clustered pillar, and aerial arch, and groined roof soar up in matchless symmetry, and the soul is held spellbound by the poetry which speaks through the entire structure! There is a remarkable peculiarity in the text in the original which must be specially pointed out. The preposition which we have translated "to" should be rendered "in," and so rendered, we are significantly taught, that Christian growth is not by mechanical addition, but by vital increase. We are to add not "to" our faith, but "in" our faith, virtue, and "in" our virtue, knowledge, and so on. The first thing that we are commanded by the apostle to "add" to our faith is virtue, meaning by this term vigour, manliness. Our faith is to be itself a source of power to us. We are to be strong in faith. It is to be to us the power of God unto salvation, enabling us to overcome the temptations and evils of the world, and to rise above all the infirmities of our own nature. Our faith should be manifested as it was in olden times by a victorious strength which is able to overcome the world, which fears the Lord and knows no other fear. To this strength or manliness we are further commanded to "add" knowledge. In our manliness we are to seek after knowledge. The quality of courage is to be shown by the fearlessness of our researches into all the works and ways of God. We are not to be deterred by any dread of consequences from investigating and finding out the whole truth. The wisdom from above includes not only the knowledge that we are pardoned sinners, but also all that can furnish the understanding and fill the soul with food for its high capacities and boundless appetites. With wonderful sagacity the apostle commands us to add to our knowledge temperance; for there is a tendency in knowledge to puff us up and fill our hearts with pride. Temperance gives us just estimates of ourselves and of the world. It gives us the true knowledge of all things. It enables us to use our knowledge aright, to convert thought into action, and vision into life. We are to know ourselves and our relations to God's Word in order to regulate our life accordingly. To this self-government we must add patience. As the plant slowly ripens its fruit, so we are to ripen our Christian character by patient waiting and patient enduring. It is a quiet virtue this patience, and is apt to be overlooked and underestimated. But in reality it is one of the most precious of the Christian graces. The noisy virtues—the ostentatious graces have their day; patience has eternity. And while it is the most precious, it is also the most difficult. It is far easier to work than to wait; to be active than to be wisely passive. But it is when we are still that we know God; when we wait upon God that we renew our strength. Patience places the soul in the condition in which it is most susceptible to the quickening influences of heaven, and most ready to take advantage of new opportunities. But to this patience must be united godliness. Godliness is God-likeness, having the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus, viewing everything from the Divine point, and living in our inner life as fully in the light of His presence as we live in our outer life in the light of the sun. And exercising ourselves unto this godliness, our patience will have a Divine quality of strength, endurance, beauty imparted to it such as no mere natural patience possesses. We wrong God when we are unkind, ungenerous, and uncourteous to each other. But brotherly kindness is apt to be restricted towards friends only—towards those who belong to the same place or the same church, or who are Christians. It must,

therefore, be conjoined to charity. In our brotherly kindness we are to exercise a large-hearted charity. Such, then, are the graces which we are enjoined by the apostle to add to each other, to develop from each other, not as separate fruits dispersed widely over the branches of a tree, but as the berries of a cluster of grapes growing on the same stem, mutually connected and mutually dependent. This is the ideal of a perfect Christian character. It must have these parts; it must be characterised by these qualities. These are the fruits of the Spirit. These are the products of genuine faith. They are not like the links of an iron chain, manufactured separately, and mechanically added to each other; but they are like the living cells of a growing plant, in which one cell gives birth to another, and communicates its own qualities to it. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *An apostle's method of silencing objectors*:—"Add to your faith virtue." "You have faith." This is assumed, you perceive. "Now," says the apostle, "let your faith be associated with virtue." The word is used in only three passages in the New Testament. It is a word derived from the name of the Greek god of war, and hence would give some countenance to those who would simply make it to mean fortitude, or courage. Others take it in another sense, by associating it with rectitude of conduct—everything that is "lovely and of good report," in conduct. For my part, I do not see how we can do without either meaning. The apostle speaks, in one of his passages, of our being "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, to show forth the virtues of Him who hath called us": that is, "to show forth the praises"; so to exhibit God in connection with our faith in His Son, that men may praise Him, seeing how His name and His law are magnified in the work of redeeming love. In another passage, in the Philippians, the Apostle Paul uses, in a more general sense, the same word: "If there be any virtue"—if there be anything at all commendable. Now, I think, we must look at the word as having both these senses. "See," the apostle says, "that your profession of faith is in connection with such conduct that the name of God may be magnified in you and by you." But, then, why should we exclude the idea of courage? Right conduct in the midst of evil men; consistency of conduct in the midst of a world lying in the wicked one; forgetting all distinctions of time, or country, or circumstances, to take God's mercy, and apply it to our own souls; to accept Christ as God's well-beloved Son; to look right into the grave, and think of the judgment-seat will require fortitude; and take the word, in whatever sense you please, fortitude and courage and rectitude of conduct must, says the apostle, be associated with your profession of faith in Christ Jesus. But then the apostle says we are to associate also "knowledge"; that is, he enjoins upon us to be intelligent professors of faith in Christ Jesus. God puts none of our faculties under ban; God does not ask any man whom He has endowed with faculties, by which He may be glorified by His creature, to keep them in abeyance, to leave them uncultivated. We are to have the soul filled with wisdom from above, and to seek all kinds of wisdom, that we may consecrate them to the service of God. And mark how necessary it is for the believer in Christ Jesus ever to be growing in intelligence. New errors creep into the Church; new forms of error are presented to the believer. He is not to be satisfied with the instruction which God blessed to the bringing him into living relationship with Christ Jesus. We ought, as a matter of conscience, and as a matter of duty, to seek to increase our intelligence, that we may be ready always to give an answer to every man, and a reason of a hope that is in us. And then the apostle enjoins "temperance" upon us. The simple meaning of the idea is self-government, or self-restraint, rather. This was one of the virtues which the Grecian philosophers laid great stress upon, in this general sense, not simply in eating and drinking, but in everything that referred to the passions of men. As the apostle says, "Be angry, and sin not." If there is just cause of anger, we are to be moderate in our anger. And the Apostle Paul speaks of persons who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God"; that is, they are not temperate in their pleasures. There is nothing contradictory between this temperance and earnestness. Now, a man may be earnest without intelligence; he may be zealously affected even in a bad cause; but temperance—prudence, that is, moderation in our views, and in the mode of carrying out our views—may be found in connection with great earnestness. But, then, to "temperance" we are to add "patience." Even when you regulate yourselves most, and have your spirits under the directing influences of the Spirit of God, you cannot possibly live and act for Christ without finding some difficulties. "But," says the apostle, "just quietly endure all things; just patiently persevere in all that concerns your Christian course." "And, then," says the apostle, "associate also with these things godliness." The word means certain acts of worship pre-

sented to God; but it means more than this, it means a reverential spirit, by which our acts of worship are regulated. Is it not remarkable how much our religious worship is dependent upon certain influences, certain associations, certain circumstances? You perceive a man who has associated early in life with persons who frequent the house of God, and he contracts a kind of habit, and it is a long while before he can shake off this habit. Now, just change a man's position in society; see what the increase of this world's goods will do for a man; you see him slackening his attendance at the house of God, and leaving certain acts of worship that he once regularly engaged in. I have seen men who rigidly observed certain outward acts of worship when they were at home. I have seen them give the lamentable proof that it was all a matter of external influence. And therefore the apostle says, "Associate with everything that is right, everything that is virtuous in conduct, godliness": that is, a devout and a reverential spirit, manifested in connection with your devotedness to Christ and Him crucified. But the apostle says, "Not simply towards God, but towards your fellow-men." Christ Himself enjoined upon His disciples love towards each other, by which they should manifest that they loved Him. (*J. Sherlock.*) *Additions to faith*:—I. THE ADDITIONS WHICH YOU ARE TO MAKE TO YOUR FAITH. The apostle does not exhort Christians to seek after faith. This he supposes them to possess already. You say you have faith—but faith without works is dead, being alone. Faith resembles a foundation, of high importance in case of a building, but useless if no superstructure be reared. It is only a beginning, which is nothing without progress. What are clear notions unless they influence; or proper motives unless they impel? Moses had faith, and he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. 1. The first addition which he requires of you as believers is virtue—courage. This principle in the whole of your Christian course will be found indispensably necessary. You live in a world unfriendly to religion. It will be found no easy thing to deny yourselves and take up your cross, to pluck out a right eye. Some of these difficulties, indeed, might be avoided if you were only to be religious and not to appear so. If we trace things to their origin we shall find a thousand evils springing, not from ignorance but cowardice. Pilate condemned a Saviour of whose innocency he was conscious because of the Jews. Many of the Pharisees "believed on Him, but feared to confess Him lest they should be put out of the synagogue." The disciples were afraid and forsook Him. 2. A second addition is knowledge. And this very properly follows the former. It teaches us that courage is a force which wisdom is to employ; courage may urge us to undertake the war, but judgment is to manage it. And hence it will be easy to determine the nature of this qualification. It is practical knowledge; it is what we commonly mean by prudence, which is knowledge applied to action. It is what Paul recommends when he says, "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time." This kind of knowledge results principally from experience and observation; and he is blameable indeed who does not grow wiser as he grows older, and who does not make every day a correction of the former. Our own history affords us some of the best materials to improve and embellish our character. We should derive strength from our weaknesses, and firmness from our falls. But, alas! what numbers are there upon whom the continuance of life and all means of improvement seem to be thrown away. They have eyes, but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not. Whereas "the wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." "The prudent man looketh well to his going." He draws down his knowledge from speculation, and uses it in common life. He judges of the value of his notions by their utility. He studies his character and condition. He examines his dangers, his talents, his opportunities. 3. You are to avoid intemperance. There is a sense in which this word may be applied to the mind as well as the body. 4. You are to add to your temperance patience. There is an obvious and striking relation between these. The one requires us to bear, the other to forbear. The one regards the good things, the other the evil things of the world. By temperance we are preserved under the smiles of prosperity, and by patience we encounter the frowns of adversity. 5. Godliness is indispensable. Courage and prudence, temperance and patience, would be no Christian qualities, if in the exercise of them we were not influenced by suitable regards to God. Without this reference our religion is nothing more than morality. 6. We are to add to godliness brotherly kindness. 7. To brotherly kindness, charity. II. INQUIRE HOW THIS IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. The apostle tells us. It is by giving

all diligence. 1. These things deserve your diligence. It is pitiable to see men employing their zeal and consuming their strength upon trifles. But this cannot be said of spiritual blessings and graces. These are in the sight of God of great price. They are necessary to man. They purify his passions, and tranquillise his conscience. They enrich, they dignify him, they are his perfection. They make him happy. 2. Diligence will infallibly secure these things. 3. There is no attaining these things without diligence. Diligence is indispensable. (1) Indispensable if we appeal to analogy. You must labour even for "the meat that perisheth." (2) Indispensable if we appeal to the character of a Christian. He is a merchant, a scholar, a husbandman, a traveller, a soldier—the anxiety of the merchant, the application of the scholar, the hardy toil of the husbandman, the wearying progress of the traveller, the painful exercise of the soldier, are images which ill accord with indolence and ease. (3) Indispensable if we appeal to the promises of the gospel. These all require it, encourage it, produce it. (*W. Jay.*)

The Christian chorus :—The word translated "add" takes us back to an old Grecian custom; it means to be a chorus-leader, to furnish a chorus at one's own expense. The Greeks worshipped their gods through a hired chorus. When a poet had completed his work, he called upon the archon (or city mayor) to grant a chorus. He in turn appealed to a wealthy citizen called a choragus, who collected a chorus, hired a trainer, and in time rendered the poet's composition to the delight of the citizens and the glory of the gods. As a reward he received a tripod, which he consecrated, and in some cases placed on a monument. The Athenian street lined with these memorials was called "the avenue of tripods." Into this custom as a mould Peter pours the truth of God's gift and man's duty. Vers. 2-4 set forth God's gift to man, the composition of Jehovah, the sacred score, the expression of His life and love. Grace and peace are allotted to us; they are not obtained by effort, but are gifts of God. All that pertains to life and godliness comes through precious promises. He who takes the promises of faith takes the life of God into his soul. Here stands the poet with his finished work, pleading for a chance to help the people and honour the gods. He has put himself into the composition, it is as yet only a promise of harmony; the chorus is organised, trained, the people gather, the soul of the composer finds expression, the people are inspired to nobler lives, the gods are glorified. Until the archon accepts the poet's promise, and the chorus renders it, the poet is dumb. God has given Himself in great and precious promises, completed His work, and now calls upon men to accept and fill the universe with Divine harmony. Vers. 5-7 give us man's duty growing out of God's gift. His work is the inspiration to, not the substitute for our work. God operates, man must co-operate. The air is free, therefore breathe it; the earth is rich, therefore till it; the seed is vital, sow it; the sea is wide, launch out upon it. Opportunity means duty; gifts bring obligations. Peter is writing to Christians—to "them that have obtained like precious faith." Faith is a present possession, something assumed, to which other things are to be added. Yet faith is but one grace, one instrument in chorus; without it the others are useless; with it alone you can never render God's composition. A solo is not a chorus. Beethoven and Wagner cannot be rendered by one instrument; much less can God be set forth by one virtue. "Add to your faith virtue." Not virtue in the narrow sense of moral excellence, but of the energy which Christians are to exhibit, as God exerts His energy upon them. Faith in "the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" must be an energetic faith. The verb of life is passive toward God, but active toward men. The poet threw himself into his composition; the chorus was simply to take in what he gave, and pour it out upon others. God has put Himself into this gift of His; receiving it we are to yield our powers to it, and let His energy control us. A lazy Christian is a contradiction in terms. "And to energy knowledge"—intelligence, understanding, spiritual discernment. This looks two ways: understanding of truth, and discernment of what is right and wrong in life. As the years go by we should know more and more of God's will as made known in His Word. Astronomy is ever finding new stars. Christians should find new depths, new heights, and new breadths in God's Word as the years go by. "And to knowledge temperance"—self-control, the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions. Keep the beast beneath the saddle. Eyegate and eargate must be guarded lest the enemy capture man's soul, and the door of speech be kept; for "If any man offend not in word," &c. "And to self-control patience"—the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials

and sufferings. Not only endurance of the inevitable, but the heroic, brave patience, with which a Christian not only bears but contends. Faith, energy, self-control count for little unless you endure; there are many Galatian Christians, who run well for a time; but the crowns are given to men who complete the race. Quick response on the part of the soil is no guarantee of a harvest; depth is as needful as willingness. "And to patience godliness"—reverence, respect, piety toward God; the confession of human dependence upon God manifested in conduct and conversation. Having faith, energy, self-control, and patience, there is danger lest we lose the fine sense of reverence; danger that we become irreverent. At the beginning of the Christian life there is an awful sense of God; in too many cases this wears off, we become familiar with and degrade holy things and places, forget to bow in prayer, to close the eyes in worship. "And to godliness brotherly kindness"—love of the brethren. Nearness to Christ as the head means nearness to one another as members in particular; the muscles that bind the members to the head bind them to one another; the nerves that give the head control of the members are nerves of mutual joy and suffering. Godliness cannot be solitary and selfish, but must be social and unselfish; he who loves God must love his brother also. "And to brotherly kindness charity"—love, the broad affection which should characterise Christians, the love of men as men, "God is love." The object of God's love is the world; likeness to God means love to all mankind. Paul calls it the bond of perfectness, the sash which binds all other graces into place, the girdle over all; here it is the last instrument; without it you cannot render God's composition to the world. The first is faith in God, the last is love to man, for faith in God begets His likeness in us. Yonder is God, the great composer, bidding us render His composition. What powers He must see in us; what confidence in our powers He must have; what a calling is ours! When St. Cecilia played the angels responded; well may they respond when human powers are counted worthy to render God's opera. Oh, men and women, rise to the dignity of your powers and possibilities! God waits for expression, angels wait to hear God expressed. There are eight instruments called for, the octave, the perfection of harmony; though the chorus be what no man can number, yet at the heart of it is the octave, and God calls on each man to use the powers in himself; each man has the octave in himself, and is called upon to chorus his powers, to train his gifts. Then we have (ver. 8) the consequences of faithful service. Grace and peace are multiplied through knowledge, and knowledge comes through faithful use of these powers. The musician who gives himself to the works of the master gains knowledge of the score, and is transformed into a sort of human photograph, possessed by and giving out the genius of the composer. So the Christian who tries to render God's composition comes into a fuller knowledge of it, sympathy with it; God's thoughts become his thoughts, and God's ways his ways; he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him. The composition controls the performer. On the other hand, "He that lacketh these things is blind," &c. The word "blind" here carries with it a curious figure, "darkened by smoke." Smoke-blinded, squinting his eyes up, forgetting the door of entrance and exit, bewildered, he gropes about searching in vain for the way out of sin. Refusing to give himself to God's gift, to cultivate the Christian graces, his horizon narrows, his life shrinks; what he has mastered sinks from him: forgiveness forgotten, sin returns, and he is lost. Hear God's call to constant practice, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." God's work is done, Christ has offered the finished opera; in grace as in nature the end of His work is the beginning of your work; where the composer stops the performer begins, and at this point the composer becomes dependent upon the performer. Enter diligently upon your part of the task; "by patient continuance in well-doing" thou shalt reach the final reward. And that is "an entrance shall be ministered unto you," &c. "Ministered" is the passive of the same verb that is translated "add" in ver. 5. As the city honoured the man who assumed the burden of the chorus, giving him a public triumph, rearing for him a tripod on the broad avenue, so God shall minister to those who chorus His works of grace a mighty triumph in the kingdom of His Son. (*O. P. Gifford.*) *Apostolic Christianity*:—Men are very fond of looking at the Divine government from that side where it can be the least seen, and where they are most subject to the errors of their own fluctuating imaginations, and to the obscurities of philosophy, falsely so called. It is far better, wherever we can, to look at the great truths of the Divine moral government, at the mystery of God's dealing with men in this world, from the human side. And this is what is done in this passage. It is, in brief, the

inspired disclosure of the purposes of God in respect to men. What it is that the grace of God is attempting to do with those who are called in the Lord Jesus Christ, is set forth. We are called of God. In our version it is "to glory and virtue," but in the original it is "by glory and virtue," as if the call was not by the nature of man, but by the nature of God. By His own being, by the glorious and virtuous power of His own Spirit, He calls us up out of our lower life—out of that nature of ours which is physical. The apostle goes on to say, "On account of this, giving all diligence." You are called. The call is one which is to be answered. There is to be working together of the inspiration of the Divine Spirit and human endeavour, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you." "On account of this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." What is faith? Supersensuousness. Well, what is supersensuousness? It is all that truth which exists beyond the discernment of the senses. Now the apostle says, "Add to that faith virtue." "Add to this vision-seeing tendency of yours, which may etherealise itself and go off in a cloudy dream—add to this the practice of a wise and righteous kind. Add to your faith virtue, in the old Roman sense—true manhood." By the way, I have jumped a thought. It does not say "add to" in the original; it says, "Provide," or "develop in." It is as if he had had in his mind the thought of a plant. "Add to your faith, or in your faith, virtue; in other words, develop out of your faith virtue—that is, practical godliness; and in your virtue or from out of your virtue, develop knowledge." By this is not meant, evidently, that knowledge which we gather by our senses—scientific knowledge, ideas, facts; but a higher knowledge—that subtle intuition of truth which men have who live high and noble lives. That which is meant by temperance is self-government. And in temperance, or from it, develop patience—endurance—the spirit of bold, quiet waiting. "And to patience, godliness." That is, let your patience be not stoical. Let it not be stubborn, sulky. Let it be the waiting and endurance of a man who believes that God reigns, and that all the affairs of the universe are in His hands, and shall work toward good. "And to godliness, brotherly kindness." That is, let there be in your godliness a warm sympathy and affection, not only for yourself, but for your family, for all your near neighbours, for all your neighbours that are more remote, for all your townspeople, for all the world. "And to brotherly kindness, charity." Local affection and universal affection—add these. Here, then, is the apostle's conception of a Christian man's character, development, and destiny; and I remark—I. This ideal destiny of man is one that shall lead him into the likeness, into the sympathy, and into the participation of the Divine nature. The reason why we know so little of the Divine nature is, that we have so little in ourselves that interprets it to us. I have groped to see if there are not at least some traces along the line of this march, and I think I see some. I observe, for instance, in the progress of the lower animal in man up toward the higher, that when it reaches the human race, the difference between undeveloped men and men who are developed, is the power to discern the invisible. That is, men whose forces are muscular are inferior to men whose forces are mental. And when the apostle says that we are to be partakers of the Divine nature, I say that the declaration is in harmony with everything that I see going on in human nature. We rise away from the animal toward the spiritual. We advance from lower manhood to higher manhood. The line is from the flesh toward the spirit. Therefore, it might naturally be expected that Christian character would consummate itself in the development of the Divine nature. That is the highest form of spiritual existence, and when the apostle says this is so, I am prepared to receive it, and to rejoice over it. II. No man was ever converted to Christianity at one flash. No man ever built a house at a single blow, except in a summer dream. The conversion by which the Spirit of God starts a man, just starts him—that is all. It turns him away from the wrong direction. It turns him toward the right model. It gives his heart an inspiration for things higher, and then says to him, "Work out your salvation." A man who has a musical ear goes into a workshop and sees lying there large quantities of material of various kinds—iron, and steel, and copper, and brass—and he says, "Let me make these available." And he takes the various kinds of metal, and puts them into a furnace and melts them, and pours the liquid which they form into a mould; and when it is cool and brought out it is a bell. Such is the result of the combination of all these incoherent substances. And when it is struck it is musical. And he says, "I have hit it! It is perfect!" But it is a monotone; and after some thought he says, "No, I have not reached perfection yet. There is more material here. What if I should make another bell?" So he goes to work and makes a

second bell. And then he makes a third; and then a fourth. And some musician says, "Hang them up in yonder tower," and they are lifted up into the tower; and, swinging there, they ring out through the air glorious chants which call men to God's house. God has lifted up the spire or tower of the human soul, and has set in it some thirty bells; and they are all to be brought into accord. There are two or three that strike bass notes musically; but it is our business to bring harmony into the whole mighty collection of musical instruments that are swinging in the belfry of man's soul. No man is perfect until all his faculties are brought into harmonious play. God never put a faculty into a man which was not necessary; and if we are to be perfect, every one of our faculties must be developed and used. As God looks upon men, they are not perfect until they are built up into the lines and lineaments of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have partaken in part of the Divine nature. Then they are sons of God; and to be a son of God is something transcendently glorious.

III. The glorious ideal of Christianity, compared with all the current ideas, stands up in bright and rebuking contrast. How many are calling men to church-membership! How many are calling men to morality! How many men are called to philosophy! How many men are called to philanthropy! But such is not the call of God. God calls men to be partakers of the Divine nature. And the providence of Divine grace is working on that pattern incessantly. What the gardener means, and what Nature means, are very different things. What the grape-vine means is to drive out its branches, rank and strong, far and wide. What the gardener means is grapes; and therefore he cuts back the vine on every side. "Let me grow," says the vine. "Bear," says the vintner. "Give me more room for my leaves," says the vine. "Then give me more grapes for my wine," says the gardener. Men in this world are seeking to develop forces that shall be for their pleasure. God is meeting those who are His own with blows at every step, and beating them back. He is tempering this man's zeal by various shames. He is subjecting another man to such tests as shall compel him to come to endurance. In various ways God's providence is meddling with us. We are all praying that God's will may be done; but we do not like the answer to our prayer when it comes. The soul is a temple, and God is silently building it by night and by day. Precious thoughts are building it. Disinterested love is building it. Joy in the Holy Ghost is building it. All-penetrating faith is building it. Gentleness, and meekness, and sweet solicitude, and sympathy are building it. All virtue and all goodness are workmen upon that invisible temple which every man is. "Ye are the temple of God." The foundations are laid, the lines are drawn, and silently, night and day, the walls are carried up, tier after tier being laid; and when the temple is built it shall seem as if it were composed of precious stones—of beryl, and amethyst, and topaz, and diamond—so that at last when it is completed, and there comes the shout of "Grace, grace, unto it," it shall be a temple built in darkness to reveal light; built in sorrow to produce a joy which shall never die.

IV. If these views are generally correct, we may see in them the correction of many of the popular sayings and tendencies of the day. I am met at every step by those who say, "I ought to conform to the laws of my being." Which way is the eagle's nature, where he lies in his nest, or where he is, in the might of his power, poised under the sun, on a summer day? Is a man's nature that which he is born to, or that which he comes to by unfolding? Is a man's nature that which is furthest from, or nearest to, that which God meant should be the final estate to which he is to come? A man's real nature lies far beyond his present sphere. Nature in a man is not what he came from, but what he is going to. I am not, therefore, to take my models and patterns from behind; but this one thing I am to do—I am to forget the things which are behind, and to look on beyond, and to take my conceptions of true manhood and noble nature from the ideals which I form of God—and they are interpreted in my experience by God's Spirit. (II. W. Beecher.)

Combination of Christian graces :— You would think that flower-garden very defective which grew only one kind of flower, however beautiful that one may appear. It is the large variety of flowers that gives interest and pleasure in a garden. Thus, if you see a Christian with only one predominant grace, whatever it may be and however fine, he is lacking. It is the variety of graces, and their combination in the one life of experience and practice, that give charm and glory to Christian character, as it is the combination of colours that makes the light of the day. (Jas. Hamilton, D.D.)

An incongruous addition :— As it is always incongruous to see a mighty foundation with a trivial superstructure, a block of granite the basis, and a mud wall the building, a foundation of jasper, and the remaining corners all brick; so where there really is precious faith to begin

with, you grieve that there should not be added courage, knowledge, temperance; but wood, hay, stubble, trivial tastes, narrow notions, sectarian prejudices, a sour or censorious spirit, and manifold infirmities of the flesh and spirit. (*Ibid.*)

Faith.—*Faith the root of Christian life*:—When the Vatican issued the celebrated Bull Unigenitus, the occasion of so many scandals, and of such protracted controversy, and in which it condemned, as abounding with most portentous errors, the excellent commentary upon the New Testament of the pious Father Quesnel, it selected as one of those errors, a remark of the good Jansenist upon the chapter before us, that “Faith is the first of graces, and the source of every other.” And yet what else than this very sentiment does the language of the apostle here suggest? Faith is put by him first in order; and is it not so put by Peter’s Lord? (John iii. 36.)

I. FAITH, IN ITS WIDEST SENSE, IS TRUST OR BELIEF; confidence in the word, character, or work of another. Though requisite in religion, it is as much requisite elsewhere. Human society in its whole framework is so held together; and the kindreds and amusements and business of the world are presenting to the most earthly-minded, continual images and intimations of that faith which, when demanded of him by the Church and by the Word of God, he may sometimes affect to regard as strange and unexampled. The generous confidence of soldiers in a tried and heroic leader; the implicit confidence of his correspondents in a merchant of known means, and of proved integrity; the trust of the voyager in the intelligence and vigilance of the navigator; the unshaken assurance of a friend in the worth and affection of one whom he has long known and intimately loved—these are all but examples, in daily recurrence, of the use and the need, of the sweetness and of the power, of a reasonable faith and a well-placed trust. The faith of the gospel is something more than these, only as being trust in God. It is trust as to matters of higher concernment, and upon better warrant, and in a greater and better Being. It is a reliance on His true testimony. It is not irrational, for it has overwhelming evidence. Instead of its being, as the bigots of scepticism (for infidelity has its blind and bitter bigotry) represent it, a bandage for the eyes, and a manacle for the free hand, faith is really, to the eyes of the soul, a telescope bringing near the far glories of heaven: “the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for.” And it is, to the hand, a clue leading our steps out of the mazy dungeon of sin, and through the labyrinth of earth. It is a magnet pointing the voyager to his desired haven; the charter, to the criminal, of an undeserved and full pardon. And as this faith is trust in the truth of the ever-truthful God, it is highest wisdom, as it is reliance on the Omnipresent, the Almighty, and the everlasting Jehovah, it is the surest, the only safety.

II. And should it be asked, WHY HAS IT THIS PRIORITY IN THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM, we answer, it may well occupy this place of precedence in the scheme of man’s salvation, for various reasons. 1. Man’s history required it. Unbelief, the opposite of faith, had the primary place in man’s fall and perdition. 2. It occupies the first place, again, from the nature, respectively, of God and man. He, as the Infinite and Omniscient, knows much which man, as the finite being of limited faculties and existence, can know only through His Divine testimony. 3. Again, God’s unutterable tenderness and goodness have assigned to faith this post of precedence. The babe, yet but a prattler, may have full trust in the parent who cherishes it. Before it can reason, or even speak, it may believe in its father and mother.

4. And man’s besetting sin—the pride which, after all the deep descent of the Fall, clings so persistently to him, however degraded, made it fitting, that the mode of his acceptance before God should be one that allowed no occasion for boasting.

III. BUT WILL NOT A SCHEME OF SALVATION, THUS FREE AND INDISCRIMINATE, BREAK DOWN ALL VIRTUE, AND “THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE,” and abolish law, and holiness, and truth? So, in all ages, objectors have argued. But the providence of God, and the history of the churches, have sufficiently answered these cavillings. The faith that justifies is implanted by a transforming Spirit, and reconciles to a holy and sin-hating Father, and unites to a Redeemer detesting and destroying iniquity. Whilst faith then accepts pardon as God’s free gift, it accepts as the inseparable concomitants of that pardon, penitence for sin, gratitude to the Giver, ingenuous love, adoption into the household of God, and assimilation to the Elder Brother—the Head of that household.

IV. FROM THE NECESSITY OF ITS NATURE THE IMPLANTED FAITH BECOMES A ROOT OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH, AND A PRINCIPLE OF PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT. In its earlier stages faith is generally but feeble. That it should remain so, is not the will of Him who implants and who sustains it. 1. From the nature of faith, and of the human mind itself, faith, where well placed, on a trustworthy object, must grow and strengthen by exercise and continual repeti-

tion. 2. The growth set before our faith appears, again, from the character and structure of Scripture, the volume on whose testimonies faith fastens, and in whose rich pastures she must ever feed. God might have made it a book to be exhausted at one reading; or a record of the past, unavailing to the men of the present; or a mysterious outline of the future, of little clearness or usefulness till the times of its fulfilment had come. Instead of this, it is a book of all times, full of the ancient past, and the busy present, and the dread or gorgeous future. It has the simplest teachings interwoven inextricably with its most fathomless mysteries. Now, when faith is presented with such a manual, not to be mastered in weeks or years, but still evolving new lights to the latest studies of the longest lifetime, does not the structure of the book proclaim the intent of God, that faith should not sit down content with present attainments, and its as yet immature strength? 3. And so, too, the character of God Himself proclaims the same great law of the constant growth of faith. "Acquaint thyself with Him and be at peace," is the demand of reason, no less than Scripture. Man has capacities and aspirations that the earthly, the perishable, the finite, and the sinful can never satisfy. 4. The office and character of the Holy Ghost, the Author of faith, point to the same results. The Saviour Himself described the influence of this Spirit's indwelling "as a well of water" in the disciple "springing up into everlasting life." (*W. R. Williams.*) *Faith*.—I. *ITS NECESSITY*. 1. Our apostle, to build the house of Christianity, lays this as the foundation. Philosophy lays her ground in reason, divinity in faith; the first voice of a Christian is, "I believe." 2. The necessity of faith appears—(1) In respect of God (Heb. xi. 6; Rom. x. 14; Matt. viii. 13). (2) In respect of the devil (1 Pet. v. 9). He is too strong for thee if thou meetest him with thy virtue, or with thy good works; for he will object sins enough to outweigh them. Solon cannot meet him with his justice, nor Solomon with his wisdom; every poor sinner can overcome him with his faith (Eph. vi. 16). (3) In respect of thyself. (*a*) Thou art ignorant. There is no understanding of God but by faith. (*b*) Thou art originally corrupt, naturally hateful to God; nothing canst thou do to please Him, till thyself be first made acceptable to Him. The doer is not acceptable for the deed, but the deed for the doer. Hadst thou all the succeeding graces, and not this foundation of faith, whereby thy person is made accepted in the Beloved, when thou art judged, thou couldst not be saved. II. *ITS SINGULARITY*. Not faiths, but faith (Eph. iv. 5). There is but one faith in the church, as but one church in the faith; one faith in nature, not one in number. Every man hath his own faith, yet all have but one faith. III. *ITS PROPRIETY*. 1. "Your faith," because you have a right and interest to this faith. Divers gifts are appropriated to divers men; but faith is general to all the elect. 2. "Your faith," because every one must have a proper and peculiar use of faith. Thou canst not see Christ with another's eyes, nor walk to heaven on another's feet. IV. *ITS SOCIETY*. "To your faith"; "to" implies some accession. Faith is a great queen; it is base to let her go without a court and a train. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Virtue*.—*Faith and virtue*.—Isaac Taylor has told us we may find an illustration of this apostolic injunction by taking a view at large of church history. If we do so we shall "discern beneath the scientific phraseology of the passage, a condensed but comprehensive caution against each of those prominent corruptions that have developed themselves in the course of eighteen centuries. They are readily enumerated, and may be put somehow in this fashion." 1. Pusillanimous or inert faith. 2. The licentious abuse of the gospel. 3. A fanatical or haughty subjugation of animal desires. 4. Anchoretic pietism. 5. Sectarian or factious sociality. Thus our apostolic canon is seen to hold up as in a mirror the history of the degenerate Christianity of all ages." Now let us think of faith and manly energy combined. It would be better to inquire at this point, what is the New Testament conception of "virtue"? We have to thank the gospel of Christ for the force of the meaning which we at present attach to the word. You are familiar with the history and some of the literature of the great heathen nations—the Greeks and the Romans. You know what "virtue" meant with them. Patriotism, first and chiefly; willingness to endure all, to give up all for the safety or benefit of their country; fearlessness of danger; implacability of hatred of the enemy; scorn of physical suffering; insensibility to the common sympathies of men; the cultivation of a brave war-spirit; this was courage, manliness, "virtue," in those days. We have, as I said, to thank the gospel that the meaning of the word has changed, that we understand true manliness to consist in the full and free development of all that is good in human nature; the cultivation of some of those tenderer emotions which were so haughtily scorned; the recognition of the fact that, in quiet, unanswering

submission, there may be majesty of soul as true or truer than is evident in the man who does battle with fortune and writhes under her hand; that love, mercy, forgiveness of injury, are not tokens of an effeminate heart, but of manliness; that a man is most victorious when he conquers himself, and most free when he yields ready, grateful obedience to the will of God. The manliest man must be the Christian; and what strikes us chiefly in thinking of the great names of pagan history, men of the type of Aristides, of Pericles, of Socrates, of Decius, of Brutus, is that it was the inspiration of this truth that they lacked for their perfection. This manly energy, then, is to be cultivated, conjoined, mixed up with that faith in the promises of God which is the only true basis upon which spiritual character can be built. Now, such a command would not have been given if the apostle had not foreseen that the tendency of human nature would be to divorce these two things, as either incompatible with each other, or, at all events, as not necessarily connected. Some of you have not lived beyond the remembrance of your first Christian experience. What effect was produced upon you by the vivid consciousness that you stood cleared from sin in the presence of a merciful Father; that eternal life was yours, that all the promises of the rich heavenly inheritance were yours? Was not the effect that your inclination was just to sit still, and ponder thankfully the marvellous grace of God, in revealing such blessing, in assuring to you such a glorious future? Such a desire for quiet contemplative enjoyment of this new experience filled you, that you regarded with distaste anything which threatened to break in upon it. Now you see the wisdom of it all. Now you see the necessity of the apparent harshness of some of that life. As some one has said of the early Christians, "they were daily brought upon a path of danger which made them such men of action, of promptitude, and of courage, as they were men of meditation; while, more than any others, they lived in correspondence with things 'unseen and eternal,' more than any others also they wrestled with things earthly, being embarrassed amid common cares, exhausted by hunger, thirst, and toil, distracted by fears, and often actually engaged in encountering the anguish of cruel deaths. Thus they were compelled, by the very position they occupied, to 'mingle with their faith, virtue.'" Such has been, in varying fashion, the course of God's providence with all of us. Our nature is such that the active and the passive emotions must both have play, or the man is not proportionate in his development—the man is not manly. It is no small evidence of the Divinity of Christianity that such a precept as this is found as part of its ordinance, showing that the religion is adapted for the man by a wisdom above his own. Faith cannot thrive without some expression in action. Faith without activity ends in superstition. Now, just glance at the other side of the truth. There must be this Christian manliness evident and active, but it must have faith as its basis, as its very life. While language helps thought, language without thought would be nothing. Activity without faith leads to infidelity, utter and complete atheism. (*D. J. Hamer.*) *Virtue*.—I. Consider, first, WHAT THIS VIRTUE IS. No better suggestion has been made than that which takes it as meaning a certain manly energy, vigour, and firmness of disposition, which is the first outcome of Christian faith, and may well be the first aim of Christian effort. Now that strength of nature, firm tenacity of character, will at bottom be neither more nor less than a good strong will; for a man's strength is the strength of his will. And that being understood, what are the shapes in which this manly energy will manifest itself? There should flow from faith a tenacious vigour which masters circumstances and does not let them work with us as they please. True, the ship can only be carried by the wind and the currents, but, equally true, if there be a good strong hand on the tiller, and the canvas be wisely set, she can sail almost in the wind's eye. Circumstances do make us, but it depends on us what they make us. Though they supply the force, the guidance lies in the hand that holds the reins and pulls the bit. The strength of the Christian man will manifest itself in ruling outward things, and making them subservient, whether they be sorrowful or joyful, to the highest end of all, even his larger possession of a fuller Divine nature. And, in like manner, the "virtue" of my text will manifest itself in the rigid subjugation, by the energy of a strong will, of all my own inclinations, desires, tastes, passions, and the like; which all seek to assert themselves, and which the more mightily and ungoverned they work, the weaker a man is. In like manner, this manly energy, which all Christians are bade in the very first place to cultivate, will teach us independence of other people. Learn not to live upon their smiles, dare to be voices and not echoes, and to take your commandments, not from the habits of your class or of your calling, but from the lips which alone have power to command, and whose approval is praise indeed.

Let me remind you that the gentle Christ is the pattern of this manly force as of everything else. All that the world adores as power looks weak, hysterical, strained by the side of the calm gentleness of that life which bears no trace of effort, and yet is mightier than all besides. He is Power, because He is Love. II. And now observe THE ROOT OF THIS VIRTUE, OR ENERGY, IN FAITH. A faith which does not grow into virtue and knowledge, and all the other links in this chain is, if not dead, at least ready to perish if it has not vitality enough to fruit. And then need I say that the exercise of confidence in God, as revealed to us in Jesus Christ, has a direct tendency to produce this strong form of character of which my text speaks? Faith as the realisation of the Unseen will bring strength. III. And now a word as to THE CULTURE OF THIS "VIRTUE" BY OUR OWN EFFORT. The original word is very graphic and picturesque. It means, "Bringing in by the side of," when fully and clumsily and yet accurately translated. "Bringing in your diligence by the side of"—what? By the side of that, "partakers of the Divine nature." God's gift does not make my effort unnecessary, but rather demands it as its completion and consequence. The best way by which we can give diligence to make ourselves strong, is by nurturing the faith which strengthens. Get into the habit of thinking about Jesus Christ all through your days, get into the habit of bringing mind and heart and will under the dominion of the principles of the gospel, and you will find the strength flowing into you and you will be mighty by Him. And we can get this strength in larger measure, too, by the simple process of habitually acting as if we possessed it. That is to say, you may cultivate the habit of suppressing yourselves, of stopping your ears to men's voices, of mastering and coercing circumstances. The Will gets dominion by asserting its dominion. There are no better ways of evolving this strenuous vigour from faith than these two—First, live near the source of it—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." And then, exercise the little that you have got, and it will grow by exercise. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Virtue :—I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD. II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS CHARACTERISTIC AS BELONGING TO A CHRISTIAN. 1. What a Christian ought to be. Not feeble, vacillating, pusillanimous; but brave, strong, trustworthy. 2. How a Christian ought to endure. 3. How a Christian ought to resist. III. THE NEED FOR THIS CHARACTERISTIC. There is no high goodness without strength. IV. THE WAY TO THE ATTAINMENT OF VIRTUE. 1. A deep conviction of its necessity. 2. Fellowship with heroes who have embodied it. 3. Communion with its great source. 4. Exercise of as much of it as we possess. (*U. R. Thomas.*)

Virtue :—In common speech every moral excellence is called a virtue. We also give the name "virtue" to that outward conformity to the law of God which constitutes a good moral character. Thus honesty is a virtue; veracity is a virtue; chastity is a virtue, &c. It is evident, however, that the text does not use the word in either of these significations. It cannot intend by virtue moral excellence in general, since it goes on to enumerate several particular moral excellences, such as temperance, patience, godliness, and charity, which must be added to virtue in order to complete the Christian character. It cannot intend any one in particular of those moral traits which we sometimes call virtues, since in addition to virtue it specifies most of these by name. For the meaning of the apostle we must go back to the primary idea of virtue—which is, manhood, manly vigour, a courageous tone of mind. The old martial Romans, from whom our word virtue is directly inherited, used this term to denote primarily the sum of all corporeal or mental excellences in their ideal of a man. The use of virtue in the sense of power or energy is common in old English; and there are some traces of this elsewhere in our version of the Scriptures, which help to determine the meaning of virtue in the text. The Greek word here translated virtue occurs but four times in the New Testament. As used by Paul in Phil. iv. 8, it has the sense of moral excellence. But as used by Peter with respect both to God and to man, the word clearly denotes force, energy, power. There is another word (*δύναμις*) whose primary meaning is power, which our translators, following Wiclif, sometimes render by virtue, thus showing that they attached to virtue the old Latin sense of energy or force (Luke viii. 46; vi. 19). Here virtue denotes not moral goodness, but miraculous healing power. Wiclif uses virtues as the equivalent of miracles. Where our version speaks of the "mighty works" done in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, Wiclif styles these "virtues." Again, "He could there do no mighty work"; Wiclif reads, "He must not do there any *virtue*" (Mark vi. 5). Milton applies the phrase "celestial *virtues*" to the fallen "powers and dominions" of heaven, rising

“More glorious and more dread than from no fall.”

Here the word “virtues” conveys no idea of moral excellences, but is the equivalent of potentates. It is obvious, then, that in old English and in the first English version of the Bible the word virtue had its primitive Latin sense of manliness, a vigorous or energetic spirit, and that it sometimes retains this meaning in our version and also in good poetry. This is the meaning which most fitly renders the original term in the text. It is almost impossible to express this idea of virtue by any one English synonym. Isaac Taylor paraphrases it as “manly energy, or the constancy and courage of manly vigour.” The one word which comes nearest to it, while it has the abundant sanction of good English writers, is hardly domesticated in the pulpit; yet both the word and the thing were strikingly expressed by an honoured foreign missionary, when urging upon the American Board the immediate and thorough occupation of Turkey, with men and means for the service of Christ. Said Dr. Schaufler, “After all the discouragements and disasters of the Crimean campaign, official mismanagement, army jealousies, camp sickness, and the discomforts of winter, the soldiers held on and took Sevastopol, not by science but by pluck”—and what we need is Christian pluck to take possession of Turkey in the name of Christ. This is the virtue which all Christians are expected at all times to cultivate. “Giving all diligence, add to your faith *virtue*.” The apostle speaks to those whom he fully recognises as one with himself in Christ. The faith that bringeth salvation is already theirs. But they are not to rest in that faith as the whole of the Christian character and life. Add to your faith, virtue; as followers of Christ cultivate a true Christian manhood. I. IN WHAT THIS MANHOOD CONSISTS. II. ITS PLACE IN A COMPLETE CHARACTER. III. HOW IT MAY BE ATTAINED AND CULTIVATED. 1. The virtue of which the apostle speaks—boldness, vigour, courage, manhood—is not to be confounded with rashness. In his earlier experience as a disciple, Peter was sadly deficient in the very virtue which he here recommends, though he was by no means wanting in a rough physical vigour, and the courage which that inspires. 2. This manly virtue should not be confounded with wilfulness. Stubbornness of will is not strength of character. It is doggedness or mulishness, not manliness. If wilfulness were a virtue, then Pharaoh was the most virtuous of men. A resolute, unflinching purpose to do right, a will to honour God and to stand by truth and duty, a will which cannot be broken upon the wheel, nor relaxed by the fires of martyrdom, but like steel grows more firm and inflexible under pressure and heat—such a will is, indeed, a manly virtue. But “will-worship,” the magnifying of self-will, adherence to a position or course, not because it is known and felt to be right, but because it has been taken, and pride forbids to change—this wilfulness is as far from Christian manliness as a spoiled child is from an angel. 3. But the virtue of which we speak, while it is neither rash nor wilful, is always bold, firm, and determined in maintaining truth and performing duty: it is a manly and energetic tone of mind. (1) An obvious constituent of this state of mind is an intelligent conviction of truth and duty. “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” Steadfastness in purpose is impossible where the mind is doubtful as to the object in view. A purpose springing from mere feeling is apt to prove unstable, since feeling is a variable quantity. Manly resolve rests upon intelligent conviction. Strength of conviction gives courage to resolution. (2) But in order to this manly virtue, the principle of obedience to God must be established in the soul as final, above all personal interests, above all earthly goods, above all merely human custom or law, above whatever would obtrude itself between the personal soul and a personal God, its Creator, Ruler, and Judge. You cannot cower down a soul that rests implicitly on God. When Luther stood before that court of the German empire which held his life in its hands, it is said that he was the only person in the assembly who was perfectly undisturbed. Luther was ready to die for the doctrine of justification by faith, since he himself had added to faith—virtue, a manly courage, a holy energy of soul—proceeding from an intelligent and principled obedience to God. (3) One other constituent enters into this manly virtue—that is, frankness or sincerity in avowing one’s convictions of truth and duty. He who would be manly must be open. Frankness is not forwardness; it does not require that one should be always thinking aloud; neither is it bluntness; but it does forbid one from a selfish motive, to conceal his convictions when truth and duty are in question. When the Jewish Sanhedrin threatened Peter and John, and forbade them to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, the apostles fell back upon conscience and

the law of Christian obedience, and said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken to you more than to God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." That was Christian manliness. Peter had now learned to add to his faith, virtue. I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS VIRTUE TO COMPLETENESS OF CHARACTER IS EVIDENT WITHOUT ARGUMENT. There can be no sterling character without this. The annals of Christian martyrdom often exhibit this manly virtue grafted upon child-like faith. II. HOW SHALL THIS VIRTUE BE ATTAINED? 1. Study the examples of those who have manifested virtue. Look at Noah, standing up against the cavils of an apostate world to do the command of God—a preacher of righteousness. Look at Abraham, with firm tread walking trackless wastes to unknown lands, his courage rooted in faith. Look at Moses confronting the stubborn will of Pharaoh. Look at Paul, ready to face a Jewish mob, or the prejudiced Sanhedrin, or pagan governors and Roman captains, or the wild beasts at Ephesus, or the dungeon at Rome, and to stand in Caesar's palace as a witness for Christ. 2. To attain the full vigour of Christian manliness, you must exercise this virtue whenever you have opportunity. Virtues will not come to serve us upon great occasions unless they are trained and developed day by day. The young Christian should begin early to cultivate this holy courage—learn to say "no" to every solicitation of evil; learn to say "yes" to every call of duty. 3. Since virtue rests upon faith, you can strengthen and develop it by increasing faith as a living power in the soul. Much as we may discipline ourselves to virtue, our strength must lie not in ourselves and our purposes, but in God our Saviour. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." A living faith secures a manly piety. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *Virtue*:—The term ἀρετή, translated virtue in the text, denotes strictly manhood, prowess, manly qualities. Stephanus defines it by "*virtus, sed proprie virtus bellica*"; martial courage or valour. He cites a gloss on Thucydides i. 33; where "*arete*" is expressed by *industria, navities, virtus, fortitudo*; activity, zeal, manliness, fortitude. Suidas denotes "*arete*" to be "*Constantia et animi vigor*"; firmness and strength of mind. Homer applies it to his heroes to denote valour in battle, and other manly qualities. The Mycænæan Periphetes is said to have been "*superior in all kinds of virtues (ἀρετὰς), whether in the race or in the combat*" (Il. xv. 642). Here virtue denotes physical qualities, such as speed, strength, prowess. So the "god-like Polydorus" in the agility and valour which he displayed in fight, is said to have exhibited "*virtue of feet*" or limbs (ποδῶν ἀρετήν. Il. xx. 411). The same term is applied to the "*valour*" of Meriones (Il. xiii. 277), and to the "*bodily vigour*" of Menelaus (Il. xxiii. 578). This primary sense of ἀρετή is strictly expressed by the Latin *virtus*, from which virtue is derived. This, in its literal sense, is manhood, valour; and is applied to physical courage and to energy of character—vigour of mind in dangers and labours. Cicero speaks of something akin to virtue in animals, as in lions, dogs, and horses; but insists "*that virtue of the mind*" (*animi virtus*), being the offspring of reason, is to be preferred to "*physical virtue*" (*corporis virtuti anteponatur. De Finibus v. 13, 38*). He also speaks of "*the Divine force and virtue of the orator.*" Here *virtus* is a pleonasm, reiterating the idea of *vis*. (*Ibid.*) *Virtue*:—I. WHAT IS VIRTUE? II. AS EARLY AS THE DAYS OF APOSTLES THERE WERE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH THOSE WHO WOULD MAKE FAITH SUFFICE WITHOUT VIRTUE. Some really loving and practising piety, have yet, in their crude theories, discredited morality and virtue, for the purpose of extolling, as they supposed, religion. III. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER CLASS WHO PROCLAIM THE SUPERIORITY OF VIRTUE TO FAITH, and the sufficiency before God and man, for this life and the next, of virtue without faith. But if virtue be but the small portion of man's duties that he owes in this life to his fellow-mortals, and man be formed for another life as well as this, and have a God as well as human society to regard and propitiate, it seems impossible on any rational principle to establish it that the discharge of this small portion of his obligations shall be accepted in full for his neglect of yet higher duties to a yet higher Being. And if, in matters of human courtesy and friendship even, you are wont to look at the motive as determining the worth or worthlessness of the service rendered, does it not seem necessary even to the claim of true virtue for these social and human duties, that the man discharging them do it from right motives, from the true love of man and the paramount love and fear of Almighty God? From mere vain craving after honour and praise, men may discharge the duties. But are such duties, so prompted by lower motives, genuine virtue? Again, take a few of the more eminent of those whose virtues are thus held up as surpassing

the fruits of Christian faith. Take Hobbes, the philosophical oracle of the court of the last Stuarts. Take Hume, whom his friend, Adam Smith, pronounced among the most faultless of human characters; or in later times Bentham. And after a close analysis of the lives and influence of these men, do you not find the inquiry of the apostle remaining still in full force, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ?" Was the morality of any of these men superior to the average morality of their times? Did virtue do in them what faith achieves in the Christian—overcome the world? Again, did it tend to improve that world, recovering its degraded, and uplifting its oppressed classes? Go out as missionaries of the new lights of philosophy without Christianity; and who of you would hope to see the new creed, like the faith of the New Testament, teaching the barbarian, taming the cannibal, making freedom possible, and law and duty sovereign over the nations? IV. BUT TURN TO DWELL RATHER UPON THE UNION THAT SCRIPTURE MAKES BETWEEN THE TWO PRINCIPLES, which we have seen isolated and divorced, requiring as those Scriptures do, the man of faith to become the pattern of virtue, abounding in every good word and work. The problem is not to guide the sinless, but to recover the sinful. How can you efface the brand of sin on their souls? Morality has not the atoning calvary. It cannot call down on its pentecostal aspirations the rushing fires of the Holy Ghost. The virtue that would be thus recuperative on the masses must be preceded by a faith, with which shall go the regenerating power of God, and for which shall have been first provided the great remedial and reconciliatory process of the redemption. Let the Pharisee or the Sadducee go with another doctrine than that of faith to Zaccheus, would they have won his fourfold restitution of aught wrongly gained? The God that shall answer by fire, He is God. Faith can produce virtue. Look again at the way in which she instructs virtue. Read the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, or take the same apostle's discourse of charity and its fruits, in the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthian Church. Saw you ever such full, and brilliant, and unmatched portraiture of virtue as this? But beside these preceptive instructions, remember that all the doctrines and mysteries that faith receives have their practical lessons. The fall, and original sin, how they teach humility and dependence on God—the first lessons of moral progress. The incarnation and redemption—is that a mere logomachy? On the contrary, see in it a great scheme for the subdual of sin, and the implantation of hope, and love, and gratitude. But must faith produce always virtue? It must, or it is not genuine. The inseparable accompaniment of true faith in Scripture is repentance; and what is repentance but the practical and the outward and inward renunciation of sin? (*W. R. Williams.*) *Of Christian fortitude:—*

I. First, let us consider THAT WHICH MUST ACCOMPANY OUR WHOLE DUTY, THE MANNER OF PERFORMING IT, OR APPLYING OURSELVES TO IT, "GIVING ALL DILIGENCE." It is not to be confined to one point, but runs through the whole detail of the Christian graces which is here given. We should summon all the powers of our souls continually to attend this very thing, and watch every occasion of doing and of receiving good. The necessity of this will appear if we reflect on the constitution of human nature, and the Divine wisdom and condescension in accommodating to it the way of conferring the greatest blessings upon us. The blessed Author of our beings has a regard to their frame while He carries on His merciful designs towards us. He does not deal by us as unintelligent machines, but rational creatures. He does not make us happy without our own knowledge, choice and concurrence. I will add but one observation more on this subject, that religious industry will produce constancy, as its natural effect. Whatever obligations we are under to diligence in our duty at any time do equally bind us at every time; and there can be no sure evidence of our sincerity without a persevering steadfastness in the work of the Lord. II. I now come to THE FIRST PARTICULAR WHICH THE APOSTLE EXHORTS US TO ADD TO OUR FAITH, AND IT IS VIRTUE. This virtue carries in it the idea of hazards and difficulties, and the excellence of it consists in a magnanimous superiority to all dangers and all opposition. As it is peculiar to a probationary state, or a state of discipline, like ours, it is that without which there can be no real goodness, at least no steadfastness in such a state. The "flesh lusteth against the spirit"; our senses and inferior appetites always minister the occasion of evil. Now, these must be resisted by a Christian. Here, then, is another occasion for the exercise of Christian fortitude, which may in some cases require all our strength. How difficult must it be to stand unmoved against a train of sufferings in our outward estate. And how much invisible wicked agents may contribute to the

difficulties and trials of the Christian life, who can certainly say? Having thus shown you the proper object of Christian fortitude, or the occasion of its exercise, I will next consider the exercises and dispositions of mind which are necessary to it, or do concur in it. And let us, first of all, observe that it is very different from a blind passion. Nothing is more necessary in the whole of our religion than that we be sedate and deliberate; and particularly that our zealous resolutions for God be formed upon a just and solid ground of calm and mature consideration. Secondly, having proceeded so far, the next thing necessary is steadfast resolution. It is of consequence to us that we hold on in a religious way, that we endure to the end. Then certainly we should fortify our minds against temptation by firm purposes; we shall find the firmest we can enter into weak enough. Thirdly, the virtue which the apostle here exhorts us to add to our faith imports bearing trials, uneasiness and fatigues with equanimity. A Christian has the same sense of pleasure, profit, and honour with other men: and yet he bravely denies them. He has the same feeling of pain, and yet is not moved by it to forsake his duty; and herein he acts reasonably, for the tendency of such disagreeable sensations is overruled by superior motives; he sees such an excellence in religion, finds such an inward peace and comfort in his integrity, has such a solid joy in the prospect of a future glorious reward, as is sufficient to bear him up under all his present uneasiness. Here, then, is the exercise of religious fortitude. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*) *Christian fortitude*:—I. I am to EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF THIS GRACE OF CHRISTIAN COURAGE OR FORTITUDE. Courage, in general, is a temper which disposes a man to do brave and commendable actions, without being daunted at the appearance of dangers and difficulties in the way. 1. For what it is to be exercised. It is courage in Christ's cause; that is, in maintaining the profession of the Christian faith, and adhering to the practice of our duty. 2. Against what Christian courage is to be exercised. It supposes oppositions, trials and dangers in our way, else there would be no occasion for it. It is a temper for which there will be no room in heaven. (1) The power, the subtilty, and activity of the powers of darkness call for courage in a Christian. (2) The oppositions from within ourselves require courage. (3) The several discouragements or dangers we may meet with from other men, in the way of our duty, and even for our duty, make courage necessary. 3. Wherein or in what acts and instances it should express itself. (1) In deliberate and vigorous resolutions for God and our duty, upon counting the cost. (2) In the suppression of distracting fear of evils at a distance. (3) In a vigorous application to our Christian work, notwithstanding the stated and constant difficulties and oppositions attending it. (4) In a readiness to undertake hard and difficult services when God calls to them. (5) In a uniform steadiness of conduct under all the trials we actually meet with. II. WHAT MAY BE INTENDED IN THE EXHORTATION TO ADD VIRTUE, OR COURAGE, TO OUR FAITH. When we are called to make this addition we are only required to build the most proper and natural structure upon our most holy faith. The fortitude required by the gospel is distinguished from all other fortitude, not only as it is upon account of the truths and duties of Christianity, but as it is founded upon Christian principles. Christian faith is most fit to inspire with Christian fortitude. 1. Faith discovers Divine providence as engaged for us and with us in all our difficulties. 2. Faith proposes the Divine Spirit as directly provided to help our infirmities. Particularly for this very purpose, to inspire us with needful courage. 3. Faith represents our main enemies as already vanquished, and as having their chief power broken. 4. Faith gives us particular assurance that our trials shall not exceed our strength; either the strength we have, or that which shall be imparted (1 Cor. x. 13). 5. Faith sets in view greater evils to be feared from our cowardice than can be feared from our adherence to God. 6. Faith assures us of the certain and glorious success of our courage. That our endeavours against our powerful enemies shall issue in a full conquest (Rom. xvi. 20.) 7. Faith represents to us the noblest examples of such holy fortitude upon the same principle. Lessons: 1. Consider this grace of fortitude as a matter of the utmost importance in the Christian life. The variety of oppositions and difficulties in our way make it necessary. 2. Cultivate therefore your faith, in order to the forming of your minds to holy fortitude. 3. Use all farther additional means to fortify your minds. Be prepared for the worst, by counting frequently the cost. Make clear the goodness of your cause, for which you may be called to exert your courage. Carefully exercise a good conscience: without this the best cause in profession will be very faintly maintained in an evil day. (*J. Erans.*) *Courage*:—Whatever the Christian was in the early days, he could not well be a coward. He could not live in any fear as

to what people would say about him: there was no doubt about that. And he could not live with a miserable counting of the loss or gain that religion should bring him. He knew full well that it would mean abuse, loss, danger, perhaps death. So in the old time Christianity first demanded faith that took hold of the promises—and then demanded courage that held on to them at any risk though earth and hell raged furiously. To-day religion is not so much a battlefield as it is a hospital for sick and disabled folks; it is very often only a round of poultices and plasters and nourishing diet, where the talk is of troubles and trials and what we have to go through. Look at the company in which this valour is found. "Add to your faith valour." St. Peter is writing to those who have obtained like precious faith in the Saviour. But it is not good for Faith to be alone; to live in luxurious ease; hers is a high and sacred calling. So is it that at her right hand must stand the tall and stalwart captain of her guard, Courage, my Lord Courage, strong in action, resolute in danger, fearless always. And at her left is her Prime Minister, and councillor, old Knowledge, with lofty brow, and ready understanding of the times and its requirements, and skilful in devices for meeting them. Then comes the Comptroller of the Household, a goodly gentlemen of clear eye and of fair complexion, my Lord Temperance. Then cometh the Lady-in-Waiting, Patience, fair Patience, whose cheery song keepeth the palace bright in troublous times. "Bear bravely," Patience sings, "it is all well that cometh down from Him; and it is ever well for them that journey up to Him." Then cometh the Queen's chaplain, Godliness, who moveth amidst the rest having a deep and holy sense of God's claim, a steadfast eye to His commandments, a lofty sense of His greatness, and a glad obedience to His will. Then come the two almoners who dispense the Queen's bounty—Brotherly Kindness and Charity. Thus only is Faith secure, and thus only can she rightly discharge all her duties and claim all her honours, when she is attended by each of these.

I. THAT CHRIST'S RELIGION ASKS FOR COURAGE SHOULD GIVE IT A STRONGER CLAIM UPON US. I ask you to-day to come and pledge yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, because it does need courage. II. WITH MANY IS IT NOT JUST THIS ONE THING—THE LACK OF COURAGE—WHICH IS THE UNDOING OF THE LIFE? Some want courage to decide for Christ. III. IN THESE BUSY TIMES MANY A MAN WANTS COURAGE TO DEAL WITH CIRCUMSTANCES THAT HINDER HIM. "Well," says somebody, indignantly, "must I sacrifice my business?" Yes; or anything else, if you can dare to call it a sacrifice, seeing what infinite gain is at stake. IV. OTHERS NEED COURAGE TO DEAL WITH DAMAGING INFLUENCES ABOUT THEM. There is some companion, or some pursuit, or some pleasure that takes away all the heart and appetite for the service of the Lord Jesus. It leaves you like a garden in winter—nipped, withered, dead, without bud or bloom or beauty. There are things that make prayer such hard work that it seems impossible, and the Bible is a weariness, and the service of God is a dreary restraint. Resolve by God's help to have done with them bravely for the sake of the King, and for the sake of your own true life. V. THERE ARE OTHERS STILL WHO NEED COURAGE TO DEAL RESOLUTELY WITH BESETTING SINS. Your only hope is to add to your faith courage—to have no terms with the enemy. You must perish or your foe; the two cannot live together. (*M. G. Pearse.*)

Christian courage:—It is not physical courage, the courage of the brute, the courage of the man without nerves; it is the courage of the man who has moral sense developed and spiritual ideas strong. I suppose you have heard the story of the Duke of Wellington, who, seeing in the thin red line which shines in Britain's glorious story a man trembling in battle but who would not retreat, said: "There is a brave man; he knows his danger, and he faces it." Another story is that two men were once standing together in battle, one strong with accumulated flesh and blood, phlegmatic, not knowing what fear was, and the other thin and pale and nervous; and as he trembled so much that his spirited horse trembled also, his phlegmatic companion turned to him and said: "Humph! afraid, are you?" "Yes," said he, "if you were as much afraid as I am you would run." And so sometimes in the Christian life apparently the weakest one is called to bear the heaviest strokes of Providence. He staggers under his affliction even as Jesus, pale and weak and trembling, staggered beneath the Cross. So we are not called to physical courage—that is good enough in its way—but to moral courage. (*W. E. Griffis, D.D.*)

Goodness is true manliness:—There is nothing really brave, really manly, really womanly, on earth, unless it is also good. To be good and to do good—that alone is manly. There are two Latin words for man. The one—*homo*—means merely a man as an animal distinguished from a dog or a horse. But the other word—*vir*—means a man in the best and truest sense; and that gives us our word "virtue." Never forget, virtue

and manliness are one. (*Canon Teignmouth Shore.*) **Knowledge.**—*Knowledge* :—**I. WHAT EXACTLY IS MEANT BY THIS SECOND LINK OF OUR CHAIN.** What is meant here is a practical insight into what Christian people ought to do, not only in general, but at each moment in accordance with the circumstances and demands of the instant. The more we can rule our lives by the intelligent application of principles, and not by mere use and wont, instinct, imitation, mechanism, necessity, the more we shall be the men and women that God meant us to be. But Peter does not stop with such a mere toothless generality as that; for everything depends on what the law is which we apply to conduct. So this knowledge is not only of what it is right and wise to do at the moment; but it is knowledge of what it is right and wise, on Christian ground, to do at the moment and in the circumstances. Let the perception of duty be a perception illuminated and determined by the principles of the gospel, and bring that law to bear upon all life. Such a continual reference of daily exigencies and circumstances to the great principles that lie in Christ and His revelation will take the place of that selfish and secular tact and instinct which the world prizes so highly. It will give delicacy to roughness, sympathy to the hard, tact to the clumsy, and will bring a simplicity of motive and a suppression of self which are the best possible precautions for seeing clearly what the will of the Lord is. “Supply in your strength knowledge.” **II. THE CONNECTION OF THIS LINK IN THE CHAIN WITH THOSE THAT GO BEFORE.** The believing man is the truly sagacious man. The real prudence is got in communion with Jesus Christ. The eye that looks at the sun is blinded, but the eye that looks constantly at God sees all things as they are, and is delivered from the illusions which deceive the rest of mankind. To see all in God and God in all, that is the way to understand the depths of things, and to know what, at each moment, they call upon us to do. What we want to know is not only what circumstances and self-advantage require, but what Christ requires, and that we shall learn when we keep near to Him in faith. In like manner the strength, of which my text has been speaking, naturally produces—when it gets fair play, and when men give themselves honestly to work out all that is in it—it naturally produces this happy certitude and illumination upon the path by which we should walk. **III. THE PRACTICAL DUTIES WHICH COME OUT OF THIS EXHORTATION.** 1. First, study, and keep very near the pattern of Jesus Christ. There is nothing more wonderful in that wonderful life than the unconscious facility and certainty with which He did the very act, and said the very word that the moment required. 2. Then, again, I would say try and get a more firm and intelligent grip of the principles of the New Testament as a whole. I believe there is the weakness of much of our modern popular Christianity. You do not read your Bibles half enough. 3. Let me say again what is only a deduction from what I have already said—regard all Christian truth as being meant to influence conduct. We write up in churches the Creed on the one side, and the Ten Commandments on the other. Christ is creed and Christ is commandment. 4. Again, let us see to it conversely, that we bring all the actions of our lives under the grip of our Christian principle. The lawyers say, “*De minimis non curat lex.*” “The law does not take care of the very small things.” Perhaps it does not; Christ’s law does. It stretches out its hand over all life, and the smallest duties are its special sphere. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) “*To virtue knowledge*” :—Virtue without knowledge were like a beautiful dandel blind, or a fair house that hath not a window in it. Virtue is like a pearl in the shell; there must be knowledge to break the shell, or we cannot come at the pearl. Ignorance is dangerous. Thus the devil carries many to hell, as falcons carry their hooded hawks, without baiting. There is no wretchedness so pitiable as that which is not known to the sufferer. If men will not know God, God will not know them. The work of regeneration begins at illumination. The first thing that sunk in our first parents was knowledge: now where the wound began, there must begin the medicine. Knowledge is the light of virtue. 1. By knowledge is here meant an insight into heavenly things. 2. This earnest exhortation to knowledge intimates that naturally we want it. The first way to knowledge is to know our own ignorance. 3. Knowledge is not the cause of sin, but ignorance; for virtue is begotten and nourished by knowledge. 4. Seeing we must join with our faith knowledge, it is manifest that an ignorant faith is no faith. 5. This knowledge must be added to virtue also. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Knowledge* :—**I.** There is in the Church of God, as well as in society generally, a DISPOSITION TO EXALT PRACTICE AT THE EXPENSE OF THEORY; AND YET ALL PRACTICE IS BUT THE EMBODIMENT OF SOME THEORY. There is in some minds a disposition to mock at all science and all patient thought as being but idle and

unprofitable speculation. Common sense is lauded at the expense of study and research. The labourer is exalted above the thinker, and the man of experimental activity is pronounced the truly useful, whilst the studious and reflecting is denounced as a thriftless and unprofitable cumberer of the earth. But society and the Christian Church need the thinker as much as they require the labourer. Every seaman is not expected to construct his own nautical tables, or every miner to build his own steam-engine that may uplift the ore or drain off the superfluous waters. Yet without the aid of the astronomer and the machinist, of what avail would be the practical energy of the hardy mariner, or the begrimed miner toiling in his ever dark and narrow gallery? So, in religion, a just, religious practice must grow out of just, religious principles. And although a simple and childlike faith may readily grasp the great outlines of these principles, it requires that faith should be patient and studious, in order that these principles may be fully understood and justly stated, may be seen in their due position, and may be held in their just proportion, and in their mutual dependence and symmetry. II. Now our text and, in full harmony with it, the entire body of the Divine Scripture, require THAT THE CHRISTIAN PROFIT IN HIS RELIGIOUS COURSE, BY GOING ON FROM FAITH TO VIRTUE, AND FROM VIRTUE TO KNOWLEDGE. The first great necessity of our nature is that we know ourselves, that we learn from the book of God our origin, destiny, and redemption. But to have a just and safe knowledge of ourselves it is needful that we know our God. Framed by Him and for Him we cannot ascertain the moral bearings or calculate, so to speak, the latitude and longitude of our own drifting course over the ocean of life; but, as we refer to Him whose will is the meridian line by which we estimate the position of all beings, and whose favour is the Light and central Sun of our moral life. And knowing ourselves, and knowing our God in Scripture, we are called upon to know this world, that portion of it called Nature which we can reach and survey; and that march of the Divine purposes in the government of the race which we call history; and to know life, or those arts, and occupations, and relations, and human laws, and local customs that are to affect us in the discharge of our duties to our fellows. We are required to know man, not only as he should be, and as in his original innocence he was, but man as he is, in his selfishness, craftiness, and wretchedness, and yet, withal, in the long and tangled train of all his susceptibilities, and his capabilities, and his hopes and his fears, his grovelling desires and his soaring aspirations. III. THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AS FOLLOWING AND TENDING TO GUARD AND CROWN FAITH AND VIRTUE. Why should it be set here, and not at an earlier place, in the rank of Christian excellences? 1. We suppose the reason to have been this: it was to remind us of a great truth, that practical obedience or virtue is necessary if we would gain any great advancement in Christian knowledge. Not only is such obedience an evidence of a sound understanding, but it is also a safeguard for it. No man can keep a healthy and sound intellect who is perpetually sporting with known error, and wallowing in known iniquity. The very conscience may become defiled, and the eyes of the soul contract blindness, by disuse and misuse. 2. Virtue was again made to precede knowledge, in order to protect against a great error that began to be promulgated ere the first apostles had quitted the arena of the Church militant for the thrones of the Church triumphant. Gnosticism, or the system of knowledge, claimed in the early Christian Church the highest prerogatives. It sought to plant knowledge, or the teaching of its own wild and foul philosophy, as the very basis of faith. Much of the Rationalism and Pantheism of our own times proceeds on the same most false and most fatal principle. Instead of going out of ourselves to find, by faith in God's testimonies, what He is and what we ourselves are, and to obtain the recuperative grace that sanctifies the heart and so enlightens the intellect, this system drags the God and the oracle and the revelation into man's self, makes its own purblind reason, and its own hasty and crude utterances, in the natural state of alienation from God and moral blindness, the law of judgment, to God and to His teachings. 3. The gospel does not proscribe knowledge: it requires it. It makes knowledge possible to the savage by awakening aspirations where before were only appetites; and by letting out on every side the horizon of his cribbed and narrow intellect, into the wide eternity and the high infinity around and above him. It not only patronises and diffuses knowledge; it classifies it as humanity unaided cannot do it. See in modern missions the usefulness and glory of consecrated learning in a William Carey and a Henry Martyn, a Morrison and a Judson; and is it not evident that, whatever else the gospel be, it is not the patron or the parasite of ignorance? 4. Physical science in our day has made rapid progress. Religion

frowns not on it. But far as physical science claims to be paramount and sufficient and exclusive, it has usurped honours that are not its due. It would, in so doing, treat man as a being of mere bodily organs, without conscience, without a God, and without an eternity; and in so regarding our race it robs and degrades us. Religious knowledge comes in to prevent the degradation and to denounce the usurpation. Religious knowledge comes in to remedy the deficiency, and to right the wrong. Political enfranchisement, or the recovery of the rights of the masses, is another most popular subject of thought and debate. But when was humanity so elevated as when the Creator assumed its likeness in Bethlehem? How is fraternity to be expounded and established, but by bringing men to look on themselves, as being in common amenable to the Last Judgment, and as being also in common interested in the great propitiation? The gospel it is, then, that gives the best knowledge; ascertains the relative rank and worth of all knowledge; popularises, diffuses, and defends it; and above all gives to man, the sufferer, the knowledge of the Consoler; and to man, the sinner, the revelation of the atonement; and to the groping captive of sin and heir of the pit, announces liberty and holiness, citizenship in heaven and sonship with God. (*W. R. Williams.*)

*Of knowledge:—*I. WHAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS EXHORTATION? Knowledge is an attainment very suitable to a reasonable nature, and is the glory of man because it is the improvement of that faculty which is one of his distinguishing privileges. But there is a great diversity in the kinds of knowledge, which chiefly depends on the quality of the object and the importance of the ends it serves. That knowledge which the text recommends is, according to this rule, the most valuable (Prov. ix. 10.) If we observe the connection of the apostle's discourse, that he has placed knowledge in the middle of the Christian virtues, it will appear plainly enough that he means a right understanding of them, such a knowledge as is necessary to our practising them. We should constantly study to be more and more acquainted with the Christian virtues, to understand the mind and will of God, and be making daily proficiency in the exact knowledge of our duty. We should use our own active endeavours that we may grow in knowledge, for the purposes of usefulness and goodness. Secondly, another thing intended in this exhortation is a disposition to improve knowledge to the proper practical ends of it.

II. THE REASONABLENESS OF OUR ENDEAVOURING TO ATTAIN KNOWLEDGE, AND MAKE DAILY PROGRESS IN IT. If knowledge be absolutely necessary to our doing our duty acceptably, then all the arguments which press us to the one do also oblige us to the other. First, this is the way to be preserved from snares, of which we are always in danger through temptation and the deceitfulness of sin. Secondly, in proportion to the measure of our knowledge, so is our steadfastness; if it is of a rational kind. Thirdly, this unsteadiness, together with weakness of understanding, which is one cause of it, renders men in a great measure unprofitable to the world and to the Church. There is not anything a Christian should have more at heart than to promote the common edification of the body of Christ. And that this may be effected, adding knowledge to our faith and virtue is the best expedient.

III. SOME DIRECTIONS FOR ATTAINING USEFUL AND SALUTARY KNOWLEDGE.

1. The first is a high esteem of it. If it be pleasant to our souls, if we have a just sense of its excellency, and thus our affections are captivated to it; it is the best preparation of mind we can have for this most important acquisition.
2. Let us use the means of attaining knowledge with great diligence and care. There is no other way to prove our sincerity and our love of wisdom.
3. But it is above all things necessary that we use the means of knowledge, and particularly that we search the Holy Scriptures without prejudice and prepossession.
4. The best means of attaining to religious knowledge, is doing what we know to be the will of God. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*)

*Knowledge:—*The meaning of the term "knowledge" must be ascertained by a comparison of the text with other passages in which this word occurs. It is of course knowledge with respect to spiritual things and religious duties of which the apostle here speaks. This word is used in the New Testament some thirty times, and with various shades of signification. Sometimes it denotes a supernatural gift, knowledge by immediate inspiration. Perhaps it is in this sense that the "word of knowledge" is classed with the gifts of healing and of tongues, and with other miraculous powers. But since all Christians are exhorted to add knowledge to their faith, the apostle cannot intend a miraculous gift which God only could bestow. And for the same reason he cannot here intend the power or faculty of knowing in which sense the word is used when it is said that "the love of Christ passeth knowledge," *i.e.*, is beyond the natural comprehension of men. We cannot add a new

sense or faculty to our natural endowments. Again, the word "knowledge" is used for the object of knowledge, and especially the system of truth made known in the gospel. But this must be known, in a measure, before we can have faith; and the knowledge spoken of in the text comes after faith. Knowledge is used also to denote a general apprehension of religious truth; but, as this is essential to the act of faith in Christ, it could hardly be referred to as a something to be added to faith. Isaac Taylor says this knowledge is "neither human erudition nor general intelligence, but that specific knowledge of which the gospel is the subject." There is another use of the word which applies it to the deep, clear, and cordial perception of truth, followed by the discriminating adaptation of truth to practical ends. Thus the apostle Paul speaks of the Christians at Rome as "full of godness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another" (Rom. xv. 14); *i.e.*, they possessed that discriminating insight into truth which would shed light upon questions of practical duty. Knowledge is a spiritual apprehension of Divine things, forming and controlling the practical judgment. A soul informed by such knowledge discerns the way of truth and duty. This knowledge is not the mere perception of the truths of the gospel in their objective form, but an apprehension of gospel truths in their inward spiritual relations. I. WHAT THIS KNOWLEDGE IS. II. HOW IT MAY BE CULTIVATED. III. THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE IN ITS EFFECTS. 1. This inward experimental knowledge of Christ and His truth differs from the intellectual perception of truth, just as the feeling that we know the mind and heart of another differs from the knowledge of his person which we gain through the eye; it is the difference between heart knowledge and knowledge merely by perception or intellection. Now we may know Christ, and yet may not know Him; may know Him as to His person revealed as Divine; we may know Him as to His character recorded in the four Gospels; we may know Him as to His doctrine and His work; and still we may come far short of really knowing Christ. Such knowledge is objective; *i.e.*, it exists in our thought as an object, and does not bring us into personal sympathy with Christ as our Saviour and Friend. It is in the brain but not in the heart. 2. And here, again, this knowledge differs from faith. Faith is that belief in Christ upon the evidence of the Gospels which leads the soul to rely upon Him as its Saviour, and to commit itself to His service. This faith rests upon a degree of knowledge as its warrant. But having gained this faith, and rested ourselves in it, we are exhorted to add to it knowledge; not the mere knowledge of the doctrine of Christ as a Saviour—for that we have already—but knowledge of Christ Himself, which comes through the heart, proving His doctrine, His promises, His love, in its own blessed experience. 3. But this inward knowledge of Christ has its outward expression in a judgment wisely exercised upon truth and duty. We need to cultivate the judgment as well as to fortify the spirit, to attain to a sound discernment of duty as well as to firmness in duty. It is a proverb that discretion is the better part of valour; a critical judgment as to the time and manner of acting is important to the success of the boldest and bravest action. In his description of the good man the Psalmist happily combines a sound judgment with boldness and firmness as essential qualities of his character. "He will guide his affairs with discretion; surely he shall not be moved for ever. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid." Such knowledge is not what men of the world call prudence, which is exercised more in the cautious avoidance of evil to one's self than in devising and executing that which is good. There are two or three words which somewhat approach to this meaning—discernment, discretion, and discrimination; these all in their radical idea mean "to separate," "to distinguish," to "make a difference," especially between the true and the false, the right and the wrong, in theory and in practice. This discrimination as to truths and motives duly exercised by the mind itself, and faithfully applied to our outward conduct, constitutes knowledge as a practical thing. IV. HOW SHALL THIS KNOWLEDGE BE ATTAINED? 1. By the prayerful study of Christ as He is set before us in the gospel. The mere tourist sauntering through a gallery of art recognises in one painting a work superior to the rest; but the artist lingers before that picture and scans its every point till, without the help of catalogue or cicerone, he discovers it to be a Titian, a Tintoretto, a Murillo, and feasts his soul upon those diviner touches that reveal the master's hand. You must not look only, or read by catalogue or note-book, but must study. Prayer is the life element of such a study. 2. We gain this knowledge by a diligent and teachable seeking after the will of Christ. The spirit of obedience helps to the knowledge of duty. This determination to do the will of Christ is like a signal rocket piercing the gloom of night from

a ship on an unknown shore. 3. We gain this knowledge by studying questions of right and duty in the closet. The place for calm, mature judgment is the place of secret prayer. 4. We may gain this knowledge by being willing to learn, and to correct mistakes. The key of knowledge is humility. 5. We may cultivate this knowledge by often testing ourselves by our principles. If we were careful to keep a daily balance-sheet of our actions and principles, we should be more quick to detect errors of judgment, and to increase our stock of practical wisdom. True principle is a fixed quantity. It rests upon the eternal base of truth and justice, and is firm as the pillars of heaven. As the old Egyptians took their astronomical bearings from the sun-line upon the pyramid, so should we take our moral bearings by the light of Christ's teaching and life, giving the meridian line of principle and duty.

V. THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE IN ITS EFFECTS. 1. This knowledge, combined with firmness in faith, gives beauty and dignity to character. We have seen that virtue gives energy, strength, resolve; but a character in which force and earnestness predominate is one-sided; may easily run into extremes. 2. This knowledge gives us power over ourselves. Man was created a power, and not a thing. In proportion as the soul gains a true spiritual power over its inferior desires does it become a power over the world. 3. This knowledge gives us power for good and even great achievements. It is no modern discovery that "knowledge is power." 4. This knowledge of Christ gives us power over evil and over death. It is half the battle to know the enemy, his ground, his resources, and his tactics. Classical usage helps us little as to the meaning of *γνώσις* (gnosis) in the New Testament. Plato uses it commonly of "understanding," though sometimes of a deeper philosophical insight. But with the Neo-Platonists, gnosis came to be almost a technical term for higher insight, deeper wisdom, a certain mysterious knowledge reserved to the initiated. In this sense of deep spiritual insight, but without the associations of mysticism or mystery, the word gnosis is often used in the New Testament. It is a term peculiarly liable to abuse by enthusiastic minds, and before the close of the apostolic age there began to appear a sect of Gnostics, who claimed to have "an extraordinary insight into Divine things beyond the system of faith, which the people commonly received on authority." This insight they professed to have gained through certain secret traditions handed down from Christ, the higher light. Their gnosis corresponded to the esoteric doctrines of the old Greek philosophers, mysteries to be communicated only to the initiated. The Epistles of John seemed to have been aimed in part at this Gnostic tendency. The true Christian knowledge is as far as possible both from the obscurity of mysticism and from the pretensions of clairvoyance. The gnosis of the New Testament is the privilege of all Christians alike. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*)

TEMPERANCE.—*Temperance*:—I. TEMPERANCE IS THE CURB, bringing into subjection all those passions of human nature that tend to voluptuousness, just as patience and meekness check and keep under the fiercer passions or those tending to violence. Christian temperance sets itself in opposition to the drunkard's bowl, and the glutton's banquet, and the revels of the profligate, and the anxious longings of the covetous, and against the immoderate desire of what is not ours, as well as against the undue and immoderate abuse of what is ours. It includes, thus considered, sobriety, and chastity, and moderation—all the varieties of a wise self-discipline, imposed on man's fierce quest of pleasure. II. LET YOUR KNOWLEDGE, then, said the apostle to the readers of his Epistle, DEFEND ITSELF BY THE COMPANIONSHIP OF TEMPERANCE. Why, it may be asked, should this be selected, and not any other of those clustering graces which go to attest the energy and fruitfulness of the Divine Spirit in the work of his moral renovation? Let it be remembered, then, that in the sin of our first parents, the knowledge which they sought, beyond God and His instructions, was knowledge which brought with it a sin against the holy temperance that had before been the law of Paradise, and the defence of primeval innocence. Was it not then fitting that the victim of the Fall should be perpetually reminded of his need to be on his guard evermore against that dominion of the bodily senses into which the Fall betrayed us? In Satan's school knowledge brought forth intemperance; but it must not be so in Christ's school. Is it not, again, a fact, sustained by the history of the Christian Churches, that even when men enjoy this gospel their knowledge, both in things secular and spiritual, is but too often perverted into a license for casting off the self-control and the serene moderation of Christian principle? Is not a palmy civilisation often found shading a feverish and lawless sensuality? Was it not thus that Solomon—after his wide research, that wrote of plants from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, and in consequence of his growing acquaint-

ance and his large converse with heathen society—became in his old age a doting conformist to the lewd idolatry of Ashtaroth? III. To glance at THE BEARING OF THIS CHRISTIAN GRACE ON THE TEMPERANCE REFORMATION OF OUR TIMES. But we suppose that the best friends of temperance will yet find that, to give it permanence, it needs the broader basis and the deeper root of a religious movement; and that there, as in so many other earthly reforms, the controlling motives—the effectual lever, must rest on some stronger and firmer basis than earthly considerations. Drunkenness is enough to damn a man; but the mere absence of drunkenness is by no means enough to save him. IV. THE CLAIMS OF THIS CHRISTIAN GRACE, TAKEN IN THE WIDE AND COMPREHENSIVE SENSE WHICH SCRIPTURE ATTACHES TO IT, UPON THE DISCIPLES OF OUR TIMES. 1. It is necessary to true piety. The knowledge and love of God cannot lodge in a heart crowded and dragged downward by debasing and sinful pleasure. If men are Christ's, they are crucified with Him to the flesh and the world. 2. It is necessary to Christian usefulness. The man who would be really and truly useful must have an unselfish sympathy. Now, of this the lovers of pleasure are notoriously destitute. Few things more rapidly bring a seared callousness over the heart than the habitual pursuit of gross and selfish pleasure. 3. It is necessary to national well-being and prosperity. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Of temperance:—*I. THE VIRTUE ITSELF, AND WHEREIN IT CONSISTS, WILL BE EASILY UNDERSTOOD BY ANY ONE WHO ATTENDS TO THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION OF HUMAN NATURE, and what our experience will obviously suggest to us. The Author of our being has implanted in us passions which excite us to such action as is useful for our safety; and herein His wisdom and goodness appears, making provision for the continuance, the comfort, and all the purposes of our existence in this world. But, as the highest ends of our being are not confined to the present state, the same wise Creator has endued us with nobler powers and affections, by which we are determined to the pursuit of more excellent objects, wherein our true perfection and happiness consists; it is plain these inferior appetites were ordained to be in subjection to reason, and to be gratified within such limits as to be consistent with superior enjoyments, and with the proper exertion of superior powers. To consider this subject a little more particularly—1. In the first place, it is plain that sobriety or temperance does not require the rooting out or an obstinate refusal to satisfy or comply with the original appetites of nature. 2. But, on the other hand, temperance requires such a regulation and restraint of our desires towards sensible objects, or the pleasure of the external senses, that they shall not possess that room in our esteem which is due to things of vastly greater excellence and value. Temperance not only forbids all excesses, but requires such an habitual moderation that the freedom of the mind may be preserved, its powers in a constant readiness for better exercises, and that it may have a taste for intellectual and moral pleasures. The natural effect of a customary indulgence to carnal desires is a confirmed habit which increases the desire so as it prevails against better inclinations; and then experience shows the truth of what the apostle teaches, “that fleshly lusts war against the soul”; they tend to enervate its powers, impair its liberty, and bring it into bondage. 3. I observe that sobriety, like all other virtues, is seated in the mind. The appetites take their rise from the body, but the regulating them belongs to the higher faculties of the soul. It is in the superiority of the soul in its freedom, and in the dominion of reason and conscience over the lower desires and passions that the virtue chiefly consists. II. TO PROPOSE SOME MOTIVES TO SOBRIETY OR TEMPERANCE. This particular virtue of temperance stands upon the same foot with the rest, and is, like them, recommended by its own native beauty and intrinsic worth, which at first strikes any mind which attends to it. It is impossible for any one, upon a deliberate comparison, not to acknowledge in his heart that the sober man is more excellent than his neighbour who is intemperate; that it is a more lovely character and more worthy of the human nature to have the rule over one's own spirit. Besides, intemperance naturally tends to make life not only mean and contemptible, but miserable. But I intended principally to insist on these considerations which are contained in the gospel. It deserves the serious attention of Christians that the blessed Author of our religion Himself, and His apostles after Him, very earnestly inculcate this virtue. Let it never enter into our thoughts that great professions of respect or pretended faith will please Jesus Christ if we continue in carnal impurity and live after the flesh. But there are two arguments which you will find often urged in the new Testament: one is taken from the circumstances of our present state compared with the future. The second is, that temperance is an excellent preservative from snares and temptations. (*J.*)

*Abernethy, M.A.) Self-government:—*One of the old Italian masters has left us his conception of temperance on the walls of a little chapel, where he has painted a heroic female figure with a bridle upon her lips, and her right hand binding the hilt of a sheathed sword to its scabbard. And that conveys in symbol and emblem an idea of a self-command that restrains the utterance of emotion and sheathes the sword of passion. I. THIS SELF-COMMAND IS A UNIVERSALLY ADMITTED NECESSITY. A man has only to look at himself to see that he is so made as that bits of him are meant to be governed, and bits of him are meant to govern; that there are some parts of his nature which are intended to be kept down under hatches, and some that are meant to be on the quarter-deck, with the helm in their hands. We have only to look, for instance, at the way in which the necessities and the appetites which belong to our bodily organisation work, to see that they were never meant to have the mastery, or to be left to operate as they please. A man is hungry, thirsty, feels the sting of some perfectly innocent, legitimate, fleshly need, and that appetite is as blind as a bat to all other considerations except its own gratification. No matter what lies between it and its object, its tendency towards the object is the same. And is a man to let such a mere unintelligent and almost involuntary impulse drive him? And it is just as true, too, about other bits of our nature, for instance—emotions and passions. Anger is a very good thing; God puts it in us. It is meant to be exercised. Yes! But it is meant to be governed. And so joy, mirth, fear, and all the rest of them; all these are inseparable from the perfecting of a man's nature. But their unbridled working is the ruin of a man. And then excellences want to be controlled, in order that they may not run to faults. Some edible plants, if they once run to seed, are ruined for food; so a man's good qualities need to be kept under, in order that they may not become exaggerated into weaknesses. And a man's bad qualities, natural weaknesses and defects of character, which are too deeply engrained in him ever to be got rid of—these want control in order that they may be turned into excellences, as it is quite possible for them to be. What did God put a will into you for, but that you might be able to say not "I like"; or "I was tempted, and I could not help it"; but that you might, before each action, be able to say "I will"; and that passions, and the stings of lust and sense, of appetite and flesh, and emotions and affections, and vagrant fancies and wandering thoughts, and virtues that were running to seed, and weaknesses that might be cultivated into strength, might all know the master touch of a governing will, and might obey as becomes them? And what did God give you a conscience for, but that the will, which commands all the rest, might take its orders from it? II. THIS ABSOLUTE NECESSITY IS A PROVED IMPOSSIBILITY. From the beginning moral teachers of all sorts have been saying to men, "Rule yourselves"; and from the beginning the attempt made to govern myself by my unaided self is doomed to failure. Not absolute failure, thank God! I would not be understood as if I were denying that, to a large extent, every man and woman has this power of self-government. But I do want you to consider that the worth of self-control depends, to a large extent, on the motive from which it is practised; and that, unfortunately, for twenty men that will exercise it for the sake of temporal purposes and immediate advantage, there is one who will exercise it for the sake of higher motives. A great deal of the moral reformation and restraint which the best of men, who are not Christians, put in practice upon themselves, is exactly like taking a child with scarlet fever and putting it into a cold bath. You drive in the eruption, and that is about as much as you do, except that you make the disease worse, because you have driven it in. But, beyond that, when once a man's passions, or affections, or desires, or any other part of him, have got the bit between their teeth, and have cast off control, it is impossible to bring them again into obedience. When the very instrument by which we are to coerce the worst part of our nature is itself tainted, what, in the name of common sense, is to be done then? When you send out the military to suppress the mob, and the military, bayonets and all, go over to the mob, there is nothing left for the sovereign but to abdicate. As somebody has said about such a matter, it is a bad job when the extinguisher catches fire. And that is exactly the condition which men stand in who are seeking to exercise a thorough-going self-restraint, when the self which should govern is itself tainted and evil, the will bribed and enslaved, the conscience sophisticated and darkened. What is the use of saying to such a man, "Govern thyself"? III. HERE WE HAVE A CHRISTIAN CERTAINTY, IF WE CHOOSE TO MAKE IT SO. Let these three things, faith, strength, insight, work upon you, and they will make the impossible possible. That is to say, if you want to govern yourselves begin with faith. We rule ourselves when we let Jesus Christ rule us. The

Christian man, thinking of his conflict, and knowing that with his ten thousand it is hard for him to meet the twenty thousand who are arrayed against him, invokes, as some petty chief of a weak tribe might, the aid of the great emperor whose dominions are at hand, and when he stretches his protecting power over the little territory there is liberty and there is victory for the trembling prince. So hand over the authority and the sovereignty of thy soul to Jesus Christ, and He will give thee the strength to govern thyself. And, in like manner, we have here implied another prescription, "Add to thy strength, temperance." If I am in Christ it is not a question of one bit of my nature against the other, but it is a question of the higher nature, which is His, flowing into mine, and so enabling me, the true me, which is Christ in me, to keep down the animal and the evil that attaches to me. And, in like manner, there is the third condition of self-command here; that knowledge of which the preceding clause speaks, which is mainly a clear insight into Christian duty. If we have once clear in sight the dictates of an enlightened conscience, felt to be Christ's will, then it will not be so hard to put the screw on all that rebels against Him, and to stimulate (for that is a part of self-command) the lagging and slothful graces of our hearts. So it comes to this, the necessity, which is an impossibility for everybody else, is a possibility for the weakest among us, if we let Christ rule in our hearts. Put the reins into Christ's hands, and He will make you kings over yourselves, and priests unto Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Temperance.—The grace of temperance may be here diversely understood. I. FOR SUCH A DISCRETION AS MAY SEASON ALL THESE GRACES; so taken it is the salt of every virtue. Devotion without discretion is like a hasty servant that runs away without his errand. Profession of faith without temperance is turned into hypocrisy or preposterous zeal; virtue without it is folly. Patience without discretion wrongs a good cause. Godliness without temperance is devotion out of its wits. Brotherly kindness without temperance is brotherly dotage. Charity without temperance is prodigality; it gives with an open hand and shut eye. II. FOR SUCH A DISCRETION AS MAY MODERATE KNOWLEDGE, and qualify that heat to which it is addicted (1 Cor. viii. 1). Temperance is not so much a virtue itself as a marshal or moderator of virtues. It is not enough to do a good work unless the due place, fit manner, and convenient time be observed. III. FOR SUCH A MODERATION OF THE MIND WHEREBY WE SO DEMEAN OURSELVES AS NEITHER TO SURFEIT ON FULNESS, NOR TO DESPAIR ON WANT. IV. FOR A MODERATE USE OF OUTWARD THINGS. There is intemperance—1. In lust; so it is called incontinence. This may be avoided—(1) By subduing the body to the soul (1 Cor. ix. 27). (2) By debarring the flesh all lust-provoking meats and drinks. High diet is adultery's nurse. (3) By avoiding temptations (1 Cor. vi. 18). (4) By meditating on the punishment. What men think most pleasing is most plauging; to have their lusts granted (Psa. lxxxi. 12). 2. In apparel. Christ says the body is more worth than raiment; but some strive to make their raiment more worth than their bodies; like birds of paradise, their feathers are better than their carcasses. 3. In meats. (1) For the manner; this is merely circumstantial, and may thus be expressed: too soon, too late, too daintily, too fast, too much, is gluttony. (2) For the measure: it is an insatiate desire of delicacies (Luke xii. 19; Phil. iii. 19). As too much rain drowns the fields which moderate showers would make fruitful; so this plethory of diet, instead of conserving nature, confounds it. (3) For the matter: it is great feasting. (4) The effects are manifold and manifest. (a) Grossness. (b) Macilency of grace. (c) Consumption of estate. (d) Sickness of body. (e) Rottenness and death. The finest food shall make no better dust. (i) Abstinence is man's rising, as intemperance was his fall. (ii) It is God's blessing that makes fat, and not meat. 4. In drinks. (1) It makes room for the devil. (2) It overturns the estate. (3) It poisons the tongue. (4) It intoxicates all reason. (5) It enervates the strength. (6) It is the bond to incontinence. (7) It is an incendiary to quarrels and homicides. (8) It is a woe to itself (Prov. xxiii. 29). Learn we how to avoid it—(a) Because we are men. While the wine is in thy hand, thou art a man; when it is in thy head, thou art become a beast. (b) Because we are citizens, and therefore should lead civil lives; drunkenness is an uncivil exorbitance. (c) Because we are Christians (1 Tim. vi. 11; Titus ii. 11, 12; Luke xxi. 34). (*Thomas Adams.*) *Temperance*.—This is the third figure in that sum in compound addition the footing up of which makes the complete Christian character. Our modern use of this word temperance restricts it mainly to abstinence from strong drink. Abstinence alone does not fully express the idea, since this presents rather its negative side. The word means

strictly "ruling with a strong hand," having the mastery; and when applied to a person, the temperate man is he who governs himself firmly, who has the mastery especially over the passions and appetites of his lower nature. I. WHAT THIS SELF-CONTROL INVOLVES OR IMPLIES. 'Εγκράτεια is used by Plato and Aristotle to express self-discipline, self-mastery. Xenophon uses it to express the government of all the passions and appetites; such a mastery of the natural desires for food, drink, and sensual gratification, and such a power to endure cold, heat, fatigue, and want of sleep, as become a good general in time of war. (Mem. 1. 2, 1; 1. 5, 1; 2. 1, 1.) So Paul used the word when addressing Felix, who lived in open adultery with Drusilla, and who indulged every selfish and sensual passion; he reasoned of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment," till the wretch trembled. The Latin *temperantia*, from which our word temperance is derived, has the same meaning; moderation, regulation, government, self-restraint. And it is applied not only to sensual appetites, but to the government of the tongue, the eyes, the temper; to the restraint of the emotions of grief under calamity or of exultation in victory. Cicero defines *temperantia* to be that which teaches us to follow reason, both in what we seek and in what we avoid; a firm and judicious control of reason over impulse and desire (De Finibus 1, 14, and 2, 19). II. BY WHAT MEANS IT MAY BE ATTAINED. 1. This Christian temperance or self-control implies and demands the absolute subjection of all evil appetites, passions, and desires. Those grosser social vices with which the pagan society of the old world was thoroughly infected, and which the old pagan religion encouraged—vices which destroyed home, corrupted literature, debased art, and defiled the altars of the gods—were so little thought of as evils, were so fully sanctioned by custom, were so gilded over by the example of public men, the toleration of law, and the flattering arts of genius, were so protected by the priests, who made them a means of revenue, that it was an easy thing for a Christian at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Antioch, or any like luxurious capital, to slide into sins the bare suggestion of which we should resent with abhorrence. Anger, in the common use of the word, is an evil passion. A passionate man cannot exercise self-control. Some ancient philosophers used the word temperance as the specific opposite of irritability. Self-indulgence in appetite, whether under the form of drunkenness or of gluttony, is a sin. It is a sin against the body, whose beautiful mechanism we strain and impair by any excess. It is an offence against the mind, whose faculties we clog and stupefy by excess. It is a sin against God, the gifts of whose bounty are perverted. Covetousness is specified again and again in the Word of God as one of the worst forms of carnal passion; and the subjection of this is indispensable to self-government. The greed of gain must be subdued, or it will choke the life of godliness in the soul. The Christian must learn to moderate his views and desires of worldly possessions. The tendency to a self-satisfied and even luxurious enjoyment of the world is, perhaps, the strongest antagonist in our times to a simple scriptural piety. Sensual appetite, pleasure-seeking for its own sake, and frivolity in the methods of enjoyment, a vain love of pomp and show—these proceed from a propensity which cannot be reconciled with the love of God. 2. Besides this absolute subjection of all evil passions and propensities, the law of temperance requires that those natural desires which are in themselves innocent and lawful, should, both as to the manner and the measure of their indulgence, be regulated by a regard for the highest good of the soul. Appetites and tastes we have which were never designed to be our tempters and tormentors—making the body a mere battlefield of the soul—but were meant to minister to a pure and healthy enjoyment. But the peculiarity of these native appetites and tastes in man is that they do not, like the instincts of animals, regulate themselves, but require the mild restraint of reason. That is a nice point—a hair-line—where desire instead of ministering to rational enjoyment, oversteps the bounds of reason, and becomes an ungovernable passion. Keep well within that line. 3. It has been assumed in this discussion that since all sin concentrates in a selfish will, this of course must be subdued in order to a sound and perfect self-control. But I wish to insist upon the idea that selfishness is not merely to be restrained, held in check by compromises, but to be conquered, if ever the soul would gain the mastery of itself for God. Our love of God, to be complete, must be unconditional. The existence of a calculating, selfish spirit is incompatible with the very idea of love. III. HOW SHALL IT BE ATTAINED? 1. Not by mere force of will, determining to override, and if possible to annihilate the sensibilities and propensities of our nature, whether for good or evil. The cold impassiveness of marble is not self-control, nor can the Christian perfect his moral nature by cutting

away all natural emotions and sympathies. One may conquer many an appetite and passion by mere force of will, and in so doing may strengthen the will itself in resistance to God, and may stiffen that will with the pride of self-righteousness.

2. Neither is self-control to be attained by the arbitrary mortification of the body, by means of denials and penances. Christianity was not made for the desert and the convent, but for the living and hostile world; and we are not to become saints by secluding ourselves from the outer world, but are to be saints in it by the power of a new life.

3. But in order to gain self-control we must study ourselves, especially as to our weak points of character, and aim to conquer specific modes or habits of evil to which we are prone.

4. Again, the power of self-control will be strengthened if we cherish habitually the sense of God's presence and of His watchful eye. And not only the thought of God as ever nigh to us, but the presence of God by His spirit within us must be cherished if we would govern ourselves by His law. The apostle enumerates temperance, self-government among the fruits of the Spirit. And now, in conclusion, let me urge you to give all diligence to add this grace to your character; to perfect yourself in the government of your own heart.

(1) I urge you to this diligence by the greatness of the object to be obtained. Consider what it is to gain the mastery over a single passion. Think of the poets, the statesmen, the warriors who have sunk under the inebriating cup and have left a dishonoured name.

(2) I exhort you to be diligent in this self-conquest because it is made practicable by timely diligence. Passions indulged have a rapid and fearful growth.

(3) I exhort you to this self-control for your own peace of mind.

(4) Your duty to Christ and your professed hope in Him require that you shall govern yourself in His spirit. "He died for all, that they should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again." (*Joseph P. Thompson.*)

Self-mastery :—I. The NATURE of self-mastery. II. The DIFFICULTIES of self-mastery. 1. Hereditary. 2. Surrounding. 3. Inherent. III. The ADVANTAGES of self-mastery. The evils from which it saves—physical, social, spiritual. IV. The MEANS of self-mastery. 1. Fellowship with other self-conquerors. 2. Communion with Jesus Christ. 3. Help from heaven. 4. Earnest, brave endeavours. (*U. R. Thomas.*)

Temperance :—Temperance, self-mastery, the power of self-restraint, is a necessary part of Christian life, natural to it, indispensable to its perfection. Let me illustrate what I mean. You have a servant: he comes to you unacquainted with the perfect working of your system of business, strange to you, strange to the service he has to render; you do not take him into your full confidence at first; you give him such detailed directions that he cannot well make a mistake. By and by you give him your confidence, you throw him upon his honour; he knows as well as if you were always telling him what you want him to do. If there comes to pass a transaction different from what he has been engaged in, he knows your principles so well that he can complete it without referring to you at all. Detailed instruction is no longer necessary. It strikes you, too, very forcibly sometimes, does it not, that the higher position which the servant now occupies may be much more abused than the lower—the more mechanical office? He is freer in one sense from control, and, if he be a good man, the very fact that you put him on his honour in your service makes him doubly dutiful. But you know that confidence may be abused, and the fuller the trust, the greater the possibility of abuse. You know that freedom—leaving a man to act for himself, with nothing but well-instilled principles to guide him—means possibility of delinquency as well as possibility of uprightness. You say, in a word, that the man has knowledge; and that knowledge will be a dangerous thing for him and for you unless it be conjoined with self-mastery, self-restraint. You say, in other words, that in this high, confidential, honourable position in which the servant stands, to be faithful and perfect in his service he must "add to his knowledge, temperance." You have raised your servant from being little better than a machine, and you have made a man of him; the risk increases with the dignity. Intemperance is of two kinds—asceticism and licentiousness; temperance is the mean between the two. If a man is of such a nature that he cannot use his freedom without abusing it, if he must go to one extreme or the other, it is better that he should be an ascetic than a theological libertine, just as it is better for a man who must be either an entire abstainer or a drunkard, that he should be the former. Both extremes are equally intemperate; but, of course, while there is not much more than self-denial in the one, there is sin in the other. (*D. J. Hamer.*)

Self-control :—A river is usually an unmixed blessing to a country. It fertilises adjacent lands. It presents a matchless highway for commerce. But there are exceptions to the rule. One of the

largest rivers in the world is known by the name of "China's sorrow." The banks through which the Yellow River flows for nearly a thousand miles of its course are so low and so friable that, with the first flash of the spring floods, away they sink, and thousands of square miles of country are laid under water. It is not hemmed in by granite or limestone gorges like its great and incomparably useful neighbour the Yang Tsze. Its torrents are unrestrained. Within historical times it has shifted its course altogether, and discharges itself into the sea some hundreds of miles away from the old mouth. Although a river of first-class dimensions, counted by the volume of water it discharges, for nearly a thousand miles of its course it is scarcely navigable. It is a colossal power for good wasted through the lack of strong, binding power in its banks. And there are not a few people who are like this capricious river in the career they follow. We might, perhaps, describe them as the "Church's sorrow." There is uncommon virtue or potency in their characters, and they are not altogether wanting in knowledge. But through the lack of this temperance or "self-restraint" they break out at given periods like "China's sorrow," and make schism and faction in the Church, and fritter away their own capacity for usefulness, and possibly in the end shift their course into altogether unexpected channels. (*T. G. Selby.*)

Patience.—*Patience*.—I. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE IN REFERENCE TO ALL THAT IS UNWELCOME AND SORROWFUL. "In your self-control supply patience." Is there one of us who is not aware of some crook in the lot? Well, then, this is true wisdom, quietly take it and let it work as it is meant to work. It is Christian patience that is here enjoined, not the mere stoical, submitting to the inevitable; not the mere pride of not showing my feeling; not the mere foolish attempt to argue myself into insensibility. This Christian patience has for its very first element the recognition of the bitterness of the cup that He gives us to drink. The second element in Christian patience is quietly bearing, with submitted and acquiescent will, the pain or sorrow that comes upon us. Now, remember where, in our series of Christian graces, this wise endurance of the inevitable and God-sent suffering comes. It comes after self-command. That teaches us that it will take a great effort of self-control to keep the quivering limb quite still, if undrugged by any false anæsthetic, under the gleaming knife. But we can do it. And remember, too, that this injunction of Christian patience comes in a series which is all dependent on faith. Patience is possible when beneath all the sorrows, be they great or small, we recognise God's will. And in another way faith ministers patience by teaching us to understand and recognise the meaning of sorrows.

II. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS ALL DIFFICULTY, THE ARMOUR FOR THEM THAT STRUGGLE. What we have to deal with here is Christian perseverance. And about that I have only two things to say. First, how impossible it is to get any wholesome, vigorous Christian life without it; and in the second, how faith likewise ministers to all persistent effort and energy. As to the first, no course of life which has in view a far off end, towards which all its efforts are to be directed, but runs the risk of wearying ere the end is attained. The quiet persistence with which the leaf "grows green and broad, and takes no care"; the quiet persistence, with which from tiny knob, hard and green, the grape advances to blushing purple, and juicy sun-warmed mellowness, is the type of the fashion in which alone the harsh crudities of nature can be turned into the sweetness of grace. "Add to your faith persistence." And be thankful to remember that our gospel alone gives men motives and power thus to persevere to the end.

III. THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN SOUL TOWARDS LONG-DEFERRED GOOD. There is an element of hope in the New Testament conception of patience. In fact, in some passages the word seems almost to be a synonym for hope, and we read in other places of the patience of hope. This view of the "patience of hope" suggests to us a thought or two. The weakness and the misery of all earthly anticipation is that it is full of tumult and agitation. Hope is not calm, but the very opposite. As usually entertained it leads to impatience and not to patience. And the reason why hope is impatient is because we foolishly set our hopes on things that are too near us, and on things that are uncertain. The man that is only going a railway journey of an hour's duration will be more tired at the end of the first half-hour than a man who is going a journey of a day's duration will be at the end of the first half of the day. If we were only wise enough to fling our hopes far enough forward, and to set them upon that future upon which they may fasten, which is as certain as the past, there would be no need and no possibility of the agitations that perturb all earthly anticipations. And you can get the patience that endures and persists where you get everything else—from Him who is its example as well as its giver.

(*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Patience*:—Patience is, in the estimation of some, a mere drudge among the virtues. In Scripture she is a queen, magnanimous and dignified. How it is and why it is that the disciples of temperance or self-restraint are immediately commended to the cultivation of a gentle and forbearing spirit, will, as we think, appear if we but advert to the petulance which all rigorous and abstinent self-control is apt to foster. Thus, during the great fast of the Mohammedans, the Ramadan, observed by severe abstinence from food through all the hours of daylight, travellers have noted the querulous spirit that seems for the time to reign through a Turkish city. A recent British missionary speaks of the devotees of Hindooism, whose austerities are most rigid, and who proclaim superiority to all passion, as being notorious for “a general irritability.” The ascetic, of all times and of all forms of faith, has been subject, and not without some plausibility, to the imputation of sourness. I. WHAT CHRISTIAN PATIENCE IS NOT. 1. The patience of the disciple of Jesus is not stoical apathy, nor acquired or affected obduracy to all physical suffering. 2. Nor, much less, is Christian patience a meek indifference to all error and wickedness in the world around us. The standard of Christian piety adopted by some, which is all softness and repose, would have no room for men like the lion-hearted Knox who did, under God, so thorough and good a work before a licentious court, and a frowning nobility, and a raging priesthood, for the Scottish nation. Patience shines forth in such a spirit at such a time triumphant. It is the patience that dares brave all anger, and loss, and suffering; but that dares not sacrifice truth or duty, or make the fear of God to bend to the fear of man. II. WHAT THEN IS CHRISTIAN PATIENCE? We understand by it “a calm endurance of evil for God’s sake.” Now, evil is both physical and moral. Physical evil includes pain, want, disease, and death; moral, errors, sorrows of soul, and wickedness in all its varying shades, and in all its hideous shapes. Taken in this largest sense, patience includes the grace of meekness, from which, however, in other portions of Scripture, it is distinguished. Meekness is the quiet endurance of wrong from man, and patience is the endurance of woe appointed of God. But in our text we suppose the word patience to include both meekness and patience strictly so called. It is the quiet endurance of evil for God’s sake. That it is endured, implies that the evil is not self-invented and self-inflicted. If the physical evil be the effect of our own utter neglect, the passive endurance of it is not sufficient to make the sufferer a patient Christian in the truest sense of those terms. Against moral evil it must bear patiently its bold protest; but the want of immediate effect to that protest, and the presence of that evil in the world, and its temporary triumph, must not shake the Christian’s patient reliance on the wisdom and justice of the Divine Providence. For Christian patience is essentially hopeful. It must quietly wait for the salvation of God. So is it also in the New Testament represented as bound up with Christian diligence or industry. The Bible tells us of “patient continuance in well-doing,” and sends the pleader of the promises and the keeper of God’s precepts to learn of the husbandman, who, having sown the seed, must have long patience for the harvest. We have seen its needfulness to fill out Christian temperance. III. Let us observe, now, ITS RELATIONS TO OTHER GRACES OF THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER. 1. Ours is a day of religious effort for reform at home and evangelisation abroad. Look at the need of patience to preserve the spirit of the labourers in working order, and to render their endeavours successful. Mackintosh praises Wilberforce as being a model reformer, because of his immovable sweetness, as well as his inflexible persistency. But many good men assay, without this patient sweetness, to reform others by the virtual tyranny of harsh and unreasoning criminations. They resort to moral coercion where they should use moral suasion. 2. Again, as a preservative of faith and knowledge and godliness, patience is indispensable. It was said by the illustrious philosopher Newton, that if he had accomplished anything in science, it had been “by dint of patient thought.” The believer in Scripture who would feed, from its full pages, his faith and knowledge and piety into richer development and greater vigour, must be patient in searching, patient in pondering and comparing, and patient in praying over those sacred lines. 3. Again, virtue and godliness and charity, all practical Christian excellences, need patience for their development. “Confidence,” said a British statesman, “is a plant of slow growth.” True, consistent piety is also such, and needs long and meek study of God’s providence and Word to refine and perfect it. Carey said, modestly, in his old age, when his grammars and versions of Holy Scripture were almost a library in themselves, “I can do one thing—I can plod.” Men, families, nations, have pined and dwindled because they could not plod. In

the soul's struggle heavenward we do well to recollect that he "who endureth to the end" shall be saved, and that by faith and patience we inherit the promises. IV. LET US NOW CONSIDER THE MOTIVES THAT SHOULD PERSUADE US TO BE PATIENT AS CHRISTIANS. For as patience includes meekness under wrongs of our fellow-men, we must forgive or we may not hope ourselves before God to be forgiven. As patience includes submission to the Divine appointments, let us remark that our trials are lessened by serene meekness and resignation. God lightens and removes them more early, and they do not so deeply wound and empoison the soul. We are to remember, too, the necessity of this grace to success and influence with our fellow-men. It is the patient perseverance in well-doing that builds up consistency, and influence, and weight of character. We are, again, all to remember our own unworthiness before God, and our liability to pay ten thousand talents, ere, in our fretfulness, we chide man harshly, or murmur bitterly against our God and His providence. Nor is it unfitting that we remember how much of mercy and kindness there is in God's allotments. V. WE SEE WHY PATIENCE IS TO BE DESIRED, BUT HOW IS IT TO BE ATTAINED? 1. By the study of Scripture. We see there glorious examples and inspiring promises, and the most solemn warnings, and the most apposite models and precepts. 2. Let us pray. Does the spirit in us lust to envy? And would envy swell into wrath, or blasphemy, or murder? The apostle's reply is, "He," our God, "giveth more grace." And He gives it in answer to prayer. The apostles when bidden by their Lord often to forgive the offending and injurious, prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." Repeat the petition. For its teacher yet lives to be its answerer. 3. Above all, be in communion, much and habitually, with Christ. (*W. R. Williams.*)

Patience:—Now let us look at this matter fairly. Jesus Christ does not want to put us, as His disciples, in an artificial world. He has thought for us in the future and also in the present. He takes up the conditions of our life here, He takes up all the powers of our nature; and the truth which He reveals so asserts itself that when fully grasped and acted out the powers of our nature are most fully ordered and developed, the conditions of our life are most perfectly met. We are placed in certain circumstances, and Christ knows them. Christ would so teach us, so mould our nature, that we fulfil all the conditions of our earthly course in such a way as to be best prepared for entering on the fuller realities of the heavenly and eternal life. Patience, then, power of endurance, power of perseverance, is a necessary part of Christian character. Take one or two simple reminders and this will appear clearly enough. Men are in a condition of suffering in this world. Account for it as you may, expound the purpose of it as you may, the fact remains. Somehow or other we seem to be always playing at cross-purposes with ourselves. Who ever formed a plan and found no hindrance to the carrying of it out? And is it not in these smaller matters that our chief causes of discomfort lie? The big, thick clouds that altogether shut out the light from a man's life only gather once or twice perchance in his history. Yet all men have to suffer, and to suffer severely, from minor trials every day; and to meet these some firm, abiding principle regulating the life is needed. Does it not also suggest itself to you that the position in which Christianity puts a man in relation to God, to himself, even, to things present and things future, is such as to require that he, at all events, of all men should be possessed of this grace of "patience," this energy of quiet perseverance. If it be a necessity in every-day life apart from Christianity, it is all the more a necessity to the Christian. He sees things to which other men are blind; he has burdens laid upon him which other men know nothing of; and he of all men must be specially strengthened to endure. A man takes a piece of rough iron and fuses and hardens it into steel. It is sterner and stronger than it was in some respects, but is more susceptible in others. It will glitter with brilliant polish, but a breath can dim and tarnish it. The finely tempered sword must be kept ensheathed, or it will lose its lustre. So Christianity takes a man in his rough, natural state and refines his nature. He is stronger and yet more susceptible than he was before. It comes, then, to this alternative: he must be moved from the risk of danger, taken, in a word, out of the world, or he must have a new power of endurance given to him which will enable him to resist contaminating influence. A gardener takes a flower root; what it has of beauty is wild and fitful, it has many rough defects. He cultures it, and by care and scientific appliance he makes the same life bring forth more beautiful blossoms. But the plant has a fragile beauty; it cannot now weather the storm, it must be guarded against the nipping frost and the rude wind. So Christianity takes a man and puts such grace into his heart

that his life bears flowers and fruit "unto holiness"; but he cannot bear unconsciously what he could before. It comes, then, to this alternative: that he must be removed from contact with the storms of this world's experience, or else he must have what the gardener cannot give his cherished plant, special and increased power to withstand and to patiently endure. So you see this grace of which Peter speaks, and which at first sight seems rather incongruous with the rest, is really a necessary and inherent part of the Divine life in man. Christianity would deal cruelly and fatally with us if "patience" were not inalienably connected with the life which it cherishes. But there are other points in which such necessity as I have asserted is clearly seen besides that arising from the keener susceptibility of the Christian. We set out with a high ideal. Our whole nature thrills with the new life that has begun to stir within us. The sense of deliverance is precious. We feel that new motives, new aims, new desires have come to us. Sin and misery have fled away; hope and joy and peace will fill our heart. Such happy life is to be for our constant enjoyment. Are these not the thoughts which fill the soul when it first passes from death unto life? Has such experience, then, been an unchanging one with you? Have you never been thrust back from what you thought a sure and safe position of advance? Sin does not lose its hold upon us all at once. We are weak, and only by patient perseverance can we be made strong. We are subject to temptation, and only by patient watching can we hope to escape. We are ignorant, and only by patient learning can we attain unto knowledge. A war is carried on within us in which the good principles do not come scatheless from the conflict. These rebuffs and disappointments and failures are sure to meet us. Our Master had to contend with evil, and led the way by His example of faith and patience to the inheritance of the promises: so must we persevere and endure unto the end. (D. J. Hamer.) *Patience*—

I. THE ELEMENTS OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN PATIENCE. The literal meaning of *ὑπομονή* is "remaining behind," or "remaining in the house"; i.e., abiding—*das zurückbleiben, zuhausebleiben* (Passow). Hence constancy, stability, steadiness. "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding" (1 Chron. xxix. 15). The Septuagint here uses *ὑπομονή* to denote stability, the opposite of that which is transitory and fleeting. In the text De Wette renders *ὑπομονή* by *Standhaftigkeit*, steadfastness. It is something more than submissiveness, by which Isaac Taylor defines it. *Patientia* denotes the quality of bearing or enduring. Cicero applies it to the endurance of hunger and cold. In analysing patience into its elements we must view it both upon the negative and the positive side. 1. Patience does not imply a want of sensibility to suffering, sorrow, or wrong. A North American Indian would think it unmanly or cowardly to betray a consciousness of pain, to utter a cry or shed a tear for any physical suffering. We may not seek for patience in an insensibility to suffering, whether natural or forced, nor in a sullen disregard of personal consequences in carrying out some proposed end or meeting an imagined fate. 2. And here we may note more particularly that patience does not argue indifference to the issue of the trials or labours which are upon us. The mind will forecast its own future, will have hopes, will have fears, will have a choice as to events affecting its own happiness; no logic or philosophy or schooling can destroy these essential qualities of the human soul; take away these, and man ceases to be a man. He who professes not to be troubled about events because he does not care what happens is not an example of the patient man. The true patient man does care what happens. The care-nothing spirit is not true Christian patience. 3. Neither is a do-nothing spirit to be identified with patience. There are times when patience counsels to inaction, when "the strength of Israel is to sit still." But this patience of waiting is not the inaction of sluggishness nor of despondency. It is a watchful inaction, like that of men sleeping upon their arms, with their camp-fires always lighted and the sentinels at their posts. The shipwrecked mariner in an open boat without oar or sail has nothing to do but wait for the appearance of relief. But if he has a compass and a paddle and knows himself to be within a hundred miles of land, then patience will be shown not in idle waiting or in praying for some chance relief, but in working on without murmuring and without despair, though the hand is weary and the head is faint, and neither sun nor star appears over the waste of waters. Viewed, then, positively patience requires—1. The consciousness of a right intent. This removes from within all disturbing causes which might irritate and unsettle the mind, and enables us to commit our way to the Lord in confidence. We shall grow patient under trials in proportion as we grow unselfish. And so too

of labours; if we enter upon these with a pure intent, if we rise above all selfish feeling to the grandeur of working for mankind and for God, then shall we hold on by the attraction of the work itself, never ruffled by opposition nor disheartened by difficulty. Hence the exercise of a true Christian patience demands a conscience void of offence towards man and God. 2. The exercise of Christian patience demands implicit confidence in God and in our cause as approved by Him. Patience and faith go hand in hand. The main element in patience is Christian submission to the will of God. This rests upon confidence as its basis—confidence in the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. 3. Patience must have in it the element of hope. Patience is incompatible with despair. Patience under trial expects God's appearing. Patience in labour awaits God's help. The virtue of patience, by reason of its quiet and retracy, commands but little notice and admiration from men. Men do not lay the stress of greatness upon the passive virtues. II. THE PLACE AND VALUE OF PATIENCE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. 1. This virtue of patience we need in all our labours for the cause of Christ and the good of men. In working against evil we are prone either to irritation or to despondency. Our weak natures are annoyed by the opposition we encounter in a good cause. 2. We need this patience under the afflictions and wrongs which we personally suffer—afflictions at the hand of God, persecution, calumny, wrong from our fellow-men. How sweet is patience under the hand of God! It is like sunlight and flowers in the chamber of sickness. But it is easier to bear great and prolonged afflictions which come directly and visibly from the hand of God than the petty vexations and wrongs which arise from untoward circumstances and evil men. Great occasions rally great principles and brace the mind to a lofty bearing, a bearing that is even above itself. But trials that make no occasion at all leave it to show the goodness and beauty it has in its own disposition. 3. We need patience with respect to the fulfilling of God's plans of mercy for the world. God's promises are like century plants. They grow silently, almost imperceptibly, through wind and storm, by day and night, and year by year. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) **Godliness.**—*Godliness*:—At first sight it appears strange to find "godliness" ranked among the special virtues of the Christian character, whereas it is a very much more general expression than any of these specific excellences which precede it in this list. Nor is it less singular to find it inserted in the midst of a catalogue of Christian graces, whereas we should rather expect it to stand as the all-inclusive foundation of them all. What do we mean by godliness? The fundamental idea is reverence toward God. That reverence expresses itself both inwardly and outwardly—inwardly by habitual communion with Him in spirit; outwardly by habitual service of Him in act. The word covers substantially the same ground as the Old Testament expression, "the fear of the Lord." If, then, we take that for the meaning of the word, the singularity of its insertion in this catalogue may be found to be the means of teaching important truths. I. The first lesson that I would gather is as to THE ROOT OF REAL RELIGION. We must never forget, in considering this series of Christian virtues, that faith is regarded as the foundation of them all. It is the raw material, so to speak, out of which all these other graces and excellences are made. And this is especially the case with regard to the sense of reverence to God manifesting itself in habitual communion with Him and habitual service of Him which is meant by this word godliness. Some of us say that we believe in Jesus Christ and are living by faith. Does your faith lead you to this continual godliness? Are you brought by it into continual communion with Jesus Christ, and, through Him, with God? Do you constantly refer all your actions to Him? II. We have here the other lesson that REAL RELIGION IS A THING TO BE CULTIVATED BY THE STRENUOUS EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN GRACES. No man becomes "godly" by mere desiring. The bridge between faith and godliness is made of manly strength, discrimination and discernment of duty, rigid self-control, patient perseverance. If you have these things your faith will effloresce into godliness; if you have not, it will not. You will want all these virtues and graces which precede godliness in my text. You will want manly strength—for a hundred reasons, because of the condition of things round about you, which is always full of temptations to draw you away, because of your own proclivities to evil. And you will want manly strength, because you can get no hold of an unseen God except by a definite effort of thought, which will require resolute will. Further, for godliness, we need to cultivate the habit of discrimination between good and evil, right and wrong, because the world is full of illusions, and we are very blind. And we need to cultivate the habit of self-control and rigid repression of passions, and

lusts, and desires, and tastes, and inclinations before His calm and sovereign will, because the world is full of fire and our hearts and natures are tinder. And we need to cultivate the habit of patience in all its three senses of endurance in sorrow, of persistence in service, and of hope of the future, because the more a man cultivates that habit, the larger will be his stock of proofs of the loving-kindness and goodness of his God, and the easier and more blessed it will be for him to live in continual communion with Him. Exercise thyself into godliness, and do not fancy that the Christian life comes as a matter of course on the back of some one initial act of a long-forgotten faith in Jesus Christ. III. Then another lesson to be gathered from this catalogue of graces is that **TRUE RELIGION IS THE BEST PRESERVATIVE AND STRENGTHENER OF ALL THESE PRECEDING EXCELLENCES.** Do not spend your time upon merely trying to cultivate special graces of the Christian character, however needful they may be for you, and however beautiful they may be in themselves. Seek to have that which sanctifies and strengthens them all. Faith is the foundation, godliness the apex and crown. IV. And the last thought is that **THIS TRUE RELIGION OR GODLINESS UNITES IN ONE HARMONIOUS WHOLE THE MOST DISSIMILAR EXCELLENCES OF CHARACTER.** Notice that in this series all the excellences which precede my text are of the sterner, the more severe, and self-regarding kind, and that those which follow it are of the gentler sort and refer to others. If I might say that, it is as in some Alpine range, where the side that faces the north presents rugged cliffs and sparse vegetation, and close-knit strength to breast the tempest and to live amidst the snows, whilst the southern side has gentler slopes and a more fertile soil, a richer vegetation, and a sunnier sky. And in like manner the difficult problem of how far I am to carry my own cultivation of Christian excellence apart from regard to others, and how far I am to let my obligations to help and succour others overcome the necessity for individual cultivation of Christian character, is best solved as Peter solves it here. Put godliness in the middle, let that be the centre, and from it will flow on the one side all needful self-discipline and tutoring, and on the other all wise and Christlike regard to the needs and sorrows of the men around us. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Godliness*:—A religious man is he who practically makes his accountability to God the law of his life, who is bound to God with the sense of personal obligation for all that he receives, in all that he does. What, then, is that godliness which is capable of being nurtured as an addition to saving faith in Christ and to the several virtues before enumerated? Some understand the term in the old English sense of *god-like-ness*, a moral resemblance to God. But this does not express the objective sense conveyed in the original word. *Godward-ness*, if we might make such a term, would be nearer this than *God-like-ness*, a state of mind which is toward God as the sole object of its adoration and religious reverence, the central, supreme object of its trust and love, the final source of moral obligation and authority. One may have a certain faith in Christ who is yet wanting in a just and commanding reverence toward God. A mind that believes in Christ as historically revealed in the New Testament, accepts Him as a Divine Teacher, and even regards His death as in some way connected with the redemption of mankind, but which does not recognise a necessity for that death as an atonement between human guilt and Divine justice, is wanting in that godliness of which the apostle speaks. It has not attained to that reverence for God in the holiness of His Being and the purity of His law which makes the atonement at once a moral necessity for the soul itself and a legal necessity for the Divine government. A mind that looks to Christ as the author of a universal and indiscriminate salvation for the race, and admits no distinction in the results of probation between those who accept and those who reject the terms of that salvation, is surely wanting in this godliness. A just reverence for God as lawgiver and judge is wanting. I. **THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GODLINESS.** 1. That it is most inward in its seat and power. The Apostle Paul has in view this internal spiritual quality of true godliness when, writing to Timothy, he says, "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." Here godliness is distinguished from righteousness. Righteousness, as it stands in this catalogue of Christian qualities, denotes rectitude of action; godliness points to the inward spring of that action, and the ground of its righteousness, in a just sentiment of veneration toward God. True godliness has the soul for its seat and God for its object. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." 2. This sentiment is equally compounded of love and fear. That veneration or reverence toward God which is true piety is grounded in a love of His holiness. There is a veneration whose chief element is awe; a reverence for dignity, station, greatness, power, which is

cold and formal and distant. Such is the veneration which barbarian tribes manifest for the mysterious powers of Nature. But the veneration of the Christian mind for God is not a dim awe of invisible power, a dread of that Almighty force which heaped up the mountains, but is a reverence for that which is greater than physical force, however sublime and terrible, even the greatness of a good and just and holy character. The poet Shelley disowned a personal God; yet what one has aptly styled "the atheistic hunger of his soul" caused him to fill the universe with invisible powers to which he paid that credulous homage which atheism always pays to mystery. But with this love and adoration of the character of God should mingle always a salutary awe of His majesty. "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." II. WHAT ARE THE MODES OF ITS EXPRESSION? 1. We should cherish this reverence for the being of God when we approach Him in prayer. Abraham and Moses, and Samuel and David, with all their impurity in supplication, were filled with reverence and godly fear when they drew nigh to God in prayer. 2. We should cherish reverence for the name of God. 3. True godliness implies a reverence for the law of God as the supreme and final rule of moral action. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." 4. We should cherish also a profound reverence for the will of God as manifested in His providence. "I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it." The godly mind rises above all secondary causes in nature and all intermediate human agencies to perceive and acknowledge the hand of God in its afflictions. III. GUARD AGAINST ITS COUNTERFEITS. 1. We are cautioned not to confound gain with godliness. The Apostle Paul warns Timothy against "men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." At first view this seems a strange and almost incredible form of heresy. But call to mind the fact that under the Old Testament dispensation temporal prosperity was promised to godly living, and you will readily see how the idea might arise, as it did, that outward prosperity was always a mark of inward piety. This substitution of gain for godliness is one of the most subtle and depraving devices of the enemy of souls. It is making a calf of gold under the very brow of Sinai, and setting aside the Holy One of Israel for an image of Mammon. 2. The other error is thus characterised by Paul. He speaks of men who are "lovers of their own selves; lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," who yet have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Manifold are the forms under which such godliness appears. There is a poetic form of godliness, a sentiment which takes the air of reverence and breathes the name of the Divinity when singing of the grander forms of nature. The old Greek and Latin poetry peopled the invisible with gods, whose presence and agency it represented in all the mysteries of nature and in all leading events of human experience. The machinery of Homer's great epic lies within the supernatural; the gods played their part in every Greek tragedy. Indeed, we know the religion of Greece and Rome mainly through their literature. But while true godliness is true veneration for God, not all veneration is godliness. It may lead the soul to God, or it may not lie deeper than the sentient and the imaginative. There is an artistic or æsthetic form of godliness. The Greek mind, which under the fairest clime and the most liberal government was stimulated to the highest culture in taste and art, expressed its devotion through artistic forms, especially in sculpture. But taste and art, however subsidiary to the expression of devotion, can never be of the essence of godliness. There is a dogmatic form of godliness, a creed-worship, a veneration for dogmas and authorities in religion. Wherever the creed is put before the life as evidence of piety, the profession of the lips before the confession of the heart, there the form of godliness is substituted for its power. There is a mechanical work-form of godliness. This puts all the religious energy of the soul into such outward visible acts as seem to be deeds of piety, but which may be only deeds of self-righteousness. The methodical and laborious Southey was once describing to a friend his minute allotment of time for his diversified labours in reading and writing—such an hour being given to French, the next to Spanish, the next to a Review, the next to classics, the next to history, &c. "But pray, Mr. Southey," interrupted the friend, "at what time do you think?" Might it not be asked of some who abound in the drill-work of religion, "At what time do you pray?" IV. THE MOTIVES FOR CULTIVATING A TRUE GODLINESS. 1. That God is as He is. Could we but form a conception of God as revealed in the Scriptures, surely we must bow reverently and walk softly before Him. 2. The blessedness of godliness both here and in the hereafter. 3. The fact that we shall soon meet God face to face. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *Godliness*:—The term *εὐσέβεια*,

here translated godliness, is used in the New Testament to denote that reverence toward God which is a spontaneous feeling of the heart in view of His character (see in Robinson). Cornelius was "a devout man (*εὐσεβής*), and feared God." The prevailing use of *εὐσεβεία* by classic writers gives to it this same objective sense. Plato, Thucydides, Desmosthenes, use it to express veneration toward the Deity (*πρὸς Θεοῦς*). See in Stephanus, Suidas, and Passow ed. Rost und Palm. In the "Definitions" sometimes ascribed to Plato, *εὐσεβεία* is defined to be *Δικαιοσύνη πρὸς Θεοῦς*, that which is just, fitting, meet, as toward the gods. The Stoics defined it to be *ἐπιστήμη Θεῶν θεοσέπιας*—the appreciative or becoming service of the gods. Stephanus defines it by *religiositas*, thus expressing the same idea of reverence toward God. De Wette, in his note upon 2 Peter i. 6, says "Ehrfurcht und Liebe gegen Gott"—veneration and love toward God. This use of the word precludes the idea of God-like-ness, and favours the less euphonious, but more expressive term, God-ward-ness. It denotes also something deeper than a formal outward reverence for the demands of God, and refers directly to the reverence of the soul toward God.

(*Ibid.*) *Of godliness*:—I. WHEREIN GODLINESS CONSISTS. It takes in all those dispositions of mind with the proper expressions of them which are due to the high perfections of the Deity, and which result from the relations we bear to Him. As He is eternal, independent, infinitely excellent, powerful, wise, holy, and good, the light of nature itself teaches us to glorify Him by our praises, to esteem, love, and fear Him, and to obey His will in all things as far as it is known to us. As He is the almighty Creator of all things visible and invisible, the preserver and governor of the world, from hence arises the obligation to gratitude, confidence in His mercy, submission and resignation to His providence. The inward affections which naturally arise comprehended in godliness are, first, fear, a reverence for His majesty, a serious affecting sense of all His glorious attributes, not a confounding terror and amazement. Secondly, the fear of God, as the Scripture explains it, which is an essential part of godliness, and of the respect He claims from us, doth not exclude love. His goodness naturally excites love. Gratitude is a kind of love which naturally arises in the mind to any being who discovers kind intentions towards us. The exercise of love and respect seems especially to consist in an entire acquiescence in the order He has appointed, with confidence in His wisdom and goodness and submission to His will. When I speak of resignation to God, I do not only mean that we should be satisfied with the occurrences of life, but that we should approve and actively obey His precepts, submitting to His moral as well as providential government. This doctrine has been always taught in the true Church, and care taken to prevent men's falling into that fatal error of placing the all of religion in acts of devotion, while they neglected that much more substantial proof of respect to the Deity, the imitating of His righteousness and mercy. Yet the external acts of adoration and homage to the Deity are not to be left undone, and the performing of them according to His institution is a part of godliness. Not that there is any value in the outward performance, as separated from the affection, but supposing first the sincerity of good principles and dispositions in the soul, they ought to be exerted in external acts of worship for two reasons. First, because that has a tendency to increase them. The body and the mind in our present constitution have a mutual influence on each other. Secondly, another reason for outward acts of adoration and homage to God is that thereby we may glorify Him. II. THE REASONABLENESS AND NECESSITY OF ADDING GODLINESS TO ALL OTHER VIRTUES. First, if we consider godliness in itself abstractedly, it will appear to be a very eminent and important branch of our duty. Not only is it so represented in the Holy Scriptures, but if we attend to the reason and nature of the thing, we must be convinced that, as God is the most excellent of all beings with whom we have to do as our ruler and constant benefactor and our judge, our first respects are due to Him. It is the distinguishing privilege of mankind to be capable of religion. Secondly, it ought therefore to be added to all other virtues, because it is the chief support and security of them, and where it prevails has a great influence on men to practise them. The efficacy of godliness, strictly so called, to the production of all other virtues appears from the nature of it already explained, for it imports a disposition to obey all God's commandments and to do everything which He approves. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*) *Godliness*:—It was a beautiful saying of one of the old Fathers when, addressing himself to God, he exclaims, "Thou hast formed man, Thy creature, for Thee, and he cannot be at rest until he have come again unto Thee." I. WHAT IS THE GODLINESS HERE COMMENDED? Looking to the sense of the term here employed in the Greek original,

it is piety or the fear of God—that veneration of the Most High which leads to homage and obedience. Godliness has its three sides. It is communion with God, for the society of our Maker is enjoyed in true worship of Him. It is intellectual and spiritual assimilation to Him, in the cordial admission and love of His truth; and practical assimilation to Him, in the endeavour to reflect on the world the lustre of His graces and some broken, distant beams, at least, of His moral excellences. To make this possible—to raise the fallen and rebuild the down-trodden and polluted shrine—God Himself has come amongst us. II. THERE ARE FOUL SEMBLANCES OF GODLINESS, mere idols, that delude many. Let us keep ourselves from them. 1. It is a mistake to suppose that mere veneration for some higher existence, however imaginary and false our views of this existence—that such vague veneration is godliness; that God hears alike with delight those who call Him Jehovah and receive the Bible and those who call Him Juggernaut and who swear by the Hindoo Shaster. In this vague and unscriptural sense of the term the atheistic poet, Shelley, and the pantheistic philosopher, Spinoza, have been called men of piety, because of a spirit of tenderness and awe that was attributed to them. But atheism—the ungrateful and irrational dethronement and denial of any God—is that to be by any apothecary's art of liberalism made to coalesce with the love and worship of the true God, as forming the same incense of accepted adoration? As to pantheism, it is opposed to piety or true godliness radically and throughout. True godliness begins in humility and penitence, and is sustained by prayer and adoration. But pantheism begins in pride. 2. It is a mistake, again, to look, as some seem now disposed to do, upon the austerities and ceremonies of the Church of Rome, as the fairest exhibition of godliness. III. IN WHAT MANNER, THEN, MAY WE SAFELY AND SUCCESSFULLY ATTAIN THE GODLINESS WHICH THE APOSTLE HERE ENJOINS? Far, then, as it is a life, God must give it. Far as it is a truth, He in His Scriptures and by the Spirit of His Son must teach it; and far as it is a communion, it must be sought in the one way, Christ. Daily and earnest and effectual supplication is necessary. This must, again, seek God's teachings in the study of His revealed truth. Here He has manifested Himself, His purposes, and character; and this, His book, He delights to honour and to transcribe afresh into the experience and hearts of His devout people. IV. EVERY INDUCEMENT OF INTEREST AND DUTY, OF HONOUR AND SAFETY, OF BENEVOLENCE TO MAN AND PIETY TOWARDS GOD, REQUIRES EACH OF US TO BECOME THE FRIEND AND CHILD AND FOLLOWER OF THE LIVING GOD. 1. Remember that it is the highest style of human nature. The scholar, the sage, the discoverer, and the hero, what are they, before God, to the saint? 2. Holiness is, again, the master-key of the universe. Born to die, you are fated to travel hence. But whither? Become God's charge and child. Be a renewed man by God's grace, and you are gifted, virtually, with the freedom of the universe. 3. Remember, again, that it is the one thing needful. Send bread to the famishing, give sympathy to the oppressed, give healing remedies to those who are sick and ready to die, give education to the ignorant. But before the school, or political emancipation, or health, or even bread, the tribes of Adam need true godliness. 4. The last consideration is that as godliness is the bond and crown of all the virtues, so it is, on the other hand, the one sufficient remedy for the subjugation and removal of all the vices. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Godliness*:—Let us trace the wisdom and necessity of the exhortation, and the wisdom and necessity of that which is thus commanded. It was a wise suggestion to men of every age that they should possess and develop this habit of pious reverence. It gives us the hint that the contrary was likely to be the tendency. It is no easy thing, under all circumstances, to look calmly and trustfully up to the throne of the living God, and cheerfully commit all our life to His fashioning and to His keeping: it is no easy thing at all times to trace the gentleness of His grace in the ways of providence. We see the necessity of the exhortation, then, because this reverence of heart in all purity and faith is hard of accomplishment. Our lot seems to be cast in what, generally speaking, may be called a thinking and reading age. Men are learning to observe, and to glory in observing. There is God's great universe, spreading about us on all sides, and He who created it, and created us, knew that as men learned to read, they would aspire to acquaintance with the truths which unfold themselves to careful observation. The only thing I have to say about it is, that it makes a life of reverence, of piety, of "godliness," harder to us than it was to men who lived in the time nearer to human intellectual infancy. By the discovery of what are called natural laws, and the secondary

causes of the effects we see around us, do we not apparently lengthen the distance between ourselves and God? To the savage, the thunder is the voice of the Great Spirit, the lightning is the flash of His angry eye. He stands face to face with his deity in these things. To the Israelite, God, Jehovah worked directly in sending the plagues upon the obstinate king and his people, who would not let them go; in bringing streams of water from the rock, in sending manna for their food, in overthrowing their enemies, in establishing their greatness. They did not see, or care to see, the second causes, the long chain, it may be, of means by which these effects were accomplished. They seemed to stand ever in the immediate presence of their God. Is it not true that the advancement of science and acquaintance with natural laws has removed you to a lengthened distance from Him, who works through all things by the word of His power; and that, as there is a wider interval for you to overpass, it is harder for you, than it was, say for Abraham, or Noah, to live a life of reverence and the fear of God? Thus much concerning the necessity for the exhortation. One word on the necessity of that which is thus commanded. Because the thing is harder there is the more credit in its accomplishment. If the man has a larger interval over which to look, the stronger must be his sight, if he is able to see clearly through all the intermediate second causes, the great first Mover in all things, working out His purpose. The more thickly the "clouds and darkness" roll around God, the truer man does he assert himself, who is able to trace His loving intention through the mystery. If we are ever to come to the full stature of manliness in Christ, we must possess in active exercise this disposition of "godliness." (*D. J. Hamer.*)

Of the practice of godliness :—1. The amiableness of a truly pious temper, and the importance of it in religion. 2. It will have a most happy influence to make us holy and righteous in our whole conversation in the world. 3. It will tend exceedingly to our own interest and happiness. The exercise of it will afford us the most sincere and high pleasure and satisfaction.

I. THE PROPER METHODS OF RAISING AND CULTIVATING A TEMPER OF RATIONAL PIETY AND DEVOTION. 1. Let us be at pains to acquire just notions of the Deity; for the opinions which we form of Him will have the greatest influence on our temper and behaviour towards Him. 2. Let us keep up a lively sense of the excellence and the goodness of God in our minds by serious attention to them, and frequent reflections upon them. 3. Let us consider God as always present with us, and the Witness and Inspector of our behaviour. The lively consideration of this cannot but make us exceedingly careful to treat Him with all possible respect and honour, and to do everything which we apprehend will be pleasing and acceptable to Him. 4. Let us attend carefully upon the positive institutions of religion, and the outward duties of devotion. These have been appointed on purpose to maintain in us a lively sense of God and His excellences, to recall to our minds the several considerations which have a tendency to improve and strengthen our good dispositions towards Him, to instruct us in the duty which we owe to Him, and to make us serve Him with the greater zeal and cheerfulness. And if we attend to them for these ends, we shall find them means every way fitted to answer them. (*J. Orr, D.D.*)

Brotherly kindness.—*Brotherly kindness* :—I. OBSERVE HOW IN THE VERY NAME OF THIS GRACE THERE LIE LESSONS AS TO ITS FOUNDATION AND AS TO ITS NATURE. The word is all but a coinage of Christianity, and the thing is entirely so. The gospel bridged over all the divisions, and brought bond and free, Jew and Gentile, man and woman, into a great unity, so deep, so real, that all antagonism vanished. "The mystery hid from ages" was revealed—that a common relation to a Divine Father made all the men who partook of it one. But let us think of what instruction this word contains in reference to the foundation of this Christian unity. We go deep down into the very heart of Christianity when we talk about all Christians being "brethren." It is not a mere sentimental expression to convey the idea that they ought to love one another, but it is a declaration of the deep reason why they ought thus to love one another; and it links on to that great truth, that in Jesus Christ all they that love Him and trust to Him do receive direct from God a real communication of a new and supernatural spiritual life, which makes them no more merely sons of God by creation and after the flesh, but sons of God through the Spirit. The lonely pilgrim travels to the Cross, and when he comes there he finds that he is "come unto the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven." This unity is a far deeper thing than mere identity of opinion. Christ's Church is no voluntary association into which men may pass or not, as they please, but you are born into it, if you are Christian people, as much as you are born into your mother's house. And you can no more denude yourselves of your

relationships to the other men who possess the same life, than you can break the tie of brotherhood which binds you to all them that have received corporeal life from the same source as you. II. OBSERVE THAT THE PLACE WHICH THIS VIRTUE HOLDS IN THE SERIES TEACHES US THE ONE-SIDEDNESS OF A CHARACTER WITHOUT IT, HOWEVER STRONG AND SELF-CONTROLLED. Unless the rock be crowned with a coronet of wild flowers it is savage and black. And unless to our strength that fronts the world, to our quick discernment of duty that looks through illusions and clearly sees duty, to our self-control, that is severe to ourselves, and to ourselves alone; to our patient persistence that bears and does and hopes on and ever, we add the supreme beauty of sympathetic gentleness and Christlike tenderness, all these other lovelinesses will lack their last touch of poignant exquisiteness that makes them complete. On the other hand, it is a very real danger in earnest Christian culture, that we shall concentrate our attention far too much on the self-regarding virtues, and too little upon those which refer to others. The place which this brotherly kindness occupies in our series, may further teach us that it is a great mistake for good men to cultivate the gentler graces at the expense of the sterner and the stronger. Christian love is no mere feeble emotion, but a strong and mailed warrior, who beareth all things, and can do all things. III. THE OCCURRENCE OF THIS GRACE IN OUR SERIES TEACHES US THE LESSON THAT IT IS A DUTY TO BE WON BY EFFORT. It is just as much your duty to cherish brotherly love to all professing Christian people as it is to govern your own passions, or to do any of these other things that are enjoined upon us here. The introductory clause of this whole series covers them all. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith." The hindrances are strong and real enough to make effort to overcome them absolutely essential. There is our own selfishness. That is the master-devil of the whole gang that come between us and true Christian charity to our brethren. And then, besides that, there is in our day a wide distinction among Christian people, in station, in education, in general outlook upon life, in opinion. In addition there is that most formidable hindrance of all, our wretched denominational rivalries. IV. THE PLACE WHICH THIS GRACE HOLDS IN OUR SERIES TEACHES US THE BEST WAY OF MAKING IT OUR OWN. "In your godliness supply brotherly love." The more we realise our dependence upon God the more we shall realise our kindred with our brethren. The electric spark of love to Christ will combine the else separate elements into one. Cleaving to the one Shepherd, the else scattered sheep become one flock, held together, not by the outward bonds of a fold, but by the attraction that fastens them all to Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Brotherly kindness*:—I. THE CONNECTION. The apostle joins brotherly kindness to godliness—1. Because brotherly kindness is the daughter of godliness. The river of charity springs from the fountain of piety. 2. Because brotherly kindness is the moderator of godliness. God loves not such mad zeal, that so fixeth the eyes on heaven that it despiseth to look on their poor brother on earth. 3. Because godliness is proved by brotherly kindness (1 John ii. 9). II. THE DEFINITION. It is a love to the faithful; to such as possess the same faith with us, and by that faith are adopted heirs to the same God, through the brotherhood of the same Christ. It is distinguished from charity by nearness and dearness. By nearness, I mean not local but mystical. Charity hath a great latitude, and is like the heaven that covers all; brotherly kindness like the sun that shines upon the one half at once. The firmament sends influence to more than the sun, but the sun comes nearer to that object it blesseth than the firmament. By dearness; for the bond of nature is not so strong as the bond of grace. Our creation hath made us friends; our redemption, brethren. III. THE DISTINCTION. There are three sorts of brethren. 1. By race; and that either by birth, or by blood. 2. By place, such as are of the same nation. 3. By grace. IV. THE CONCLUSIONS. 1. The necessity is great. (1) It is worthy in itself; that virtue which is ranked with godliness must needs be honourable. (2) We are apt to neglect it; therefore St. Peter urges it several times (1 Pet. i. 22, ii. 17, iii. 8, and here); St. Paul thrice (Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 1). 2. The practice. (1) What it forbids as opposites to it, and murderers of it. (a) Contentious litigation (1 Cor. vi. 6, 7; Prov. vi. 19; Gen. xiii. 8). (b) An inveterate hatred. God loves all His children; wilt thou hate him that God loves? (1 John ii. 11, iii. 15). (c) Even anger itself is a traitor to this virtue; for as hatred is a long anger, so anger is a short hatred; malice is nothing else but inveterate wrath (Matt. v. 22). (d) Oppression (1 Thess. iv. 6). (e) A proud contempt of one's brethren (Psa. l. 20). (2) Positively. (a) This brotherly kindness is shown in reprehending those we love (Lev. xix. 17). (b) Helping their poor estates. (c)

Praying for them. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Brotherly kindness*.—I. This same apostle has, in his earlier epistle, enjoined it upon the disciples of Christ to “LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD.” And whom has the Saviour taught us to regard as being thus our kindred and our brethren? We turn to the Gospels for the needful light in interpreting the Epistles. 1. When our Lord was celebrating with His apostles, the last religious ordinance of His life on earth, He said to them, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John xiii. 34, 35). This law was new in its authorship. The Decalogue on Sinai had been given through Moses. The Son Himself was now come to speak, face to face, that law of Love which crowned and solved all the earlier commandments. It was, again, novel in its motives. To intimate His equal Deity, the Son here makes love to Himself, the motive of holy obedience. As it was new, too, in its evidence. It would become, before the world, the badge and public pledge of Christian discipleship. 2. But whilst I am required to cherish a brother’s warm regard for these, are none but these my brethren? We answer to this question: Spiritual ties, whilst overriding, do not annul all natural bonds. And who are our brethren, by these earlier and human ties? We suppose all who are near to us—those attached and grappled to us by the domestic charities; those, again, with whom we are united of our free choice by the bonds of friendship; and those, lastly, who are our countrymen, one with us by the law of patriotism. II. **HOW, THEN, IS IT THAT GODLINESS NEEDS THE ADDITION OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS?** 1. Far as the range of worldly brotherhood extends, in our relations to the home, to the circles of friendship, and to our countrymen generally, godliness should be guarded by this grace of human sympathy, to counteract an unjust, but common imputation against true piety. The monk, fleeing to the wilderness; the spiritualist, overlooking his engagements to society and the household, in the care of the closet and his soul, are answerable for an error here. Their godliness lacks brotherly kindness. So, too, the hostility of the worldly to true piety, venting itself of old by statutes and penalties; venting itself in our times, rather in derision and cruel mockery, may easily provoke in the minds of the truly godly an alienation that would, unchecked, issue in utter isolation. But this is rather natural than justifiable. It is not so much the strength of the Christian’s godliness, as the human weakness intermingled with, and diluting that piety, which thus teaches him to withdraw, because he has cause of complaint. 2. But not only may the bonds of worldly and human brotherhood, thus, with or without the Christian’s fault, be seemingly sundered by his godliness; a man’s piety may seem to hinder his recognition at times of the ties of spiritual brotherhood also. If it be asked, how this can be, let it be remembered in reply, that a man of eminent devoutness may easily become absorbed and abstracted in manner. 3. But a more disastrous barrier to this brotherly kindness is the existence and range of controversy among Christians. III. **WE NOW REACH THAT DIVISION OF OUR SUBJECT IN WHICH WE CONSIDER HOW THE CHRISTIAN GRACE OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS IS TO FILL UP THE SPHERE OF WORLDLY BROTHERHOOD, EMBRACING AS THAT DOES, FRIENDSHIP, KINDRED, AND COUNTRY.** 1. As to the power of religion to adorn and cement friendship, the history of the Church speaks emphatically. 2. As to the effects of religion on those who are our brethren because our countrymen, the topic of Christianity in its relations to the nation is too vast and complicated to be at this time discussed. It is evidently a duty of Christian patriotism, to urge thoroughly the work of Home Missions, and to send the Bible and Sabbath-school and ministry on the very crest of the westward waves of emigration. IV. **THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN GRACE, WHICH THE APOSTLE HERE ENJOINS, SHOULD BE DISPLAYED IN THE DISTINCT SPHERE OF SPIRITUAL BROTHERHOOD.** 1. Within the same church, then, the disciples of our Saviour need to be more and more given to mutual intercession. 2. Christians in this day need, again to ponder the warnings of James as to social and terrestrial distinctions, unduly dwelt upon in the intercourse of fellow-disciples. Fraternity among Christians, again, requires that we do not abandon merely to the care of the State, the poor and dependent of our fellow-disciples. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Brotherly kindness*.—Now, one of the first impulses of the heart when men are thrown together is to lay hold at once of points of contact, to recognise identity of interests, community of feeling, to get rid, as far as possible, of those things which are exterior and accidental, or else to pierce through these and find how, in all essential and unalterable things, the human heart is at one with its kind. I know that society, and commercial society not least, manifests contending interests, that

the motto seems to be—"Every man for himself, and (sometimes not very reverentially added, by the way) God for us all"; that it appears almost necessary that a man should harden his heart against consideration for his brother man; that he is afloat upon an angry sea; that the struggles of others often dash the water in his face, and threaten his own existence, and that even if he abstain from retaliation, he scarcely dare reach out a hand to help a brother for fear of being dragged down. I know these things from present observation; but still it is true that all such circumstances are an after-growth, and that under the earliest, simplest conditions of human society, "brotherly kindness" is an instinct, an irresistible impulse. You may see it, if you like, springing forth again, with all its early strength and freshness, on occasions such as when men, few in number, and with all differences of position destroyed, have to form among themselves society anew; in any case of shipwreck, say, when some are cast upon uninhabited land. The brotherly instinct is at work again at once, and only expires when simplicity is corrupted, and artificialism blots it out. Now, is it not the wish of the best moments of every man, that this feeling could be maintained, that all contending interests should sign a truce of brotherhood? And I suppose the best of men, as they find the hopes which their fancy had kindled die away in the light of fact, say, "The thing is impossible: while I have to deal with such men as so-and-so, I can afford little room for the exercise, in this relation, of such a virtue as 'brotherly kindness.' We must be living under a different condition of things from the present, all society must be made afresh before this can be." Exactly so, and that is the root of the whole matter. Men must be renewed, redeemed, and then "brotherly kindness" may have its full and perfect exercise. Is not this announced as the mission of gospel truth in this world? It reveals our own nature to us; it shows us in what points we are akin one to another. And now another question meets us; the answer to which will engage our attention. Peter is writing to Christians, "to those," he says, "who have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Why does he think it needful to insist upon the exercise of this virtue, "brotherly kindness"? Is not this the message that we "have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another?" What need, then, for special exhortation as to the mingling of this with the other elements of Christian character? If we think for a moment, the answer to such question will readily occur. Christianity, the religion of faith and love, is the law of the heavenly life, but it is sent to us here, and now, for the ordering of this earthly life. I shall now point out what seem to me the grounds on which the seclusive, meditative, form of piety might be judged likely to manifest itself unduly, and then remind you of one or two facts which show that such judgment is well founded. Gospel truth teaches us this one thing of all most clearly—the individual relation between each human heart and God—personal, not representative, nor corporate religion—the impossibility of vicarious love, of deputy service. Personal susceptibility, personal action are necessary if the soul is to make any way toward heaven. This revelation gives him not only new light concerning his own nature, it gives him new ideas of God. This Infinite Being is revealed as standing in near relation to our spirit, as having made sacrifice for our soul's redemption, so that our life is lifted out of all its appearance of littleness, sublimed by the ordering of His perfect will, sanctified by the might of His Holy Spirit. May not a man, when thoughts like these possess him, when his godliness takes its truest, intensest form, well be wishful to stand in some "quiet place" apart from interruptive society, where he may fathom, in some measure, the vastness of what has been revealed. But there is more; this Divine relation is to be an abiding one: death is no destroyer of it, but rather a caster down of what has been a hindrance to the closer union. These highest delights are, in one sense, solitary ones, we can communicate no idea of them in words, and we are tempted to leave that society in which none can fully know us and have sympathy in our joy, and wait in communion with Him who sees all and knows all, and accepts the silent homage of our hearts. Now, such tendency as this towards seclusion has manifested itself in time past, and it is seen to this day. We know it in the experience of those who are called Mystics, men of the German school like Tauler, men of the French school like Gerson. We see it in the seclusion of hermits, and monks, and nuns. But has the idea no force with us? We are social, but is it Christian or worldly society that we practise? Do we not seclude our religious life too much within ourselves? (*D. J. Hamer.*) *Brotherly kindness* :—

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BROTHERLY LOVE. 1. This love is based upon the evidence of a Christly character, and is prompted by love to Christ Himself. It is not the

doctrine of a universal fraternity which the text inculcates, but brotherly love between the members of the body of Christ. This brotherly love rests primarily upon a character recognised and approved as the basis of fellowship; it is the love of a friend of Christ for another in whom also he discerns a friendship for, and a likeness to Christ. The profession of love to Christ is not enough to command this brotherly love. We do not then bestow this brotherly affection indiscriminately upon all who call themselves by the name of Christ. We must have evidence that they are His disciples. But, on the other hand, we may not withhold this love from any who show truly the spirit of Christ. The love of Christ will prompt to this. That love is the most potent of moral affinities. Not more surely does the magnet search out and draw to itself particles of steel in a heap of sand, than does the love of Christ in the heart draw to itself, by its sweet and potent magnetism, whatever has a real affinity for Christ. It is not an external and formal fellowship, not the spirit of sect or party, not alliance in a particular Church, which generates and feeds this love; but an inward affection for Christ Himself, which causes us to delight in whatever is like Christ or is pleasing to Christ. Our very love for Christ forbids that we should love as brethren those who do not, above all errors and faults, clearly evince their love for Him. 2. This brotherly love does not require in Christians an entire agreement in opinion or coincidence in practice. 3. This brotherly love does not forbid Christians to controvert the opinions or reprove the faults one of another. 4. True brotherly love does not require the same marks of outward consideration toward all Christians. This love is neither a vague sentimentalism nor a levelling radicalism. II. THE GROUNDS OR REASONS OF THIS MUTUAL AFFECTION OF THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. We have seen that this brotherhood of believers is founded originally in their common relations to Christ. Descending now from this general survey, we may note more particularly—1. That brotherly love is the only real bond of union in a Church of Christ. What is a Church? A body of professed believers in Christ, associated under a covenant for mutual watchfulness and help in the Christian life, and for maintaining the ordinances of the gospel. Its basis is a covenant. A covenant differs herein from a constitution. A constitution is a system of rules and principles for the government of persons united under it. But a covenant, as the term is used in Church affairs, is “a solemn agreement between the members of a Church, that they will walk together according to the precepts of the gospel, in brotherly affection.” Now it is obvious that this covenant cannot stand one moment without love. Love is its essence; its vital element. In the normal structure of our churches, we have nothing to hold us together but the simple bond of love. 2. Brotherly love is the truest evidence of a regenerated and sanctified heart. The heart of man is by nature selfish and proud. It careth for its own things and not for the things of others. The gospel makes the soul and its interests paramount to all temporal distinctions; it puts the spiritual infinitely above the physical; it honours character above all rank, and station, and wealth, and power; it honours all men as the offspring of God; and it looks upon the renewed man in Christ as the image of Christ, to be received and loved for His sake. “One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” 3. This law of Christian brotherhood declared by our Lord, not only secures to each and every disciple the same rights and privileges in His kingdom; it forbids any relation between Christians which is inconsistent with their absolute equality before Him, and their fraternal love for each other. 4. The fraternal love of Christians gives to the world the highest and most convincing proof of the reality and the power of Christian faith, and is the necessary condition for the advancement of Christianity in the world. For the spread of Christianity, therefore, it is not enough that we found schools and colleges, build churches, establish missions, multiply tracts and Bibles; all this apparatus is needed for the work; but they who would reform and save the world, must above all things have fervent charity among themselves. III. HOW SHALL THIS LOVE BE DEVELOPED AND CHERISHED? 1. Wherever this is possible, Christians must cultivate a familiar acquaintance with each other. How often a Church is rather an aggregation of independent units than the coalescing of congenial fervent hearts! 2. We must cherish brotherly love by dwelling in our thoughts and speech upon the excellences of brethren rather than upon their infirmities and defects. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) **Charity.**—*Charity* :—We have now reached the last bead on this rosary of Christian graces. As the apostle uses it here, this love is the crown and consummate flower of all Christian excellence; the last result of discipline and self-culture, the very image of God. I. “CHARITY” IS THE SUM OF ALL DUTY TO ALL MEN. We hear it urged—and there is a truth in the saying—“we want less charity and

more justice." Yes! but we want most the charity which is justice; the love which every man has a right to expect from us. You do not do your duty to anybody, however you may lavish gifts upon them, unless this Christ-like sentiment dwells in your hearts. The obligation has nothing whatever to do with the character of the object on which that ray is to fall. The sun is as much bound to shine upon a dunghill as upon a diamond. Our obligation to love our fellows has a far deeper source than the accidents of their character. Now let me remind you that all this is an intensely practical exhortation. People curl their lips at the fine words that Christian teachers talk about universal love, and say, "Ah! a pretty sentiment. It does not mean anything." Well! let a man try for a week to live it, and the want of practicalness in the exhortation will be the last thing that he will complain of. Fine emotion is all very well, but even Niagara is going to be turned to practical use now-a-days, and made to work for its living. And all the rush of the deepest and purest emotion is nought unless it drives the wheels of life.

II. NOTICE HOW THIS SAME GRACE OR VIRTUE IS REPRESENTED AS BEING ATTAINABLE ONLY AS THE OUTCOME OF GODLINESS. There is only one thing that can conquer the selfishness which is the great enemy of this universal charity, and that is that the love of God poured into a man's heart shall on its bright waves float out the self-regard which is central and deep almost as life itself.

III. THIS GRACE IS THE LAST RESULT OF ALL CHRISTIAN CULTURE AND VIRTUE. The man that is simply righteous, strong, self-controlling, patient, has not yet touched the highest apex of possible development. All these cold and stern graces need to be lit up, like the snow of the glacier, with the gleam of this sweet, solemn light, in order that they may glitter with their serenest whiteness. Add to virtue, love; to knowledge, gentleness; to all the graces which regard our own self-development, the supreme consecration of the excellence that forgets itself, and stretches out loving hands, laden with tender sympathies and large gifts towards the weary, even if it be the hostile world. Further, this Divine charity, not only completes these sterner graces, but it needs them for its development and its perfecting. Our love to our fellows will never be noble, deep, Christlike, unless it be the child of severity to ourselves. And still further let me remind you that this wide, expansive, all-comprehending charity is the child of an intensely personal faith. It is when the love of Christ to me dawns on my heart that I am brought to the broad charity that grasps all the men whom Christ has grasped, and cannot but love in its poor measure, them whom He so much loved that He died for them. (*J. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*Of brotherly kindness and charity:—*I. THE PRINCIPLE ITSELF is easily understood, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The proper expressions of this inward good affection in the mind are as various as the necessities of mankind, and the abilities and opportunities of others to relieve them. To instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the disobedient, to convert sinners, to strengthen the weak, comfort the feeble-minded, to encourage the sincere; these are the noblest offices we can possibly perform to our brethren, because they serve the highest ends, and produce the best and most lasting effects. But, besides these offices of charity, there are others enjoined by the natural law of benevolence, and which the gospel, so far from overlooking, peculiarly enforces. The wise and sovereign providence of God has so ordered that there is a diversity in the state of men; some are indigent, others in a capacity of relieving. In all these, and other cases of a like nature, reason and a compassionate heart will readily suggest to a man how he ought to show his charity.

II. THE OBLIGATIONS we are under to the practice of this excellent duty. 1. And the first thing I shall mention is taken from the consideration of ourselves. Let any one look into the workings of his own heart when a pitiable object is presented to him, and try whether he does not feel something within which calls him to stretch forth his hand for the relief of the distressed? if it is not with violence to himself that he can harden his heart, and hide himself from human misery? The greater ability, therefore, which Divine providence gives any man of diffusing the effects of his virtue far and wide by relieving multitudes of his fellow-creatures, the larger occasion he has of enjoying the purest pleasure, even like that of God Himself, whose happiness is in communicating good, for the absolute perfection of His nature raises Him above the possibility of receiving any. 2. Another obligation to the practice of brotherly kindness and charity arises from the object of it, our brethren and neighbours, their condition, and the relation we stand in to them. Do we acknowledge God the Author of our being? He is equally the Author of theirs, which should inspire us with tender compassion towards each other. But the Christian religion has super-added special obligations to those general ones which the common ties of humanity lay upon us, by establishing a new and intimate rela-

tion among the disciples of Christ. 3. In the third place, we are, with respect to God, under great and indispensable obligations to the exercise of brotherly kindness and charity. This is clearly insinuated in the text, for the apostle exhorts us to add charity to godliness. The principles of the fear and love of God will naturally determine us to exercise good-will and beneficence to our brethren. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*) *Charity*:—We are now got to the roof of this spiritual house, charity. This is the highest round of the ladder: there be eight steps, this is the uppermost, as nearest to heaven. I. THE MOTIVES TO CHARITY. 1. The necessity of it—(1) In respect of God. He charges us with it, both in the law and in the gospel (Lev. xix. 18; John xiii. 34). (2) In respect of thyself. Things of greatest use should be of greatest estimation. Thou wouldst know if thou breathest, Christian; the sign of it is thy charity. This is the pulse of faith (Jas. ii. 18). 2. The dignity of it. It is a royal office; yea, a Divine practice. Mercy and charity is the sole work communicable to man with God. The Lord is content to acknowledge Himself the charitable man's debtor (Prov. xix. 17). 3. The commodity of it. It secureth all, increaseth all, blesseth all. 4. The danger of neglecting it (Matt. xxv. 41–43; Prov. xxi. 13; Jas. ii. 13). II. THE MATERIALS WHEREIN THIS EXTERNAL AND PRACTICAL PART OF CHARITY CONSISTS. 1. Who must give charitably (1 Tim. vi. 17; Luke xii. 21; 1 Tim. vi. 18; 2 Cor. viii. 12; Eph. iv. 28; Luke iii. 11). 2. What must be given: not words, but deeds; a charitable heart hath a helpful hand. 3. To whom extends our charity: this munificent part of it to the poor (Luke xiv. 13, 14; vi. 33). 4. Whereof must we give: not evil-gotten things, but our own. When the oppressor hath built his almshouse, and hopes by his perfunctory devotions to be admitted to heaven, the curses of the undone wretches knock him down to hell. 5. How we must give—(1) Cheerfully. (2) Discreetly. (3) With a right intention; for God's glory, not thine. (4) Opportunely. The more delay in giving, the less honour in the gift. (5) Before giving thy goods to the poor, give thyself to God. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Charity*:—I. THE PLACE CHARITY OCCUPIES. It is brought forward last in our text, not as being in itself independent of, and in order of time, subsequent to those which the apostle has before recounted; but it is exalted, because of its power to keep in unison all the other graces, as the knot completes and holds together the garland. The regenerate soul loves God in the first pulsations of his new-found spiritual life; and gratitude to the Redeemer who has bought him, prompts, early and continually, all his acts of obedience to God, and all his acts of kindly service to his fellow-man. But how is it related to, and distinguished from brotherly kindness? Whilst the latter regards mainly the principle of fraternal obligation to human nature, the former finds its chiefest scope and its highest object, in the filial ties binding man to his Father and God. The love of God subordinates and regulates all the outgoings of attachment in the renewed heart. II. We must now discuss THE TRUE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE SEMBLANCES THAT USURP WRONGFULLY ITS TITLES AND HONOURS. It is not, then, as the popular usage of the word would often make it—bare almsgiving. Neither is this grace a mere magnanimous disregard of all doctrinal variances, and a baseless assurance that all forms of faith are, if sincere, equally acceptable to God. No: the charity of the Scriptures loves the true God; and as He is the God of Truth, it loves, ardently and without compromise, His truth, unmitigated and unadulterated. Nor is evangelical charity connivance with sin. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him, but in any wise rebuke it," said the law. "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth," is Paul's language in his matchless portraiture of this grace. And, as in the nature of God, love to truth and holiness, is an attribute, having as its opposite pole, hatred to falsehood and unholiness; so, in each other true servant of God, the love of piety is necessarily detestation of impiety, and hatred for the workers of iniquity—not indeed detestation of their persons and souls, but of their practices, and principles, and influences. For the charity of the Scriptures is, first, love to God, the Creator and Source of all goodness—to the good amongst men, as bearing His regenerate image—and to the evil of our race it is a charity, that seeks to reclaim and restore. III. And now let us dwell upon SOME OF THE FRUITS WHICH CHRISTIAN CHARITY MIGHT AND SHOULD DISPLAY IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN SOCIETY. Its root is, then, in another world. It is, first, filial towards God; and then fraternal towards man as the creature of God. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Charity*:—Christianity inculcates charity, universal love. This religion of Jesus implies a love that is unrestricted in its exercise, but the implication lies a little farther from the surface than that which teaches social feeling among Christians themselves. You cannot conceive of a man who loves Christ

not having the impulse to exercise kindness of feeling towards those who hold the same "precious faith and promises" with himself. Fellowship, more or less close, is implied in the very nature of the case. But you can conceive of a man who has strong feelings of brotherly kindness, and, in one sense, because such feelings are strong within him, not expanding his love to include those who are not one with him in matters of faith. Conceive of such a thing, did I say? The possibility has become a fact over and over again. Think of the market-place at Smithfield, where Protestants and Romanists were burnt as each adverse party came into power; and why all this? Was it not because men had "brotherly kindness" of so strange and strong a kind, that they had no "charity" at all? We see it in all regions of thought. In politics men are banded into cliques and parties, and because of the very strength of the bonds that hold them together, they find it hard to exercise charity towards opponents. Even in the cold region of philosophy, where there is so much that is abstract, so much that seems unfruitful and uneventful, any acquaintance with the history of the rise and growth of rival schools will remind us that fierce persecution-spirit has not been wanting. As we see this lack of charity manifesting itself in every branch of thought, we need not be surprised that, and in this matter of religion, we find sectarianism rampant, and charity lacking. I have said that the inference from the genius of Christianity is universal love, but that it is not so obtrusive, not so readily reached, as the duty of "brotherly kindness." It shows itself clearly, though, after a little thought. It springs from the fact that Christianity is a religion for the whole earth, and that it teaches us how to strike away all that is accidental in the condition and surroundings of men, and to find under these outward differences of nation and caste, of position and intellect, the heart that throbs with the same passionate impulse as our own. The gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims its mission to be to unite once more all the children of men into one Divine family. Now the fact that charity and love for all men, irrespective of class, or creed, or circumstance, love for them because they are men, created and redeemed by the one God and Father of us all, is so rarely and so imperfectly exercised, presents itself as something for which we should be able to account. Not to excuse it, but to find out the reason of it. Persecution, in its most virulent, in its fiercest form, has well-nigh disappeared now-a-days. But are there not three kinds of relation in which we may stand to men: one of active opposition, one of neglect and apathy, one of active sympathy and hearty co-operation? We may in some measure have shifted from the first to the second in our dealing with those who do not agree with our system of thought, and belief, and action, but that we have not advanced to the third is an unquestionable fact. I do not plead for sympathy with error and sin, but this I say—that we shall be striving after imitation of God Himself if we still love the sinner and the wanderer, not because of, but in spite of their being such, and try to reclaim them from that which has a tendency to interrupt our charity in its full, free, Divine flow. A man with any spark of enthusiasm about him, a man of strong conviction, having settled views of truth, is, by the very force of his own nature, made impatient of dissidence and contradiction. He thinks that all men ought to see with his eyes, and to speak with his tongue. It seems then to follow from this, that the more that intelligent holding of Christian truth obtains among men, the more difficult will the exercise of this grace of charity become! The exercise of charity, universal love, demands an effort; so does everything that is worth having; and this is perhaps the highest form of religious feeling to which we can aspire. Retaining our own moral convictions, not sacrificing our individualism of nature, to look abroad upon others, who, conscientiously as ourselves, have laboured their way towards the attainment of the truth, and, as the result, see it in a different light, and speak of it in a different language—to look abroad upon all these, and love them. Heaven's light shines down upon the world, and some things cast up the red ray, others the green, others the blue, or yellow. Let them not become bitter one against the other, because individuality so asserts itself. It is the same holy light, it touches them, they live in it. Let them rejoice and love one another. (*D. J. Hamer.*) *Charity*:—I. ITS ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS AND CONDITIONS. 1. As an essential element of this love there must be the full recognition of a common humanity in all men, whatever their country, their colour, their language, their birth, or their condition. 2. But the doctrine goes farther, and recognises in all mankind not only the brotherhood of a common physical descent and of like physical characteristics, but a higher relationship as the common offspring of God. 3. And hence again, this love for man which the gospel enjoins, must flow primarily from love to God. 4. The Scrip-

tures always trace this love to a renovated heart. II. ITS PRACTICAL SPHERE AND EFFECTS. 1. We may trace the practical working of this spirit, in charity for the opinions of others in matters of religion. 2. Another application of this law of love is to the faults of others. 3. This spirit of love should be viewed in its application to the necessities of our fellowmen. 4. This spirit of love will prompt also to all wise and beneficent measures of philanthropy and reform. III. HINDRANCES TO ITS EXPRESSION. 1. These hindrances lie in the want of consideration. A candid allowance for the circumstances of others would almost always mitigate that severity of judgment which fastens upon the outward act, or makes one an offender for a word. 2. In the want of intercourse. If travel enlarges the mind, it expands the heart also to a kindlier judgment of men, and sympathy toward them. 3. In some lurking selfishness, which invents excuses for not loving others. IV. THE METHODS OF DEVELOPING THIS AFFECTION. 1. By rightly estimating its power. Power does not lie in noisy demonstration or in visible force. The power that again melts down these barriers and unlocks the frozen earth, can you hear that, though it makes the trees clap their hands and wakes all the birds to song? And can you hear love; or weigh it, or measure it? But in that little word lies a power greater than philosophy, diplomacy, or arms, to rule and mould the world. 2. By the constant and studious practice of love. 3. By elevated communion with God. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." And so we are urged to cultivate this love. 4. By its own dignity and blessedness. The Scriptures place love before all things, in the enumeration of Christian graces. "Charity never faileth." (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *Charity*:—I. THE GLORY OF LOVE. We might conclude its surpassing glory from its position in the exhortation. By a sort of spiritual rhetoric it is the word of the climax. It is love which, like the sunlight, giving the landscape its sublimest glories, transfiguring it with something like the lustre of "the golden city," gives to all the landscape of character its beauty. It is love which, like the Shekinah that glorified the temple, alone glorifies the structure of a character built on faith, and consisting of virtue, temperance, &c., is an empty shrine till it glows there. It is love that crowns manhood. II. THE POWER OF LOVE. It is—1. The spring of a true character. Supplying the constant and sufficient motive to lead men to live the right life. It is—2. The sign of a true character. As in their search for nightingales, controversial naturalists discover them by their song, so in their search for Christians, men discover them by their deeds and life of love. It is—3. The sceptre of a true character. We conquer by love. III. THE DUTY TO LOVE. IV. THE WAY TO LOVE. How can this glory be attained, this power exercised, this duty discharged? 1. Cherish lovingness. Banish pride, malignity, envy, uncharitableness. 2. Exercise love. 3. Have fellowship with Christ. (*U. R. Thomas.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **Ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful.**—*Fruits of the knowledge of Christ*:—Among the most beautiful emblems of the Christian life in Scripture are those employed to shadow forth its fruitfulness. The choicest and noblest trees, the majesty and gracefulness of whose form delight our eye, or whose fruits regale our taste, are the Divinely chosen types of saved and sanctified men. I. THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN FRUITFULNESS. It was not that your leaves might idly wave in the sun, be fanned with the pleasant breath and sprinkled with the refreshing dews of heaven, that you were taken from the wild forest of nature and planted in the garden of God; but that you might reward the husbandman's care with abundance of the fruits of righteousness. And, if this result is not realised, you may read His deep sorrow and anger in the words pronounced over Israel (Isa. v. 6). Fearful is the doom of barrenness (Heb. vi. 7-9). II. FRUITFULNESS—IN WHAT IT CONSISTS. It is in a man's works and words and influence that, according to the view of the apostle, we are to find the fruits of the Christian life. Do not tell us of feelings and experiences, of qualities and graces, of which you say you are conscious; unless these inward impulses and affections make your life fertile in holy and loving purposes and performances. It is by what a man does that it becomes known what he is. The fruit proceeds from the tree, but is distinct from it. It is elaborated by the tree from the juices that circulate through root and stem and branch. The air, and light, and moisture, and nutritious elements of the soil contribute the materials; but the tree, out of these, by the power of its wondrous life, forms a product altogether new. And so, like the bounteous fruit-tree, every man who rightly fills his place in God's vineyard is not a consumer only but a producer. The world is the better for him. What has been taken into his own soul

from above and from around—the doctrine of God's Word—the influences of God's Spirit—the lessons of nature and Providence—mingles with his being, and is changed and elaborated into holy thoughts, which may refresh thousands of hearts—into precious words of truth and power to become the germs of life in others, and into deeds of holiness and love. III. THE DEGREE IN WHICH FRUITFULNESS IS ATTAINABLE. "Barren and unfruitful"—are not two terms to express the same idea. A fallow field, which yields nothing for the reaper's sickle, is "barren" in the sense here meant. A field which rewards the husbandman's toil with only a scanty crop would be appropriately designated "unfruitful." He is far from exhibiting the perfection of the Divine life, who, like the bleak patch beside the lonely cottage on the side of some stony hill, produces but a poor and precarious harvest, although he has made a great and happy transition from the desert barrenness of an unregenerate state. Maturity in grace, with its rich and mellow clusters, is a spectacle as lovely as it is rare. Where it does exist, it is often hidden from the view in many a humble home, in many a sequestered path. It is by our bearing "much" fruit, our Saviour tells us, that His Father is glorified in us. It is His continual aim that the fruitful branch may become more fruitful still. IV. THE PRODUCTIVE ENERGIES OF THE LIFE OF FAITH. To be fruitful, all the functions of a tree must be in a healthy, vigorous state, its roots drawing nutriment from beneath, its leaves drinking in the dew and sunshine, the sap stirring through trunk and branch and leaf. If all its activities are in full and healthy play, its energies will not be wasted in excessive growths of foliage and useless sprays, but it will in its season bring forth fruit. What qualities must our souls possess in order to secure fruitfulness? They are virtue, knowledge, self-restraint, patience, godliness, brotherliness, charity. They impart to the soul a stamina and vigour, which not only preserve its life in the drought of summer and amid the icy winds of winter, but load the boughs with fruit. (*W. Wilson, M.A.*) *The choir of graces*:—In ancient Athens there was a class of officers called chorus-leaders, who represented the various tribes and at public festivals or religious rejoicings for a victory, brought out a chorus to lead the songs of the people. These leaders were not always singers or practical musicians, but they equipped the chorus and paid the cost of marshalling it upon public occasions. Hence the term which denoted their office came to mean in general, "one who provides supplies," and, therefore, as in the text, add to or supply to faith, virtue, and the whole train of graces. Faith is the leader of this choir; virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-love, and charity are marshalled under faith as their leader, to swell the praises of Christ from an obedient and loving soul. Faith is the clef which gives the key in which these seven notes of the perfect scale are sounded. Faith organises and sustains the chorus and has a place for each in its well-trained band. When all are assembled faith drills them into harmony. But if any one be wanting faith itself appears defective, and the soul is out of tune. It is as if the first violin were wanting at a Philharmonic concert, or the trumpet obligato should fail to sound in the resurrection scene of Handel's "Messiah." 1. That one who is wanting in these graces and takes no pains to cultivate them has no warrant to believe himself a Christian. Every one of these virtues being thus inward and spiritual, and having an intimate and necessary relation to faith in Christ, where these are wanting there can be no living germinating faith. I do not understand the apostle to teach that completeness in each of these virtues, and the exact proportion and harmony of the whole are essential to a Christian character; but are not these graces themselves, each and all of them, so essential to that character that if any one of them is wholly wanting, neither possessed nor sought after, he who is thus deficient is blind and destitute as to the Christian character and life? A true Christian may betray a lack of moral courage in certain emergencies, as did Peter after the arrest of Jesus. But suppose Peter had continued to deny Christ at every approach of danger, should we not have classed him with the apostate Judas? One may be a true Christian whose knowledge of Christian doctrine is meagre, and who makes frequent mistakes in practice. But if, after five, ten, twenty years, one knows no more of the Bible and has no more heart-knowledge of Christ, shall we continue to regard his experience of conversion as genuine? A Christian may sometimes neglect a call of charity, or set aside a real claim upon his love. But if he never heeds such a call, can he be a child of our Father in heaven? Moreover, since all these graces may be imitated, the positive and entire lack of one proves the rest to be counterfeit or superficial. 2. A full and symmetrical development of these graces is the most satisfactory evidence and the most beautiful

exhibition of Christian faith. The mind delights its symmetry. The symmetrical development of the human form, in which each member and feature, perfect in itself, is well proportioned to every other, is our ideal of beauty. This symmetry of form and feature, extending to every line of the countenance and every muscle of the anatomy, is the life-like perfection of the statue; proportion is indispensable to beauty in architecture; symmetry and perspective to the harmony of colours, to the effect of painting; chord and harmonies, preserved even in the most difficult combinations of sound, are the highest charm of music; rhythm, the measured and regular succession of sounds, is essential to good poetry; the proportion of numbers and of mathematical laws enters into every science which aims at completeness. But in nothing is this symmetry so strenuously insisted upon as in moral character. The sharp and sometimes carping criticism of men of the world upon the faults and even the peccadilloes of professed Christians shows the demand of conscience for completeness of character, and does homage to Christianity itself as a complete system of morality. Hence the New Testament lays much stress upon completeness of Christian character; for the word "perfection" signifies not so much the absolute sinlessness of a sanctified nature, as the completeness, the full symmetrical development of the renewed man in all the graces of the Christian life. This conscious, steady, visible growth in all the graces is the best evidence of a renewed heart. This full and symmetrical development of the Christian graces makes to the world a most beautiful and convincing exhibition of the Christian faith. A perfect Christian character is one in enumerating whose graces you can always say and, and never interpose a but. The average Christian character is sadly marred by that little disjunctive conjunction—He is a very good man—but; He is kind and charitable at heart—but rough and irritable in manner; he is temperate and patient—but lacking charity; he is reverent and devout—but lacks moral courage. 3. The abounding of these graces in the soul will make it fruitful in the knowledge of Christ—will insure for it a progressive and rewarding piety. The relation of heart-culture to the enjoyment of religion is like that of good agriculture to a good crop. You cannot have a garden by merely purchasing a place. The soil may be of excellent quality, and the situation most favourable; the title may be well secured, and the party of whom you buy may make most abundant promises as to the fertility and beauty of the ground; but unless you give all diligence to make and stock the garden, unless you dig and plant, and weed and trim, your title, deed, and promises will not give you a single shrub or flower. If well-selected fruits and flowers are in your garden and abound, they will make you fruitful in the knowledge of its capacities and in the enjoyment of its pleasures. Two reflections are obvious here. 1. If Christians find no enjoyment in religion, it is because they have failed to cultivate its particular and combined graces. 2. The highest fruitfulness of a Church is to be secured by the perfecting of personal character in its members. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *Two sorts of Christians:—*1. THE BRIGHT PICTURE OF WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN MAY AND SHOULD BE. 1. Every Christian may have for his own in assured possession that whole series of lustrous beauties of character (vers. 5-7). You may be strong and discerning and temperate, &c. It is a prize within your reach; is it in any sense a prize within your possession? 2. We may each have an increasing possession of all these graces. "If these things be yours and abound," or, as the word ought more accurately to be rendered "and increase." The expression suggests that if in any real sense they are in you, they will be increasingly in you. The oftener a man lavishes the treasures of his love the richer is the love which he has to lavish. The more rigidly he schools and disciplines himself the more complete becomes his command over his unruly nature. 3. We may all, if we will, have these graces making us diligent and faithful. The meaning of the word rendered "barren" is, as the Revised Version and the margin of the Authorised give it, "idle." Well, that seems a little thing, that all that aggregation of Christian graces has only for its effect to make men not idle, not unfruitful. And it seems, to some extent, too, illogical, because all these graces are themselves the result of diligence, and are themselves fruit. But the apparent difficulty, like many of the other anomalous expressions of Scripture, covers deep thoughts. The first is this—Look after your characters and work will look after itself. The world says, "Do! do! do!" Christianity says, "Be! be! be!" If you are right, then, and only then will you do right. So learn this lesson, do not waste your time in tinkering at actions, go deeper down and make the actor right, and then the actions will not be wrong. The highest exercises of these radiant gems of Christian graces is to make men diligent and fruitful.

Again, it takes the whole of these Christian graces to overcome our natural indolence. The pendulum will be sure to settle into the repose that gravitation dictates unless the clock be kept wound up, and it needs all the wheels and springs to keep it ticking for its four and twenty hours. The homely duty of hard work, the prosaic virtue of diligence, is the very flower and highest product of all these transcendent graces. Then, still further, there is a lesson here in the collocation of the words before us, namely, an idle Christian is certain to be a barren one. And now the last point in this picture of what all Christian people may be is—by the exercise of diligence and fruitfulness attain to a fuller knowledge of Christ. Literally rendered, the text reads, “towards the knowledge.” There be two measures of knowledge of Christ. There is that initial one which dawns upon a heart in the midst of its sin and evil, and assures it of a loving friend and of a Divine Redeemer; and there is the higher, constantly expanding, deepening, becoming more intimate and unbroken, more operative on the life and transforming in the character, which is the reward and the crown of earth, and the crown and heaven of heaven. And it is this knowledge which the apostle here says, will follow if, and only if, we have striven to add to our faith all these graces, and they have made us strenuous in service and fruitful in holiness. II. THE CONTRASTED OUTLINES OF THE BLACK PICTURE OF WHAT SOME OF US ARE. 1. It is possible for a man to be purged from his old sins and yet not to be growing. It is a case of arrested development, as you sometimes see a man with the puny limbs of childhood; or, as you sometimes see a plant, which you cannot say is dead, but it has not vitality enough to flower or to fruit. 2. Further, such a one is “blind,” or, as the apostle goes on to explain, or, if you like, to correct himself, “he cannot see afar off.” The apostle employs a unique word to express “cannot see afar off,” which, if you will pardon the vulgarism for the sake of the force, I would venture to translate “blinks.” There was a time when you had clear vision. The smoky roof of your cabin was rent, and you saw through it up to the Throne, but your eyes have gone dim because you have been careless to develop your faith; and where there is no development of faith there is retrogression of faith. Therefore, all the far-off glories have faded, and the only things that you see are the things that are temporal, the material, the pressure of present cares, and the like. 3. Let me remind you of the last point in this sad picture. “He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” Yes! These idle unfruitful Christians have in their memories, if they would only open the cupboard door and look, a blessed gift long ago given that might, and that ought to stimulate them. They are their own worst condemnation. There was a time when they felt the burden of sin upon their consciences when they hated it and desired to be free from it. And what has it all come to? The sins forgiven have come back; the sins hated have reasserted their dominion; Pharaoh has caught them again. The moment’s emancipation has been followed by a recrudescence of all the old transgressions. So they contradict themselves and their own past and contravene the purpose of God in their pardon, and, with monstrous ingratitude, are untouched by the tender motives to growth in holiness which lie in the pouring out of the blood which cleanses from all sin. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**—*Our Lord Jesus Christ*:—As He is “Lord” He can, as He is “Jesus” He will, as He is “Christ” He doth, as He is “Our” He shall save us. “Lord”; consider His righteousness. “Jesus”; consider His sweetness. “Christ”; consider His willingness. “Our”; consider His goodness that gives us interest in Himself and vouchsafes us to challenge His mercy. “Lord,” in regard of His dominion (Psa. cxix. 1). “Jesus,” in regard of His salvation (Psa. lxxviii. 20). “Christ,” in regard of the promise (John vii. 26, 41). “Our,” in regard of His appropriating Himself unto us (Heb. ii. 16). “Lord,” in His power, His works declare Him to be the Lord (Psa. cxxxv. 6). “Jesus,” in being made (Gal. iv. 4; John i. 14). “Christ,” in being sacrificed and crucified for us (1 Cor. xi. 24). “Our,” in respect of the covenant (Heb. viii. 10). Infinite mercy! The Lord’s Christ is become our Jesus (Luke ii. 26). (*Thos. Adams.*)

Ver. 9. He that lacketh these things is blind.—*The miserable state of barren professors*.—I. PENURY. It is a received maxim that God and nature have wrought nothing in vain; no part or faculty of the body can be well spared. We can spare nothing for this world; but for heaven we can quietly lack things that conduce to our eternal peace! What is the reason? A man never misses what he cares not for. A man may lack outward things yet come never the later to heaven; yea, the sooner the surer; but woe to him that lacks “these things!” This is the want now

least feared, and this shall be the want most lamented. Grace is solid and real (Prov. x. 22). Whatsoever we lack let us not lack "these things." II. BLINDNESS. 1. Satan blinds the intellectual eye (2 Cor. iv. 4). 2. Lusts darken the mind. 3. The dust of this world makes many blind. III. APOSTASY. "Hath forgotten": the original implies one that did voluntarily attract forgetfulness to himself; the author of his own mischief. 1. The corruption of the heart. 2. The danger of that corruption. "Old sins"—sins that he hath done of old. Long nurture is another nature. 3. The deliverance from that danger. "He was purged." Salvation may be said to belong to many that belong not to salvation. 4. The unthankfulness for that delivery. "Forgotten." The defect of corporal sight hath often mended the memory; but it is not so for spiritual (Mark viii. 18). A carnal mind is blind to conceive, ready to forget. (1) Chrysostom says, "Nothing more helps us forward in a good course than the frequent recognition of our sins." (2) As we remember our sins to repentance, so we must forget them in respect of continuance. Otherwise the memory of them doth not reduce us to life but forward us to death. (*Ibid.*) *Religious nearsightedness*:—The man to whom these grave defects are imputed is supposed to possess an elementary degree of faith and to have once felt the purifying power of God in his dark and guilty spirit. He has received into himself the graft of a Divine life, but through some unhealthy condition of the stock that life has not become active, pulsating, fruitful. The life can only reach the true measure of its excellence through earnest self-cultivation. In the spiritual world there are wasted seeds, stunted developments. This disastrous turning back of God's spring in our hearts starts in our own neglect. To know what these deficiencies that maim a man's religious life are, we must turn to the category of qualities needing cultivation that Peter gives us. "Giving all diligence, in your faith supply virtue." That faith may be brought to bear its perfect fruit of virtue and strength, we must cultivate all the ethical branches of the faith that had been Divinely implanted within us. There is no true beginning for us before the beginning of faith, and that must be created within us by the very power of God. Do we not, however, say sometimes that the religious life not only begins but also ends in faith? So it does; just as when you go to London, if you get into a through carriage, your journey begins and ends in the same compartment. But the compartment rolls through many belts of varying country before you step out of it into the streets of London. And so, though all religious life begins and ends in faith, the faith moves in the meantime through a very wide range of virtues. "In your faith supply virtue." Here man's part in the cultivation of religion begins. Virtue implies the tone and strength of religious life. "And in your virtue supply knowledge." Religious life that has virtue without knowledge is on pretty much the same level as aerial navigation. The balloon may be made to rise into the pathway of forces that will sweep it on with unapproachable speed, but there is no known apparatus by which its course can be accurately directed. Delicate regulating power from within is wanted. So with the character to which virtue has been added without the further complement of knowledge. The lack always makes void much of the grace of the past. "And in knowledge supply temperance" or self-restraint. Strength of character must never make us reckless. Our temperance must be united with "patience." Under the crosses, disappointments, and sufferings of our daily life there must be steadfastness and untroubled hope. Murmuring and petulance are symptoms of subtle spiritual disease. "And in your patience supply godliness." Our resignation to the cross-influences of our life must not begin and end in stoicism. It would be a very poor end to all our tribulations, if they ossified our sensibilities and qualified us for the defiance of pain. And then to the temper we cherish towards God there must be joined a right attitude of mind towards our fellow-believers. "In your godliness supply brotherly kindness." And to "brotherly kindness" there must be joined a world-embracing charity. Narrow tempers are inconsistent with religious life. A true faith will always bring with it, if duly cherished, a generous breadth. Where there is the lack of this you have religious defect, limitation, shortsightedness. Let us just glance at these qualities again, and see how each quality connects itself with some important part of man's nature. "To faith add virtue." Virtue, or inward strength, connects itself with the will, for it is through the will it works. That is the first thing God claims for Himself in His purifying work of grace. "To virtue knowledge." It is through all the channels of the intellectual life that knowledge is received and treasured. When God washes a man from the defilements of the past, He demands the consecration of intelligence to His service. "And to knowledge temperance." Tempe-

rance is concerned with the government of the passions; and God, in cleansing a man from his past pollutions, seeks the subjection of well-ruled passions to His service. "To temperance patience." Patience connects itself with the sensibilities through which we are made to suffer. In cleansing a man, God seeks the after-harmony of all his sensibilities with the Divine will. "And to patience godliness." In separating a man from evil, God seeks for the response of all the religious faculties to His operations. "And to godliness brotherly kindness and charity." These qualities link themselves with the sphere of the affections. In cleansing a man from his old sins, God seeks to bring about the healthy exercise and benevolent direction of his affections. The whole range of man's powers is indirectly specified, the powers through which a man enters into relationship with his fellow-men, as well as the powers through which he knows God and enters into relationship with the Eternal. God cleanses a man to make him holy in all these relationships, holy by the putting on of all these high graces. "For if these things are yours and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." An imputed possession of these excellences will give us no high place in the scale of spiritual being. The stunted, spasmodic possession of these graces will not ennoble us very much more than the mere fiction of an imputed possession. These things are in some people as rare plants are in particular sections of country. You may come across them if you are very lucky and search long enough. A true believer's life should be as full of them as the banks and hedgerows of mid-May are full of the glint and perfume of flowers. Faith oftentimes lies dormant like hibernating insects. A book of Chinese fables tells of a country where the people wake once in fifty days, and take the dreams of their sleep for realities, and the things they see in their waking moments for dreams. The imaginative author might have been describing some believing Christians. The power of innate faith rarely breaks out into moral movement. Now faith is not a fruit-bearing stock, but so much dead lumber within us, unless it lead by the way of these practical graces up to the perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ. That is to be the grand issue of all these excellences. The end has not been reached when they have regulated our present life and beautified our present relationships. The apostle describes the lack of these things, first, under the metaphor of a grave defect in one of the leading physical senses; and, secondly, under the figure of a lapse in the working of the intellectual powers. 1. He who is wanting in one or all of these high qualities lacks the primary organ of perfect spiritual perception. "He is blind." The stagnant and unprogressive believer is blind, no less than the purely natural man who discerns not the things of the Spirit of God. How many of us have inadequate views of what salvation means! Some people see nothing in salvation but deliverance from wrath and tempest and everlasting fire. A miserably defective view that is! God does not save us to put us on to some secure level of moral mediocrity and to leave us there, but to bring us into fellowship with Himself. A shipwrecked sailor has been helped by a timely hand on to a raft or floating spar. He has not been put there that he may live on a keg of rain-water and a cask of biscuits, and spend the rest of his days on a few square feet of planking. That is but a passing means to a larger and a better end. If you watched him drifting on the raft, and saw that he made no effort to secure the larger and better end, you would say he was either blinded by the sea-spray, struck by the lightning of the storm, or driven insane by his misfortunes. He drifts close under the beetling cliffs. Now he is within an arm's length of some fissure in the cliffs. Through that fissure rock-cut steps lead up and out into a land of springs, and corn-fields and orchards, and noble cities, and breadths of summer sunshine, and all the precious fellowships of men. He drifts away as though it were his will to live and die on the raft. Voices call to him from the shore, but he seems careless of the benign destiny to whose threshold he has come. The man, you would say, is blind. So with those of us who, saved by the forgiving grace of God, neglect to enter into that region of privilege and fellowship and ennobling spiritual experience to which virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity are the successive steps for the loyal and believing soul. "He that lacketh these things is blind." And now Peter softens the expression and substitutes a somewhat milder term. 2. At best the blindness is half-blindness. If the man who neglects the cultivation of these qualities is not as dark as an unregenerate man, he at least labours under a most serious disability. He suffers from spiritual myopia, for the word used in the text is precisely the same Greek word the medical man of to-day uses to describe short-sight. "He cannot see afar off." He discerns the near, but is quite at fault when he comes to deal with the distant. Foregrounds are clear, but

all the backgrounds are sheer haze. The shortsighted man can see the puddle at his feet as he crosses the desert, but not the river of crystal, with belt of green, that flows for his refreshment on the far away edge of the desert. And so with the unprogressive believer who is afflicted by this spiritual shortsightedness. In the absence of the knowledge to which these graces lead he does not discern the complete character of the Benefactor who has washed and purified him; nor does he discern the heavenly ideal to which the washing and the purification were to point his aspirations and direct his footsteps. He sees, perhaps, a little of what God converts from, but scarcely anything of what God converts to. He has no perception of the largeness of his own destiny. 3. Again, St. Peter describes the lack of these higher Christian excellences under the figure of an intellectual lapse. "Having forgotten the cleansing from his old sin." When some Lady Bountiful takes pity on a gutter child, and washes it from its nauseous accumulations of filth, it is that having put it into better clothes, she may introduce it to a more genial and generous life. If the child begins to dress itself in its old rags and patches, or stands shivering in the cold, neglecting to wrap itself about in the better raiment that has been made ready for it, it is because the child has forgotten, if it ever understood, the purpose for which the Lady Bountiful took it from the streets and washed it. She wanted to make it her own, and give it a place on her hearth and at her table. God washed us from the guilt and contamination of the past, not that we might stand lounging for ever at the starting-point of our first faith, or possibly go back to our old defilements, but that we might put on Christ and be clothed in these excellences that are summed up in the glorious character of Christ, and stand in His presence, chosen friends and companions for ever. If the new life is not delighting the eye with its inimitable grace, and filling the air with its reviving freshness, it is because there has been some untimely and disastrous arrest. The past cleansing and its Divine motive of perfect life and attainment have been overlooked and forgotten. 4. These words imply that the memory of past grace will be a living and effectual inspiration to us at each successive step of our perfecting. When God first touches our spirits with His cleansing power, that act has in it the potentiality of complete Christian excellence. The sustained remembrance of your conversion will keep fresh and forceful the motive that will stimulate you to the attainment of these various moral and spiritual excellences. You might as well try to grow a cedar tree without roots as seek to cultivate these qualities without the peculiar type of motive supplied by the act of God's gracious cleansing from sin. (*T. G. Selby.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.**—*Diligence in making our calling sure*:—I. EXHORTATION. 1. An induction. (1) "Wherefore." This word infers a consequence on the premises, or is a reason of the preceding speech. The apostle had formerly shown the danger of such as forget their own purging. But there are many who forget not that they were purged by the redemption of Christ, but remember it too much; and from this derive encouragement of a licentious life, quitting themselves from all sins by His passion. He that thus spells Christ, hath but small literature of religion (Rom. vi. 1; John v. 14; 2 Tim. ii. 19; 1 Pet. i. 17). The end of our conversion is to amend our conversation. (2) "Brethren." (a) This word of relation declares in the apostle two virtues—(i) His humility; he prefers not himself to the rest of God's saints, but calls them all brethren. (ii) His policy; he desires to win their souls, and therefore insinuates himself into their love. This title ascribes to the people some dignity; that by faith in Christ they become brethren to the very apostles, and have the fraternity of the heavenly saints. This term is not without some requirable duty. Is the minister thy brother? hear him (Acts iii. 22). But take heed lest God's gentleness be abused by thy contempt; it is the word of thy Judge and Maker, though in the mouth of thy brother. (3) "Give diligence." Doth a man reap without sowing? You have not wealth from the clouds without digging; and would you have blessing from the clouds without working? The labour of our bodies for this world was but a curse; the labour of our souls for heaven is a blessing. "Give diligence." This exhortation presupposes no proper strength of our own to do this, for it is God's work in us. (4) "Rather." Let not the goodness of God, which without your desert has chosen and called you to the profession of Christ, forgiving and purging your former sins, make you idle and careless. But rather strive to answer this mercy in your faithful conversation; lest you fall into that pit of destruction, from whence by His death He hath redeemed you. "The rather." He seems to encourage this endeavour, partly by the benefit, partly by the danger, and partly by the reward: the first

whereof incites our gratitude, the next our fear, the last our hope. 2. An instruction. "Make your calling," &c. (1) The matter expressed. (a) For the order: the apostle puts vocation in the former place, which yet in propriety is the latter; for election is before all time, vocation in time. But this is a right form and method of speech, to set that last, which is worthiest and weightiest. Besides, we pass by things nearer to things more remote; first we must look to our calling, and by our calling come to assurance of our election. (b) For dependence: we must know that our calling depends upon our election. The determinate counsel of God doth not take away second means, but disposeth those passages into order. These two, election and vocation, are like Jacob's ladder, whereupon the saints ascend like angels to God: election is the top, vocation the foot. (2) The manner: how this may be assured. There are but two ways for a man to know it; either by going up into heaven, or by going down into himself. In the one there is presumption and danger, in the other security and peace. In Rom. viii. 16 we have two testimonies: not God's Spirit alone; there may be presumption: not our spirit alone; there may be illusion: both must witness together, concur to make up this certificate. II. CONFIRMATION. 1. The qualification. "If ye do these things." (1) The condition—"if." We must first do, and then have. Among men he first serves that deserves: for God, we can merit nothing by doing, yet we shall have nothing without doing (Matt. xx. 8, xxv. 21; Rev. xxii. 12). (2) The practice or fruitfulness in good works—"if ye do"; not think, or say, but do. Idleness never had the testimony of God's acceptance; it is a vice that damns itself. There must be hearty love, lively practice, kindly thanks, costly service. (3) The sincerity—"these things"; not what gain prompts, or lust suggests, but what God commands. Such things as pertain to knowledge, virtue, godliness. 2. The ratification. "Ye shall never fall." Does the apostle here attribute something to our works, as if the merit of our doing should preserve us from falling? No, he speaks not concerning the cause of mercy, but the way of grace. Our own works do not uphold us, but assure us by a token that we are upheld by God; they are the inseparable effects of that grace, by which we are kept from falling. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Diligence in the Christian life*:—Do we not in worldly and intellectual circles observe men who deplorably fail to fulfil their election? We see those who in the largeness of their mental gifts are evidently predestinated leaders and ornaments of their generation; but yielding to temptation, they surrender themselves to inferior pleasures and pursuits, the magnificent promise of their nature comes to naught, and their career closes in melancholy failure. Others are born into privileged families, they inherit titles and wealth, they are called by the fortune of birth to be social princes, they are indisputably elected to high position and influence; and yet not infrequently do these predestinated ones manage by ill conduct to tarnish their coronet and finish on the dunghill. As in the intellectual and social life, so is it in the spiritual; souls called to immortal distinction fail through sloth and sin to make their election sure. We must be diligent to cast out the evil things we find in ourselves. Many roots of bitterness springing up trouble us, and it is not easy to cast them out. The Canadian thistle is one of the direst plagues with which the husbandman has to contend. It seems impossible to extirpate it. It is well-nigh proof against the most desperate efforts to get rid of it; fire, poison, and the knife have no more than a temporary effect upon its vitality. Neither the scythe, the hoe, nor the plough can destroy it. Dug up, burnt up, strewn with salt, treated with aquafortis, covered with lime, it springs and blooms and seeds anew. Nothing remains but to blow it up with dynamite. Our faults are so deep and inveterate that we must bend our whole strength to the task of their destruction. We must give diligence to bring into our life all good and beautiful things. The apostle in this passage enjoins us to add one virtue to another until we possess and display them in all their completeness and beauty. It is not enough to cultivate isolated patches of life, to raise this grace or that; we must bring in every virtue, every grace, and cover the whole ground of character and action. Most gardeners are content when their grounds include only a few specimens of the growths of various types and climes; if they can produce a fair show with these, they are satisfied. It is quite different, however, with the national gardeners at Kew; there the grand aim is certainly not display, it is not even to possess a profusion of floral treasures, but to make the grounds and conservatories widely representative, to make them comprehend as far as possible every shrub and tree and flower that grows upon the face of the whole earth. The paradises of God bear all manner of precious fruit, and if our heart and life are to be the King's gardens we shall need to give all diligence.

Having brought all good things into our life, it is only by diligence that we keep them there. "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall"—indicating the tendency and peril of our nature. Unless there is constant diligence and culture we cannot hold the heights we have scaled, the fields we have won, the ground we have reclaimed. Neglect a beautiful garden for a while, and see how savage nature will avenge herself and spoil your paradise! As a French naturalist says: "There is in nature a terrible reaction against man; if we put our hand into our bosom, the garden is in revolt." It is much the same with human nature. Slowly, painfully do we subdue our life to orderliness, to purity, to beauty; but how it springs back if we relax our vigilance! We need all diligence to cast out of our breast the bitter root, the wild grape, the poisoned gourd. Then, having brought good things into our life, we need all diligence to convert them into perfect things. "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." The original is very impressive and assuring: "Ye shall not fall by any means ever." A man may do his best in the worldly sphere and fail, but no saint can do his best and fail. "For so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom." "Give all diligence." The character of life's ending is much in our own power; we are now determining our end. The measure of our diligence shall be the measure of our victory. Every well-spent hour is another flower for our dying pillow; every earnest effort to please God is so much sunshine for the dark valley; every mastered temptation brings another angel to sing in the chamber where the good man meets his fate. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

On giving diligence in our election.—I. THAT IT IS IN EVERY ONE'S POWER TO MAKE HIS CALLING AND ELECTION SURE. II. THE ONLY WAY OF MAKING OUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE IS TO LIVE IN THE SINCERE AND CONSCIENTIOUS PRACTICE OF ALL CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. This appears from the beginning of the chapter. III. THOSE VIRTUES AND GRACES BY WHICH ALONE WE CAN MAKE SURE TO OURSELVES ELECTION AND SALVATION, REQUIRE THE GREATEST PAINS AND INDUSTRY.

1. The main fundamental reason why religion is so very difficult is because of that natural propensity we have to sin. 2. Besides this unhappy degeneracy against religion, there are inveterate sinful habits to be rooted out, and these do strangely increase the difficulty. 3. The last reason to evince the difficulty of being religious is the uneasiness of planting new and opposite habits, in the room of our former vicious ones. (*R. Warren, D.D.*)

An exhortation to earnestness in religion.—Four classes of motives are suggested by this passage urging the exhortation it contains. I. THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION. II. ANOTHER MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE IN RELIGION URGED BY THIS EXHORTATION IS THE VALUE OF AN UNEQUIVOCAL CHARACTER. III. A THIRD MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE SUGGESTED BY THIS EXHORTATION IS, THAT GOD DEALS WITH US ON A SYSTEM OF REWARD. "Give diligence," and you shall have these three things—assurance, stability, and an abundant entrance into heaven. IV. ONE OTHER MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE FURNISHED BY THIS PASSAGE, IS THE NATURE OF THE REWARD TO BE BESTOWED. How majestic the idea presented here! A kingdom! (*Josiah Viney.*)

From grace to glory.—But do not our calling and election proceed from God? How then can these be made sure by any action of ours? Can we confirm Jehovah Himself in His purpose, or bring confirmation to any of His promises? The sureness to be attained is the sureness of evidences which men themselves can bring out, take note of, and increase beyond the possibility of a question. I. THE TEXT PRESENTS GOD'S CALLING AND ELECTION OF HIS PEOPLE AS A MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE ON THEIR PART IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The Bible never represents the fact that all believers are called of God by His Spirit as superseding in the least the necessity of personal effort for the attainment of holiness, but makes this fact a ground of exhortation to diligence and perseverance. The reason why many regard the purposes of God, even in the application of His grace, as in some way a barrier to their own effort, is that they conceive of all God's purposes as being executed by physical and irresistible force. This objection is contradicted by our own consciousness. If God at any point comes in conflict with our free agency, it must be in carrying out His purpose, and not simply in having a purpose. "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." God's purpose was to be made sure by the agency of men accustomed to manage a ship.

II. THE VIRTUES AND GRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IN A FULL AND SYMMETRICAL DEVELOPMENT, GIVE TO THEIR POSSESSOR THE ASSURANCE OF HIS PERSONAL CALL AND ELECTION. No amount of technical knowledge of religion can certify our personal interest in Christ. No rapture of occasional experience can certify our calling and election. Assurance grows with the fruits of grace, is inseparable from these, is a dry branch without these. III. THIS COMPLETE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER ATTAINED IN

LIFE ASSURES PEACE AND TRIUMPH IN DEATH, AND A JOYFUL ENTRANCE INTO ETERNAL LIFE. As Dr. Doddridge interprets the text, carrying out the figure of a choir of graces, "if you will lead on the virtues and graces here enumerated in their beautiful order, those graces will attend you in a radiant train to the mansions of immortal glory and blessedness." He who matures these graces in life shall have victory over death. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *The gains of Christian diligence*:—Notice how very homely a virtue it is that takes all this motive to persuade lazy people to it—nothing more than hard work. Diligence is a very prosaic grace, extremely unlike the heated emotion and the idle sentimentality which some of us take to be religion, but it is the foundation of all excellence, and emphatically of all Christian excellence.

I. DILIGENCE IN THE CULTIVATION AND NURTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IS THE SEAL OF OUR CHRISTIAN STANDING. Exercise it, says Peter, to "make your calling and election sure," to confirm your possession of these Divine, and, in themselves, unalterable facts. God does not choose men to a salvation, which consists of certain arbitrary privileges which they may possess whatever their character, but He "calls us that we should be holy and without blame before Him." If we are not carrying out His design in that choice, are we not invalidating it? On our faithfulness and Christian diligence depends our continued possession of the privileges which God has given us. There is another side to this thought, viz., that this same diligence confirms our Christian standing to our own consciousness. The real sign to a man that he is Christ's is that he is growing like Christ.

II. THIS DILIGENCE IN THE CULTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER BECOMES A STAFF TO OUR ELSE TOTTERING STEPS. "For," says Peter, "if ye do these things ye shall never fall." So our Version has it; but the promise is even more emphatic—"Ye shall never stumble," which comes before falling. Does that mean that if a man will only set himself diligently to try and cultivate these Christian graces he will thereby become immaculate and free from sin? Not so. Observe the language—"If ye do these things." More literally and accurately we might read—"While ye do these things." As long as a man is diligently occupied with the stress of his effort in adding to his character the graces that are here enjoined, so long will he stand firm in righteousness. We have no such efficient prophylactic or shield against the assaults of evil as the pursuit of good. Again, the way to keep ourselves from becoming worse is resolutely to aim at getting better. Again, such diligence, though it may not be crowned with complete success, will certainly secure from utter failure.

III. THIS DILIGENCE IN CHRISTIAN CULTURE IS THE CONDITION OF THE ENTRANCE ABUNDANTLY MINISTERED. There is a "being scarcely saved," and there is an "entrance abundantly." And the principle that lies here is plain, that the degree of our possession of the perfect royalty of Heaven depends on our faithfulness here on earth. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Your calling and election sure.—*The elect making sure of their election*:—There are many things in life about which we all desire to feel "sure." For instance, the firmness of our health; the completeness of cure when we have been sick; the stability of the engagements by which you earn your daily bread; the fidelity of our kindred and friends; and the well-being and well-doing of loved ones who are absent. The marvel is that people who say they are "the called" and "the elect" are sometimes among the careless ones.

I. CERTAINTY AS TO HIS POSITION A MOST DESIRABLE OBJECT FOR THE CHRISTIAN—HE OUGHT TO BE "SURE." If he be not sure, one of two things must be true: either he doubts without cause, or he trusts without cause. The latter, if it continue, will be fatal—he will be ruined by false confidence; and the former, if it abide, will be injurious. Look first at doubt without cause, which we say is injurious. Does it not cripple exertion? What can a man do who is ever questioning his chief responsibilities and capabilities, and who is not even sure as to his position? Doubt breaks up peace. There is no rest to the spirit that is unassured, and at the same time doubt must seriously lessen joy. Now peace and joy are not to be dealt with as religious luxuries, they are states of soul which are required for the most practical of uses. Peace is a holy keeper of the heart and mind, and joy is a Divine invigorator and refresher, for "the joy of the Lord is your strength." Ungrounded confidence, on the other hand, is most dangerous. Of the two, better doubt for ever, where there is eternal cause for confidence, than rely without cause. He who thinks he has found will not seek. But now what profit is there in being "sure"? To be "sure," prevents the waste of energy in groundless doubt and in useless inquiry; for you will find that, in cases of groundless doubt, there is an immense waste of energy in constant introspection, and fearfulness, and foreboding. Moreover, to be "sure" sets the man free for works of faith and labours of love; he can give himself to intercession and to

prayer for others, his own case being settled. To be "sure" places a man at liberty to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection. II. THIS IS TO BE SECURED BY DILIGENT ATTENTION. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." The word used is very expressive—strive, use all activity, strain every nerve. Now the following things must be done before we can be sure. 1. There must be a strict inquiry into God's description of the "called" and the "elect." God does not lay much stress upon the emotions; He lays chief stress upon the state of the will towards Himself. "For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." 2. We require a close examination of our inner and outer life. In all cases of regeneration the change is thorough. It is not perfected at once, but it affects the whole nature. And, in connection with this, there should be a narrow search for unfavourable signs which might counteract the favourable signs, and a search for special favourable signs which should confirm the rest. We require also the continued pursuit of those attainments which, as made, will involve cumulative evidence. This is a matter which Christians sadly neglect. I see them dwelling on their conversion, instead of acquiring confidence from what is now going on within their souls. Yet, if you be a Christian, there is a glorious work going on now; yesterday it was, and it is now. Then, in connection with all this, I need not say there must be not only an anxious desire to recover any ground which you may have lost, but there must be direct appeal to God on this subject. (*S. Martin.*)

An assurance of salvation :—I. IS THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS MORAL CERTAINTY AS TO OUR CALLING AND ELECTION REALLY POSSIBLE? We hesitate not for a moment to answer the question in the affirmative. If the object to which this exhortation unquestionably points be altogether beyond our reach, how are we to account for the importance thus manifestly attached to it? The prophet Isaiah (xxxii. 17), speaking of the happy consequences of the outpouring of the Spirit, expressly declares that "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." St. John also (1 John iii. 19)—"Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." St. Paul likewise (Heb. vi. 11) thus addresses the Jewish converts, "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Nor is the attainableness of this personal assurance, or moral certainty as to our calling and election, less clearly proved by the evidence of fact and experience. II. DOES THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS MORAL CERTAINTY, AS TO OUR CALLING AND ELECTION, BELONG ESSENTIALLY TO A STATE OF GRACE? While on the one hand it has been confidently asserted that assurance as to our personal interest in the blessings of Christ's purchase bears presumption on its very face, not a few have confidently maintained that this assurance of salvation is of the very essence of faith, or, in other words, that without it we can have neither part nor lot in the redemption of the gospel. That this opinion is erroneous appears evident, we apprehend. 1. It is contrary to the nature of the Christian life. Still exposed to temptation, and not unfrequently overpowered for a time by its assaults, the progress of the genuine believer is ever chequered by the visitation of fear, of despondency, and of sorrow, as well as of the opposite emotions of hope, and confidence, and joy. Nay, indeed, such oppressive feelings are often necessary; they are subservient to his present advancement in his spiritual course and his final triumph over his spiritual foes. 2. While the doctrine, against which we are now contending, is thus in obvious contrariety to the nature of the Christian life, it is also, at the same time, very manifestly inconsistent with the general bearing of Scripture statement and exhortation. Nothing is more apparent in God's holy Word than the encouragement that is there given even to those whose state of mind and of heart is just the very opposite to everything like security or confidence. The broken heart, the poor in spirit, are blessed. 3. But not only does the contrariety of the doctrine, against which we are contending, to the nature of the Christian life, and its inconsistency also with the general bearing of Scripture statement and exhortation thus clearly demonstrate its fallacy: the consequences likewise to which it naturally leads are sufficient to convince every candid inquirer that it is at the same time most pernicious and dangerous. III. HOW IS THIS ASSURANCE OR MORAL CERTAINTY, IN REGARD TO OUR CALLING AND ELECTION, REALLY TO BE SECURED? The apostle, turning our attention to the virtues and graces of the Christian life, very distinctly points to the exercises of such virtues as the source of the assurance here more immediately referred to. Nor does this conclusion rest upon the language of the Apostle Peter alone. Our Lord Himself, exposing the false confidence of the

Pharisees, expressly declares to them that the sincerity of the Christian's faith, and consequently his spiritual safety, is to be discovered by its effects. "Either," says He, "make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit." (*John Thomson.*) *Election*:—What does Scripture teach concerning election? At the outset let me remark that wherever the Bible speaks of the elect it speaks, not of God's purpose to make men different, but of the fact that they do differ—a fact not only recognised by God, but determining His conduct towards us. And further, the view Scripture sets forth of the subject is intensely practical, whereas the view too commonly taken of the doctrine has made it one of pure speculation and of no practical value at all. Now, that a doctrine of election should be found in the Scriptures ought to present no difficulty, ought to surprise no one, for the simple reason that whatever the difficulties of the doctrine may be, it is confessedly founded on fact. Election in some shape or form meets us everywhere, wherever we observe the ways and doings of God. In the material world nothing can be clearer than that some objects have endowments which do not belong to others. Some attract us by their beauty of form, their fragrance, and so forth; while others repel us as being unsightly, offensive, noxious. Is not this of the will of God? Is not this His election, that some objects shall possess what is denied to others? In the heavens one star differs from another star in glory. Among the angels there are principalities and powers, elect angels. In fact, throughout the creation of God we nowhere find uniformity or equality of endowment; everywhere we find variety. And similarly amongst men: compare the poet with the ploughman. And similarly amongst races: compare the Anglo-Saxon with the Hottentot. What gifts are lavished on the one that are denied the other! And we find no difficulty in believing that these differences are of God. We ought not to be surprised, therefore, on opening the Bible, to find in it a doctrine of election. And, as a matter of fact, the whole substance of the Bible is a series of elections made by God Himself. Noah was elected of God to be the second father of the race; Abraham to be the father of the elect people; Moses to be their legislator; Samuel to be their prophet; David to be their king; Christ to be their hope; the apostles to be His witnesses. The fact therefore meets us wherever we turn. The only question is, as to the significance of the fact, as to how we are to interpret it. Have we the key? I believe we have, and in the history of Israel I conceive God would have us understand what the Divine election means. First of all, the election of Israel was an arbitrary act of God. The ground of it was not any foreseen excellence in the people, for, as a matter of fact, this they never possessed. A more troublesome, murmuring, rebellious, disobedient, faithless people the annals of history do not know. Then, again, as to the persons elected. The election was national, not personal; of the whole body, not of the individuals. The election, moreover, was not to a blessing absolutely—certainly as regards the individuals of the race—but to the offer of one conditionally. In other words, it was not an election to final salvation; not to the enjoyment of the promised land as a possession, but only to a condition of privilege, the result of which might be the ultimate possession, but only of individual choice. The evidence of this is the simple fact that entrance into Canaan was denied to all but two: a blessing was placed within the reach of the people; whether it should be theirs or not depended on themselves. As the vocation and privilege of Israel were higher than those of other nations, so, too, were they subjected to severer discipline. A high standard of national life was set before them, and they were trained to it by a stern and exceptional process. So that their election of God implied sharp discipline. There was, further, a deep purpose in their discipline which we must not overlook, or we shall misunderstand the whole. It was this: that the blessings they were to reap as the result of their fidelity were not for themselves alone. They were to be the instruments of blessing to mankind. The face of God shone on Israel that His way might be known on earth, His saving health to all nations. Israel mistook its vocation, wrapt itself in the cloak of exclusive privilege, and affirmed, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." If, then, we apply these principles, what shall we expect to find? We shall expect to find that the election will be of the sovereign will of God, unaffected by any foreseen conduct. The former part of this statement is denied by none: the latter part is implied in the Saviour's description of the day of judgment, in the universal declaration of the gospel that this life is a state of trial, and in such positive assertions as those of Paul, that God will render to every man according to his deeds, that God is no respecter of persons, and the like. We shall expect to find several other things.

As to the persons elected, except as regards individuals called to some special work, Scripture tells us nothing. We are all sure that they are the elect of God who prove their election by the loftiness and excellence of their spiritual life, and that this is the only proof that can be given or that could be accepted as reasonable. And as to the election itself, if it is to eternal life at all, surely it is to eternal life as a present possession and experience, and not simply to something to be received in the future. But the analogy of Israel would lead us to say that the election is not to eternal life at all, but to a condition of privilege, the result of which may be the possession of a spiritual life, which links men on to the Eternal God, and is eternal life; but this only where there is choice; otherwise the election to privilege does not secure to men eternal life, as belonging to the Israelitish people did not secure entrance to the promised land. Again, if this fact be clearly apprehended, that the knowledge of God is eternal life, and that this is the life to which the elect are called—not a future so much as a present good, and this good a very lofty level of life, the privilege of aiming higher, working harder, sacrificing more, suffering more keenly than any others in the world—this will explain the fact which has often perplexed men, that the path of the noblest saints has been a path of sternest discipline. Their summons is to a nobler, loftier, more self-sacrificing life, a life of self-forgetting, absorbing, loving service to Christ, and it is as they live this life nobly and well that they make their calling and election sure. (*R. V. Pryce, M.A.*)

Particular election:—When Mr. Whitfield was once applied to to use his influence at a general election, he returned answer to his lordship who requested him that he knew very little about general elections, but that if his lordship took his advice he would make his own particular “calling and election sure,” which was a very proper remark. I. First of all, then, there are the TWO IMPORTANT MATTERS IN RELIGION—secrets, both of them, to the world—only to be understood by those who have been quickened by Divine grace: “CALLING AND ELECTION.” It will be asked, however, why is “calling” here put before “election,” seeing election is eternal, and calling takes place in time? I reply, because calling is first to us. The first thing which you and I can know is our calling; we cannot tell whether we are elect until we feel that we are called. We must, first of all, prove our calling, and then our election is sure most certainly. And this is a matter about which you and I should be very anxious. For consider what an honourable thing it is to be elected. In this world it is thought a mighty thing to be elected to the House of Parliament; but how much more honourable to be elected to eternal life; to be elected to “the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven”! Election in this world is but a short-lived thing, but God’s election is eternal. It is worth while to know ourselves elect, for nothing in this world can make a man more happy or more valiant than the knowledge of his election. “Nevertheless,” said Christ to His apostles, “rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven”—that being the sweetest comfort. And this, too, makes a man valiant. When a man by diligence has attained to the assurance of his election you cannot make him a coward. “Was not I ordained by God to be the standard bearer of this truth? I must, I will stand by it, despite you all.” He saith to every enemy, “Am I not a chosen king?” II. Come, then, here is the second point—GOOD ADVICE. “Make your calling and election sure.” “How, then,” says one, “am I to make my calling and election sure?” Why, thus: If thou wouldst get out of a doubting state, get out of an idle state; if thou wouldst get out of a trembling state, get out of an indifferent, lukewarm state; for lukewarmness and doubting, and laziness and trembling, very naturally go hand in hand. Be diligent in your faith. Take care that your faith is of the right kind—that it is not a creed, but a credence. Take care that your faith results from necessity—that you believe in Christ because you have nothing else to believe in; and give diligence to thy courage. Labour to get virtue; plead with God that He would give thee the face of a lion, that thou mayest never be afraid of any enemy. And having, by the help of the Holy Spirit, obtained that, study well the Scriptures and get knowledge, for a knowledge of doctrine will tend very much to confirm your faith. Try to understand God’s Word; get a sensible, spiritual idea of it. And when thou hast done this, “Add to thy knowledge temperance.” Take heed to thy body: be temperate there. Take heed to thy soul: be temperate there. Be not drunken with pride. Be not passionate: be not carried away by every wind of doctrine. Get temperance, and then add to it by God’s Holy Spirit patience; ask Him to give thee that patience which endureth affliction, which, when it is tried, shall come forth as gold. And when you have that, get godliness.

III. THE APOSTLE'S REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE. I put in one of my own to begin with. It is because, as I have said, it will make you so happy. Men who doubt their calling and election cannot be full of joy; but the happiest saints are those who know and believe it. But now for Peter's reasons. 1. Because "if ye do these things ye shall never fall." "Perhaps," says one, "in attention to election we may forget our daily walk, and like the old philosopher who looked up to the stars we may walk on and tumble into the ditch!" "Nay, nay," says Peter, "if you take care of your calling and election, you shall not trip; but, with your eyes up there, looking for your calling and election, God will take care of your feet, and you shall never fall." 2. And now the other reason. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Just one thought more. It is said that the entrance is to be "ministered to us." That gives me a sweet hint. Christ will open the gates of heaven; but the heavenly train of virtues—the works which follow us—will go up with us and minister an entrance to us. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The nature, possibility, duty, and means of the assurance of one's effectual calling:—*

I. IT IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, BUT A DUTY IN CHRISTIANS, TO ENDEAVOUR AFTER AN ASSURANCE OF THEIR EFFECTUAL CALLING AND ELECTION. 1. When we say a believer may and ought to be assured of his calling and election, we do not mean as if of his own self he could have this Divine persuasion. As it is with the colours that are the object of the sight, though they be never so good and visible, yet if there be no light the eye cannot see them. Thus it is here: though there be never such excellent graces, and though God hath wrought a wonderful change in thee, yet thou art not able to see it till the Spirit of God enable thee. 2. The soul of a man, being a rational and spiritual substance, hath two kinds of acts. There are, first, the direct acts of the soul, whereby it is carried out immediately and directly to some object. And there are, secondly, reflex acts, whereby the soul considers and takes notice of what acts it doth. It is as if the eye were turned inward to see itself (1 John ii. 3). So that when we believe in God, that is a direct act of the soul; when we repent of sin, because God is dishonoured, that is a direct act; but when we know that we do believe, and that we do repent, this is a reflex act. Now, whether this certainty or assurance be a certainty of faith, or of sense, or rather mixed of both, I shall not dispute. 3. This assurance is a privilege which may be had, and it is our sin if we breathe not after it, or do anything that may justly fill our hearts with doubts and diffidence. Yet it is not of absolute necessity to salvation. 4. Neither yet is this assurance the apostle presses us unto such as admits of no doubts, no temptations or oppositions by Satan. II. CONSIDER WHAT ARE THOSE EFFECTS OF GRACE WHICH, IF A MAN WALK IN, HE MAY BE PARTAKER OF THIS PRIVILEGE: not but that God by His absolute sovereignty, and for holy ends, may leave the most circumspect Christians in darkness, without any light, as it was in Job. And the prophet intimateth, "Who is among you that feareth God, and hath no light, walking in darkness?" (Isa. l. 10.) 1. We must give all diligence and heed to the obtaining of this privilege. We must make it our business; it must be importunately begged for in prayer. 2. The way to obtain this assurance is a fruitful, fervent, and active walking in all the ways of holiness. "If these things be in you and abound," saith the apostle. The sparks that are ready to go out do hardly evidence there is any fire. We doubt of life when we feel scarce any breath. And thus it is here. The more negligent and lazy thou art in the ways of godliness, the less certainty must needs be in thee. And the reason is plain; for if graces exercised be the sign or seal, then the more these appear, the more thriving and flourishing they are, the surer testimonies there will be of thy calling and election. 3. Another way to preserve or obtain this assurance is humility and meekness, going out of ourselves, avoiding all presumption, all self-righteousness (Phil. ii. 12). 4. This assurance is obtained and preserved by a tender watchfulness against all known sin. For it being sin only that separates between God and the soul, this only raiseth up the great gulf, therefore all witting and willing allowing of this is a direct destroyer of all assurance. 5. Another way to obtain this is to take heed of grieving the Spirit of God or quenching the motions of it. For seeing it is the Spirit of God that witnesseth, and it is the Spirit that feeleth, if we would have assurance, we are to nourish it, to do nothing that may resist and repel it. 6. If thou wouldst attain to this assurance, acquaint thyself well with the covenant of the gospel, with the precious promises revealed there, with the gracious condescensions of God's love in Christ. Many of the children of God are kept in a doubtful and perplexed estate because they

consider not the riches of Christ's grace revealed in the gospel. (*Anthony Burgess.*) *Of effectual calling*:—I. I now come to show THE GREAT ADVANTAGE OF THIS CERTAINTY. Where the godly heart hath this holy assurance and persuasion wrought by God's Spirit, there it hath many helps which the tempted soul wanteth. 1. Where there is certainty of this heavenly privilege, there the soul is more inflamed and enlarged to love God. 2. Certainty of our calling and election will breed much spiritual strength and heavenly ability to all graces and duties, to go through all relations with much holiness and lively vigour. 3. This certainty and assurance of grace would exceedingly keep up the heart under all afflictions and outward miseries. 4. This certainty of grace is a strong and mighty buckler against all those violent assaults and temptations that the devil useth to exercise the godly with. 5. This certainty is a special means to breed contentment of mind, and a thankful, cheerful heart in every condition. 6. This certainty of grace is a sure and special antidote against death in all the fears of it. This makes the king of terrors a king of all consolations; for seeing that by grace we are the members of Christ, death hath no more sting on us than on Christ our Head. These are the advantages. II. But the godly heart may inquire, HOW SHALL I KNOW THIS HOLY CERTAINTY AND PERSUASION BY GOD'S SPIRIT FROM MY OWN PERSUASION, FROM THE SELF-FLATTERY THAT IS IN ME? 1. Holy certainty is kept up in all exercises of grace and constant tender avoiding of all known sin; but presumption will agree with the practice of all these. 2. Presumption is unwilling to be searched and tried. It fieth from the light, it cannot abide the touchstone; but this holy certainty loveth a deep search. 3. Presumption beareth up a man's heart till a man come to some great and extraordinary calamities, and then this bubble vanisheth away. Dross will melt in the fire, but gold will be the more refined. The wind makes chaff fly away, but leaveth the corn more purified. 4. Presumption is not opposed nor assaulted by the devil. Satan doth not tempt and labour to drive people out of it, but nourisheth them in it. But out of this holy certainty the devil's main scope is to drive them. 5. It is the sure character of presumption that it divideth the means and the end. It hopes for such privileges, though it never do the duties. Now this is not assurance, but a presumptuous delusion, whereas you see this text is, to give all diligence to make your calling sure. 6. Presumption is but a self-deceiving, false logic that a man deceiveth himself with. Whereas you heard this certainty is a knowledge wrought by God's Spirit in us. 7. The presumptuous man is full of haughty arrogance and proud preferring of himself, contemning and undervaluing others. Thus that Pharisee, "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men," &c. Whereas true assurance is accompanied with deep humility and a pitiful respect to others. III. In the next place it may be questioned WHAT THAT GODLY PERSON SHOULD DO WHO HATH NOT THIS ASSURANCE? Though grace be in him, he knoweth it not, yea, he thinketh the clean contrary. Now to such an one we say, let him walk in a faith of adherence and dependence when he hath none of these evidences. This the Scripture calls trusting, rolling, leaning, and staying of the soul upon God. And this dependence of faith is far more noble than the assurance of faith. 1. In assurance, there I go on in holy duties and love of God, because of the sensible sweetness and delight that I have; but in dependence, there I trust in God when I have no sense or feeling. 2. To depend and wait on God though darkness be in thy soul, argueth thy faith more firm and strong. It was an high expression in Job, "Though He kill me I will trust in Him." Do not then give over thy constancy in holy duties; be not discouraged in waiting on God for assurance, for He will at last cause the sun to arise, and the dark night to fly away. (*Ibid.*) *Assurance*:—One may be a believer in Christ and not have attained to a full assurance of salvation. Faith has a beginning and an end. It may be weak or strong, partial or complete. Believers are enjoined to make their calling and election sure. The distinction is an important one. "Many are called, but few chosen." The calling we regard as simply the Word of God, or the truth of God, as objectively put before the mind. To make that sure is to make perfectly certain to ourselves that the Bible is the Word of God. More particularly, that Word sets before us the whole true character of God, the whole true condition of man, and the whole truth as to the way of salvation. One must understand the message, or comprehend to some extent the terms of the invitation. He must be sure that it is really addressed to him, and that he is entitled to accept it as such. Having satisfied himself of that, he must give himself to the more complete understanding of it. How long, then, does it take one to know the truth of the call, objectively considered—the truth concerning God, one's self, and the way of salva-

tion? It will take him to the end of time, neither more nor less. The holiest man that ever lived could not spare a single moment of the whole time given to him by God from the work of making his calling sure. The way of salvation is simply the life-long process of getting into the truth, and, ever as we realise that, the corresponding process of bringing it forth into the life again. It is here that the calling glides into the election. To make one's election sure is the additional matter of attaining to perfect certainty as to one's individual and personal acceptance with God. This is the subjective aspect. It brings into view the living and growing relation of one's own spirit and character to the truth. It is an axiom that the Word of God is true. It is also a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. But it is quite another question as to whether a given individual is among the elect or no. The elect are those whom God chooses as His own, and the only way by which we can either be among the elect or know that we are, is the way of choosing from day to day the will of God as our will or rule of life. The faith that saves and leads to assurance is declared in Scripture to have two aspects. It is "the substance" or fundamental condition of a great and manifold hope; the hope of the ultimate triumph of good over evil and of truth over error; the hope of the personal appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; and the hope of our individual acceptance in His sight. It is also "the evidence" in the present, that these hopes will be realised. As the substance, it is a life-long thought, and as the evidence, a life-long work. As both in one it is an ever-growing spiritual reality, identical with the life-long duty of making our calling and election sure. (*F. Ferguson.*)

An entrance shall be ministered.—*Entrance into the kingdom*:—I. THE PASSAGE. 1. The sureness. (1) The reason—"for." As if to say: There are some blind, and forget the way of truth: what then? Therefore make your election sure. Why? For if ye do so ye shall never fall. How are we sure that we shall not fall? For so you have a full entrance to blessedness. (2) The means—"so." Make your election sure; and by living soberly and righteously endeavour the ascertaining to your own hearts, that God hath decreed you to salvation; for so you shall have a free entrance into the kingdom of Christ. 2. The readiness—"an entrance," without trouble. (1) The entrance to grace and mercy is open, and ready to entertain all entering feet (Rev. iii. 7). (2) The removal of such impediments as might hinder this passage. (a) The world is none of the least; and in this there is a double opposition; on the left hand indigence, on the right opulence. (b) The flesh steps in next to bar up our entrance. There is no man hath a worse friend than he brings from home. (c) The devil is a master antagonist, a watchful and wrathful enemy. (d) Death is the last enemy, but not the least. Yet to the faithful that fiend is a friend (Phil. i. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55). (3) The matter of this entrance. It consists in two things. (a) Our union with Christ. If the Head be entered, the members cannot be denied. (b) Our communion with the Holy Ghost. 3. The fitness, or preparation. We are not beholden to ourselves for this entrance: it is "ministered" to us. (1) The means is ministered, therefore it is called the ministry of the Word, the ministration of the sacraments. (2) The apprehension of this means is ministered, for it is given to us to believe (Phil. i. 29). (3) The object of this apprehension is ministered, eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ (Rom. vi. 23). 4. The easiness—"abundantly." The gate is not narrow in itself, but only in respect of unqualified enterers. It is too low for lofty and aspiring ambition, too narrow for pride, too straight for covetousness; but to faith it is broad. If the worldling would untwist his riches by charity, and the sinner untwist his sins by repentance, they may abundantly enter. II. THE PALACE. 1. Its royalty. It is the Lord's own "kingdom." 2. Its immutability. The honour of earthly princes is often laid in the dust; but this is an eternal kingdom. The royalty of Christ is absolute, independent, universal, and everlasting (Luke i. 33). It is fit that He should be so honoured who was so humbled. Our sin brought Him exceeding low, let His own righteousness exalt Him exceeding high. (1) The supremacy of the King. By comparing earthly things with heavenly, we may observe the excellency of that regiment in which we stand: it is a kingdom; and the dignity of the Governor: He is an eternal King (1 Tim. i. 17). All inferior kingdoms are derived from Him, and subordinate to Him (1 Tim. vi. 15). (2) The security of the subjects. We have a King to rule us; a King of majesty, a King of mercy; one who can protect us from all evil, and supply us with all good. (3) The felicity of this kingdom, whose law is truth, whose King is the Trinity, and whose bounds are eternity. (*Thos. Adams.*)

The abundant entrance.—I. The first thing the apostle would have them keep in remembrance is THE GLORIOUS STATE OF A CHRISTIAN IN ETERNITY. 1. One reason why the glorious state of a Christian, either in time or eternity—in one case the kingdom of grace, and in the other the kingdom of glory—is called “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” is that it is the purchase of His blood; it is a purchased possession. 2. Then this kingdom may very properly be called “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” because it is the work of His hands. 3. We shall see then what we do not understand now—the nature, the office, the order, and the actions of angels. 4. We see the glory of “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” in the act of His own exaltation. 5. But there are other peculiarities in this kingdom. There are peculiar privileges, which the inhabitants, and kings, and priests, and subjects of this kingdom enjoy. One of these privileges is this: whatever we see increases our happiness; not only from its own excellency, but it increases our happiness because it is mine. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things.” There is another thing which will finish heaven’s happiness, and that is that every object is mine for ever. It is not only “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” but it is “the everlasting kingdom.” II. We come now to THE GRAND WORK OF A CHRISTIAN IN TIME. What is that? 1. To make sure work for heaven, we must get a clear title to heaven. 2. Again, in order that we may make our calling and election sure, we must get a personal meetness for heaven, not merely a title. III. HOW MUST WE DO THIS WORK? 1. Here is the grand work; all you are to do is to enter into that work with all your hearts—“Give diligence.” Exercise your given power and improve your given opportunity in removing impediments. 2. Again, exercise your given power, and improve your given opportunity, in an immediate application to the blood of the Lamb. 3. And then we must yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit; for without that we can do nothing. IV. THE MOTIVES TO ENGAGE US IN THE WORK AND SUPPORT US UNDER IT. 1. The all-important ground of this duty, and the all-important argument to engage us in this duty, is eternity. 2. Another argument is, the inestimable privileges in life. What are the inestimable privileges in life? Absolute security from apostacy. Give diligence, and you shall “never fall.” 3. Then there is present happiness in making our calling and election sure. 4. There are, therefore, inestimable privileges in life; and there are inestimable advantages in death. “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (*W. Dawson.*)

Entrance into Christ’s kingdom.—I. SOMEWHERE IN THE UNIVERSE OF GOD CHRIST HAS A GLORIOUS KINGDOM. II. AN ENTRANCE INTO THIS KINGDOM IS THE HIGHEST DESTINY OF MANKIND. Here he obtains—1. The most perfect freedom. 2. The most exalted fellowships. 3. The most blessed progress. In knowledge, power, dignity, usefulness. III. THE MORE MORAL VIRTUES WE ATTAIN, THE MORE ABUNDANT WILL BE OUR ENTRANCE. (*Homilist.*)

Getting into harbour.—There is land ahead, and the spiritual mariner knows that when that land is reached his toils will cease for ever. The picture which Peter here had before his mind’s eye was purely nautical. His idea was that of a ship which, after a prosperous voyage, was entering with full sail into her destined haven. All on board are hopeful and joyous. Nothing has happened to maim either the vessel or the crew. The crowds on the beach seem to be almost within hail. I. THE COUNTRY TO WHICH WE ARE BOUND. 1. It is gloriously governed. It is a “kingdom”; and it is “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”; that is, He reigns and rules in it. (1) He reigns by right of Divine authority. (2) He reigns by right of irresistible conquest. What a glorious victor is our King! (a) He conquered for us. Sin, death, and hell, allied against Him for our hurt, were completely routed by His almighty arm. (b) He conquered in us. The old rebel heart resisted Him to the utmost, but He ultimately overcame. The day of our subjugation was one of the happiest we ever knew. (3) He reigns by right of universal suffrage. Loyalty to the King is, in the kingdom of Christ, a rule that knows not a single exception. 2. It is permanently established. It is a “kingdom” in which there are no republicans, and it is an “everlasting kingdom,” in which there are no revolutions. 3. It is unspeakably blessed. The King is “our Saviour”! The term is very comprehensive. In every conceivable sense King Jesus is the Saviour of His people. II. THE WELCOME WE MAY ANTICIPATE THERE. 1. We may expect an entrance. Apart from the common contingencies of ordinary navigation, there are two sources of danger sometimes experienced on the sea. The first is that, in sailing to the port, enemies may be met with on the voyage; and secondly, in

attempting to get to the shore, enemies may oppose the landing. 2. We may expect an entrance ministered. And as ships cannot pass unchallenged into our national harbours, so there is no getting into heaven by stealth. Each entrance is "ministered." Out here, on the ocean, you may feel that you are so mixed up with all the rest, that by and by there will be a chance of sailing in with the crowd. But it is a fearful mistake. Do not be deceived! Ships do not enter that harbour thus. The narrow entrance, which you are so fast approaching, will only admit "one by one." Each soul must encounter the Divine scrutiny. 3. We may expect an entrance ministered abundantly. Some months ago a large ship was observed, under full sail, making for Kingstown harbour. Her crew had discovered a fire in her hold, and after exhausting themselves in attempts to get it under, they managed, as a last resource, to run the vessel straight for the port. To the amazement of the people on the shore, she came on, without slackening sail, until she had reached the mouth of the harbour, and then, the sailors being, through exhaustion, unable to control her course, she came dashing right through all the ships that were lying at anchor, and running burning on the beach, she became a total wreck. She reached the port, but none could say she had "an abundant entrance." If he could possibly avoid it, no sailor would care to finish a voyage like that. But I fear that many people content themselves with a prospect of thus getting into heaven. Of course, the poor fellows on board the burning vessel were glad to escape even though they were "saved so as by fire"; but they would have been far happier had they succeeded in bringing safely home their vessel and her cargo. The ship that receives the most abundant entrance is not the one that runs away from every foe, lest she should receive a scratch or lose a little gilt from her figure-head; but the vessel that receives abundant honour is she which, having carried the thunders of her country's guns into the very strongholds of the foe, returns amid the plaudits of the nation—like Nelson's immortal *Victory*—covered with glory. Think of the other shore! What welcomes await the voyager within the harbour! How "abundantly" will he be received by those who have gone before! III. THE CONDITIONS BY WHICH IT IS SECURED. 1. Faith in Christ. 2. Life for Christ. The apostle says, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," &c. 3. Glory with Christ. This is the fruit of which faith is the root, and of which life for Christ is as the tree. The sailor often meets with the heaviest gales just before he reaches the port; and the Christian sometimes finds the tribulation keener as he approaches the kingdom. But the weather is not always stormy. It is sometimes sweetly calm, and at such times many get into port. Their entrance is equally blessed, for they have passed through all their dangers and fears during the early portion of the voyage. (*W. H. Burton.*) *Happiness in death*:—The apostle urges the manner of our dying—he would have us die not only in a state of salvation, but of peace—and triumph. I. THE STATE TO WHICH THE CHRISTIAN LOOKS FORWARD—"the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 1. Christians, we know very little of "the hope which is laid up for us in heaven": it is "the glory which shall be revealed in us." Two things are spoken of this kingdom which deserve remark. 1. The first concerns its permanency and duration—it is "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour." "The fashion of this world passeth away." The Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, Roman Empires arose, astonished mankind for a season, and disappeared. 2. It is "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And what means this relation? It is surely designed to distinguish Him from a mere possessor, and to intimate peculiar prerogative, residence, administration. It is His by claim. As the Son of God He is "Heir of all things." He acquired it as the reward of His obedience and sufferings. He has now the disposal of the offices and privileges of the empire among His faithful followers. This was surely the idea of the dying thief when he prayed, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." He is the Sovereign; and there He rules—not, as here, "in the midst of His enemies"—no treason, no sedition, no disaffection there. There He reigns immediately, always in view, and accessible to all. II. THE DESIRABLE MODE OF ADMISSION. And here we read of an ENTRANCE—MINISTERED—ABUNDANTLY. What is this entrance? Unquestionably—Death. But you should remember that your entrance into the invisible world is administered. Not only is the will of God concerned in the general sentence of mortality pronounced upon us, but death always receives a particular commission from Him. The circumstance of time is fixed by Him: "the number of our months is with Him." The place is determined by His purpose. The means and the manner of our removal are disposed by His pleasure. The death of some

is distinguished by honours not vouchsafed to all: and this is what the apostle means by an entrance ministered unto us abundantly. For all do not enter alike. Some, shipwrecked, are washed by the surge half-dead on the shore, or reach it clinging terrified to a plank; others, with crowded sails and with a preserved cargo of spices and perfumes, beautifully, gallantly enter the desired haven. A triumph was not decreed to every Roman general upon his return to the capital. We may observe a remarkable diversity even in the deaths of common believers. Some die only safe; while their state is unknown to themselves, and suspected by others. In some, hope and fear alternately prevail. Some feel a peace which passeth all understanding—while some exult with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. And in these is fulfilled the language of the promise, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace." They will need it themselves. It is a new, a trying, and an awful thing to die. They will find dying to be work enough, without having doubts and fears to encounter. You should long for this also on the behalf of others. This is the last time you can do anything in serving God in your generation; but by this you may be rendered peculiarly useful. Your dying looks and your dying words may make impressions which shall never be erased. III. TO EXAMINE THE CONDITION UPON WHICH THIS PRIVILEGE IS SUSPENDED, AND WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY HERE IMPLIED—"For so an entrance," &c. This course requires—That you should habituate yourselves to familiar thoughts of death. This will dissipate the terrors which arise from distance and imagination. This will break the force of surprise. And the less powerfully you are attached to earthly things, the more easy will be your separation from them. It requires that you should obtain and preserve the evidences of pardon; without these you cannot be fearless and tranquil in the near views of eternity, since "after death is the judgment." Is he in a condition to die who has lived in the practice of some known sin, and in the omission of some known duty? It requires an attention to religion in your families. I pity that father who will be surrounded when he dies with children whose minds he never informed, whose dispositions he never curbed, whose manners he never guarded. In a word, it requires you to live in the strenuous cultivation of practical and progressive religion. "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," &c. If there be such differences among Christians in dying, we may be assured that there will be inequalities in heaven. What preparation have you made for a dying hour? (*W. Jay.*) *An abundant entrance into heaven:*—He had prayed for a triumphant death. One day, when speaking about heaven, some one said, "I'll be satisfied if I manage somehow to get in." "What!" said Robert, pointing to a sunken vessel that had just been dragged up the Tay, "would you like to be pulled into heaven by two tugs, like the *London* yonder? I tell you I would like to go in with all my sails set and colours flying." (*Life of Robert Annan.*)

Vers. 12-15. **To put you always in remembrance.**—*Pastor and people:*—I. THE PASTOR'S INFORMING. 1. His piety; desirous to bring them to the forementioned kingdom. 2. His vigilance; admitting no neglect of their souls, what discouragements soever affront him. 3. His modesty; professing that he doth rather remind than teach them. 4. His fidelity; he will do it "always," without weariness of that which may tend to their edification and comfort. 5. His sincerity; he doth not incite them to vain and unnecessary things, but "these things" that build them up to salvation. II. THE PEOPLE'S PROFICIENCY. 1. Their illumination. 2. Their confirmation. No man runs so fast but he may need some spurring. There is still something that he would teach and they should learn. The horse that would run well of his own mettle doth yet mend his pace by the rider's encouragement. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The writer's diligence and his readers' obedience:*—I. THE WRITER'S DILIGENCE. 1. "Wherefore." Because the foundation of eternal life is to be laid here, and in this life an entrance must be made to that everlasting kingdom, or there will be no fruition hereafter; therefore I will take all possible pains to prepare your souls for the. The state future follows the former, as the upper building follows the foundation. 2. "I will not be negligent." His diligence is well furthered by his sedulity. 3. "To put you in remembrance." We must often be stirred up, line upon line, &c. 4. "Always." This duty of assiduity cannot be performed by any minister of the gospel without a constant abiding among his people. 5. "Of these things"—*i.e.*, such as may save your souls. The minister must labour neither for praise nor for purse, but for conscience; he must fish for souls, not for riches. There are too many that seek the Church goods

rather than the Church's good. II. THE PEOPLE'S OBEDIENCE. 1. The apostle takes for granted that they understood these things already, and were constant in the assurance of the truth of them. A happy progress! If your mind be established in understanding, your heart in affecting, your life in obeying, blessed are you; your minister shall praise you, the Church will praise you, the angels praise you, yea, you shall be praised of Christ Himself. 2. This concession makes way for a further imposition. Though you know these things, and be established, yet you must admit a further confirming (Rom. xv. 14, 15). The cessation of remembrancing may easily lapse us to forgetfulness. (*Ibid.*) *Constant remembrance*:—I. A SATISFACTORY POSITION. They are commended—1. For proper knowledge. "Ye know them," *i.e.*, the practical bearings of the Christian religion. 2. For genuine faith. "Established—settled—in the truth." II. A HAZARDOUS CONDITION. The higher a man rises, the more Satan desires to sift him. 1. The natural tendency of fallen nature. 2. The many and urgent temptations to leave even what we know. III. A JUDICIOUS PRECAUTION. "I will . . . put you always in remembrance." 1. The necessity for this course ought to reconcile us to the constant repetition of even the most elementary truths of religion. 2. Christianity consists of two parts—faith and practice. Both are easily forgotten or neglected. Other things absorb the mind. (*Homilist.*) *Ministers as remembrancers*:—The very inwardness of the principal truths of religion makes our being frequently reminded of them so much the more necessary, and renders the ministrations of a Christian pastor so essential to our spiritual welfare. Nay, further, our very familiarity with Christian truths makes the office of the minister as a remembrancer not less necessary. Even the more we know of them, the more we need to be reminded of them. But why is this continual remembrance of religious truths so essential to the Church, that Christ has not only appointed a special order of remembrancers, but has also instituted holy mysteries as sacraments of commemoration? Because only as truths live within the mind can they be influential on the heart and conduct. And only as we are continually reminded of them do they gain this life within us. It is not enough to have received truths, we must feel them. We are living daily in a world of sense; we need to be transferred continually into the world of spirit. We see around us the vanities of time; we need to have heaven opened to our gaze, that we may behold the grand realities of eternity. The grand obstacle to all religion and holiness is sense—the living in the present and the visible, and therefore for the present and the visible. The grand method of deliverance, therefore, from this obstacle is faith. I put you in remembrance that you are the creatures of the one living and true God. I put you in remembrance that before this God, to whom you are thus accountable, you stand charged by His most righteous law as guilty sinners. I put you in remembrance that this same God, whom you have thus displeased, and before whom you stand guilty, is very holy and yet very merciful. I put you in remembrance that in consequence of this compassion this same God—so holy, yet so merciful—sent down His only-begotten Son into the world to take your place, to bear your sins. I put you in remembrance that this pursuit of personal moral excellence and holy character can be successfully begun, continued, and completed by you only as you obtain the influence and help, the life, the love, and the power of God's Holy Spirit. (*T. Griffith, M.A.*) *Established in the present truth*.—*Present truth*:—I. THE GOSPEL SPEAKS OF A PRESENT RECONCILIATION OF GOD TO MAN. II. CHRISTIANS HAVE A PRESENT LIFE IN CHRIST. III. PRESENT RECONCILIATION IN THE PRESENT LIFE MEANS PRESENT CONFESSION. IV. WE HAVE A PRESENT HEAVEN. (*A. J. Gordon, D.D.*) *Shortly I must put off this my tabernacle*.—*The shortness of our life*:—I. From this notion of putting off our bodies it will appear that—WE DO IN REALITY CONSIST OF BODY AND SOUL, which is the foundation of all religion. If we were all body, the pleasures and interests of the body would be our supreme happiness; but since we have a soul to govern the motions of the body, it must be our wisdom and our interest to take diligent heed of that soul, and not suffer the body to engross all our care. A creature that is made of two distinct parts cannot be completely happy by providing for one part only. Our care of the life of the soul will oblige us to take care of any hurt or mischief that may befall it, as we see it does in our bodies. Again, do we bestow much time and labour upon adorning our bodies, it is abundantly more for our interest that we spare a portion of them to the soul, in exalting that with wisdom and holiness. II. This observation that we are to put off our bodies will instruct us in THE DIGNITY AND SUPERIORITY OF THE SOUL ABOVE THE BODY. The soul herself suffers nothing by this separation, but is made more glorious by it. The soul is the seat of knowledge and sensation,

and the body is very insignificant without it. The soul, therefore, is the best part of us. The body has no life without the soul, but the soul has life though it be stripped of body. How, then, can we justify our neglect of the soul and our unmeasurable, our most unreasonable affection for the body?

III. Are we constantly apprehensive that we must leave our bodies? THIS SHOULD TEACH US NOT TO VALUE OURSELVES UPON ANY BODILY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS, NOR TO ALLOW TOO LARGE A SHARE OF OUR PAINS AND TIME IN SEARCHING AFTER THEM, BUT TO PURIFY BOTH SOUL AND BODY, AND TO PREPARE THEM FOR A HAPPY RECEPTION INTO THE OTHER WORLD. It is absurd to boast or grow proud of things which we are soon to part with, or be very eager to obtain what we are sure we cannot hold for a long time. The ornaments of sobriety and temperance, humility and meekness, charity, wisdom, and holiness, will stand us in greatest stead when our bodies have left us. And nothing but they will do us service. (*R. Warren, D.D.*)

The shortness of human life :—1. "I know"—not perhaps precisely the day, or the place, or the manner. But death is not a stranger to my thoughts; my account is cast up, I am ready. 2. "That I must put off," or lay down; willingly, not on compulsion; not pulled down, but laid down. It is a metaphor drawn from a wager; the faithful man doth wager, and pawn his soul to God. 3. "This my tabernacle"—not my castle, or strong tower, or standing house; but a tent, a movable, a tabernacle. 4. "Shortly." The time is not so far off that I dream not of it; not likely to happen in another age, and creeping on by slow degrees. The sun is not descending, but ready to set; the messenger knocks at the door; the clock runs upon the last minute; the epilogue is on the stage; the taper at the last glimpse; the oak falling under the latest blow of the axe. 5. "As the Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." It is a shame for me to be unprepared when such a Prophet hath certified me, both in prediction and example showing the way. I. A RESOLUTION. "Knowing." The assurance of unavoidable death is a doctrine well known. Make a virtue of necessity; offer God that for a gift, which you are bound to pay as a debt. II. A DISSOLUTION. 1. Personal. "I"—though a preacher, an apostle, &c. These singular deductions out of universal propositions, are profitable to men, and acceptable to God. (1) Seeing we must die, do you pray for us, that we may do your souls good while we live (Eph. vi. 18, 19). (2) Seeing our life is so short, do you apprehend the means while it lasteth (Heb. iii. 45). 2. Necessary. "I must." If heaven were to be had upon earth, saints should not dwell in tabernacles. 3. Voluntary. "Put off." The apostle calls himself a depository, that hath a jewel committed to him on trust, which he is willing to surrender. 4. Instant. "Shortly." (1) The less space a man hath allowed for his business, the more he should ply it. The fewer days, the fruitfuller lessons. (2) The words of dying men have been most emphatical, most effectual. The last words of good men are best, as the last glare of the sun going down most clear. An admonition uttered by such a teacher, at such a time, to such an auditory, challenges good attention, great devotion. III. A REVELATION. "Even as our Lord," &c. 1. Those who refer it to the manner, conceive this revelation to be given him (John xxi. 18, 19). 2. They that refer it to the time of his dying, understand it thus: That Peter should die, he knew in general; that he should die a martyr, he knew in particular; but that he should die shortly he could not know, except by some later revelation, in special. It is probable that where Peter wrote this Epistle, even there he received this revelation. 3. Now howsoever an apostle had some special premonstrance of the nearness of his end, yet this is not common, though old age and consumptions be certain forewarners of approaching death. We, too, have the more preparation, by how much we have the less revelation concerning the time and circumstances of our death. (*Thos. Adams.*)

Putting off the bodily tabernacle :—1. His exemplary industry and diligence in his ministerial work. (1) The quality of his work, which was "to stir them up by putting them in remembrance," to keep the heavenly flame of love and zeal lively upon the altar of their hearts. He well knew what a sleepy disease the best Christians are troubled with, and therefore he had need to be stirring them up, and awaking them to their duty. (2) The constancy of his work, "As long as I am in this tabernacle." The body is called a tabernacle, in respect of its moveableness and frailty, and in opposition to that house, "eternal in the heavens." And it is observable how he limits his serviceableness to them. Death puts an end to all our ministerial usefulness; but till that time he judged it meet to be aiding their faith; our life and labour must end together. 2. The motive stimulating him to this diligence; "knowing that I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me." (1) He reflects upon the speediness or near approach

of his death. "I must (shortly) put off this my tabernacle" (2 Tim. iv. 6). (2) The necessity of his death: It is not I may, but I must put off this my tabernacle. (3) The voluntariness of his death; for voluntariness is consistent enough with the necessity of the event. He saith not, "I must be torn, or rent, by violence from it"; but "I must depose, or lay it down." The law of mortality binds all, good and bad, young and old, the most useful and desirable saints whom the world can worst spare, as well as useless and undesirable sinners (Rom. viii. 10). The continuance of these our tabernacles, or bodies, is short, whether we consider them absolutely or comparatively. 1. Absolutely. If they should stand seventy or eighty years, which is the longest duration (Psa. xc. 10), how soon will that time run out! 2. Comparatively. Let us compare our time in these tabernacles. (1) Either with eternity, or with Him who inhabits it, and it shrinks up into nothing (Psa. xxxix. 5). Or (2) with the duration of the bodies of men in the first ages of the world, when they lived many hundred years. The reasons of putting off the earthly tabernacle so soon, are—1. The law of God, or His appointment. 2. The providence of God ordering it suitably to this appointment. And both these in pursuance of a double design. (1) By dissolving the tabernacles of wicked men, God pays that debt of justice owing to the first Adam's sinful posterity (Rom. vi. 23). (2) By cutting off the lives of good men, God pays to Christ the reward of His sufferings, the end of His death which was to bring many sons to glory (Heb. ii. 10). Inference 1. Must we put off these tabernacles? Is death necessary and inevitable? Then it is our wisdom to sweeten to ourselves that cup which we must drink; and make that as pleasant to us as we can which we know cannot be avoided. Inference 2. Must we put off these tabernacles of flesh? How necessary is it that every soul look in season, and make provision for another habitation? Inference 3. Must we put off our tabernacles, and that shortly? What a spur is this to a diligent redemption and improvement of time? You have but a little time in these tabernacles; what pity is it to waste much out of a little! Inference 4. Must we shortly put off these our tabernacles? Then slack your pace and cool yourselves; be not too eager in the prosecution of earthly designs. Inference 5. If we must shortly put off these tabernacles, then the groaning and mourning time of all believers is but short; how heavy soever their burden be, yet they shall carry it but a little way. Inference 6. Must you shortly put off those tabernacles? Then spare them not whilst you have them, but employ them for God with all diligence. Inference 7. Look beyond this embodied state, and learn to live now as you hope to live shortly; begin to be what you expect to be. (*John Flavel.*) *Man's earthly mode of being:—I. HERE IS A FELT DUTY CONNECTED WITH THIS MODE OF BEING.* "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up," &c. The spiritual excitation of the Christian soul. He sought to put Christians in mind of five things which he refers to in the context: That spiritual excellence is the great end of Christianity (vers. 3, 4); that spiritual excellence is progressive in its nature (vers. 5, 7); that it requires very diligent cultivation (vers. 5, 10); that it is the only guarantee of salvation (ver. 9); and that it will ultimately meet with a glorious reward (ver. 11). Now there are three important things implied in the apostle's aim—1. A paramount necessity for the Christian ever to feel these things. His own progress and the conversion of the world depend upon this. 2. A sad tendency in the Christian to forget these things. 3. An obligation which one Christian has to endeavour spiritually to excite others by these things. II. *A DESTINED CHANGE THAT AWAITS THIS MODE OF BEING.* "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle." 1. The nature of the change. It is a putting off the tabernacle. 2. The nearness of the change. "Shortly." 3. The assurance of the change. "Knowing." It is not a subject of doubt. III. *A GLORIOUS CAUSE THAT MUST OUTLIVE THIS MODE OF BEING.* "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." Three things implied: 1. The necessity of Christianity to posterity. All generations require it; therefore it must be handed down. 2. The felt interest of the good in posterity. They are far more anxious to bequeath truth and godliness than estates or empires. 3. The capacity of men to help posterity. Through a holy life, and instructions oral or written. Properly estimate thy mortal mode of life. Thou art dwelling in a tabernacle. I would not have thee ascetically to despise thy body, for it is the workmanship of God; an exquisite instrument of the soul; the inlet of the material, and the outlet of the spiritual. But I would have thee to remember that it is not thyself, but a temporary habitation of that soul of thine, which is identified with a gospel in which the universe is interested, and upon which the salvation of thy race depends. Realise the vastness

of the work thou hast to do while in thy frail tabernacle, and do it. (*Homilist.*) **That ye may be able, after my decease.**—*A noble endeavour and desire* :—I. THE APOSTLE'S ENDEAVOUR. 1. The first thing required to this endeavour is learning. (1) They are dangerous teachers, that never were learners. While they will not be scholars of truth, they become masters of error. They must know their winds, ebbings and flowings, creeks and sea-marks, that will be fishers. Wherein consists this learning? Not in a theory of divers arts, but in the sober use and discreet application of divinity. (2) Some think a minister hath no great need of learning, because he is to speak to the unlearned (Heb. v. 11, 12). 2. The next thing required to this endeavour is an honest and religious life. If this have been bad before thy calling, redeem it now. The minister that spends himself like a taper to light others, must not himself go out with an ill savour. An innocent life is a silent testimony of a good minister. 3. The last thing required to perfect this endeavour is constant labour. Pray the Lord to send forth labourers, not loiterers, into His harvest. II. THE APOSTLE'S PURPOSE. 1. "That ye may be able." All is for your sakes, this preaching, this remembering, this writing, all for you. 2. "After my decease," &c. The apostles did not only preach to us vocally while they lived, but even now also exemplarily by their former conversation, and still doctrinally by their holy rules. The words of a preacher die not with him, but live in the hearers' hearts, and shall either convert them here, or convince them hereafter. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The Christian's usefulness in and after death* :—It is worthy of remark how frequently the inspired writers insist on fundamental doctrines. They had, indeed, evidently no desire to tie down either themselves or their converts to any one set of truths, whilst there were others which God's Spirit was ready to unfold. On the contrary, they speak reprovably of that indolence or indifference which made men rest in first principles when it became them to go on to perfection; but nevertheless they had no idea of men abandoning the first principles, as though they were not necessary to the more advanced inquirer. Now, the first thing we wish to point out is the sincere desire for the glory of God in the salvation of sinners, which must have animated the man who could breathe the language of our text. We read in such language an entire forgetfulness of self, the indication of a pure zeal for the welfare of the Church. If carnal motives had actuated the apostle, he would probably have desired that his departure might be injurious to the Church. Suppose that, having been kept sound in the faith, so long as he ministered amongst them, numbers were afterwards to decline, what a testimony would seem to be given to his power and faithfulness as contrasted with those of his successors in office! Something of the same kind is frequently occurring in the world. The felt injury which results from the loss of an individual causes him greater glory than even all the benefits which he may have been enabled to effect. When, for example, a statesman, who has guided with a master hand the vessel of the commonwealth through the breakers and shoals, is withdrawn from his post whether by death or intrigue, and the rudder is given into a feebler grasp, what, if he sought only his own reputation, would that statesman more desire than that dangers should threaten and shipwreck to the state seem inevitable? It would be by the proud inferiority of those who filled his place, that his own greatness would become most conspicuous. And we are not without examples of the same kind in regard of the ministers of Christ. Now, we have hitherto simply argued upon the evidence which we think is furnished by our text to the humility of the apostle, of the readiness of St. Peter to be counted nothing, and less than nothing, provided the cause of Christ might prosper and prevail. But now we wish to take a somewhat different view of the passage. We have already said, that in all probability the apostle was not reckoning upon what might be done by his successors towards preserving in his converts the remembrance of the truths he had taught. He appears rather to have calculated upon the permanence of his own instructions, when himself should have been withdrawn by death. This is very observable. He announces his determination of putting the Church in remembrance as long as he lived; arguing, manifestly, that it would never be safe for him to relax in his work; nevertheless he reckons on the Church retaining the remembrance, when death should have silenced his monitory voice. You will perceive there is here something like a contradiction. If it were necessary to be always putting them in remembrance whilst he lived, how could he hope that there would not be forgetfulness when he was dead? We think it possible that the apostle had reference to what was likely to be the power of his death; and if so, there is a beauty and a pathos in the passage which is not to be surpassed in the

whole range of Scripture. There is often practically far more of power in the death than in the life of a religious individual. There is something so hallowed around the memory of the dead, something so spiritual and unearthly, that the most hardened are more touched by the remembered words of the departed than by all the utterances of the living. When memory syllables to us the admonitions of those who lie mouldering in the dust, it is almost as if a spectre spoke, and we start and shrink as if in contact with a messenger from the invisible world. Neither is this the only or the chief reason why death gives this impressiveness and this permanence to inculcated truth. It is in death that a man puts to the proof the worth of the principles which he has spent life in recommending and enforcing; and if he be enabled, during the taking down of the "earthly house of this tabernacle," to give evidence of a joy and a peace of spirit which are to be accounted for only by the truth of what he has taught, why there is yet more in his tranquillity and assurance than in all the fervour and power which he may have thrown into his lessons to convince men that he has followed no cunningly devised fable. It is this which lays so great a weight of responsibility upon those who are much with the righteous in the season of their sickness and death. Yes, more, far more, may be done by dying than has been effected by living. It is a blessed thought, and appears in no common degree to strip death of its repulsiveness, and even invest it with beauty. This is what I call victory in death. Even as the Captain of our salvation is said to have destroyed death, so may we, treading humbly in his footsteps, use it to undermine the empire of Satan. Of this the Church teems with proof. Thus was it that confessors and martyrs prevailed. Oh! it should mightily encourage us to persevere in enduring to the end, to know that when we shall be weakest then we may be strongest. In place of feeling when we lie down on our death-bed that all is over, and we can do nothing more, we may feel that if the dying statesman cannot benefit the state, nor the expiring warrior beat down the foe, the departing Christian may fight the battle of God, and speed the march of Christianity. We shall not die as teachers; we shall, God helping, teach in dying. The tears which are wept over us shall be from the fountains of the heart broken up by our removal. Our memory shall haunt the scene of our labours. Now, suppose we take another view of this text. It is not unlikely that St. Peter had respect to his writings when he announced that he would endeavour to instruct after death. He preached to one generation; he wrote for every future. It was his hope and endeavour, as announced in our text, to instruct after death. He did not wish to be forgotten, so that when he passed away from earth he might survive in his writings, and still be instrumental in winning souls to Christ. There is something very grand and ennobling about this ambition. It seems to me that the man who entertains and accomplishes the wish of doing the work of an evangelist after death, triumphs over death in the highest possible sense. I could almost dare to say that he never dies. There is many a private Christian who is long remembered and venerated, whose example is efficacious long after his decease, and whose lessons operate when the tongue which delivered them has mouldered into dust. And we call it the destruction, the abolition of death, when man may thus do good notwithstanding his decease. This is true immortality; for such as these the curse is wholly done away. They know no pause in the highest employments. And may it not be lawful to desire and to strive for the being thus held in remembrance after death? As Christians, we should pant to bring glory to God. We should not be willing to be circumscribed by life. The battle is to go on, and we should long to take part. The Church is to be edified, and we should crave for employment; yea, it might be as pure and as humble a wish as ever was breathed, though it might sound like that of one eager for human distinction, if it did not suffice us to be useful to others whilst we tabernacled amongst them, but if, throwing onwards our thoughts to yet distant days, we were to address our fellow-men in the words of the apostle: "We will endeavour that ye may be able after our decease to have these things always in remembrance." Now, we cannot conclude without pointing out to you the exquisite composedness with which St. Peter speaks of death, and without breathing a prayer that when our last hour shall be near we may as placidly expect its approach. The apostle evidently contemplates without apprehension his dissolution, though he knew that he must die a cruel and ignominious death. And his only anxiety is for the welfare of those from whom he should be separated. It only argues terror of death when men shrink from making arrangements in anticipation of their dissolution. I love to hear the dying Christian speak

calmly of the churchyard where he wishes to be buried, of the distribution of his property, of the place where his children are to live. I feel that he is ready for his last dread account, when he can thus, without flinching, direct all which has concern to his being numbered with the dead; but the noblest thing of all is when the dying Christian shows that his last thoughts are on the welfare of the Church and the glory of God. The wounded warrior, as the life-blood ebbs away, will sometimes kindle at the noise of the battle. He will half raise himself from the earth, listen to the distant shout, and forget his anguish as he fancies that he hears the triumph of his comrades in arms. Yes, chivalry has such stories to tell; but Christianity has nobler. The servants of Christ, when they can no longer join the war, will breathe out the soul in longings for its success. They will think on the yet vast powers of heathenism—on the aboundings of vice—on the spreadings of infidelity; and, though about to put off their armour and enter into rest, will give their last thought to the struggle, and their last prayer for the triumph of the hosts of the Lord. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *A good man's endeavour to compensate for the limitations of a mortal life:—*It is one of the noblest protests of man against mortality. "I will endeavour that after my decease," &c. Many have been the protests of man against mortality, or his efforts to modify its effect. One toils night and day life through to establish a reputation; another a business; another to bequeath a fortune; another, like Peter, to leave behind an influence which shall ennoble other lives (*Gen. xi. 4; Job xix. 23, 24, &c.*). 1. Here observe the desire is not that after Peter's decease people should remember him as much as "the things" he had taught them. To the true minister the message is of infinitely more importance than himself. 2. The ambition of Peter is that he should aid the memories of his brethren in the best direction and for the highest purpose. 3. There is another law which Peter recognises, namely, that by which the utterances of a teacher are not unfrequently best remembered when he is gone—"after my decease." Peter himself had remembered his Lord's words best at such a time (*Matt. xxvi. 75; Luke xxii. 61; see also John ii. 22, xii. 16, &c.*). Now what are those things which Peter considers of such importance for men to remember? (*See vers. 8, 9, 10, 12.*) (1) The largeness of the Divine provision—"All things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2) The promise of its bestowal—"Exceeding great and precious promises." (3) The ultimate end of all—"That ye may become," &c. Now we come to the bearing of all this upon human consecration—"Add to your faith virtue," &c. Here is a summary of Divine grace and human duty. These are the things which he wishes them to remember. "These things" are the conditions of "fruitfulness," vision, and steadfastness, and these are the things that make human life great. Now, he would not have them think that this progressiveness in the Divine life was an easy task. Again, observe that he who asks diligence of them pledges himself also in our text, "Yea, I will give diligence," &c. Now, these are the words of an aged man—a man who during life has undergone much discipline, and, consequently, who has been matured and ennobled. How closely such lives are knitted with the lives of others, and how far-reaching their influence! This is one of the great redeeming features of the brevity of human life: that it projects its force into the ages, yea, into eternity. Death can do nothing to such a man except to transfigure him. (*D. Davies.*)

Vers. 16–20. **We have not followed cunningly devised fables.**—*From starlight to sunlight:—*I. THE MYTHICAL MODE. "In declaring the power and advent of the Lord Jesus, we were not as those who are familiar only with the popular myths which are deemed sufficient for the multitude; we were, rather, as the favoured few who are admitted to the secret mysteries, who are permitted to know the truths that underlie the fables and stories which fill the popular imagination." What, then, were these "myths," and what the "mysteries"? The myths, in their origin, were simply poetical conceptions of the processes and phenomena of Nature. Thus, for instance, the sun sinks, or seems to sink, every night into the sea; in the fervid East, moreover, it dries up the streams. But "sun," and "sea," and "streams" had, in the infancy of the world, masculine and feminine names, as, indeed, they still have in most of the languages spoken by men. These masculine and feminine names were soon turned into proper personal names by the vivid imagination of men to whom the world was fresh and wonderful; and hence, instead of saying "The sun sinks into the sea," they said, "The Sun-God sinks into the lap of the Sea-Goddess, and rests until their child, the Dawn, wakes him from his slumbers."

Instead of saying "The sun dries up the stream," they told a pretty story of a certain River Nymph whom the Sun-God dearly loved, and who would give him no peace till he came to her in all the glory of his heavenly pomp, beholding which she was forthwith consumed. All the great and many of the lesser processes of Nature were thus mythicized, turned into poems and stories—the succession of day and night, the dependence of men and cattle on the shining of the sun, on the fruits of the earth, on the sweet, fresh water of the mountain streams. Still, under all these freaks of fancy there lay concealed the germs of many religious truths, as, for example, these: that the Powers which ruled in heaven cared for the earth and blessed it; that God, or the gods, might take human form and dwell among men; and that there was a fair spiritual world, larger, brighter, happier than the world of sense, into which even man might pass and rise. As years and centuries elapsed, these truths were forgotten out of mind, as were many of the ethical maxims deduced from them. In order that they might not altogether perish from the memory and life of man, certain "mysteries" were founded and ordained. To be "admitted," that is, to be initiated, into these mysteries, was an honour granted to comparatively few of the millions of antiquity; and it was granted only after they had passed through a probation which either was, or was affirmed to be, terrible to any but men of a brave and constant spirit. Their good faith was thus put to a severe preliminary test; tremendous oaths binding them to secrecy were administered to them; to divulge a mystery or to intrude upon it uncalled were offences punishable with death. Now, says St. Peter, when we made known to you the power and advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, we were telling you no pretty popular myth, no fable of a Divine person who came down and dwelt with men, such as you have often heard from your priests or rhapsodists, such as you may still hear from your heathen neighbours. We had been initiated into the very mysteries of truth; we had mastered their secrets, that we might divulge them to you. We spake of that which we ourselves had seen, and handled, and felt, of the Word of Life.

II. THE MIRACULOUS MODE. From the mythical St. Peter passes to the miraculous method of revelation. Where was that inner temple, that sacred and oracular shrine, in which, after their initiation, the apostles were admitted to the mysteries and stood to be eye-witnesses of the unclouded majesty of the Incarnate God? It was on "the holy mount," on which the Lord Jesus was transfigured before their eyes. But why does the apostle select this scene in our Lord's life—the Transfiguration—before all others? Simply, I suppose, because at that moment, in that scene, all that was most marvellous in the Lord Jesus Christ was shown forth in its most marvellous forms. The "advent" of Christ was a miracle; every word and deed that disclosed His Divine "power" was a miracle: but the miraculous element of His "advent and power" culminated in His Transfiguration.

III. THE PROPHETIC MODE. After describing the honour and glory done to Christ, and the voice which came to Him from the glory that shone around Him on the holy mount, the apostle adds: "But we have something surer still—the prophetic word, whereunto ye do well that ye give heed," &c. Why does he call it "something surer still"? First, because it is "as a lamp shining in a dark place." Now, as we all know, we can find our way even on the darkest night, if only we have "a lamp to our feet"; and, moreover, we can see to do any necessary work, if only we have a lamp shining over our head. In plain words, the apostle's argument is that miracles are not guides, or not safe guides; but that, on the contrary, we are under a guidance that is both good and safe when we follow the moral rules of the written Word. The Divine Word has another claim on our regard and preference. For this "lamp" which shines so helpfully on the activities of human life, has been lit and is fed by God Himself. "No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation." That is to say, the prophetic Word is not a mere logical deduction from the facts of life and Nature; nor is it a mere guess at things to come, based on a knowledge of what has taken place in the past. There was something higher than human wisdom in the prophetic utterances, something safer than the prognostics of human reason; for prophecy never came only from the will of man, but holy men, borne along by the Holy Ghost, as the ship is borne before the wind, spake the words that were given them from God. There is a Divine wisdom, therefore, an infallible wisdom; there is a Divine power, an almighty power, in the inspired Word, even when it is most human and imperfect in outward form. This was one contrast in the apostle's mind: and the other was that the prophecies of Scripture were superior to the oracles uttered by the ministrants of heathen shrines. When these oracles were consulted, they gave "private interpretations."

IV. But, finally, THE SPIRITUAL MODE

of revelation is even safer and better than the prophetic mode, as much better as sunlight is better than lamplight. When Christ is once with us, and in us, what further proof can we require of His "advent" or of His "power" to quicken and redeem? With Christ to teach us what He would have us do, we can dispense with all other teachers, all other aids. Myths! We have been initiated into the very mysteries of the faith, and are joyful eye-witnesses of His majesty. Miracles! He has wrought the great miracle upon us, bringing a clean thing out of an unclean, opening our blind eyes, unstopping our deaf ears, quickening us from our death in trespasses and sins. Laws and hopes! When once we have personally laid hold on Christ, we are a law unto ourselves, and move in the freedom of a glad obedience to His will; we have a hope already fulfilling itself in us, and yet opening up into widening vistas of light—the hope of eternal life and service and peace. The morning star has risen in our hearts; the day has dawned; the darkness is over and gone, and, with the darkness, all our need of the lamps and stars which once made night tolerable to us. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Apostolic testimony* :—I. A DISCLAIMING OF ALL FABULOUS MIXTURES WITH THE SACRED TRUTH. II. A PROCLAIMING OF THE VIRTUE AND EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST. 1. The manifestation itself. "We made known unto you." The apostles did not hide the mysteries of salvation revealed to them (Rom. xvi. 25, 26). (1) This doctrine makes to the conviction of them that conceal the way of the Lord (Matt. xxiii. 13; Rom. i. 18). (2) This reproves them also that content themselves with their ignorances, and never labour for knowledge. 2. The matter manifested. "The power and coming of our Lord." By this the apostle intends the sum of the gospel, and the full salvation that is given us by Christ, in whom are all the treasures of blessedness. Of this he makes two distinct parts. (1) That Christ came in the flesh, suffered for our sins, and rose again for our justification. (2) The virtue and efficacy of this in our hearts, when we manifest the fruit of it in our well living and well believing. III. A TESTIFYING OF THIS, AND THAT FROM THE SUREST WITNESSES. In witnesses there are three things especially required. 1. That they be of good report and repute; for a bad and vicious life enervates their testimony. But these were holy men; He that sent them to give testimony did not deny them their sanctimony (John xvii. 17). 2. That they be eye-witnesses; so were these. 3. That they agree in their testimony. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Christianity not a cunningly devised fable* :—"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables." The infidel says we have. This is no new cry. It is as old as Christianity itself. The apostles themselves were said to have been imposed upon. Since that day the ground of attack has been changed. We are now told that the apostles were the impostors. I. THE STATEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN DENOUNCED AS FABLES. II. THE PERSONS WHO ARE SAID TO HAVE FABRICATED THESE FABLES. Infidelity asserts that they were deceivers. Of this we might justly demand proof. They appear to be men of strict integrity. They do not hesitate to expose each other's faults or to confess their own. They appear to be utterly destitute of the art of deception. 1. Is it pretended that these grand impostors were men of renown for their talents and influence, and that, therefore, they acquired an ascendancy over the public mind? This is at once disproved by the fact that, at the very outset of their career, the Jewish Sanhedrin perceived that they were "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts iv. 13), whilst Gentile magistrates and governors regarded them as weak, demented enthusiasts, whose fittest treatment was scourging and imprisonment. 2. Will it be contended that in the construction of their scheme, they adapted their fables to the popular taste? This is at once denied. Their system was absolutely opposed to parties of every class, to men of every clime. How different was the system of Mohammed! and how different have been the schemes of more modern infidels! How careful have these impostors been to pander to the passions of those they have sought to delude, presenting or promising whatever has been adapted to the views and the tastes of the proud, the worldly-minded, the sensual, and the profane! 3. But it is said that they were fools and fanatics. This assertion is more easy than the proof. They were, indeed, accused of folly and of madness, but they convinced their accusers that they spake the words of truth and soberness. Their writings certainly afford evidence that they were men of more than ordinary mental vigour. Their style is nervous and plain. Their story is simply and unaffectedly told. 4. But they were actuated by ambition, it is said. On what object was their ambition fixed? Worldly honour or worldly power is usually the great object of the ambitious. Besides, it was not their ambition to exalt themselves, though they had opportunities of doing so (Acts iii.,

xiv.). The entire history of the apostles is pregnant with proof that they sought not their own, but the things of Jesus Christ. What things might have been gain to them, those they counted loss for Him. 5. Impostors generally expect to get something by the impositions they practise; and the greater the risk of detection, or the danger of punishment, the greater is the gain, the hope of which is their animating motive. Now, what was the gain which prompted the apostles to devise and to execute their grand imposture? You must be aware, that so far as this world was considered, they had everything to lose, and nothing to gain. "Bonds and afflictions awaited them in every city." Will it be said that all this was the obstinacy of contumacy? that rather than avow the cheat, they readily underwent privations and sufferings? The life of reproach and trial the apostles lived, and the death of torture that they died, incontestably prove their sincerity.

III. BUT WHO WERE THE PARTIES ON WHOM THESE SO-CALLED FABLES WERE SO SUCCESSFULLY IMPOSED? 1. If the evangelic history had been a fraud, of course the apostles would have been most likely to succeed in the work of deception among the inhabitants of some barbarous clime; or, at any rate, among those who lived far away from the scenes where the plot was laid. Did they then travel into some remote or obscure region, where the inhabitants would have little inclination to suspect them, and less opportunity to detect their deceit? No; they began at Jerusalem. 2. Shortly afterwards, the apostles were induced to go unto the Gentiles; the one who was most active in this great missionary enterprise among the heathen, being a convert to the faith of Christ—not an original disciple of the Nazarene—and a convert, whose accession was one of the noblest triumphs of truth, of which the Church of Christ can boast. Do you not think that the disputer of that day would demand evidence before he gave credence to the statements of the apostles? Do you not think that the wise men of Greece, and the noble of Rome, would easily have detected the deceit of "Christ crucified," had it been a cunningly devised fable, and would indignantly have denounced its abettors as worthless impostors had they not been the ambassadors of God? IV. THE CONSISTENCY OF REVEALED TRUTH WITH REASON AND WITH COMMON SENSE. Let it, however, be remarked that those truths of Divine revelation, which it is necessary for us to understand in order to be saved, are so simple and plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, needs not to mistake respecting them. And therefore we argue that they are not cunningly devised fables. 1. To begin at the beginning—we mention first the existence of one great, supreme Being, whom the Bible denominates God. This great doctrine is everywhere assumed throughout the sacred volume, and forms the foundation of all religion, and of all morality too. 2. This Bible professes to be a revelation from God, designed to teach us His will, and to point out to us the path that leads to immortal blessedness. Is there anything unreasonable in this? 3. Let us now proceed to ascertain whether those truths which we call, by way of eminence, the truths of the gospel, are incredible or absurd. The first we notice is the entire and universal depravity of man. Go where you will, do you not find your fellow-creatures depraved as well as degraded? Is not the hand that God has filled with plenteousness lifted up in daring rebellion against Him? 4. Another great doctrine is the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. But it is objected that it is most unreasonable to suppose that the Divine Being should lavish so much love, as the doctrine of redemption supposes, on this insignificant world of ours, while there are so many worlds, and so many systems beside, filled with intelligent beings, all demanding the care of the Great Supreme as well as ourselves. We see nothing unreasonable in this supposition. Does the mother who watches and weeps over her sick or dying child, love her other children the less because her heart is so strongly drawn towards the afflicted one? Does it not magnify the Divine Being to know that when man had sinned and thereby excluded himself from the family of God, the Father of the spirits of all flesh spared not His own Son, in order that the banished ones might be restored? 5. And what inconsistency, either with reason or with common sense, can you find in the doctrines of justification or pardon righteously bestowed, because obtained by faith in the blood of Christ, and of the sanctification of the soul by the Spirit of Christ? V. Among the RESULTS of this lengthened inquiry into the evidences of Christianity, we trust will be—1. The confirmation of the believer in the truth as it is in Jesus. You know what you have believed. You know whom you have believed. You will not sell your birthright for a mess of pottage. 2. Another result we hope will be the establishment of such as may be wavering. 3. A third result we anticipate from this inquiry is a clearer perception of the nature of Christianity, and a deepened conviction of its value.

How vast are my obligations to the blessed God for having devised such a scheme for saving rebellious worms, and for having made it known to me. How necessary for me to avail myself of its privileges. (*P. C. Horton.*)

The certainty of the Christian faith:—I. THERE WAS NOTHING ABOUT THE APOSTLES OF WILD ENTHUSIASM. Before they staked everything, present life and life eternal, on the truth of Christianity, they had ample proof that Jesus of Nazareth was the very Son of the Most High, the predicted Messiah. 1. The miracles wrought by Jesus were the capital proofs of His Messiahship. 2. The miracles of which Jesus Christ was the subject were among the signs of His glorious majesty by which the twelve recognised Him for the Redeemer. Of some of these prodigies, indeed, they were not spectators; not of the meteor star, which, on reaching His birthplace, hung over it. Nor yet, did they witness the sublime scene of His baptism. 3. The transfiguration, I observe, was that view of the Lord's majesty to which holy Peter reverts with singular fondness. II. LET US PASS TO A FEW MARKS OF CHRIST'S POWER AND MAJESTY EXHIBITED IN HIS PERSONAL CHARACTER. 1. The imperturbable temper of the Lord Jesus was among the shining proofs of His moral greatness and Divine nature. 2. His patient endurance of injuries has a further peculiarity about it, which denotes a more than human elevation of mind. For be it remembered that we are often debarred from revenging ourselves by want of power, or by fear of retribution. But Jesus was clothed with almightiness. 3. The condescension of this Man, so mighty in word and deed, to the mean and wretched and vicious whenever they craved His assistance, was another indication of a mind cast in a singular and heavenly mould. Nothing of this kind was found among the Pharisees and popular teachers of the day. 4. The wisdom of Jesus, so immensely beyond what His country, His years, His education gave reason to look for, must also have satisfied candid observers that He was from above. Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians tried their skill from morning to night, and were unscrupulous in the artifices they employed to entrap Him; but without effect. But there was a higher kind of wisdom in which Jesus stood alone. Who can peruse His discourses on moral and religious subjects; the Sermon on the Mount, the parables of the Ten Virgins, of the Prodigal Son, and not confess that no mere human mind of any age, least of all that of a Jew in an age so ignorant, corrupt, and superstitious, could possibly give birth to such pure and holy lessons? 5 The authority of our Lord's diction and manner was another ray of His native grandeur, which penetrated the souls of His adherents and ranks high among the proofs of His divinity. He swept away the treasured notions that had come down from father to son, by the right which belonged to Him as the infallible interpreter of heaven. He debated nothing. He rarely deigned to offer reasons or proofs. He never suggested any doctrine doubtfully. You recognise the style of One quite aware that He is as much above other teachers as the heaven is higher than the earth; and that to put Himself upon a level with them were to belie His own character and mission. 6. Once more His devotedness to God, so pure, so noble, so fervent, so invariable, was it not of a kind to distinguish Him from ordinary saints, as the sun from twinkling stars? His zeal for God's glory in a manner consumed Him. Whatever are the arrangements of Providence He rejoices in them precisely because they are the movements of God's will. (*J. N. Pearson, M.A.*)

The credibility of Christianity:—The Bible is no "cunningly devised fable." I. IF IT BE A FABLE, IT WAS NOT DEvised HALF CUNNINGLY ENOUGH. I allude to many apparent inconsistencies in the Bible. What wise man, in devising a fabulous history, would have loaded it with such difficulties as these? II. IF IT BE A FABLE, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GUESS BY WHAT CLASS OF PERSONS IT WAS DEvised. "Kings," perhaps, "invented the Bible in order to keep their subjects in awe of their authority." "Priests," exclaims another, "were no doubt the authors." Yet there is a great deal written here against wicked priests also, which would scarcely have been inserted by them. Was it, then, the rich who devised this fable? Yet what is more common in the Bible than lessons on the worthlessness and vanity of riches? I need not ask whether the inventors of this fable are to be looked for among the poor. They are otherwise engaged than in writing books. "Some learned men, doubtless, compiled this book!" Still the same difficulty meets us. Learned men are often supposed to be proud of their wisdom; but here worldly wisdom is undervalued, and men are told that they must "become fools if they would be really wise" (1 Cor. iii. 18). Here, then, is a book, for which no probable author can be found, if it be a fable. III. IF IT BE A FABLE, IT IS UNACCOUNTABLE THAT IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN SO LONG AND SO EXTENSIVELY

FOLLOWED. IV. IF IT BE A FABLE, THE FOLLOWING OF IT HAS AT LEAST BEEN BENEFICIAL TO MANKIND. V. IF IT BE A FABLE, I MUST NEVERTHELESS FOLLOW IT TILL YOU CAN SHOW ME SOME MORE EXCELLENT WAY. I want a guide in my ignorance; I want a comforter in my troubles. Is human reason that guide? Alas! I find cause to distrust that at every step which I take. Is self-gratification the better comforter? What! to follow the devices and desires of my own heart in spite of this forbidding fable? If the gospel be not a fable, it is truth, and truth of such a nature that you will be saved or lost, according as you believe or neglect it. It must be "followed"; it must affect your heart and influence your life. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *All true*:—I. PETER'S PERSONAL PERSUASION OF THE TRUTH OF HIS RELIGION. "We have not," &c. There are seasons when we all feel anxious to know on what ground we stand, just because we cannot go into eternity thinking and guessing about some peradventure. We must have certitude then. II. OBSERVE PETER'S REPETITION OF THE OLD TRUTH ONCE AGAIN BEFORE HE DIES. The testimony of an old man like Peter, who, in his review of the past, felt happy and satisfied in the conviction of the truth he had professed, is worth many a volume of evidences to the Christian religion. III. THE HAPPINESS PETER HAD IN THE RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PAST. All aged people revert to the past with peculiar feelings of interest, if not enthusiasm. There is happiness in having good recollections—in having bright yesterdays to look back upon—in needing no desperate endeavours to forget. IV. THE WAY IN WHICH PETER FALLS BACK ON THE WORD OF GOD AS THE TRUE GROUND OF FAITH AND PEACE. "We have a more sure word of prophecy," &c. He had James and John, his companions, to think of. He had the glory of the mount and the transfiguration to dwell upon. But now he needed more. The friend may deceive you: the recollections of the past may be confused, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever. It is a sure word of prophecy. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *The value of moral evidence*:—Moral reasons are sufficient to guide men in the affairs of the present life. A man will embark on board a vessel which he only knows by the report of others to be seaworthy. He trusts to the skill of a captain and the effectiveness of a crew of whom he knows only by report. He embarks to go to a place which he only believes on the testimony of others to exist. All this he does to obtain a probable good. He acts similarly to escape an apprehended evil. When sick, he will send for a physician of whose skill he has only heard. He takes medicine which he does not certainly know will cure him. In these cases he acts reasonably. It is clear that when, in relation to the life to come, he refuses moral evidence, he acts unreasonably. (*C. Graham.*) *The Christian revelation to be presumed divine*:—The existence of God admitted, another question at once suggests itself. Has this Divine Being directly revealed Himself and made known His will to man? We were taught in childhood that He has. We say, first of all, that the very existence of this alleged revelation, in the form in which we find it, affords a presumption of its truth. 1. The first thing that strikes one on glancing at the books of the Old and New Testament, in which what is called the Christian revelation is contained, is the exceedingly heterogeneous character of their contents. A little of all ages, of all sorts of men, and of all varieties of human thought! But on even a cursory reading of these writings, heterogeneous as they seem, you cannot fail to be equally impressed with a second fact about them, that they have, after all, a strange and most striking unity. One spirit breathes throughout the whole. The same conception of God, as the eternal, self-existent, and infinite Creator, of His natural government of the world, and of His moral government of rational creatures; the same general notions of right and wrong; the same views of the design of human existence, of the individual responsibility of men, of the blessedness of well-doing and of the miseries of sin, of the guilt and want of mankind, of the justice, the goodness, and the grace of God, and of the way of reconciliation with Him. Nor does this unity of sentiment, of spirit, and of general scope and purpose seem less, but rather greater, the more carefully and thoroughly these various compositions are examined. That these men have not been mere copyists from each other, the specific diversities, and the accessions and progressive development of thought afford decisive proof. Two questions meet us therefore, namely, How came they, any of them, by views at once so unique in themselves and so immeasurably superior in intellectual and moral elevation to those attained by the historians, the poets, and the sages of all the world besides? And then, how came they, writing separately and each for his own particular end, living also some of them centuries and even thousands of years apart, so to harmonise with and to supplement each other that, taken together, their writings

form one grand and well-adjusted whole? We will not now assert that with these questions before us the conviction must arise that there is something supernatural in all this. 2. The presumption thus created by the existence of the Christian revelation in the form in which we find it, is greatly strengthened, we further observe, by the obvious and admitted fact that it has entered most profoundly into the life and thought of the world. Nor can it be said that other pretended systems of religion have done the same. There are no facts of history by which such an assertion can be justified. 3. Still further, a third fact lies before us in regard to the asserted Christian revelation, which, fairly considered, must predispose us to receive it. The effects which it has wrought, both on individual man and on society, have uniformly been salutary in a very eminent degree. These, too, are allowed to be the proper products of Christianity, and not things incidentally connected with it. 4. Not less significant is a fourth fact which presents itself at the outset to the inquirer about the Christian revelation. It has thus far stood secure against all assaults of those who have sought to overthrow it, although these assaults have been many, persistent, and often conducted with great ability and learning. The ancient prophets, each in his turn, encountered the resistance of unbelief. Then followed the long and mighty struggle between Christianity and the prevailing systems of philosophy and religion throughout the Roman empire. It was a contest of life and death. Yet, after all, the Christian faith held on its way and triumphed. So it has been in the modern world. The wits, philosophers, and savants of France, in the last century assailed it with pungent satire, with the coarsest ribaldry. English Deism, in a higher style of thought, with greater strength of reasoning, with no little real learning, enlisting champions who, to great metaphysical acumen, added untiring patience and fixed determination, attacked the historical credit, the supernatural credentials, and the asserted revelations of the Christian Scriptures. There was no lack of will, or talent, or diligent endeavour. 5. It is a fact which no one tolerably informed as to the condition and movements of the religious world will question, that at no period of its history was Christianity more vital, more powerful, more expectant and progressive than at the present time. Can falsehood be imagined to have such vitality? 6. Consider, too, that if the Christian revelation, as it has been received for ages, is Divine, it must be the greatest of misfortunes to reject it as a fable. If it be indeed a sun kindled of God to illuminate the moral darkness of our world, it will shine on to cheer, and warm, and bless the happy multitudes who welcome it, though you shall avert your eyes and hide from its beams in the thick shades of unbelief. You have nothing—nothing—to gain if it be false. You have everything to hope for life, for death, for an immortality beyond, if, as you have been taught from childhood to believe, it is indeed a real utterance, a precious gift of the ever-living God to man. (*R. Palmer, D.D.*) **The power and coming of our Lord.—***Christ's power and coming manifested by the apostle's doctrine and preaching:—*

I. THE OFFICE AND MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLE. And that principally consisted in this: In making known the power and miracles, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But this doctrine that the apostle preached consists of two heads: 1. The coming of Christ. By which is meant His incarnation and appearance in the flesh. This was that mystery that was hid from ages, but was made manifest in these last days. 2. The power of Christ, the apostle is said to make known, which indeed at first seemed much disguised. For who would have expected any miraculous discoveries of power from One whom they had seen poor and helpless Himself? And yet in this state of weakness He was made strong, grew bold and confident, despising the pride, trampling upon the bravery of this world, resisting temptations, triumphing over the powers and charms of riches. Now to make this power known to the world is to show how much all men may be benefited by the power of Christ, if they shall love Him and believe in Him. For to as many as receive Him gives He power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in His name. II. THE RULES HE OBSERVED IN MAKING KNOWN THE POWER AND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST. They used all honest and justifiable arts in preaching the gospel, but declined all ways of sophistry and deceit. As if they had said, Our cause is too plain and evident to need such poor artifices as lies and fables to support it. 1. The consideration of what hath been said should encourage us to embrace this article of our faith, Christ Jesus came in the flesh, and all others, with that zeal and love, as those who will live and die by them. 2. As we are to receive the doctrines of Christianity as most true and unquestionable, so we ought to take care that we build not upon this foundation, hay and stubble (2 Cor. iii. 12). 3. Let us

bethink ourselves how much we are obliged to God for this signal mercy and blessing, the making known to us the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. Methinks our hearts should be all on fire, and burn within us while we are discoursing and talking of it. (*R. Warner, D.D.*) *The power and coming of our Lord*:—I. THE COMING OF CHRIST WAS IN POWER. If all the devils in hell could have hindered it, He had been stayed. The kings of the earth conspire and take counsel together; but neither their power nor their policy could withstand His coming. Neither was the glory of Christ wanting, though it conveyed itself in a less public form. He had a famous harbinger to go before Him and prepare His way. There was majesty in His humility. II. THE GOSPEL IS NO WEAK THING, BUT COMES IN POWER. Christ came once unto men; He comes still unto men in the Spirit. The law came with more terror, but the gospel comes with more power. For that could not turn his heart that bare it in his hand; but the gospel is able to change the man (*Rom. i. 16*). III. THE WORD OF GOD HATH MORE POWER THAN ALL MEN'S EDICTS. IV. THE INVINCIBLE POWER OF THE GOSPEL IS MANIFESTED IN THROWING DOWN THOSE BULWARKS RAISED AGAINST IT. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Eye-witnesses of His majesty.*—*The majesty of Christ*:—In the midst of the darkest scenes of humiliation, a peculiar majesty was seen to accompany our Lord. These signs of heavenly greatness confirmed the faith of His disciples when sinking under the pressure of disappointment and affliction. I. The apostles were witnesses of His majesty when they witnessed His matchless CHARACTER. 1. He was made in the likeness of man, and He took on Him the infirmities of our nature; but He was unstained by our sins and imperfections. 2. But in Christ we not only see a character without sin, but perfect in its nature; manifesting the highest virtues in transcendent excellence. 3. With these celestial excellencies of character is joined an habitual and singular elevation above the world. His affections and labours are directed to spiritual and eternal objects. They elevate Him in the midst of ignominy; and give glory and majesty to His shameful death. 4. In Christ the various and seemingly opposite graces of character combine; and everywhere appear in their due place and on their proper occasion. II. That in correspondence with the perfection of the character of Christ, is His MANNER while fulfilling the work which His Father had given Him to do. There was a calm and simple, yet deep solemnity, in His demeanour and words, suited to the truths which He declared, and the office which He sustained—which manifested also His sense of their infinite importance, and tended powerfully to affect the minds of those whom He addressed. Without the slightest tendency to haughtiness or pride, a Divine authority. He manifested the native greatness of His character. III. There were EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS AND WONDERS in heaven and on earth, which in the midst of the deepest humiliation, gave indications of the majesty of Christ. (*S. MacGill, D.D.*) *He received from God the Father honour and glory.* *The vision of Christ's majesty*:—I. THE PERSON TO WHOM THIS HONOUR IS GIVEN. "He received." II. FROM WHOM HE RECEIVED IT. The Father gives, the Son receives. The Father speaks from heaven, the Son hears it. III. WHAT HE RECEIVED. 1. Christ would receive honour of His Father. 2. All honour and glory is Christ's, as being delivered to Him by the Father (*Luke x. 22*). 3. All true and blessed honour comes from God, and is to be sought there. IV. THE TIME WHEN THE APOSTLES BEHELD, AND THEIR MASTER RECEIVED, THIS GLORY AND MAJESTY. 1. "When there came." Why did the apostles single out the transfiguration, more than any other event, to exemplify Christ's majesty, and the honour conferred on Him by the Father? (1) Because Moses and Elias appeared to Him there: in all the rest of His miracles He had no company but men on earth, now He had a testimony from two glorious saints in Paradise. (2) Because He was adorned with celestial glory. Nothing of earth was seen, but a Divine and heavenly majesty appeared. 2. "Such a voice." This is the voice that shall one day be heard from one end of the world to the other. 3. "From the excellent glory." There be glories in the world, but they are not excellent (*Gen. xlix. 3, 4*). This glory is admirable. (1) For dignity. It is a glory: and this hath been the scope of most men's endeavours and reaches. (2) For clarity. It is not a hidden, but a revealed glory (*Col. iii. 4*). Clear, both for condition, it shall be excellent; for cognition and apprehension, it shall be seen in the full excellency of it. It is an everlasting solstice; the length is interminable, the brightness unchangeable, the fulness unvariable. (3) For verity. It shall be indeed, not in show only, but upon us. (4) For the eternity. If it had an end, it were not excellent. V. THE MATTER AND SUBSTANCE OF THE TESTIMONY. 1. "This"; the word shows Him to be that Messiah, long before prophesied, and

now manifested. This, singularly; not another, but this is He. 2. "My Son," consubstantially, because begotten of Mine own substance. Originally Mine, by union of nature; though in Him others be made Mine also, by adoption of grace. 3. "Beloved," eternally; not in time accepted, but before all beginning begotten. 4. "In whom I am well pleased," and never was offended: all other men were the children of wrath; I could not be pleased with them; but in this Son I rest. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The Father well pleased in the Son*:—I. It is very important that you have right thoughts of the Sonship of Christ, or of the sense in which Christ is affirmed to be God's Son. Is is clear from Scripture that Christ is the Son of God, in such sense as to prove Him Divine; for St. Paul argues from His Sonship, His superiority to angels, "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?" II. We are now to consider the statement, that in this beloved Son God "is well pleased." We shall now regard the Son solely in His character of Mediator—that character which He was born to assume. The Father may be considered as "well pleased" in His Son, first, because Christ's mediation magnified all the attributes of God, and secondly, because it met all the necessities of man. And now, having investigated the causes of the Father's being "well pleased" in the Son, it becomes us to ask you whether, when Christ is displaying His character of a Saviour, you, too, are "well pleased" in Him. Judge your own restoration to God's forfeited image, by deciding whether any of the like reasons operate to make you "well pleased" in Christ. (*H. Melville, B.D.*) *Graduated certification of gospel truth*:—I. The Divine revelation which he had on the holy mount was CERTIFYING. II. The Divine revelation which he had in the inspired record was MORE CERTIFYING. 1. The written Word furnishes a greater variety of Divine manifestations. 2. The written Word offers opportunities to a larger number of witnesses. 3. The written Word supplies better conditions for the formation of a sound judgment. III. The Divine revelation that he had in his own consciousness was THE MOST CERTIFYING. Peter draws a comparison between the light of the Bible and the light of Christian consciousness, and implies that the latter is far more valuable than the former. 1. The one is a lamp, the other is a "day, or morning star." 2. The one is without, the other is within. 3. The one is temporary, the other is permanent. 4. The one is the harbinger of everlasting day, the other is not necessarily so. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 19–21. *A light that shineth in a dark place*.—*The Word of God a light shining in a dark place*:—I. In showing the CORRECTNESS of THIS DESCRIPTION, I would begin with reminding you that by the "dark place" we must understand this world in relation to its spiritual condition. But in the midst of all this darkness a light has still been shining, and that light is the Word of God. II. To ILLUSTRATE IT BY A REFERENCE TO FACTS. Has it not uniformly come to pass that true religion has flourished or decayed in exact proportion to the degree in which the Bible has been disseminated or suppressed? 1. In practically applying the subject, the first inference which I shall deduce from it is that suggested by St. Peter himself in the text—seeing that there is such a light shining in a dark place, "ye will do well that ye take heed to it." Bear in mind the purpose for which it was vouchsafed: not to gratify a vain curiosity, not to puff up with fleshly wisdom, but to make wise unto salvation, to enlighten, convert, and purify the soul. Bear in mind that it is not enough to live under the light; you must also walk in the light. It is not enough that the light is around you; it must be also in you. You may have your understanding enlightened with Scriptural truths, and yet your heart may be "a dark place." 2. Seeing that there is such a light shining in a dark place, ye will do well to aid the diffusion of it. Having "taken heed to it" yourselves, let it be your care to extend the blessing of it to others. Can you, indeed, do otherwise? (*E. Cooper, M.A.*) *Unfulfilled prophecy a light provided for the Church of Christ*:—I. STATE SOME OF THE USES OF UNFULFILLED PROPHECY. 1. One use, of course, is to prove the truth and faithfulness of God's Word, establishing by implication His foreknowledge. 2. Another use of unfulfilled prophecy is guidance and direction. 3. Unfulfilled prophecy is also for warning both to the Church and to sinners—to the Church, that they may be found ready, with their loins girt, overcoming the evil, and waiting for the glory; to the world, that they may have opportunity to escape, or, if they refuse, be left without excuse in the rejection of the truth. 4. Hope is specially strengthened and sustained through the communication of what is to come. 5. Among many other uses of unfulfilled prophecy is the answer which it affords to the questionings of infidelity. II. THE

PRINCIPLES ON WHICH PROPHETICAL LANGUAGE AND ITS STATEMENTS SHOULD BE INTERPRETED. To the question, "How can we certainly discover the right way of interpreting unfulfilled prophecy," we answer at once, "By observing how God has interpreted prophecy in what has been fulfilled already." III. Let us now proceed to discuss in a few words the one pre-eminently great event of unfulfilled prophecy—THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. This is the great focus of prophetic light, and all other events and circumstances are gathered in beautiful symmetry around it. IV. THE EVENTS WHICH WE BELIEVE WILL BE CONNECTED WITH THE ADVENT. (*C. J. Goodhart, M.A.*) *Scripture light the most sure light*:—I. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A GOOD MAN MAY BE IN THE DARK. Was not David in the dark (2 Sam. xxii. 29)? Was not Job in the dark (Job xix. 8)? A good man may live and dwell in a place or town where no means of grace are; in a poor, dark, and ignorant corner of the world. Did not Job dwell in the land of Uz? As a good man may be offended and stumbled, so he may stumble into some mistakes and errors; erroneous times are dark times: every error is darkness, as truth is light. Ye see how it is in a room where there are many pictures; though ye see some of them presently, yet others have a silken curtain drawn before them, which ye see not immediately: so here, though God do reveal much unto you, yet there is a silken curtain that is still drawn before some truths, and therefore even a good man may be much mistaken. And if a good man may be under some temptation and sin, then he may be in the dark. II. THOUGH A GOOD MAN MAY BE IN THE DARK, YET HE HATH SCRIPTURE LIGHT TO WALK BY. God hath not left him comfortless, and without light, in obscure darkness. But have not even wicked men this light also of the Scripture, to walk by in their darkness? I answer, They have it as a blind man hath the sun. And though a wicked man doth hear and may read the Scripture, and know many truths which are therein contained, yet he doth not know the greatness of them. But may not a good man's eyes be held from this Scripture light? When he is converted, then are his eyes said to be opened, then is he anointed with the unction of the Holy One, and doth know all things necessary unto his salvation. He doth not shut his own eyes against any Scripture light. He knows more than he is able to utter and he feels more than he can speak. And though some Scripture truths may be hidden from him sometimes, yet he hath his intervals of sight. And though a good man may be in the dark, yet God doth not leave him so. III. THIS SCRIPTURE LIGHT IS THE MOST EXCELLENT, SAFE, AND SURE LIGHT: it is the light of lights; the most excellent light of all under God in Christ. For—1. It is a true light. There is God seen especially, and Christ seen; there also you see yourself and your own dirty face; there also you see the creatures that are in the room with you, and their emptiness; the emptiness of men, and of all comforts and relations. 2. As it is a true light, so it is an admirable and wonderful light. In other knowledges, the more ye know, the less ye admire; but in Scripture knowledge, the more light ye have, and the more ye know, the more you will lift up your hands and admire, at your own ignorance and God's grace. 3. As it is an admirable light, so it is a safe and sure light. Other false lights do lead men into fens and bogs; but we have a more sure and safe light, and the more of it fall's upon your eye, the more is your eye preserved. 4. As it is a safe and sure light, so it is a pleasant and satisfying light. Light is pleasant to the eye, and the eye ordinarily is not satisfied with seeing: but this is that light which doth bring men to rest; for when a man knows what shall be his portion for ever, then his heart is at rest, and not before. 5. As it is a pleasant, satisfying light, so it is a full and sufficient light, able to make the man of God perfect unto salvation. What state can you be in, but the Scripture will find a commandment for your rule, and a promise for your assistance and reward? 6. As it is a full and sufficient light, so it is a clear light, a light that shineth; it hath no thief in it, as many lights and candles have: not that there are no hard things therein, and difficulties. Yet what truth is in all the Scripture, which is necessary to salvation, but doth lie plain and clear? (Deut. xxx. 11–14; Rom. x. 6). 7. As it is a clear light, so it is the best light in the world, the most excellent light, a light beyond all other things which do pretend to light. (1) Wherein doth this Scripture light exceed or go beyond revelations or visions, and the light thereof? (a) This Scripture light, as you have seen, is a full light, a light which did shine forth at once in and by Jesus Christ. Revelations and visions are more particular; though God did sometimes speak in that way and manner, yet then He spake drop by drop; but now He hath, in these last days, spoken His full mind by His Son. These were but as the apples which did fall

from the tree of wisdom; but in the gospel and Scripture, ye have the whole tree itself. (b) Scripture light is the highest light; Scripture dispensation the highest dispensation: the dispensation of visions and revelations was of a lower rank. (c) This Scripture light is a more sure and certain light: for if God should now speak unto you by visions, or visional revelations, how would you know that this were the voice of God, and not a delusion of Satan? (d) There is no danger in tending upon and taking heed to this Scripture light. But if men do attend to revelations and visions, how easily may they be drawn to despise the Scripture, and such as do wait thereon! (e) Why but, you will say, may not God speak by extraordinary visions and revelations, in these days of ours? Though God may thus speak to some of His servants, yet if I have an itching desire after visions and revelations it is ill. (2) As for dreams and voices, the Scripture or the written Word of God, is more excellent than those; and the light of Scripture is the best light in compare with any light that may come from them. (3) As for impressions made upon the soul, whether by a particular word or without it; the Scripture, or the written Word of God, is more sure than those; and the light thereof the best and most excellent light in comparison with the light of impressions. If I do make an impression the certain judge of doctrines, then am I much deceived. (4) As for that light and law of grace which is in the saints, the light of the Scripture is beyond and more excellent than that. The light and law within us here is imperfect, for we see but in part, and know in part (1 Cor. xiii. 9); but the Word of God written, the Scripture and the light thereof, is perfect (Psa. xix.). The law of grace within, and the light within, is not able to convince others. Though experience be a great help to our faith, yet, take it alone, abstracted from the Word, and it cannot heal our unbelief. But though experience be the parent of hope, yet it is not the ground of our faith; it is an help unto faith, but not the first ground of our faith. (6) As for Divine providence, the Scripture is a more sure light than it. For God doth sometimes try us by His providence. So He led the children of Israel in the wilderness forty years to try them, and to know what they would do, and to humble them. But the Scripture is the rule of our doing, and therefore a more safe and sure light to walk by. And if the providence of God extendeth unto all our actions, good and evil, and to evil as well as unto what is good, then there is no certain rule or judgment to be made up from thence. (7) As for human reason and the light thereof, Scripture light is more excellent than it. For though human reason be a beam of Divine wisdom, yet if it be not enlightened with a higher light of the gospel, it cannot reach unto the things of God as it should. And as mere human reason cannot make a sufficient discovery of sin, so it cannot strengthen against sin and temptation: temptations answered by reason will return again; it cannot convert the soul. "But the Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Though the light of reason be good, yet it is not a saving light. It is revelation light from the gospel that doth bring to heaven: mere human reason cannot do it. Is there then no use of reason and of the light thereof? Yea, much, not only in civil things but in the things of God, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. IV. As Scripture light is the most excellent light, the best and most sure light, so it is our duty, THE DUTY OF ALL THE SAINTS AND PEOPLE OF GOD, TO TAKE HEED THEREUNTO, and that especially in their dark times and places. Yet further, ye shall do well that ye take heed thereunto, for the doctrine of the gospel written is—1. The Word of the Son of God. The more excellent the person is that speaks unto you, the more diligently ye will take heed unto what he saith. 2. As the Scripture is the Word of the Son, so it is the only rule of our lives. Now that which is the only rule of our lives, we are in special manner to take heed unto. 3. As the Scripture and the Word of God written is the only rule, so it is that salt which doth season all your enjoyments. It is the rule and measure of your worship; for if you do not worship according to the appointments of God in His written Word, your worship is but idolatry and superstition. It is the great relief of your souls in time of temptation. It is that which sanctifieth all your outward comforts, even amongst the creatures (1 Tim. iv. 4). And shall the Word of God written be such a blessed treasure, and shall we not take heed thereunto? 4. As it is the salt of all your comforts, so it is, and shall be, your judge at the great day. But the text saith, "That we shall do well to take heed thereunto, until the day dawn, and day-star arise in our hearts": but the day hath dawned on me, and the day-star hath arisen in my heart; and therefore now, what need I take heed to the Scripture or the written Word any longer? I answer, Yea, still you have need to do it: for did not the day dawn and the day-star arise on the hearts of the apostles and Christians in their days, according to your sense and

meaning? yet they still attended on the written Word of God. But why are the saints and people of God to take heed unto the Scripture and the written Word of God especially in their dark times and seasons? I answer, Because they are then in most danger of stumbling and falling: he that walketh in the dark, stumbleth; and who is not then apt to fall? But by taking heed to this sure light, they shall be kept from the power of their darkness. What must we do, that we may take heed and attend unto Scripture? Ye must do three things—I. Ye must attend to know and understand it. II. Ye must attend to keep it. And—III. Ye must attend to walk by the same. And—I. For your knowledge in and understanding of the Scripture, and the written Word of God, ye must—1. Observe, keep, and hold fast the letter of it; for though the letter of the Scripture be not the Word alone, yet the letter with the true sense and meaning of it, is the Word. 2. If you would have the true knowledge, and understand the Scripture, and so behold this great light in its full glory and brightness, you must diligently inquire into the true sense and meaning of it, for the true sense and meaning is the soul thereof. II. But secondly, and more practically: if you would so understand the Scripture, that you may take heed thereunto, as to a light shining in your dark state, then—You must go to God for the Spirit; for without it ye cannot understand the mind of God in the Scripture: no man knows the mind of Paul but by the spirit of Paul; nor the mind of Peter but by the spirit of Peter; no man knows the mind of Christ but by the Spirit of Christ: stand therefore under gospel dispensations, where the Spirit breathes. Take heed of a worldly, fleshly mind; fleshly sins do exceedingly blind the mind from the things of God, and a worldly mind cannot savour them. Yet take heed that you be not too indulgent to your own condition, disposition, or opinion. It is a good speech of Hilary: He is the best interpreter of Scripture that doth rather bring his sense from the Scripture than carry his sense to the Scripture. If you do desire so to understand the Scripture, as it may be a light to all your paths; then be sure that you put nothing else in commission with it for your rule. It is with the Scripture in this respect, as with God, Christ, and the Spirit; if you come to God for help, yet if you join another god in commission with Him, He will not give down His help. And so here: though you come, and tend, and wait upon God in the Scripture, yet if there be anything else which you do make your joint rule with the Scripture, any light within you, or precept of man without you, it will not give down its light to you, but you will be left in the dark. III. Yet one thing more. If you would take heed to the Scripture, you must so heed the same, as you may walk thereby. Therefore prize it much: who takes heed to that which he does not prize? Therefore, also, get your heart affected with love to every truth which you know; for because men receive not the truth in the love thereof, therefore God doth give them up to strong delusions: men take heed unto what they love. And therefore that you may heed it so as to walk thereby, let it be your continual companion, going where you go; if you go into the fields, oh! let the Word go with you; if into your calling, oh! let the Scripture and the written Word of God be with you. Thus shall you take heed unto it, as to a light shining in a dark place. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*) **Until the day dawn.**—*The dawn of day*:—The words admit of two rather different meanings. They may refer to the light which sometimes breaks upon the heart after prayer or meditation. I would suppose that you are a real inquirer after truth. You have been searching for it long and earnestly, but the dark places in the Bible—those dark places which underlie all great truths—and the dark places in your own heart are many. You cannot see any light. Least of all can you see that you have yourself any part or lot in the matter. The day cometh and also the night, for the night is as much a part of the coming as the day. It will come in its own appointed time, and not a moment sooner. The day's dawn will arise exact to its moment. Or it may be thus. You have lost the light which you once enjoyed. Something has come between your soul and God, and now all is dark. What shall you do? Pray on, repent on, confess on, plead on a little longer. It only wants your perseverance "until the day dawn." Or perhaps you say, "I have never known any of the rapturous views which some speak of." It is not given to everybody in the same degree, but to each as he needs it, or as he can bear it. The nights are as needful as the days to all the processes of nature. A brightened day of Christian experience may be yet waiting for you. Do not let hope, or faith, or courage fail until it dawn. Meanwhile, that "until" is a very important part of the blessing. Many a good thing has lost all its goodness simply because it came too soon. Do not hurry on the morning. God knows best how long your night

shall be. But there is another interpretation which belongs to the text with equal or greater appropriateness. "The day." The day of all days for this world is the Advent of Christ. That day which will throw over this earth a light never seen before, and clothe it with the most brilliant splendour. Of the exact period of that day's dawn we have been most wisely and mercifully kept in ignorance. Is, then, this life all night? Why speak of the day dawning as if it is all now so very dark? It is all comparative. This life is a very happy life; this world is a beautiful world; but we all find that colour changes its hue under contrast. To-morrow's exceeding joy may make a bright yesterday look dull, however pleasant it was. And when Jesus comes with His glory, and the heavens are new, and the earth is new, all that is now the holiest, and loveliest and best—tainted as it all is with sin and change and sorrow—it will all look like a shadow. Still it is not to disparage the present, but to exalt the future, that we are told to wait "until the day dawn." To all the mysteries of our world and being, to the chaos of our thoughts, to the dark things within and around us on every side, the key, the true solution is "until the day dawn." Bear that key with you, and it will unlock the whole year. Expect and be always looking for more and more light, till one by one the shadows flee away, and the whole orb of truth rises in his majesty, and "the day dawn." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

The day-star arise.—*The rising of the day-star*:—There is a difference between "the dawn" and the "day-star." The light of "the dawn" is general; the "day-star" gives the thought a focus and fixes it to one spot. "The dawn" is to the whole world; "the day-star" arises in our hearts. What "the day-star" is, is left without a shadow of a doubt. For Christ has singled it out as the last title which He claims in the whole Bible. "I am the bright and morning star." As "the morning star" He comes to us in the night of waiting, doubt, and sorrow. "The day-star" is the morning close at hand. "The dawn" is the day begun. Yet they can never be divided. "The dawn" must soon be full day, and "the day-star" loses itself in the risen sun. Now trace, for a moment, the connection which lies in the allegory—between "the dawn" and "the day-star." I will give one or two instances. You have been reading your Bible, and searching into some of the deep things there. You are a sincere inquirer after truth, but for a while it is all dark; and when it is the darkest, just before the light is going to break, a thought comes into your mind; it gives you a fresh view of the whole subject; it gets clearer and clearer; it spreads like "the dawn" over the hills; in another bound it unveils itself to you. Why? Whence comes this "dawn"? Is it from the head, or is it from the heart? Certainly from the heart. There is Christ in it. "The day-star" is in that "dawn." You feel it. The day "dawned" when "the day-star arose in your heart." And so Christ made the night of your ignorance turn into the day of your joy. I will take it thus. Some sin has gradually darkened your mind. It throws its deep shadow over everything. You cannot find forgiveness, and your whole life is wrapped in gloom. The night of your life becomes thicker and thicker. You pray; there is no answer. You repent; but there is no peace. When almost suddenly—as it seems to you—a hope seems to spring up, things begin to look brighter, despair ceases, praise and hope find their way to your thoughts. There is a "dawn"! But whence? Christ and His tender love has come nearer to you. He reveals Himself to you as your complete and all-sufficient Saviour. All is changed. Why? "The day-star" has "risen in your heart." Or see what shall be presently. The second Advent of Christ is breaking upon this earth. A new day shall burst. This is wonderful. Are you frightened at the solemnities of that hour—the convulsions of nature—the rolling of the heavens up into a scroll—the sight of God! Do they appal you? No. You are calm; you rejoice. Why? For "the day-star" is there, and long before, He has been "the day dawn" in your soul. He is yours. You know Him. He has "risen in your heart," and now has come the noontime of your joy! Now let us observe a little more concerning "the day-star." And first I notice that it "ariseth" of its own free action, of the very necessity of its being; in its very nature it ariseth. It must "arise." We do not make the day-star "arise"; neither do we make Jesus come into our poor dark hearts. He does it of His own free grace and favour. He comes of His own necessity. Such is His love He cannot but choose to come. He "arises" in your heart. The expression shows that it is gradual. "He arises." He goes higher and higher. The light gets stronger, and we see Him more and more. And where the days are His, we know that there will be day—perfect day. The great question for every one of us is, "Is that day-star yet arisen in my heart? If not, why?"

Are you wilfully hindering it? Are you turning away from it? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.) Christmas, or the two risings of the Day-star* (Luke i. 78, 79; 2 Pet. i. 19):—Christ has two incarnations—the one outside of man, the other inside; two births—the one in the manger, the other in the soul. I. His OBJECTIVE birth or rising. “The day-spring from on high,” &c. This day-star arose in Bethlehem. First, the origin of this rising. “Through the tender mercy of our God.” God’s sovereign, compassionate, boundless love was the cause. Secondly, the purpose of this rising. “To give light to them that sit in darkness.” This was the condition of the world—in moral night, ignorant, polluted, miserable. II. His SUBJECTIVE birth or rising. “The day-star arise in your hearts.” Christ is in His disciples (1) as the dominant object of affection, (2) as the dominant theme of thought, (3) as the dominant motive of action. III. His objective and subjective rising COMPARED. Both agree in this. They are from the “tender mercy of our God.” But the following are points of difference: First, the objective rising exists independently of the subjective; but not the subjective without the objective. In other words, unless Christ had been born in the manger He would never have been born by faith in the human soul. Secondly, the objective rising may become a curse, the subjective never. The man who does not receive Christ into the heart, but continues to reject Him, is injured immensely by the fact of His outward revelation. Thirdly, the objective rising is independent of human choice or effort, but not the subjective. Fourthly, the objective rising is not a matter of consciousness; the subjective is. That Christ came into the world can only be proved by logic and dealing with known facts; consciousness, the strongest and ultimate proof, can yield no testimony to the fact. But the subjective rising is a matter of consciousness. Conclusion: Learn—first, what personal Christianity is; secondly, what the duty of the preacher is. Try to get Christ, and not creeds, into human souls. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 20, 21. **No prophecy . . . is of any private interpretation.**—*On the indiscreet application of Scriptural prophecy*:—As the term “prophecy” is here used without any limitation, it seems clearly designed to comprehend all those prophetic enunciations which have been vouchsafed by the Holy Spirit of God. All such prophecy is a light vouchsafed to man from the great Source of all light and all knowledge. But it is a light purposely shaded at first with some obscurity; it shines only as in a dark place until the day of its fulfilment shall dawn. The epithet here applied to prophecy is rendered in our translation “more sure,” but it would be more correctly rendered “more firm, more constant, more enduring.” Prophecy affords a more firm and enduring evidence than miracles, inasmuch as it has a slow and gradual development, unfolding its proofs more clearly and completely as ages roll on; its light shines forth to the eyes of men with a fuller and brighter lustre in proportion as the veil is withdrawn from futurity. When miracles are no longer vouchsafed for the confirmation of the truth, prophecy becomes, by the lapse of time, a more powerful and convincing head of evidence as it is proved, by the course of events, to be really prophecy. And thus may it be said that in the more clear and full development of one species of evidence we have a growing compensation for whatever may be conceived to be lost by the lapse of time to the strength, or clearness, or fulness of the other. To this “word of prophecy,” he says, “ye do well that ye take heed,” that ye pay the serious attention which it deserves; but he cautions them first, before they do so, to know, to recollect, to bear in mind that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.” The apostle intends to caution his disciples against the hasty, fanciful, and inconsiderate interpretation of all Scriptural prophecy. Our attention then becomes directed by these words to a subject of great importance—the indiscreet application of the prophetic parts of Scripture. Now undoubtedly we may trace one fruitful source of this practice to the propensity which prevails with all of us to magnify and exaggerate everything that passes within the narrow sphere of our immediate observation. As in the objects presented to our bodily senses, that which stands immediately before us absorbs the greatest portion of our attention and precludes the sight of others that are more distant. Misled by these false and prejudiced views, individuals have been easily carried away with the notion that the occurrences of their own little day and contracted sphere of observation are of sufficient distinction to be made the specific subject of Scriptural prophecy. But operating in unison with this undue appreciation of the importance of events which are present have been an over-forward disposition to display superior penetration and ingenuity amongst those who interpret prophecy, and credulous superstition and prying curiosity

amongst those who believe their interpretations. Now in the case of the prophecies contained in Scripture a peculiarly tempting field is opened for those persons who are given to these adventurous speculations. But it is of far less importance to inquire into the causes which have led to the indiscreet application of Scriptural prophecies, or to detail what has taken place in times past, than to endeavour to repress the practice by pointing out the injury which it must ever cause to the general interests of religion and to the authority of the Christian records. Now the principal evil which must with too great certainty be derived from this practice is that of exciting a general prejudice against the truth of all Scriptural prophecies. When different persons are found, many of sufficient credit for learning and acuteness, eagerly and confidently applying the prophecies to events widely different, what impression must be made on the public at large, on those who form their judgment of these matters at a distance and without paying close and accurate attention to them? The inference will too obviously be that the prophecies of Scripture may be turned to any sense at the will of the interpreter. Nor, if such an imputation be cast on the prophetic parts of Scripture, will the cause of revelation in general wholly escape. Or, if the credit of Scripture be saved, it will be saved only at the expense of the veracity and good faith of those who attempt these interpretations. While so much positive evil results from the licence, which has been too often assumed, of hazarding, on light grounds and hasty views, novel interpretations of Scriptural prophecy, the most powerful of all arguments is afforded by this consideration to induce all persons who feel the reverence due to the inspired Word of God to abstain most carefully from this indiscreet practice. Prophecy was not given to gratify the prying curiosity of men ever anxious to dive into the recesses of futurity, nor to exercise their forward ingenuity in searching out new interpretations which might arrest the attention of the public. It was designed for a more availing, a greater, and a nobler purpose—for the purpose of affording to the truth of Christianity its growing testimony, which might be unfolded by degrees and open fresh conviction on the mind as the revolutions of time should produce its gradual accomplishment. Consistently with this purpose, a certain degree of obscurity was unavoidable. Under these views of the real character and true intent of Scriptural prophecy, let it be hoped that the interpretation of it will never be attempted carelessly and lightly from any private motive of exhibiting penetration and ingenuity, but only from the deliberate consideration of what may conduce to the right understanding and elucidation of it. (*G. D'Oyly, D.D.*)

Holy men of God spake as they were moved.—*The inspiration, conscription, and exposition of Scripture*:—The apostle had formerly commended reading of the prophets by the benefit of them; now in reading them he gives warning from the difficulty of understanding them. There often lies a deep and hidden sense under a familiar and easy sentence. Let not men rush into their exposition, like hasty soldiers into a thicket, without seeking direction from the captain. When we come to read them we must subject ourselves to the government of the Spirit. I. THE INSPIRATION FROM GOD. It was not a vision of their own heads, but they “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 1. Consider the infallible completion of things long before prophesied in their due seasons (1 Kings xiii. 2). 2. Consider that their being hath continued from Moses unto this day. This is miraculous—that in so great hurly-burlys and alterations they should not be lost! 3. That the scope of it should be to build up no worldly thing, but only the kingdom of heaven, and to direct us to Jesus Christ. 4. That it should pass with credit through the whole world, and find approbation of all languages, nations, and places, and where it meets with oppositions should make way through them as thunder through the clouds. 5. That the Hebrew tongue, wherein the Old Testament was written, doth so excel all tongues, in antiquity, sanctity, majesty. 6. The majesty of the style, which yet is not only powerful in words, but effectual in working (Heb. iv. 12). 7. From the very baseness of falsehood, we learn to admire the lustre of truth. To disgrace and weaken the credit of the Scriptures Satan had his poets and fabulists, whose mythologies were obtruded for true reports. 8. This is an argument of the finger of God and supernatural power in Holy Writ, that the penners of it renounced all affectation and delivered the true message even against their own reputations. II. THE CONSCRIPTION. Although not by the will of man, yet was it done by the hand of man. 1. “Men.” Why did not God choose some other nature of greater authority and credit? (1) That no glory might be ascribed to the means (2 Cor. iv. 7). (2) In commiseration of man’s weakness (Exod. xx. 19). (3) For the

security of our souls. If our preacher were an angel, Satan could transform himself into that shape. (4) In fit correspondence to the work of our redemption (Acts iii. 22). 2. "Men of God." This is an ancient attribute (1 Kings xvii. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 17). But especially they are called men of God because their dispensation comes from God (1 Cor. ii. 13). 3. "Holy men." The Lord who sent them qualified them. III. THE EXPOSITION, which is by no private spirit, but by the Holy Spirit's illumination of man's mind and directing the Church. He that expounds the Scripture upon the warrant of his own spirit only doth lay the brands of the fire together without the tongs, and is sure at least to burn his own fingers. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The Bible*:—That is the Scriptural way of stating the great doctrine that the Bible is inspired, that the Bible is the Word of God. And you remark the grand simplicity and directness of the statement. The Holy Spirit speaks to us in Holy Scripture: we can understand that; let us hold by that. How He does so is not revealed, and so we cannot tell. We are all well assured that the supernatural influences of that Divine Spirit do still, in every Christian man and woman, weave in with the natural workings of soul and mind, of heart and head. When the Blessed Spirit helps us to pray He avails Himself of our natural faculties—of our memory, of our perception of things which may befall us, of our capacity of feeling, trusting, and loving. The prayer is the prayer of the Holy Spirit; but it is also the individual and characteristic prayer of this man, of that woman, of that little child. It is exactly so with that rarer gift which we call inspiration, as with the sanctifying, comforting, prayer-prompting communications for which ordinary Christians ask and look day by day. You know how the inspired writers of the Bible retain their individuality. St. Paul does not write like St. John; St. Luke writes quite differently from either, and St. Peter from all three. And yet do you not feel that there is a something which belongs to all of the many men that wrote the Bible? One Breath has breathed upon them, one Hand has touched them all! In a certain loose way we may speak of the inspiration of the poet, the orator, the painter; and it would be mere pedantry to quarrel with a phrase so well understood in the main. But never forget that differing **not** in degree but in kind—differing essentially, vitally, altogether—is the true, holy, Divine inspiration of the men who wrote the Bible. And we are to distinguish likewise between the supreme inspiration thus described and the ordinary and still-continuing gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is a wide difference between that guidance which you and I may get for the asking and the true inspiration of those few among our race concerning whom St. Peter tells us that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And now, having said so much as to the nature of the inspiration of the Bible, let me suggest some thoughts upon God's Word generally. The Bible, remember, is the Word of God. It not merely contains the Word of God, as in some sense all things do, for "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork"; it is the Word of God. It is the flower and crown of all God's revelation to man: everything that we can read, or fancy we read, on the pages of Nature or Providence we find far more plainly stated in the Bible. And we find a vast deal more. We find there things most needful to salvation, about which earth and sea and stars are dumb. Even the lesser characteristics of the Bible are noteworthy. The very language of this blessed book is such as wonderfully suits its claim to be God's message to all races and tongues. The Bible bears translation into other languages as no other book does. It is at home, and at its ease, in all languages. You hear it said that there is no more remarkable miracle of skill than the language of our English Bible, which is indeed the standard of perfection in our tongue. But there is something more in this than the industry, tact, scholarship of the translators. Surely it is that when the Holy Ghost used holy men of old to write God's message to all human beings, He moved them so to write it in such tongues and in such words as would bear, as human words never did, to be rendered into the mother tongue of every being who has speech and reason. And then how this wonderful volume suits all men in matters more vital than its language! There are extraordinary national differences in ways of thinking and feeling, and extraordinary differences in such things between the people of different times and ages. And yet this wonderful book, dealing as it does throughout just with religious faith and feeling, suits man wherever you find him, comes home alike to Eastern and Western nations, never gets out of date, never is outgrown by the increasing intelligence of educated men, and expresses no feeling in which all Christian people cannot sympathise. How it suits all our moods, all our circumstances! In every state of thought and feeling we find what we want

in the Bible. And just remember, too, what is the secret of the Bible's so coming home to all. It is not a question, here, of those intuitions of moral truth which, when we read or hear them, make us say, "Now that is true," or even say, "We have often thought that ourselves, though we never heard it expressed before." The Bible comes home to all, because it treats of great facts which we never could have found out, yet which, when told, commend themselves, not to sensibility, not to taste, not even to intellect merely, but to our conscience and heart, to our deepest and most solemn convictions of what is Divine and right and true! Therefore it is that the little volume is the first prized possession of childhood, and old people have it in their hands to the last; therefore it goes into the soldier's knapsack; therefore the aged statesman and judge would read it like a little child; therefore you find it under the pillow of the dying, wet with tears. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*)

The plenary inspiration of the Scriptures:—That the book which we emphatically call the Bible was written by the inspiration of suggestion. I. Let us INQUIRE WHAT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE INSPIRATION OF SUGGESTION. Some suppose there are three kinds of inspiration, which they distinguish from each other by calling the first the inspiration of superintendency, the second the inspiration of elevation, and the third the inspiration of suggestion. 1. It was necessary that the sacred penman should be conscious of Divine inspiration all the while they were writing. It was not sufficient for them barely to know that they began to write under the influence of the Spirit. For nothing short of a constant realising sense of His motion and direction, could give them full assurance that what they wrote was the infallible Word of God, which they might honestly present to the world under the sanction of Divine authority. 2. The Supreme Being was as able to afford them the highest as the lowest kind of inspiration. 3. That the sacred penmen were utterly incapable of writing such a book as the Bible without the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost. 4. To suppose that they sometimes wrote without the inspiration of suggestion, is the same as to suppose that they sometimes wrote without any inspiration at all. The distinguishing of inspiration into three kinds is a mere human invention, which has no foundation in Scripture or reason. And those who make this distinction appear to amuse themselves and others with words without ideas. 5. That the sacred penmen profess to have written the Scriptures under the immediate and constant guidance of the Holy Ghost. II. It may be proper to take particular notice of THE MOST WEIGHTY OBJECTIONS WHICH MAY BE MADE AGAINST THE PLENARY-INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. 1. It may be said there appears a great diversity in the manner and style of the sacred penmen, which cannot be easily reconciled with the supposition of their being equally and constantly guided by the inspiration of suggestion. It is true, indeed, we plainly discover some variety in the manner and style of the sacred writers. But this is easy to account for, by only supposing that God dictated to each sacred penman a manner and style corresponding to his own peculiar genius, education, and manner of living. But on the other hand, we find a much greater similarity in their manner and style than could be reasonably expected on supposition of their writing agreeably to their own genius and taste, without the suggesting influences of the Spirit. 2. It may be said that the mistakes and contradictions to be found in the Scriptures plainly refute the notion of their being written under the inspiration of suggestion. To this it may be replied in general, that most of the supposed mistakes and contradictions to be found in the Scriptures may be only apparent, and so might be fully removed, if we were better acquainted with the original languages in which the sacred books were written, and with the customs and manners of the different ages and places in which the sacred penmen lived. But the direct and decisive answer to this objection is that it operates with equal force against every kind of inspiration. 3. It may be said, since God originally intended that the Bible should be transcribed by different hands and translated into different languages, there was no occasion for His suggesting every thought and word to the sacred penmen; because, after all, their writings must be subject to human defects and imperfections. It is sufficient to observe here that every transcription and translation is commonly more or less perfect, in proportion to the greater or less perfection of the original. And since the Scriptures were designed to be often transcribed and translated, this made it more necessary, instead of less, that they should be written, at first, with peculiar accuracy and precision. 4. It may be said that the Apostle Paul seems to acknowledge, in 1 Cor. vii., that he wrote some things in that chapter according to his own private opinion, without the aid or authority of a plenary inspiration. In one verse he says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." And in

another verse he says, "To the rest speak I, not the Lord." If we understand these expressions literally, then we must suppose that the apostle and all the other sacred penmen always wrote under a plenary inspiration, only when they gave intimations to the contrary. But we find no such notice given, except in the chapter under consideration; and therefore we may justly conclude that all the other parts of Scripture were written by the immediate inspiration of God. But if, in the second place, we understand the apostle as speaking ironically in the verses before us, then his expressions will carry no idea of his writing without Divine aid and authority. And there is some ground to understand his words in this sense. There is, however, a third answer to this objection, which appears to be the most satisfactory; and that is this: the apostle is here speaking upon the subject of marriage; and he intimates that he has more to say upon this subject than either the prophets or Christ had said upon it. Accordingly he says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. To the rest speak I, not the Lord." By these expressions he means to distinguish what he said from what other inspired teachers had said upon the same subject. On the whole there appears no solid objection against the plenary inspiration of any part of the Sacred Scriptures; but, on the other hand, every argument which proves them to be partly, equally proves them to be altogether, given by the immediate inspiration of God. Improvement: 1. If the Bible contains the very ideas and sentiments which were immediately suggested to the sacred penmen by the Divine Spirit, then great caution and circumspection ought to be used in explaining Scripture. The words of Scripture may not be lightly altered, nor expunged, nor supplied, nor wrested from their plain and obvious meaning according to the connection in which they stand. 2. If the Divine Spirit suggested every word and thought to the holy penmen, then it is not strange that they did not understand their own writings. These the apostle tells us, in our context, they did not understand. They might, by the aid of the Spirit, write precepts, predictions, promises, and threatenings, of whose import they were ignorant, that would be very intelligible and very useful in future ages. They wrote not for themselves, but for others; not for present, but future times. And this affords an additional evidence of the plenary inspiration of all the sacred writings. 3. If the Bible was written under the inspiration of suggestion, then it is an infallible rule of faith, and the only standard by which to try our religious sentiments. 4. If holy men of old wrote as they were moved by God, then it is reasonable to expect that the Bible should bear clear and strong marks of its Divine author. Accordingly, when we look into the Bible, we find the image and superscription of the Deity on every page. It displays all the perfections of God. 5. If the Bible be the immediate revelation of God's mind and will to men, then it is a most precious book. 6. If the Bible contains the mind and will of God, then all who enjoy it may know in this world what will be their state in the next. It clearly describes both heaven and hell, and the terms upon which we may obtain the one and escape the other. 7. If the Bible be indeed the Word of God, then it is not strange that it has had such a great influence over the minds of men. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *An inspired definition of inspiration*:—"Men spake—from God" (R.V.). It is a definition of inspiration. A definition simple, precise, exhaustive. "Men spake"—spoke, without ceasing to be men; spoke with all those characteristics of phrase and style, of thought and mind, of position and history which mark and make the man; yet "spoke from God," with a message and mission, under an influence and an impulse, a control and a suggestion, which gave to the word spoken a force and a fire, a touch and a contact, a sight and an insight, unlike other utterances because of a breath of God in it, the God of the spirits of all flesh. "Men spake." "Human beings," St. Peter says—the "men" is emphatic. Shall we blame those who, first of all, would ask, Who? would busy themselves in the endeavour, by examination and comparison, to learn what can be learnt of the authorship of particular books; and would then go on to ask, What? in other words, to bring every appliance, of manuscript and version and ancient quotation, to bear upon the text of Scripture. Inquiries like these are only for the learned. But let us, who can but look on or listen, at least refrain from denunciations of a process for which we ought to have the deepest respect. Men spake. And does not St. Peter as good as say, And remained men in the speaking? Where is the authority for supposing that the inspiring Spirit levelled the intellects, obliterated the characteristics, overwhelmed the peculiarities, of the several writers? Men spake. And one of them has told us how. By a careful investigation of various writings going before, and an earnest endeavour to arrange in their true order the facts of the history which he was to chronicle. Men spake—and men wrote—and

they were men still. Matters which toil and pains could ascertain—matters which lay in the province of intellect, whether in the way of research or in the way of discovery—matters for which God had provided the instrument of knowledge in the human being as by Him created, even though ages and generations might come and go before the actual knowledge was made his own—on these things inspiration was silent. Men spake, and in speaking were men still. Even their message, even the thing they were sent to tell, must be expressed in terms of human speech, through a medium therefore of adaptation and accommodation. Men spake—from God. “Moved by the Holy Ghost.” The two halves of the text are dependent upon each other. Not angels—or they had no sympathetic, no audible voice for man. Not machines—or speech (which is, by definition, intelligence in communication) had been a contradiction in terms. These human beings spake from God; for He had something to say, and to say to man. There is something which God only can say. There is something which reason cannot say, nor experience, nor discovery, nor the deepest insight, nor the happiest guessing, nor the most sagacious foresight. There is a world of heaven, which flesh and blood cannot penetrate. There is a world of spirit, impervious even to mind. There is a world beyond death, between which and the living there is an impassable gulf fixed. More than this—there is a world of cause and consequence, which no moralist can connect or piece together. There is a world of providence, which gives no account of itself to the observer. More yet than this. There is a fact of sin, inherited and handed on, working everywhere in hearts and lives, spoiling God’s work and ruining man’s welfare. Who can tell, concerning this, whether indeed there is any recovery from this deep, this terrible, this fatal fall? And yet man needs to hear of these things. And confess now, you who have gone with us thus far, how utterly beside the mark of such a work as this would have been an inspiration of science, or an inspiration of geography, or an inspiration of history, or an inspiration of geology, astronomy, botany, or chemistry. Men spake, and they spake from God. He had that to tell which men by searching could not find out. He set this human being to tell it to his fellows. But oh, trust God to do the right thing! Do not mistrust Him, and summon Him to the bar of your poor intellect every time that you cannot quite see what He was about. How can you account for a slaughter of twenty thousand men in one tiny battlefield in Beth-horon or on Mount Ephraim? how can you explain the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice, and Samuel coming up again at the bidding of the witch of Endor, &c. Say, if you are wise, with the three Israelites to King Nebuchadnezzar, “I am not careful to answer thee in this matter.” Men spake—and, while they spake, they were men still. But they spake from God—and what they said from Him was truth and nothing but truth, and in it, thus spoken, is the very light of my life. Never will I part with that light till I reach a world which no longer wants it, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

CHAPTER II.

VER. 1. But there were false prophets also.—*False prophets and false teachers* :—

I. A NARRATION. 1. The connection of the words. “Also” implies that there were always true prophets. God never leaves His people without tutors. 2. The corruption of the persons. “False prophets.” (1) They that came in the name of God, but were never sent by God (Jer. xxiii. 21). (2) They that come in God’s name, and are sent, but deliver a false message. 3. The intrusion of their mischief. “Among the people.” But durst these black impostors press into so famous a light, and not fear discerning? (1 Kings xviii. 19, xxii. 6.) They say it is half a protection to foreknow a danger: behold the apostle’s fidelity, and therein God’s mercy. **II. A CAUTION.** 1. Who they be that assault us. Falsehood insinuates itself always in the semblance of truth. For error is so foul a hag, that if it should come in its own shape, all men would loathe it. 2. Whither they come. Not to the Turks, or Gentiles, or other heretics only; but to “you” that have the gospel. They seem to come unto you, but indeed they come against you; they promise your good, but they perform your hurt. (1) God suffers these for the trial of our faith (1 Cor. xi. 19). (2) God suffers them, that the true pastors might more

patiently exercise their knowledge. Heresy makes men sharpen their wits, the better to confute it. (3) God permits them for men's ingratitude. 3. These false teachers intrude themselves—as sometimes a gamester, being flushed with his luck—and they meet with three encouragements: (1) The numbers and applaudings of their auditors (Jer. v. 31). (2) The honour and respect that is done them. (3) Large gifts and riches. 4. Their unavoidable necessity. They will press in, and we cannot easily stave them off. Jesus Christ must enlighten our hearts to decline these false teachers. Now the means whereby Christ teacheth us is the Scripture.

III. A DESCRIPTION of these pernicious liars, concerning whom we find a threefold mischief: one that issues from them, another that abides in them, a third that is inflicted on them. 1. Their seminary mischief, offensive and noxious to others. (1) The matter, what they bring in—"damnable heresies." (a) Heresy is that which doth diametrically oppose the truth, and set up an opinion against it. Error is when one holds a wrong opinion alone; schism, when many consent in their opinion; heresy runs further, and contends to root out the truth. (b) "Heresies," in the plural, to point at a multitude. The troubles of the Church seldom come single; but either unite their forces, as the five Amorite kings combined against Gibeon (Josh. x. 5); or separately they vex her on every side, as Solomon was assaulted by Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam (1 Kings xi.). (c) They "shall bring in." Here is the necessity. "Shall"; though provision spend all her wit, and prevention all her strength, yet no avoiding it. (d) The malignity of them. "Damnable heresies." (i) Because they are reprobated of God. (ii) Because pestilent to the kingdoms or nations where they are admitted. (iii) Because they bring destruction to all their followers and defenders. 2. The causes that produce such inevitable effects. 3. The manner of their induction: underhand, "privily." (1) Their subtlety, whereby they insinuate their unseen poisonous seeds (Eph. iv. 14). (2) Their vigilant care to spy out the opportunity, how they may privily bring heresy in (Micah ii. 1). (3) Their hypocrisy, with the covertly carriage of their intended plagues (Rom. xvi. 18). Vice dares not walk without a borrowed shape. 4. Their criminal evil. (1) They "deny." It were bad enough to slight Him, worse to forget Him, yet worse to forsake Him; but to deny Him is fearful. (2) "The Lord." Not a creature, not a man, not a father, not a friend, not an angel, not themselves; but the Lord, this is more fearful. (3) "That bought them." It is much to deny a benefactor, more to deny a parent, more to deny a Creator; but yet there is a step higher: to deny a Redeemer. Denial of Christ is of two sorts—either in judgment or in practice; denial in faith or denial in fact. The latter is of infirmity, the other of infidelity. 5. The punishment. (1) They "bring upon themselves." (a) The wicked are the causes of their own condemnation (Isa. l. 1; Prov. v. 22; Psa. lxiv. 8; Jer. ii. 17). (b) God is not the cause of man's transgression or damnation (James i. 13; Rom. ix. 19). (c) They themselves bring it; therefore not any fatal necessity out of themselves, but their own malice within them. (2) "Destruction." This is the measure of their punishment—total ruin. (3) "Swift." Man may shoot and miss, or his arrow be so slow of flight that it may be avoided; but if God shoots, He hits and kills. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Error in the Church*:—1. The futility of insisting on having even now what might be called a pure Church. "It must needs be," said our Lord, "that offences come." 2. It is none the less the duty of the friends of truth and righteousness to maintain the spirit of a vigilant and strenuous resistance to the assaults of error and corruption. 3. That a doctrine or a practice has many followers, even among church members, affords but a poor presumption that it deserves to be followed (Matt. xxiv. 5, 10-12). 4. The certain and irretrievable ruin of ungodly men. 5. Finally, let us bless God that, through the waste wilderness of obstruction, deceit, and delusion, His own holy Word has clearly marked for us "the way of the truth." (*J. Lillie, D.D.*) *Doctrinal poison*:—The poison that ended the life of Alexander VI. of Italy was no less destructive because it was concealed in a glass of wine. The virus that sent to the grave Sir Thomas Overbury was not the less fatal because it was hidden in a jelly handed to him by a fascinating lady. The bite of the asp that closed the career of Cleopatra was not the less deadly because the reptile rested on roses. Doctrinal poison is none the less mortal because the pen of a prince in erudition inscribes on it the word "scholarship." (*S. V. Leech, D.D.*) *Damnable heresies*.—*Destructive heresies*:—1. It is a destructive heresy for a man to think that he can be saved without faith in Christ, while ignoring, or, it may be, denying the redemptive work of Christ. 2. It is a destructive heresy for a man to think that he is safe and in the way of salvation while yielding to corrupt passions and living a careless life.

3. It is a destructive heresy for a man to regard himself as a Christian, and think he is right for heaven, while possessing nothing of the mind and spirit of Christ.

4. It is a "heresy of destruction" for a man to think that if he abstains from great and glaring transgressions he may safely indulge in sins of the heart, and need no be over particular about what has been called "the minor moralities of life."

5. It is a "heresy of destruction" for a man to think that he is a Christian sheltered by the blood of Christ while he consciously and continually disregards the commands of Christ.

6. It is a "heresy of destruction" for a man to boast that Christ is all in all to him while he withholds himself and all he has from Christ.

7. It is a "heresy of destruction" for a man self-complacently, to suppose that he may "gird up the loins of his mind, be sober, and hope unto the end" while he is conscious of no love to God, and while cherishing hatred of his fellow-man. Let us examine ourselves, lest we should—(1) Endanger our own soul's salvation. (2) Endanger the souls of others. (3) Deny the Lord that bought us. (4) And so dishonour God, bring upon ourselves "swift destruction." (*The Study*.)

Denying the Lord that bought them.—The master and his slaves:—There were three great stains on the civilisation of the world into which Christianity came—war, the position of women, and slavery. The relation of the New Testament to the last of these great evils naturally connects itself with the words before us. This same wicked thing, slavery, is used as an illustration of the highest, sacreddest relationship possible to men—their submission to Jesus Christ. With all its vileness, it is still not too vile to be lifted from the mud, and to stand as a picture of the purest tie that can bind the soul. The word in our text for "Lord" is an unusual one, selected to put the idea in the roughest, most absolute form. It is the root of our word "despot," and conveys, at any rate, the notion of unlimited, irresponsible authority. Nor is this all. One of the worst features of slavery is that of the market, where men and women and children are sold like cattle. And that has its parallel too, for this Owner has bought men for His. Nor is this all; for, as there are fugitive slaves, who "break away every man from his master," and when questioned will not acknowledge that they are his, so men flee from this Lord and Owner, and by words and deeds assert that they owe Him no obedience, and were never in bondage to Him.

I. CHRIST'S ABSOLUTE OWNERSHIP. To material things and forces He spake as their great Commander, saying to this one "Go," and he went, and showing His Divinity, as even the pagan centurion had learned, by the power of His word, the bare utterance of His will. But His rule in the region of man's spirit is as absolute and authoritative, and there too "His word is with power." Loyola demanded from his black-robed militia obedience so complete that they were to be "just like a corpse," or "a staff in a blind man's hand." Such a requirement made by a man is of course the crushing of the will and the emasculation of the whole nature. But such a demand yielded to from Christ is the vitalising of the will and the ennobling of the spirit. The owner of the slave could set him to any work he thought fit. So our Owner gives all His slaves their several tasks. As in some despotic Eastern monarchies the sultan's mere pleasure makes of one slave his vizier and of another his slipper-bearer, our King chooses one man to a post of honour and another to a lowly place; and none have a right to question the allocation of work. What corresponds on our parts to that sovereign freedom of appointment? Cheerful acceptance of our task, whatever it be. The slave's hut, and little patch of garden ground, and few bits of furniture, whose were they—his or his master's? If he was not his own, nothing else could be his own. And whose are our possessions? If we have no property in ourselves, still less can we have property in our property. These things were His before and are His still. Such absolute submission of will and recognition of Christ's absolute authority over us, our destiny, work, and possessions, is ennobling and blessed. We learn from historians that the origin of nobility in some Teutonic nations is supposed to have been the dignities enjoyed by the king's household—of which you find traces still. The king's master of the horse, or chamberlain, or cupbearer, becomes noble. Christ's servants are lords, free because they serve Him, noble because they wear His livery and bear the mark of Jesus as their Lord.

II. THE PURCHASE ON WHICH THAT OWNERSHIP IS FOUNDED. This master has acquired men by right of purchase. That abomination of the auction-block may suggest the better "merchandise of the souls of men" which Christ has made when He bought us with His own blood as our ransom. First, then, that is a very beautiful and profound thought, that Christ's lordship over men is built upon His mighty and supreme sacrifice for men. We are justified in saying to Him, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant" only when we can go on to say, "Thou hast

loosed my bonds." Then consider that the figure suggests that we are bought from a previous slavery to some other master. He that committeth sin is the slave of sin. If the Son therefore make you free, you shall be free indeed. III. THE RUN-AWAYS. We do not care to inquire here what special type of heretics the apostle had in view in these solemn words, nor to apply them to modern parallels which we may fancy we can find. It is more profitable to notice how all godlessness and sin may be described as denying the Lord. All sin, I say, for it would appear very plain that the people spoken of here were not Christians at all, and yet the apostle believes that Christ had bought them by His sacrifice, and so had a right over them, which their conduct and their words equally denied. How eloquent that word "denying" is on Peter's lips! It is as if he were humbly acknowledging that no rebellion could be worse than his, and were renewing again his penitence and bitter weeping after all those years. All sin is a denial of Christ's authority. It is in effect saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It is at bottom the uprising of our own self-will against His rule, and the proud assertion of our own independence. It is as foolish as it is ungrateful, as ungrateful as it is foolish. That denial is made by deeds which are done in defiance or neglect of His authority, and it is done too by words and opinions. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. Many shall follow their pernicious ways.—*Pernicious ways*.—I. AN ATTRACTION. 1. The ringleaders. (1) The necessity of a head to every schism and faction; never was breach made in the vineyard of Christ but some principal beast led the whole herd. If their reward in heaven be so great that save one soul from death, how great shall their torment be in hell that pervert many souls to destruction! (a) The way to suppress a schism is to cut off the head; it will be hard for a body to move headless. (b) Seeing there are such corrupters of our truth, and disturbers of our peace, let us be sure to hold the truth in peace, cleaving to our Head, Jesus Christ (Col. ii. 19). (2) The great force of example. (a) Let this teach men of place to look unto their exemplary lives, lest, as they have made themselves examples of transgression, God make them examples of destruction. (b) Seeing we are all apt to be followers, let us seek out the best patterns (Phil. iii. 17; Psa. xvi. 3). (3) Their mischiefs. (a) There is a plurality, diversity of their "ways." Truth is but one, errors are infinite. Goodness is a uniform simple, sin a multiform compound. Satan baits his hook according to the appetite of the fish. He studies many ways to make you wretched; do you study one way to make yourselves blessed. (b) These ways are pernicious or damnable. The wicked never rest till they meet with final ruin. 2. The rabble. (1) Their multitude—"many." Wickedness is never scant of followers. (2) Their tractableness—"shall follow." There is a pliable disposition in all men naturally to evil, in these a desperate precipitation. (a) The greediness of the ungodly to sin, that they scarce tarry for temptation. (b) Sin is strong when it meets with a weak resister. How easy is it for error to domineer over ignorance! (c) Observe the power of evil men over their associates, whether in perverting the higher faculties of the soul, reason, and understanding, and conscience, or in corrupting the lower will and affections. (d) We must not fall off from the faith and Church of Christ because multitudes travel another way. (e) Seeing there is such certain danger in following after common copies, let me avert you from all these pestilent examples, and propose to you one worth your imitation. II. A DETRACTION. 1. The patient that suffers. (1) The singularity—"the way," that excellent way. There is only one way of truth and of salvation by it. (2) The sincerity—the way "of truth." (a) It is certain. It is called "the testimony" (Isa. viii. 20) because it bears witness unto itself; so is it called "the truth" because it shall accomplish itself. (b) It is excellent, as being the letters patent of our salvation. 2. The injury that is offered to it. (1) "By whom." The instruments or occasioners of this scandal—those misled proselytes. The seminaries of infection have poisoned them, and they spread that pestilence, to the dishonour of Christ and the scandal of His gospel. (a) Not only the principals, but even the accessories in schism are guilty of sin, and liable to punishment. (b) The authors of this seducement are not discharged, though their scholars have dissipated the evil. (2) "The way of truth shall be evil spoken of." The aspersion laid upon the gospel by their means is blasphemy, the worst kind of evil speaking. (*Thos. Adams.*)

Ver. 3. Make merchandise of you.—*False teachers as merchantmen*.—The apostle here makes a continuation of their sins and a declaration of their plagues. They

extend the thread of their mischief very long, till hell fire burn it off. They broach heresies, corrupt multitudes, sell souls, as merchants do their wares; cozen men's consciences, colour foul natures with fair words, blaspheme the gospel, deny Jesus Christ. Oh, how constant and long-winded are they in their wickedness! But there is a judgment that wakes while they slumber. I. THE GENERAL SIMILITUDE (MERCHANTISING) HERE USED. The calling of a merchant is of great antiquity and necessary use. Merchants are the feet of the world, whereby distant countries meet together. Yet it is a dangerous profession, not only for wreck of life and goods, but also of conscience; which is not always made in their ships abroad, but too commonly in their shops at home. 1. The merchants are false teachers. As Judas sold Christ for thirty pieces, so they sell men to sin, little esteeming the price that a soul cost. 2. The wares—"you"; your estates, liberties, lives, and souls. They set up a mart of holy things, and with their impostures fill their purses. An evil pastor may sell his flock three ways—(1) By flattery. He that encourages a man in his errors sells him for his own gain. (2) By heresy. Broaching schisms and factions and erroneous opinions, as it were feeding the people with bones, or rather poisons, instead of wholesome meat. (3) By silence. The watchman who does not ring the alarm bell at the approach of danger betrays the city to the enemy. 3. "Through covetousness." This is the ground or motive of their traffic. It is true of every schism, what was said of Lucilla's faction, with a little inversion: anger bred it, pride fostered it, and covetousness confirmed it. (1) This sin of covetousness is iniquity in all men, blasphemy in a clergyman. The titles we bear, the office we sustain, the Person we represent, the nearness of our calling to that absolute integrity, are remembrances unto us that we be not covetous. (2) There is no fault in a minister like covetousness, because there is no sin reigning in the world like worldliness. We may preach our hearts out to dissuade men's affections from this world; if we embrace it ourselves, they will never believe us. (3) The vice of covetousness is an epidemical disease, the grand Cairo of mischief, the metropolis of wickedness, a universal plague that has infected all conditions of people. 4. The means of their utterance, "feigned words"! Heresy was never found disjoined from hypocrisy. Their speeches are so ambiguous and equivocal, that they seem to hold both ours and our adversaries' tenets. What they cannot perform by the evidence of truth, they seek to attain by the eloquence of art. As rebels make their proclamations in the name of the king, and pirates intending to rob merchants hang out the flags of other nations, both to scandal them and to conceal themselves; so do hypocrites wear Christian colours that they may be the devil's cozeners. II. THEIR PERDITION. 1. The severity of it. (1) Their "judgment." The menaces of God are not always followed with an infallible event, being sometimes on purpose signified, that they may be by penitence prevented. (2) For whose sake doth God execute judgment upon these false teachers? For His own glory and the Church's good, that they may no longer cozen men's souls with their impostures. (3) Though the Lord will judge these wicked persons, yet this forbids not magistrates to execute justice upon them. (4) Their "judgment"—their own; as proper to them as the inheritance they bought with their money. Sin doth naturally draw a punishment. (5) Their "judgment." But is it so certainly theirs, that no repentance can prevent it? Yes, serious repentance may avert the vengeance, if their gracious God gives the repentance. (6) Their "judgment and their damnation." Observe the proportion and adaptation of their punishment to their sin. It holds in divers analogies. (a) They denied the Lord that bought them, therefore the same Lord shall judge them. (b) They acted all their villainy in secret, therefore now it shall be laid open. (c) The way of truth hath been blasphemed by them, therefore now it is fit that it be glorified on them. (d) Before they sold men in covetousness, therefore now they shall be sold themselves in justice. (e) Before they brought in the heresy of damnation, therefore now they shall sustain the penalty of damnation. (f) Before they did pull on themselves destruction voluntarily, therefore now must father the child of their own begetting, and suffer destruction necessarily. (g) Their sin did hasten punishment and make it swift, therefore fit it should no longer tarry; it "lingereth not." (7) "Damnation" is principally taken for the censure or sentence condemning; as the sentence follows the trial, and the execution the sentence; here it intends the execution of the judgment. 2. Sleepeth not, lingereth not, slumbereth not. Though it be not yet present, it is propinquant; if not extant, yet instant. (1) This wakeful vengeance is threatened against the ungodly very fitly; for nothing is more proper to the nature of sin than to sleep in security. (2) Sin will not let justice sleep, but sends it up continual challenges, provoking Him to draw that

sword, which He had rather should rest in the scabbard, than be sheathed in His own creatures. 3. "Long ago." There is a preordination of plagues for reprobates, and the very moment of the execution appointed (Jude, ver. 4). Lessons: 1. Seeing God doth not sleep in His justice, let not us sleep in our injustice. 2. As this is terror to the ungodly, so comfort to the righteous. As justice is ever waking, so mercy is never asleep. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Manhood in the market*:—Who are they that are engaged in this business? 1. The liquor-dealers. 2. Writers and publishers of obscene literature. 3. Purchasers of the virtue of women. 4. Bribers and bribe-takers. 5. Mercenary journalists. 6. Atheistic orators and religious quacks. (*A. Little.*)

Vers. 4-10. **If God spared not the angels that sinned.**—*Angelic sinners*:—I. That they are the most ANCIENT sinners. They were the first transgressors of Heaven's eternal law. 1. The uniqueness of their circumstances. They had no tempter. Adam had; so has his race ever since; so have we. All their propensities were in favour of holiness. 2. The force of their freedom. Having neither an outward tempter nor an inward propensity to wrong, they must have risen up against all the external circumstances and internal tendencies of that being. II. That they are the most INFLUENTIAL sinners. 1. They were the original introducers of sin to this world. 2. They are the constant promoters of sin in this world. III. That they are the most INCORRIGIBLE sinners. Instances of man's conversion from sin are numerous. Their incorrigibility shows two things. 1. That intellectual knowledge cannot convert. 2. That an experience of the evil of sin cannot convert. IV. That they are the most MISERABLE of sinners. There are three things which indicate the extent of their misery. 1. Contrast between their present and past condition. 2. The vastness of their capacity. 3. The utter hopelessness of their state. (*Hornist.*) *Fallen angels a lesson to fallen men*:—"These are ancient things." Most men hunger after the latest news; let us on this occasion go back upon the earliest records. It does us good to look back upon the past of God's dealings with His creatures; herein lies the value of history. We should not confine our attention to God's dealings with men, but we should observe how He acts towards another order of beings. If angels transgress, what is His conduct towards them? This study will enlarge our minds, and show us great principles in their wider sweep. 1. Consider our text FOR OUR WARNING. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell." Behold here a wonder of wickedness, angels sin; a wonder of justice, God spared them not; a wonder of punishment, He cast them down to hell; a wonder of future vengeance, for they are reserved unto judgment! Here are deep themes and terrible. 1. Let us receive a warning, first, against the deceivableness of sin, for whoever we may be, we may never reckon that, on account of our position or condition, we shall be free from the assaults of sin, or even certain of not being overcome by it. Notice that these who sinned were angels in heaven, so that there is no necessary security in the most holy position. This should teach us not to presume upon anything connected with our position here below. You may be the child of godly parents who watch over you with sedulous care, and yet you may grow up to be a man of Belial. You may never enter a haunt of iniquity, your journeys may be only to and from the house of God, and yet you may be a bond slave of iniquity. The house in which you live may be none other than the house of God and the very gate of heaven through your father's prayers, and yet you may yourself live to blaspheme. 2. The next thought is that the greatest possible ability, apparently consecrated, is still nothing to rely upon as a reason why we should not yet fall so low as to prostitute it all to the service of the worst of evils. A man may not say, "I am a minister: I shall be kept faithful in the Church of God." Ah me! But we have seen leaders turn aside, and we need not marvel; for if angels fall, what man may think that he can stand? 3. Neither must any of us suppose that we shall be kept by the mere fact that we are engaged in the sublimest possible office. Apart from the perpetual miracle of God's grace, nothing can keep us from declension and spiritual death. 4. I want you to notice, as a great warning, that this sin of the angels was not prevented even by the fullest happiness. The most golden wages will not keep a servant loyal to the kindest of masters. The most blessed experience will not preserve a soul from sinning. No feelings of joy or happiness can be relied upon as sufficient holdfasts to keep us near the Lord. 5. This warning, be it noted, applies itself to the very foulest of sin. The angels did not merely sin and lose heaven, but they passed beyond all other beings in sin, and made themselves fit denizens for hell. Oh my unrenewed

hearer, I would not slander thee, but I must warn thee: there are all the makings of a hell within thy heart! It only needs that the restraining hand of God should be removed, and thou wouldst come out in thy true colours, and those are the colours of iniquity. 6. The text may lead us a little farther before we leave it, by giving us a warning against the punishment of sin as well as against the sin itself. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell." They were very great; they were very powerful; but God did not spare them for that. If sinners are kings, princes, magistrates, millionaires, God will cast them into hell. You unbelievers may combine together to hate and oppose the gospel, but it matters not, God will deal with your confederacies and break up your unities, and make you companions in hell even as you have been comrades in sin. Neither did He spare them because of their craft. There were never such subtle creatures as these are—so wise, so deep, so crafty; but these serpents and all the brood of them had to feel the power of God's vengeance, notwithstanding their cunning. II. But now I want to ask all your attention to this second point for OUR ADMIRATION. 1. I want you to admire the fact that though angels fell the saints of God are made to stand. Oh, the splendour of triumphant grace! Neither the glory of our calling, nor the unworthiness of our original, shall cause us to be traitors; we shall neither perish through pride nor lust; but the new nature within us shall overcome all sin, and abide faithful to the end. 2. Now let us learn another lesson full of admiration, and that is that God should deal in grace with men and not with angels. One would think that to restore an angel was more easy and more agreeable to the plan of the universe than to exalt fallen man. I rather conceive it to have been the easier thing of the two if the Lord had so willed it. And yet, involving as it did the incarnation of the Son of God and His death to make atonement, the infinitely gracious Father condescended to ordain that He would take up men, and would not take up the fallen angels. It is a marvel: it is a mystery. I put it before you for your admiration. Behold how He loves us! What shall we do in return? Let us do angels' work. Let us glorify God as angels would have done had they been restored and made again to taste Divine favour and infinite love. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The punishment of the wicked:—I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE SINNER'S FUTURE PUNISHMENT might be argued from that attribute of justice which belongs to the Divine character, and the entire purity of which is in Scripture so frequently insisted on. For it is manifestly contrary to justice, that no distinction should be made between the righteous and the wicked. 1. The first instance he adduces is that of "the angels that sinned." The angels, it may be admitted, fell from a loftier elevation in the scale of being than man did; but the final fall of those who perish through their own neglect of the salvation of the gospel, will be more terrible than that of angels. 2. But the apostle deduces the same inference from the Divine judgments at sundry times inflicted upon men—specifying particularly the general deluge, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrhah. And the inference on this latter ground is as just as in the former. For in the first place there can be no reasonable doubt that these remarkable events were purposely intended to manifest in a conspicuous manner the Divine displeasure against sin. 3. But while they serve as manifestations of the general truth, that God cannot look upon sin with allowance, they serve more particularly, as argued by the apostle, to remind us that a day of still more awful judgment is approaching, in which the ungodly shall be subjected, not to the calamity of a temporal destruction, but to a punishment commensurate with the magnitude of their guilt. II. THE MAGNITUDE OF THE EVIL AND SUFFERING IN WHICH THEIR PUNISHMENT IS TO CONSIST. 1. It has already been apparent in some degree, that the punishment is indescribably dreadful; and it is farther manifest from the fact that it is a punishment which cannot be inflicted upon them in the present life. Our nature in its present state, if subjected to such a torment, would faint, and be consumed; and the punishment, so far at least as the body is concerned, would presently be ended. 2. There is another terrible indication on this subject, in the circumstance that the punishment is one in which man will be associated with the fallen angels. What must be the nature of that torment which constitutes an adequate punishment to fallen angels! 3. And then to all these considerations is to be added the tremendous thought that the punishment is everlasting. The fearful characteristic of those who die under "the curse of the law" is that they die "without mercy." "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" and "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." (*T. Crowther.*) *The punishment of the angels that sinned*:—1. He "delivered them": but into whose hands? Indeed, He delivers guilty mortals into the hands of guilty angels

(Matt. xviii. 34; 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. i. 20). Some answer, that themselves are the instruments to torture themselves. After a sort, every transgressor is his own tormentor; and wickedness is a vexation to itself. Ambition racks the aspiring; envy eats the marrow of his bones that envieth; the covetousness which would be most rich, keeps the affected with it most poor; ebriety begets the headache; lust afflicts the body that nourishes it; and we say of the prodigal, he is no man's foe but his own. 2. "Into chains of darkness." Into darkness—there is their misery; into chains—there is their slavery. (1) Darkness signifies the wrath of God, and is opposed to that favour of His which is called the light of His countenance (Psa. iv. 6). (2) "Chains." (a) The power of Divine justice. (b) The guiltiness of their own conscience. (T. Adams.)

Noah . . . a preacher of righteousness.—*Noah's preaching*:—1. Noah had his calling immediately from God; whereas we are mediately ordained by the imposition of hands. 2. The Lord honoured Noah in conferring his office upon him. Certainly a minister's life is full of honour here and hereafter, too; so it is full of danger here and hereafter, too. 3. Noah faithfully executed this calling, and continued preaching a hundred years. Both in his doctrinal instructions and exemplary life he was a preacher of righteousness. 4. He had not such happy success of his preaching as his own soul desired, and he might in reason have expected. A man may be lawfully called by God and His Church, and yet not turn many souls. It is the measure, not the success, that God looks to; our reward shall be according to our works, not according to the fruit of our works; which is our comfort. 5. So long as Noah preached, the world was warned. God needed not to have given them any warning of His judgments; they gave Him no warning of their sins. Yet, that He might approve His mercy, He gives them long warning that they might have space enough of repenting. Oh, how loth is He to strike that threatens so long before He executes! (*Ibid.*)

Sodom and Gomorrha.—*Sodom and Gomorrha*:—1. The strongest cities are not shot-proof against the arrows of God; but even things ordained for refuge are by His justice made destructive. There is nothing peaceable where God is an enemy. 2. Sin can bring down the most magnificent cities. 3. None of these wicked cities escaped. Men, women, children, houses, plants, monuments, all that grew on the earth were destroyed (Gen. xix. 25). 4. Great is the danger of living in opulent and delightful places. Where is no want is much wantonness; and to be rich in temporals hastens poverty in spirituals. In a scantiness, the things themselves do stint and restrain our appetites; but where is abundance, and the measure is left to our own discretion, our discretion is too often deceived. (*Ibid.*)

Sodom and Gomorrha an example of the fate of the ungodly:—1. No society of men or policy can hinder the judgment of God, which He will bring upon them for their sins. 2. The same judgments of God are executed by contrary causes. The old world was destroyed by water, these cities by fire. Sinners should not think themselves safe because they have escaped one judgment, for when they are farthest off from one evil, another is ready to fall upon them (Amos v. 19). 3. Extreme judgments follow extreme sins. 4. They that are unto others examples of sin shall be also unto them examples of punishment. (Wm. Ames, D.D.)

Delivered just Lot.—*Lot in Sodom*:—I. THE SPIRIT'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING LOT. Lot was a "just" man and a "godly." What disclosures shall the last day make! What changes in our views of individuals! 1. His state before God. Only as justified by faith can we be accounted righteous. 2. Lot's character. The bent and purpose of his soul was towards God. He ran not as he should have done in the way of God's commandments; trial upon trial was needed to keep alive the flickering lamp of spiritual life. II. HIS SITUATION IN SODOM. He first "pitched his tent towards" it, and the next step was downwards—he dwelt in Sodom. 1. I ask of that residence, was it profitable? I would not make it the chief motive to serve the Lord, that it shall be well with you here; but I would yet say lose not this world and that which is to come. 2. I ask, further, concerning that residence, was it happy? Did it bring peace to his soul? could he rejoice whilst there abiding? What saith the Word of God? It speaks of him as "vexed from day to day." "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," and He did deliver Lot; but He suffered His servant to feel that "an evil and a bitter thing" it is to depart from the narrow way; whilst dwelling in Sodom, happiness must not be his. 3. Nay, was that residence safe? He came forth from it a fugitive who had entered it as a prince. Are you seeking to avoid reproach by some concession contrary to God's truth? Are you planning for the world's aid? Cast off your vain confidences, safety is not in them! III. THE HINDRANCES TO HIS REMOVAL

MIGHT BE THESE. 1. The tie of property. There Lot had laid up his goods. For a time, doubtless, worldly prosperity was his, and the entanglement was strong. How strong that tie is to all! How great the grace to those who have burst from its hold! 2. The ungodly amongst whom he dwelt would be opposed to Lot's departure. He evidently stood in fear of them, and he might dread to give them any excuse for violence. 3. His family had, fearful to relate, formed alliances in that city of evil; these would cling around him, and prevent the determination to depart. 4. But far more than all was that lethargy of soul the hindrance, which—nourished by the atmosphere in which he lived—increased by each day's sojourn in the infected city—would make him less and less capable of the effort needed for his escape. Conclusion: 1. What a God is He with whom we have to do! 2. What a world is that with which we have to contend! We dwell as it were on enchanted ground. 3. What depths of heart-deceit does the history of man bring to light! (*F. Storr, M.A.*) *Just Lot*:—I. HIS GRACE—a just man. 1. What this justice is. (1) Legal righteousness is of three sorts—(a) Perfect, which consists in an absolute completion of the law: this is lost beyond all recovery. (b) Civil, which consists in an outward deportment conformable to the law (Matt. v. 20). (c) Internal, when a man by repentance, and by endeavour after repentance, inwardly serves God. This may justify our faith; it cannot justify us. (2) Evangelical righteousness is that which is revealed in the gospel; and should never have been revealed if that of the law could have saved us. 2. Thus is a man just before God, but Lot was also just before men; and there is a visible justice, as well as the invisible. (1) There is a righteousness of preparation, which is a resolution of heart to be righteous (Psa. cxix. 106). Though he do sometimes admit sin, he doth never intend sin. (2) There is a righteousness of separation, because it is seen to decline the places of temptation (1 John v. 18). (3) There is a righteousness of reparation which consists in the reforming of errors and conforming of manners, salving past defects by a bettered life, and is indeed the righteousness of repentance. Righteous, not because there is no sin committed, but because there is no sin that is not repented. (4) There is a righteousness of comparison; so was Lot just comparatively among the Sodomites. (5) There is an operative righteousness. The best traveller may stumble in his journey, yet have his eye observant and his foot constant on his way. (a) If we will be delivered, let us be just. (b) Never did man serve God for nothing; if Lot be just, he shall now find the benefit of it. (c) The Lord first makes us just and then saves us. II. HIS PLACE, which was sinful. But why would Lot stay in such a wicked city? Not as a neighbour affected with their customs, but as a physician to cure their diseases. But he that looked for a paradise found a hell, and the cup of his prosperity was spiced with the bitter fruits of a cursed society. What doth Lot in Sodom—a saint among sinners? Fishes may be fresh in salt waters; live in the sea and not partake the brinish quality. It is not so with man; rather some evil for neighbourhood's sake. Can a man be clean among lepers? Sooner are the good corrupted by the bad than the bad are bettered by the good. III. HIS CASE. "Vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." 1. The matter of his vexing was their sin; the evil of the place came from the persons, who were fully, filthily, palpably wicked. (1) The impudence. It was manifest wickedness; their faces did not blush at it (Isa. iii. 9). (2) The continuance. As their sins were extant, so constant; their ways were always grievous (Psa. x. 5). It is not so much sin, as the trade of sin, that is damnable. (3) The uncleanness. Their sin was not only palpable and durable, but detestable. They were exposed to turpitude, their bodies prostituted to fleshly pollutions. 2. "Vexed." This was no ordinary disturbance, nor common displeasure; but oppressed, excruciated, tormented; his senses, his very soul, exceedingly afflicted. He was not an idle looker-on, as if he minded not what they did; nor in a timorous observation of the proverb, "Of little meddling comes great rest"; but knowing it to be the cause of God, his heart was perplexed about it. He was not vexed with them, but with their deeds; we are to hate none for their creation, but perverting the end of their creation. "Vexed." That which is here passive is in the next verse active: he "vexed his righteous soul." Who bade him stay there to be vexed? He vexed himself when he might have quitted himself. Yet because he was vexed he is delivered. Because he avoided their sins he escaped their judgments. And surely they were both miraculous; for his declining their sins was no less a wonder than his deliverance from their flames. As the latter was God's gracious prevention, so the former was His prevenient grace. (*Thos. Adams.*) **Vexed his righteous soul**.—A saint's vexation:—I. THE INCENTIVES. 1. Causal or

radical—"He being righteous." As in natural things, like things are not opposed by like things, fire fights not against fire, but against water; so in moral things, the innocent are not opposed by the innocent; one good man does not persecute another. Wolf and wolf can agree, lamb and lamb fall not out; but who can reconcile the wolf to the lamb? 2. Occasional—"Dwelling among them." One reason why God suffers evil men to try the good. They are the best lilies that thrive amongst thorns. (1) "Amongst them" that hate righteousness, and him for it. (2) "Among them" that thought Lot to be the only man that molested them. (3) "Among them" that thought Lot a proud and imperious fellow. (4) "Among them" that thought him a fool for his labour. (5) "Among them" that thought him exorbitant, because he walked not after their rule. (6) "Among them" that hated the truth, and loved the prophecy of wine and strong drink. Among these bad men dwelt this good Lot, and still he was righteous. It is likely they endeavoured to win him to them, either by rewards or menaces. 3. Objectual—"Their unlawful deeds." Sin is the object or matter of a saint's vexation. That which grieves God should also vex us: this hath tried the zeal of the saints. (Exod. xxxii. 19; 1 Kings xix. 14; 1 Sam. iv. 22; Numb. xxv. 7, 8). 4. Organical or instrumental—"In seeing and hearing." The eye and ear are those special doors that let into the heart its comfort or torment. (1) The sight of sin makes a man either sad or guilty; if we see it, and be not sorrowful, we are sinful. (2) The most offensive sins are such as be objected to sight and hearing. Spiritual and internal sins may be more culpable, outward are more infamous. (3) He did see and not see, hear and not hear. Connivance at rank impiety is bad in all men, intolerable in some; such are the ministers of either gospel or justice. (4) Sodom's sin was so much the more heinous to God, for offending man, and vexing the heart of His servant Lot. (5) He that would not be vexed with evils, let him turn his eyes and ears another way. Let us frequent their company, where in seeing and hearing we may reap comfort. II. THE FIRE ITSELF. "Vexed his righteous soul." 1. Its property. (1) It is the argument of a righteous man to be far from his Maker's service. As sails to the ship and wind to the sails, so is fervency to righteousness. A soldier without courage, a horse without mettle, a creature without vivacity, such is a Christian without fervency. (2) It doth also improve righteousness; like the fire which came down from heaven upon the sacrifices, causing them to ascend thither in acceptation. Fervency is that mark which God would have us set on all His services, that so they may be discerned to be His own. (3) It honours righteousness; many thousands have been righteous whose names are not on record; but of those who have been zealous in their piety, the Scripture takes special notice. 2. Its sincerity. As this was no common fervency, so no counterfeit; he little dissembles whose soul is moved. (1) There be some that vex themselves out of envy; Lot did not so. This is a black zeal, reckoned among the works of the flesh (1 Cor. iii. 3; Acts v. 17; Gal. v. 21; James iii. 14; 1 Cor. xiii. 4; Rom. xiii. 13). (2) There be that vex themselves out of choler; transported with intemperate passions. We do not read that Lot was cruel and turbulent, vexing others; but he vexed himself. (3) There be that vex themselves without cause, and strike their friends for their enemies. Let our zeal come in to part, not to partake the fray; all endeavouring and praying, that peace may be within the gates of Zion. (4) There be that vex themselves out of hypocrisy; they have other ends than God's glory. (5) There be that vex themselves out of ignorance; for there is a zeal not according to knowledge. Here is a pitiable fervency, like mettle in a blind horse, or a sting in an angry bee. (6) The very name of a counterfeit pre-supposeth an original. That virtue which even hypocrites put on to grace them, is, questionless, some rare and admirable thing. The true Lot, whose fervency is in the spirit, not in show; in substance, not in circumstance; for God, not for himself; guided by the Word, not by humour; tempered with charity, not driven with turbulency; such a man's praise is of God, though it be not of men; and through all contempts on earth, it shall find a glorious reward in heaven. 3. Its singularity. One Lot will be righteous amongst and against all Sodom, and express this righteousness in the midst of their vicious customs. It hath been the lot of fervent holiness to be rare, as to be excellent: adherents may hearten, opposites must not dash zeal out of countenance. (1) So near as we can, let us make choice of the good; for man naturally produces works conformable to the objects before his eyes. (2) If, like Lot, we be necessitated to the society of bad people, yet let us be good still; yea, therefore the more holy, because in the midst of a perverse generation, shining as lights in a dark place. (3) Let us follow the examples of the best, not

of the most. Who had not rather be righteous with one singular Lot, than perish with all ungodly Sodom? 4. Its constancy. "From day to day." The fixed stars are even like themselves, whereas meteors and vapours have no continued light. To run with the stream, or sail with the wind, or, like the mari-gold, to open only with the sunshine, is no praise of piety. Give me that Job that will be as honest a man among his thousands as under the rod, when the number of his present ulcers exceeds his former riches. (*Thos. Adams.*) *How ought we to bewail the sins of the places where we live?*—It is the disposition and duty of the righteous to be deeply afflicted with the sins of the places where they live. I. For the obvious Scripture examples.—Our Lord (Mark iii. 5) was "grieved for the hardness of their hearts," namely, in opposing His holy and saving doctrines. David profeseth that "rivers of waters ran down his eyes, because men kept not God's law"; and that when he "beheld the transgressors, he was grieved; because they kept not His Word" (*Psa. cxix. 136, 158*). The next example shall be Ezra's, who, hearing of the sins of the people in marrying with heathens, in token of bitter grief for it, "rent his garment and his mantle, and plucked off the hair of his beard and of his head, and sat down astonished" (*Ezra ix. 3*); and he did neither "eat bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away" (*Ezra x. 6*). To these I might add the example of Jeremiah (*Jer. xiii. 17*). I shall conclude this with that expression of holy Paul (*Phil. iii. 18*).

II. The manner how this duty of mourning for the sins of others is to be performed.

1. In our mourning for the sins of others in respect of God, we must advance—(1) His great and unparalleled patience and long-suffering extended toward those whose sins we lament. This was evident in Nehemiah's bewailing the sins of the sinful Jews (*Neh. ix. 30*). (2) In mourning for the sins of the wicked, advance God in the acknowledgment of His justice and spotless righteousness, should He with utmost severity take vengeance upon offenders. (3) In spreading before God the wickednesses of great sinners, admire His infinite power, that can not only stop the worst of men in, but turn them from, their course of opposing God by their rebellions. We are not so to mourn for, as to despair of the conversion of, the worst. They are as much within the converting reach as the destructive reach of God's hand. (4) In mourning admire that grace and power that hath kept thee from their excesses. It should more comfort thee that thou sinnest not with them, than trouble thee that thou sufferest from them.

2. The second branch of the manner how we must bewail the sins of others is as it respects those for whom and for whose sins we lament and mourn.

(1) We must bewail the sins of our bitterest enemies, as well as of our most beloved relations—a rare and seldom-practised duty I fear that this will be found. (2) We ought to bewail the sins of our near and dear relations in a greater measure than those of mere strangers—natural affection, sanctified, is the strongest. (3) They that mourn for others' sins, especially the sins of those they most love, must mourn more for their sins than their afflictions and outward troubles. (4) We ought to bewail the sins of others according to the proportion of the sins of the times and places where we live. (5) We ought to mourn for the sins of others advantageously to those for whom we mourn, with the using of all due means to reclaim and reduce them. (a) By prayer for their conversion and God's pardoning them. (b) We must endeavour to follow the mourning for sinners with restraining them from sin (if we have it) by power. (c) We must mourn for sinners with advantaging them by example, that they may never be able to tax us with those sins for which we would be thought sorrowful. (d) We must follow our mourning for others' sins with labouring to advantage them by holy reproof for the sins we mourn for. (e) With expressing that commiseration toward a sinner in private which thou exprestest for him before God in secret. (6) We must mourn for those sins of others that are in appearance advantageous to ourselves.

3. I shall consider how we should mourn for the sins of others in respect of ourselves.

(1) They whom God hath set in any place or station of superiority over others, either more public or in families, should be the most eminent mourners for the sins of those committed to their charge. (2) Those who, now converted, have been the most open sinners in their unconverted state should more lay to heart the sins of the openly wicked than those who have lived more civilly and without scandal. (3) They that mourn for others' sins must more mourn because those sins are offensive and dishonourable to God and hurtful to sinners, than because they are injurious to themselves that mourn over them. (4) They that mourn for others' sins should mourn more in secret than in open complaining. (5) They that mourn for others' sins must mourn to a high degree who have been the occasions and

promoters of their sins—either by neglecting to reprove them for, restraining them from, or giving them examples of, sinning. This sanctified conscience will make one of the bitterest ingredients into sorrow for the sins of others. (6) They that mourn for the sins of others must mourn with a holy reflection upon themselves. (a) They must reflect upon themselves with sorrow, because they have the same impure natures that the most-to-be-lamented sinner in the world hath. (b) With a reflection of examination. (i) Whether you have not some way or other furthered this sinner in his much-to-be-lamented impieties. (ii) Whether the same open sins that are acted by him—the noted offender—or sins almost or altogether as bad, are not acted and entertained by thee in secret places, or at least in thy heart. (c) With a reflection of care and watchfulness that thou mayest never dare to fall into the sins that thou bewailest in another; that thou who labourest to quench the fire that hath seized upon thy neighbour's house, mayest be careful to preserve thine from being set on fire also. III. To show why this holy mourning is—

1. The disposition, and
2. Duty of the righteous, I shall express the reasons of both distinctly. 1. It is their disposition, and that under a threefold qualification—(1) Because they are a knowing people. They know what tears and heart-breakings sin hath stood them in; they know that sin will cost the wicked either tears of repentance or damnation; they know that sin is but gilded destruction, and fire and brimstone in a disguise (2 Cor. v. 11). (2) As to a saint's disposition: he is compassionate and tender-hearted. If sinners mourn, he mourns with them; if not, he mourns for them. (3) The righteous are a purified, sanctified people. A saint, as such, hates nothing but sin. 2. It is the duty as well as the disposition of the righteous to mourn for the sins of others; and that as they are considerable in a threefold relation. (1) In their relation to God. As “the sons of God” they are commanded to be “blameless, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation” (Phil. ii. 15). (2) Their relation to the Mediator, the Lord Christ. Here I shall mention only a double relation between Christ and saints, that engageth them to mourn for the sins of others. (a) The first is His relation to us as a suffering Surety, in respect whereof He paid the debt of penalty which we owed to God's justice; for it was sin in man that made Christ “a man of sorrows.” (b) There is a second relation between Christ and saints that should make them mourn for the sins of the wicked; and that is the relation of Teacher and Instructor. We are His disciples and scholars; and it is our duty as much to make Him our Example as to expect He should obtain our pardon. Christ never had a pollution, but oft a commotion, of affection; Christ never wept but for sin or its effects. (3) Their relation to the wicked, for whose sins they should mourn. (a) The saints are men with the worst; they have the relation of human nature to the greatest sinners upon earth (Heb. xiii. 3). It is a wickedness to hide ourselves from our own flesh (Isa. lviii. 7). (b) The righteous are the same with the wicked in respect of corrupt, depraved nature; born in sin as much as they, with a principle of inclination to all their impieties (Eph. ii. 3). Should it not, then, make thee mourn to consider, by the wickedness of others, thine own inbred depravation? what thou hadst done thyself if God had not either renewed or restrained thee? yea, what thou wouldest do if God should leave thee, and withdraw His grace from thee? (c) Perhaps the holiest men have been, some way or other, furtherers of the sins of the wicked among whom they live; perhaps by their former sinful example when they lived in the same sins themselves which now the wicked wallow in. Shouldest not thou, then, mourn for killing that soul which God so severely punisheth, though free grace hath pardoned thee? Should we not quench that fire with our tears which we have blown-up with our bellows of encouragement? (d) In this relation of saints to sinners that should put them upon mourning for them, it is very considerable that the godly and the wicked make up one community, or political body, in the places where they live. In which respect the sins of some particular offender or offenders may pull down judgments upon the whole body. So that every one had need do his utmost, by mourning, and in whatever other way he can, to redress the sins, and so to prevent the plagues, of the place where he lives. IV. Application. Use I. OF INFORMATION in sundry branches. 1. Godliness is uniform in all times, places, and companies. A righteous man is not, as the swine in a meadow, clean only in clean places; he will maintain opposition to sin in the midst of inducements to sin. His goodness may justly be suspected that only shows itself in good places, companies, and times. 2. The greatest sinners cannot constrain us to sin. The greatest temptation is no plea for committing the least sin: if we give not away, none can take away our holiness. 3. One cause may

produce contrary effects. Others' sins draw the wicked to follow them, but they put the saints upon bewailing them. 4. It is our duty to rejoice in the holiness, it to mourn for the sins, of others. Love to God's house in others was David's gladness (Psa. cxxii. 1). It was the greatest joy of holy John that his spiritual "children walked in the truth" (3 John 4). Holy ones were Paul's "joy, crown, and glory" (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20). 5. Christianity abolisheth not affection, but rectifies it. Grace is like the percolation or draining of salt water through the earth; it only takes away the brackishness and unsavouriness of our affections and faculties. 6. Everything betters a saint. Not only ordinances, word, sacraments, holy society, but even sinners and their very sinning. Even these draw forth their graces into exercise, and put them upon godly, broken-hearted mourning. 7. The great misery that sin hath brought into the world, to make sorrow and mourning necessary. It should make us long for a better world, where that which is here our duty to practise shall for ever be our privilege to be freed from. 8. There must needs remain a better state for the saints. 9. How ought sinners to mourn for their own sins! The nearer the enemy is, the more dreadful he is. Nothing more dismal than to see a sinner to go, not swiftly only, but merrily, to eternal mourning. "He that hath no tears for himself, should be helped by others." Use II. The second use is OF REPREHENSION; and that to sundry sorts. 1. To those that reproach the holy mourning of saints for others' sins. They are falsely esteemed the incendiaries in a state whose great study is to quench God's burning wrath. If sinners kindle the fire, let saints quench it. 2. This doctrine of mourning for the sins of others speaks reproof to those that take pleasure in the sins of others (Rom. i. 32). 3. This doctrine reproves those that mourn for the holiness of others. I have known some parents that have greatly desired their children should be good husbands, to get and increase their estates; but then have been very fearful lest they should be too godly; and it hath been the righteous judgment of God that their children proved spendthrifts, neither godly nor good husbands. It is often seen that, as gardeners with their shears snip off the tops of the tallest sprigs, so men most labour to discountenance the tallest in Christianity. 4. This doctrine reproves those that put others upon sin, so far are they from mourning for their sins. Poor souls! have they not sins enough of their own to answer for? It is little enough to be a leader to heaven, but too much to be a follower to hell; what, then, to be a leader! Use III. OF EXHORTATION, to mourn for the sins of the wicked among whom we live. 1. If we mourn not for others' sins, theirs become ours. 2. Mourning for others' sins is the way to awaken thy conscience for thine own former sins. 3. Without mourning for sinners you will never seek the reformation of sinners. 4. This mourning for others' sins will make us more fearful to admit sin into ourselves. 5. Mourning for others' sins speaks thee a man of public usefulness to thy country. 6. Mourning for others' sins makes the sins of others beneficial to thee. 7. Holy commotion of soul for others' sins sends forth a most acceptable and fragrant savour into the nostrils of God. Use IV. I shall add one use more; and that is DIRECTION to the means of practising this duty of holy mourning for others' sins: 1. Look not upon this duty with self-exemption. As if it belonged only to the highest in the practice of religion, or persons in office. All desire to be marked, and therefore should be mourners (Ezek. ix. 4). 2. Look upon mourning for sin to be no legal practice, but an evangelical duty. The gospel-grace makes tears sweeter, not fewer. 3. Preserve tenderness of conscience in respect of thine own sins. 4. Strengthen faith in divine threatenings against sin. 5. Be holly, not curiously, inquisitive into the state of the times. 6. Take heed of being drowned in sensual delights. (*W. Jenkin, M.A.*) *Distress of the pious at the wickedness of the godless*:—The pious are distressed at the sins of the godless because—1. These sins sully the glory of God; 2. They show the tyranny of Satan over men; 3. They conduce to the condemnation of the godless. (*J. Fronmüller.*) *Grief at sin*:—John Bunyan's wife having, after several previous applications to different judges, made a specially importunate appeal to Judges Hale and Twisdon for the release of her husband from Bedford gaol, and being again unsuccessful, said: "I remember that though I was somewhat timorous at my first entrance into the chamber, yet, before I went out, I could not but break forth into tears, not so much because they were so hard-hearted against me and my husband, but to think what a sad account such poor creatures will have to give at the coming of the Lord, when they shall then answer for all things whatsoever they have done in the body, whether it be good or whether it be bad." (*Tinling's Illustrations.*) *A Christian in the world is like a rose among noxious weeds*:—Does a rose refuse to grow and to

emit a sweet odour because there are noxious weeds in the same field? And does the rose complain and declare that it will not fulfil its mission until every weed is pulled up? A rose is a rose in the midst of thorns and thistles. A Christian is a Christian under all circumstances, and whether the world is full of noxious weeds, and the Church swarming with hypocrites, the man of faith continues to grow and bear fruit, exhaling a sweet and salutary fragrance on all around. A Christian who refuses to shed spiritual fragrance upon the desert air, because of the presence of mean and defective church members, is a mere fungus sort of Christian, being devoid of the seeds of truth, and hence empty of spiritual vitality. **The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly.**—*The Lord's knowledge our safeguard:*

—I. THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO CHARACTER. 1. He knows the godly

(1) Under trial, when they are not known to others. (2) Under temptation, when scarcely known to themselves. 2. He knows the unjust—(1) Though they make loud professions of piety. (2) Though they may be honoured for their great possessions.

II. THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO THE GODLY. He knows how to let them suffer, and yet to deliver them in the most complete and glorious manner. 1. His knowledge answers better than theirs would do. 2. His knowledge of their case is perfect. 3. He knows in every case how to deliver them. 4. He knows the most profitable way of deliverance. 5. His knowledge should cause them to trust in Him with holy confidence, and never to sin in order to escape.

III. THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO THE UNJUST. 1. They are unjust in all senses, for they are—(1) Not legally just by keeping the law. (2) Nor evangelically just through faith in Jesus. (3) Nor practically just in their daily lives. 2. The Lord knows best—(1) How to deal with them from day to day. (2) How to reserve them under restraints. He makes it possible to relieve them, and yet to maintain law and order. (3) How to punish them with unrest and fears even now. (4) How and when to strike them down when their iniquities are full. (5) How to deal with them in judgment, and throughout the future state. The mysteries of eternal doom are safe in His hand. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

God's dealings with the godly and their persecutors:—I. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE GODLY. 1. A deliverance.

It is a great comfort in every distress to hope for a deliverance; to believe it, greater; to be sure of it, greatest of all. Thus certain is every Christian, by the assurance of faith, grounded on the infallible promise of God. God often defers His deliverance. (1) To return us home: when no man will harbour that unthrift son, he will back again to his father. (2) To make us seek our deliverance in the right place: while money can buy physic, or friends procure enlargement, the great Physician Helper is not thoroughly trusted. (3) To set a better price on His benefits; for suddenly gotten are suddenly forgotten. 2. The persons delivered are the "godly." Godliness consists in two things: (1) The devout admiration; and

(2) Sincere imitation of God. 3. From what—"out of temptations." They, of all men, are most subject to temptations. The higher a tree shoots up, the more tempest-beaten. To suggest evil is Satan's blame; to resist it our praise. The more we are tried in the furnace, the purer gold we shall go to the treasury of heaven. Lord, make us as strong as the devil is malicious. (1) We that pray for deliverance from evil must endeavour against evil. Let us have wary eyes, for it is not the self-appearing devil, but the same or transformed angel, that doth corrupt us. (2) Consider what preventions the provident God useth against our sinnings. Sometimes He shortens our own arms, sometimes strengthens others against us. Sometimes reason is heard, when religion sits out; and the dishonesty, inutility, or difficulty of a sin is perpended. But it is best, when the fear of God hath corrected us, or the Word of God averted us, or the Spirit of God recalled us. (3) Let us meditate how we are blessed of God, and have reason to bless God, for these happy deliverances. (4) If we love not evil, let us long for our final and plenary deliverance from it; that immortal court, where sin can no more enter; out of this the tempter is excluded for ever. Here the Lord delivers us from the damnation and domination of sin, there from the temptation and assault; here it shall not overcome us, there it shall not come near us. 4. Our deliverer—"The Lord." His sovereignty is—(1) Independent. (2) Absolute. (3) Universal. (4) Necessary. We could not live but by His dominion. (5) Immutable. What God once is, He is for ever. (6) Incomprehensible. (7) Glorious and blessed. 5. "The Lord knoweth how." As there is nothing impossible to His might, so there is nothing concealable from His understanding. (1) He knows our temptations before they be upon us; He sees the preparing of the potion, weighs the ingredients to a scruple, qualifies the malignity of the purgatives with sweet consolations. (2) He knows them when

they be upon us (Exod. ii. 25; Psa. xxxi. 7). (3) He knows how to rid them from us. They are often so perplexful and intricate, that neither we see, nor the world sees, nor reason apprehends how, yet the Lord knoweth. II. THE END OF THEIR PERSECUTORS. 1. The malefactors. The wicked are 'unjust.' (1) To God. Righteousness is an obedience to the will of God, and injustice is no other than disobedience. (2) To man. Such are they that measure their right by their power, and therefore will do injury because they cannot do it. Unjust—(a) To the commonwealth. (b) To the Church. (c) To private persons. (3) To a man's self. So is the thriftless, that spends himself into poverty by pride and luxury; the envious, that loses the sweetness of his own by grudging at his neighbours; the covetous, that adds to the content of his treasure what he should add to the content of his nature. 2. The binding over. "Are reserved." Whether they sleep or wake, play or work, stand or walk, their time runs on, their judgment is nearer; and they are more surely kept unto it, than any dungeon, with the thickest walls and strongest chains, can hold a prisoner till his arraignment comes. (1) Wickedness hath but a time, but the punishment of wickedness is beyond all time. (2) The unjust are already reserved, the decree is passed against them. They are bound over to the last assizes by a threefold recognisance, as it were with infrangible, though insensible, chains of judgment—the bond of their sins, the bond of their conscience, and the bond of omnipotent justice—and this threefold cable is not easily broken. 3. The assizes. "To the day of judgment." (1) The sufficiency of the Judge. (2) The necessity of the judgment (2 Thess. i. 6, 7). 4. The execution. "To be punished." In this judgment, God respects no persons; He knows no valour, no honour, no riches, no royalty, in the matter of sin; but Rom. ii. 9. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The trial and deliverance of the godly*:—I. OUR RELIGION MUST BE FAIRLY TRIED. 1. The pleasures of life, as they are generally deemed, present themselves before you; many of them decidedly sinful, others of them, though not directly immoral, yet very ensnaring, they invite you to the indulgence of gratifications which war against the soul. Do you habitually resist these salutations? 2. The world, apart from its disgusting vices, exhibits to your mind, in bright colours, the numerous comforts, the many enjoyments, the family advantages, the great interests, belonging to a state of prosperity and affluence. Do you when thus tempted adhere firmly to the great Christian principle of renouncing the world? 3. Even religion itself, with imposing professions, will invite your attention and adherence for the purpose of ensnaring and deceiving your souls. Do you continue steadfast in the faith, true to your only Lord and Master? Do you reject every substitute for Christ Himself? 4. A persecuting spirit, under the pretext of holy zeal for God and religion, has often been exerted, and has proved a severe trial of faith and sincerity. Do you notwithstanding cleave to the Lord?—hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering? 5. Afflictions generally are a trial of our religion. It is when we are brought low in trouble that the excellency of faith, the sincerity of our hearts, the truth of our profession, the reality of our love to God, and the purity of our faith in the Son of God will be most satisfactorily manifested. Yet, let it be seriously remembered, that it is not the impression of the moment, but the subsequent permanent, abiding effects of affliction that become a real test of godliness. II. THE ENCOURAGING PROMISE CONVEYED IN THIS PASSAGE TO MEN OF TRUTH AND SINCERITY. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." A faithful God is not only able to comfort and sustain them that wait upon Him, but He will do it most wisely; He knoweth how to dispense His grace most advantageously to them that really love Him and cast their care upon Him. (*S. Morell.*) *Deliverance from temptation the privilege of the righteous*:—1. Who are here to be understood by "the godly." He, and he only, can lay claim to so glorious a qualification who is actually in covenant with God, and that not only by external profession, but by real relation. In a word, he, and he only, ought to pass for godly, according to the unalterable rules of Christianity, who allows not himself in the omission of any known duty, or the commission of the least known sin. And this certainly will, and nothing less that I know of can, either secure a man from falling into temptation, or (which is yet a greater happiness) from falling by it. 2. The other thing to be inquired into is, what is here meant by "temptation"; a thing better known by its ill effects than by the best description. The Greek word signifies "trial," and so imports not so much the matter as the end of the dispensation. But (the common and most received use of the word having added something of malignity to its first and native signification) generally in Scripture it denotes not only a bare trial, but such a one as is attended with a design to hurt or

mischieve the people so tried. As for the sense in which the word ought to be taken here, it may be, and no doubt with great truth is, in the full latitude of it, applicable to both sorts of temptation : it being no less the prerogative of God's goodness and power to deliver men from such trials as afflict them, than from such as are designed to corrupt them. Nevertheless, I think it also as little to be doubted, that the text chiefly respects this latter signification, and accordingly speaks here most designedly of such a deliverance as breaks the snares and defeats the stratagems by which the great and mortal enemy of mankind is so infinitely busy, first to debauch, and then to destroy souls. And now, if it be inquired whether they are the righteous only whom God delivers from temptation, and that no such deliverances are ever vouchsafed by Him to any of the contrary character, I answer that I can find nothing in Scripture or reason to found such a doctrine upon, but that such deliverances both may be and sometimes are vouchsafed to persons far enough from being reckoned godly, either in the accounts of God or man. And first, that they may be so, we need no other reason to evince it than this, that God in these cases may very well restrain the actions, without working any change upon the will or affections. And in the next place, that such deliverances not only may be, but sometimes actually are afforded to persons represented under no note of piety or virtue, but much otherwise, those three memorable examples of Abimelech, Esau, and Balaam (Gen. xx., xxxiii. ; Numb. xxii.) sufficiently demonstrate. So that we may rationally conclude that even wicked persons also are sometimes sharers in such deliverances ; but still so, that this by all means ought to be observed withal, that the said deliverances are dealt forth to these two different sorts of men upon very different grounds, viz., to the former upon the stock of covenant or promises ; to the latter upon the stock of uncovenanted mercy, and the free overflowing egress of the Divine benignity, often exerting itself upon such as have no claim to it at all. I. TO SHOW HOW FAR GOD DELIVERS PERSONS TRULY PIOUS OUT OF TEMPTATION. 1. God delivers by way of prevention, or keeping off the temptation ; which, of all other ways, is doubtless the surest, as the surest is unquestionably the best. For by this is set a mighty barrier between the soul and the earliest approaches of its mortal enemy. Unspeakable are the advantages vouchsafed to mankind by God's preventing grace, if we consider how apt a temptation is to diffuse, and how prone our nature is to receive an infection. For though the soul be not actually corrupted by a temptation, yet it is something to be sullied and blown upon by it, to have been in the dangerous familiarities of sin, and in the next approach and neighbourhood of destruction. Such being the nature of man, that it is hardly possible for him to be near an ill thing and not the worse for it. 2. We are now to consider such persons as advanced a step further, and as they are actually entered into temptation ; and so also God is at hand for their deliverance. For as it was God who suspended the natural force of that material fire from acting upon the bodies of the three children mentioned in Dan. iii., so it is God alone who must control the fury of this spiritual flame from seizing upon the soul, having always so much fuel and fit matter there for it to prey upon. And for an eternal monument of His goodness, He has not left us without some such heroic instances as these upon record in His Word, that so the saints may receive double courage and confidence, having their deliverance not only sealed and secured to them by promise, but also that promise ratified and made good to them by precedents and examples, like so many stars appearing, both to direct and to comfort the benighted traveller. 3. And lastly, we are to consider the persons hitherto spoken of as not only entered into temptation, but also as in some measure prevailed upon by it. But that I may give some light to this weighty case of conscience, how far a person truly godly may, without ceasing to be so, be prevailed upon by temptation, I will here set down the several degrees and advances by which a temptation or sinful proposal gradually wins the soul, and those all of them comprised in James i. 14, 15. 1. The first of which we may call seduction. 2. The second degree of temptation may be called enticement or allurements. 3. The third degree is, when after such possession had of the thoughts and fancy, the temptation comes to make its way into the consent of the will, and to gain that great fort also, so that the mind begins to propose, and accordingly to contrive the commission of the sin proposed to it. 4. The fourth degree of prevalence which a temptation gets over the soul is, the actual eruption of it in the perpetration or commission of the sin suggested to it. 5. The fifth and last degree, completing the victory which temptation obtains over a man is, when sin comes to that pitch as to reign, and so by consequence put out of all possibility either of resistance or escape. Having thus reckoned up the several degrees of temptation, and set before you the fatal round

of the devil's methods for destroying souls, let us now in the next place inquire how far God vouchsafes to deliver the pious and sincere out of them. In answer to which, I first of all affirm, that God's methods in this case are very various, and not to be declared by any one universal assertion. Sometimes by a total and entire deliverance, He delivers them from every degree and encroachment of a temptation. Sometimes He lets them fall into the first degree of it, and receive it into their thoughts; but then delivers them from the second, which is to cherish and continue it there, by frequent pleasing reflections upon it. Sometimes He gives way to this too, but then hinders it from coming to a full purpose and consent of will. Sometimes He lets it go thus far also, and suffers sin to conceive by such a purpose or consent: but then, by a kind of spiritual abortion, stifles it in the very birth, and so keeps it from breaking forth into actual commission. And lastly, for reasons best known to His most wise providence, He sometimes permits a temptation to grow so powerful as to have strength to bring forth and to defile the soul with one or more gross actual eruptions. But then, in the last place, by a mighty overpowering grace, He very often, as some assert, or always, as others affirm, keeps it from an absolute, entire, and final conquest. So that sin never comes to such a height as to reign in the godly, to bear sway, and become habitual. But though its endeavours are not always extinguished, nor its sallings out wholly stopped, yet its dominion is broken. It may sometimes bruise and wound, but it shall never kill. Now the foregoing particulars, upon a due improvement of them, will naturally teach us these two great and important lessons. 1. Concerning the singular goodness as well as wisdom of our great Lawgiver, even in the strictest and severest precepts of our religion. Certainly it is a much greater mercy and tenderness to the souls of men to represent the first movings of the heart towards any forbidden object as unlawful in themselves, and destructive in their consequence, and thereby to incite the soul to a vigorous resistance of them while they may be mastered, and with ten times less trouble extinguished, than after they are once actually committed, they can be repented of. No doubt sin is both more easily and effectually kept from beginning than, being once begun, it can be stopped from going on. 2. The other great lesson is concerning the most effectual method of dealing with the tempter and his temptations; and that is, to follow the method of their dealing with us. A temptation never begins where it intends to make an end. II. To show what is the prime motive, or grand impulsive cause, inducing God to deliver persons truly pious out of temptation. Now this is twofold: 1. The free mercy of God; and 2. The prevailing intercession of Christ. III. To show why and upon what grounds deliverance out of temptation is to be reputed so great a mercy and so transcendent a privilege. In order to which, as all deliverance, in the very nature and notion of it, imports a relation to some evil from which a man is delivered; so in this deliverance out of temptation, the surpassing greatness of it, and the sovereign mercy shown in it, will appear from those intolerable evils and mischiefs which are always intended by, and naturally consequents upon, a prevailing temptation. Four things more especially are designed and driven at by the tempter in all his temptations. 1. To begin with the greatest, and that which is always first intended, though last accomplished, the utter loss and damnation of the soul. For this is the grand mark which the tempter shoots at, this being the beloved prize which he contends so hard for. 2. In the second place, loss of a man's peace with God and his own conscience, and the weakening, if not extinguishing, all his former hopes of salvation. It confounds and casts a man infinitely backwards as to his spiritual accounts. It degrades him from his assurance; renders his title to heaven dubious and perplexed; draws a great and discouraging blot over all his evidences, and even shakes in pieces that confidence which was formerly the very life and support of his soul, with new, terrible, and amazing objections. 3. The third consequence of a prevailing temptation is the exposing of a man to the temporal judgments of God in some signal and severe affliction. For though in much mercy God may, as we have shown, save such a one from eternal death, yet it rarely happens that He frees him both from destruction and from discipline too; but that some time or other He gives him a taste of the bitter cup, and teaches him what his sin has deserved, by what at present it makes him feel. 4. The fourth and last mischievous consequence of a prevailing temptation is the disgrace, scandal, and reproach which it naturally brings upon our Christian profession. The three former consequences terminated within the compass of the sinner's own person; but this last spreads and diffuses the mischief much further: nothing in nature casting so deep a stain upon the face of Christianity as the blots which fall upon it from the

lewd and scandalous behaviour of Christians. (*R. South, D.D.*) **And to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.**—*The reality of future punishment*:—I. **THINK OF THE CRISIS WHICH IS INDICATED BY THE TEXT.** “The day of judgment.” At the day of judgment those of whom our text speaks will be present. These unjust ones will avowedly be all there. They are still existing, because then they will be forthcoming. Yes, and all besides these unjust ones are still existing, in order that they may be forthcoming then. Every descendant of Adam is existing unto this hour; living as much as we are living, away amidst the intermediate blessedness or woe; awaiting there the coming of the Lord to judgment. Public pronouncement must there be of the allotted destiny, world without end. The present does not terminate upon itself. II. **THINK OF THE PARTIES DESIGNATED BY THE TEXT.** “The unjust.” This word is used to represent the ungodly. To be unjust towards our fellow-man is to do unto him that which should have been avoided, and to neglect to do unto him that which should have been performed. We sustain to him relationships involving manifold obligations. We sustain towards God relationships involving manifold obligations. Certain things are due from us to God; certain tempers of heart; certain modes of thought; certain habits of life. They are in no wise optional. Now, in the judgment of the great day inquisition will be instituted accordingly. Not a godly man has lived who will not then be honourably recognised. Not an ungodly man has lived whose ungodliness will not then be brought transparently to light. Compromise will be impossible. Suppression will be impossible. Evasion will be impossible. III. **THINK OF THE DOOM DECLARED BY OUR TEXT.** “Punishment unto which they have been reserved.” There was, according to the intimation, an idea of ultimate escape. The penalty which had been merited would somehow be averted. So in their folly men imagined they should not surely die. But God was knowing them all the while; preparing, moreover, all the while, as His forewarnings told, to execute His will. Dare any man amongst us to suggest that the great God was inconsiderate when He spoke of a fearful looking-for of judgment? Dare any man amongst us to suggest that He who holdeth us responsible for the full sincerity of our own words has been so far indifferent to the full sincerity of His own as to speak of tribulation in the future life when there is no such thing as tribulation? Real, downright positively real, this future punishment of the unjust. Forecastings of the punishment are sometimes realised in the present life. Instances of punishment have now and then occurred among the children of men which are enough to silence the objections which some of you are making now. You want the preacher to remember the goodness of God. I have it in remembrance; but I have in remembrance also the blindness of Elymas the sorcerer, and the latter end of Herod, who was eaten up of worms. You want the preacher to remember the goodness of God. I have it in remembrance; but I have in remembrance also the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise; the cherubim with the flaming sword being placed there to dare them ever to return. (*W. Brock.*)

Ver. 10. Them that walk after the flesh, . . . and despise government.—*Walking after the flesh*:—Now from the thesis he accommodates the general doctrine to his own purpose. If God will take vengeance on all the wicked, let not these pernicious seducers think to escape. 1. They follow “the flesh,” not reason, much less the Spirit. 2. They “walk after” the flesh: the flesh is not like some stranger, whom they meet rarely; or some friend, whom they see but now and then; or a domestic companion, with whom they eat, drink, play, sleep. But it is their commander, whose colours they march under. It is the weight that sets all their wheels a-going; the horses that draw their chariot, the very life of their corruption, and corruption of their life, without which they do nothing. 3. “In the lust of uncleanness”—a sordid, irrational, stinking turpitude. After this the reprobate walks; his whole self, all the parts of him: his eyes walk after to look upon it; his ears walk after to hearken to it; his mouth walks after to talk of it; his feet walk after to pursue it; his hands stay not behind to act it; his heart is foremost of all to desire it. 4. Finally, whatsoever may cross their lusts, they set themselves to contemn. “Despise government.” Not that Almighty Word which rules heaven and earth, but all the beams of God’s omnipotent royalty, in His deputed magistracy. As if they resolved to disgrace that wherein God had imprinted the most immediate characters of His own supreme majesty. (*Thos. Adams.*) **Presumptuous.**—*Presumption*:—Presumption is a deliberate and wilful sinning against conscience, example, or warning. 1. There be some that presume of safety in sin, not doubting to fare well, while they

fear not to do ill: as if this world were to last for ever, and the corn and tares were never to be parted. 2. There be some that attempt things without warrant, or expect things without promise; this is the common presumption of the world. And they that know they cannot live without feeding, or change places without moving, yet will hope to be saved without practical obedience. 3. There be some that take their salvation without all question, and are so sure of heaven that they never doubt the contrary; and this is presumption. Every good grace hath its counterfeit: if in the faithful there be a modest assurance of their blessedness in Christ, the carnal will be blown up with an impudent arrogance, as if their footing was as sure in heaven as any man's. That we may not be thus cozened, observe some differences between presumption and assurance. (1) Presumption is natural, assurance supernatural: we were born with that, we are new-born to this: that was the legacy of Adam, this of Christ. (2) Presumption submits not itself to ordinary means, assurance refuses no means of being made better. (3) Presumption is without all doubting, assurance feels many perplexities: he that doubts not of his estate, his estate is much to be doubted of. (4) Presumption is joined with looseness of life, persuasion with a tender conscience: that dares sin because it is sure, this dares not for fear of losing assurance. (*Ibid.*) *Presumption* is a firework, made up of pride and foolhardiness. It is indeed like a heavy house built upon slender crutches; like dust, which men throw against the wind, it flies back in their face, and makes them blind. Wise men presume nothing, but hope the best; presumption is hope out of her wits. (*Ibid.*) *Presumption*:—I heard the Hon. Thomas Marshall, of Kentucky, make a ten minutes' speech in Broadway Tabernacle, in which he said, "Were this great globe one chrysolite, and I offered the possession if I would drink one glass of brandy, I would refuse it with scorn; and I want no religion, I want the temperance pledge." With that wonderful voice of his he thundered out, "We want no religion in this movement; let it be purely secular, and keep religion where it belongs." Poor Tom Marshall, with all his self-confidence, fell, and died at Poughkeepsie in clothes given him by Christian charity. (*J. B. Gough.*) **Self-willed.**—*Self-willed sinners*:—The natural and unsanctified will of man is hard to tame. No prince can tame the will: he may load the body with irons, vex the sense with pains, yea, surcharge the affections with sorrows; yet still a man's will is his own: in his will he is a king, even while his body is below a slave. The will can make a man's life happy or wretched, when fortune cannot do it. The self-willed man needs no greater enemy than he is to himself. 1. The malicious and spiteful (Numb. xvi. 3). 2. They that despair of proffered grace, and with both hands put back the proffered goodness of God. 3. Contemners of the Word (Hos. viii. 12). 4. Blasphemers. (*T. Adams.*) *Self-will*:—The self-willed is a slave to the worst part of himself; that which is beast in him governs that which is man: appetite is his lord, reason his servant, religion his drudge. His five senses are all the articles of his faith; and he had rather be a famous man upon earth than a saint in heaven. He likes nothing for any goodness, but because he will like it; and he will like it because others do not. If an unseasonable shower cross his recreation, he is ready to fall out with heaven, and to quarrel with God Himself, as if he were wronged because God did not take his time when to rain and when to shine. He is a querulous cur that barks at every horse; and in the silent night the very moonshine opens his clamorous throat. All his proceedings are so many precipices, and his attempts peremptory. He hath not the patience to consult with reason, but determines all merely by affection and fancy. There is no part about him but often smarts for his will. His sides be sore with stripes, and thank his will for it. His bowels are empty, and complain that his will robs them of sustenance. Yea, not seldom, his will breaks the covenant, and his neck pays the forfeit. He is the lawyer's best client, his own sycophant, and the devil's wax, to take what impression he will give him. (*Ibid.*) **Not afraid to speak evil of dignities.**—*Speaking evil of dignities*:—In the discharging of this artillery of hell against the glories and powers which God has ordained, we may consider four particulars: the bullet, the musket, the powder, and the mark. The musket is the malice of the heart; the powder the spitefulness of the tongue; the bullet is blasphemy, disgracing of magistrates; the mark, or butt, is dignities. 1. This piece is charged with three deadly bullets, libelling, murmuring, mutinying. (1) Libellers think it a point of wit to traduce magistracy. Scandals of great men have seldom any fathers; they kill, and make no report. (2) Murmurers, though they disperse not written scandals of the magistracy, yet mutter out repining exceptions against their actions. (3) Mutineers so speak evil of dignities that they raise up evil against

dignities. He that poisons the people with a mal-opinion of their prince, is the most dangerous traitor. 2. The engine that carries this mischievous burden is the tongue. It flies lightly, but injures heavily. It is but a little member, but the nimblest about a man, able to do both body and soul a mischief. 3. The powder that chargeth the tongue, and carries this shot of blasphemy, must needs be malice, the saltpetre of a rancorous hatred. 4. The butts at which this pestilent artillery lets fly the apostle calls dignities, glories. God hath not only set them as vicegerents in His own room, but also enabled them with gifts for so great a designment. Good kings are no ordinary blessings: a worthy general is worth half an army; such as Moses and Joshua were, whose faith fought more for the camp than the camp fought for them. Inferences: (1) Glories they are, why then should they not be glorious? Let their pomp, apparel, diet, dwelling, all be magnificent; let nothing be wanting to their state upon whom depends the state of all. (2) Dignities they are, therefore should be worthy—(a) Of admittance. (b) In performance. No dastards, not proud and disdainful, nor covetous. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 11. **Whereas angels . . . bring not railing accusation.**—*Lessons from the angels*:—From this angelical moderation we learn—1. Not to accuse. This is one of the most significant names of the devil, to be an accuser of the brethren. Love covers a multitude of sins; malice discovers what should be concealed. 2. Not to rail. This is indeed properly the language of hell. Angels do not rail, devils do; angels do not curse, devils do. Your curse is an arrow shot against a stone, it shall wound yourselves. 3. To be afraid of these impieties, as being always before the Lord. A good man would not admit them, were he sure that God would never take notice of it; but before the Lord, who dares rail on His delected image? Corrupt fear dreads the penalty, loves the sin. Gracious fear dreads the sin, and escapes the penalty. The fear of the Lord is pure, because it keeps the heart from being defiled. (*Thos. Adams.*)

Ver. 12. **But these, as natural brute beasts.**—*Men like beasts*:—I. **THEIR RESEMBLANCE.** 1. What they are like—beasts. You have read many fables and apologies, wherein beasts are feigned to speak like men; but who would endure that theatre, where men be seen to play the beast? Such is the power of sin, it can transform men into beast. While idolaters turn beasts into gods, they turn themselves into beasts. 2. Wherein they are like them. (1) The whole intendment of the beast is sensuality; and so of wicked men. (2) Beasts cannot foresee the future, nor provide for it. (3) Beasts are not ashamed of their deeds; where is no reason, there is no sin; and where no sin, no shame. These have reason, yet are not ashamed of their abominations (*Jer. viii. 12*); and therein are beasts, or worse. II. **THEIR ORDINANCE.** “Made to be taken and destroyed.” 1. God is an absolute Lord over His creatures, and hath as just right of their disposition, as He had power of their creation (*Matt. xx. 15*). 2. God is always most just, nor can He do other than what is perfectly good. His judgments are sometimes manifest, often secret, always wonderful, never unjust. 3. The will of God is the cause of all causes, in which we must make a stand; and neither beyond it, nor without it, seek for any reason. 4. God hath not ordained any to destruction without the respect of sin. III. **THEIR IGNORANCE.** “Speak evil of the things that they understand not.” Not to understand, is the infirmity of a man; to speak of that he understands not, is the part of a fool; but to speak maliciously evil, is the part of a devil. They will not understand, they will not be silent, they will not speak well. If they will not know, let them hold their peace; nay, they will speak; but then let them give good words; nay, they will speak evil. IV. **THEIR VENGEANCE.** “Shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” 1. No cause doth more necessarily produce its proper effect, than sin doth naturally beget punishment. 2. Forbearance of punishment is no argument of immunity; though not presently, they shall perish. 3. Obstinate sin would make its own rod, were there none prepared. The grace of God resisted, turns to desperateness; and wicked men, like some beasts, grow mad with baiting. They cannot be quiet till they have wrought out their full destruction. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Sensuality*:—1. Sin, where it reigns, turns a man into a brute beast as it were. This is showed in all those places of Scripture where wicked men are compared unto brute beasts, either in general or in special, to horses, mules, dogs, swine, foxes, wolves, bears, lions, &c. 2. The fountain of all this sin and misery is the want of a right and spiritual judgment. 3. A sign of such a condition, that is, of a man turning to a brute beast, is to follow the

passions of corrupted nature without reason. 4. Such men do corrupt also whatsoever natural goodness they have in them. 5. Such sinners are entangled in their sins, and kept unto destruction like as brute beasts in their snares, wherewith they are taken (2 Tim. ii. 26; Lam. i. 14). (*Wm. Ames, D.D.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **Shall receive the reward of unrighteousness.**—*Sin punished* :—

1. When we think of the sins of wicked men, we should likewise think of their punishments. (1) Because these two are in God's purpose, and their own nature knit together. (2) Because the consideration of sin often does more hurt than God, if the consideration of the punishment be not joined unto it. 2. Profuse luxury is a sign of a man sinning securely. 3. Luxury, the more it is shown openly, the more it is to be condemned. 4. There is the greatest danger in those sins from which the greatest pleasure and delight ariseth. (1) Because pleasure is a sign of a perfect habit. (2) Because pleasure is very hardly left. 5. They that please themselves most in their sins, do most contaminate both themselves and others. 6. The outward members also of wicked men are full of wickedness. Because out of the abundance of the heart all our faculties, and all the instruments of operations receive impressions answerable unto the heart. 7. The uncleanness of the body is oftentimes joined with impurity of religion (ver. 14). 8. In such men covetousness is oftentimes joined with their impiety. 9. The exercising of the heart unto such sins doth very much strengthen and increase them. 10. They that are after this manner accustomed unto their sins are hardened in them. 11. Such men are most to be detested. (*Wm. Ames, D.D.*) **Pleasure to riot.**—*Pleasure* :—

1. Whether a man may take any pleasure in this world, or no? Yes, certainly; one special use of wisdom stands in tempering our pleasures: to be delighted is not evil, but to be delighted in evil. Why hath God given man such a choice of earthly commodities, but for his use? The wise man can distinguish between the love of pleasure and the use of pleasure; and while others serve delight, he teacheth delight to serve him. 2. How may a Christian take pleasure in the world? By having respect to three things: whether it be lawful, expedient, or becoming. The pleasure must be lawful, there can be no safety in a sinful delight. Poison may be qualified, and become medicinal; there is use to be made of an enemy; sickness may turn to our better health, and death itself to the faithful is but a door to life; but sin can never be made good. Pleasure therefore first must have the warrant, that it be without sin; then the measure, that it be without excess. If the cup be evil, we may not taste it; though good, yet not carouse it. We are not born to play or sport. Nor is the lawfulness only observable, but the conveniency; a man may wear good clothes unhandsomely. The stuff may be good, yet while the fashion of the garment does not become him, it appears ridiculous. The place, occasion, company, opportunity, all must be fit. (*Thos. Adams.*) **Spots they are, and blemishes.**—*Spots and blemishes* :—

In every sin there is not only guilt, that binds over to punishment, but defilement; which makes the sinner not less filthy than guilty; and even when the guilt is remitted, the filth remains still. The hurt is not so soon cured, as the fault is pardoned. 1. All men are spotted, originally from their parents; of actual spots themselves are the parents. If all our internal spots should break out, we could not endure one another. The whole world would be an hospital, and every man a leazar. 2. The whole world is spotted, that is another step: in the universal blemishes of nature let us read our own. To charge God with this degeneration is the highest blasphemy: coldness may sooner arise from fire, than any evil from the fountain of goodness. 3. But if every man be spotted, who shall then enter into heaven, seeing into that city no unclean thing shall come? (Rev. xxvi. 27.) This is true, yet many that have been unclean persons are since admitted (1 Cor. vi. 11; Rev. vii. 14; Jer. iv. 14). The grace of God may go a great way in our souls, and yet not leave us without spots. Not to have no spot here, but to have no spot imputed hereafter, is the happiness of a Christian. 4. We have all spots, but these are spots; for the apostle speaks not of their actions here, but their persons; not the blemishes of the men, but that the men themselves are blemishes. This is a high degree of sin, to be wholly turned into sin. 5. To whom do these appear spots and blemishes? (1) To God, who hath pure eyes, and can abide no unclean thing. (2) To the angels. Iniquities be sport for devils, but an eyesore to the angels; they that rejoice at a sinner's conversion do rather grieve at his aberration. (3) To good men, whom nothing pleaseth that displeaseth their Maker. (4) To bad men; for howsoever sinners love to be evil themselves, yet they would have others good to them. (5) To the creatures; they grieve that they

are compelled to wait on a wrong master. (6) And do they not offend themselves? No, the sick man may feel, the dead does not. 6. Sin is of a defiling quality; like a bemired dog, when it fawns upon us it fouls us. It may in this one thing be compared to fire, it converts matter into itself. 7. Open and notorious offenders ought to be denied these holy feasts; and instead of communicating with us, to pass under the censure of excommunication from us; till in penitent tears they have cleansed their pollutions. 8. We may not abstain from the sacrament, because there be spots and blemishes in the society. 9. As all sins are spots, so some have a more special resemblance, as carrying in them a natural poison and filthiness. Such particular instances we find in Scripture, wherein God discovered the spots in their consciences by sticking spots on their bodies (Exod. ix. 11; Numb. xii. 10; 2 Kings v. 27). Application: 1. Learn to see thy spots. Many have unknown sins, as a man may have a mole on his back, and himself never know it (Psa. xix. 12). But many a one knows his fault, yet loves it. 2. Confess these spots. The spots that God hateth, are the spots that man hideth. 3. It is madness to confess ourselves foul, and not to wash, therefore let us endeavour our own cleansing. In our making there was work for God only; in our marring there was work for ourselves only; in our restoring there is work for God and ourselves together. 4. There is only one fountain to purge all these spots, the blood of the Lamb. For this purpose Christ was baptized, even to wash us. His first baptizing was with water, His last with blood; both of them wash the world from their sins. (*Ibid.*) **Sporting themselves with their own deceivings.**—*Sporting with sin*:—It is hard when the fool can find no bauble to play with but sin; casting firebrands, and arrows, and death; and then jeers (Prov. xxvi. 19). Custom brings sin to be so familiar, that the horror of it is turned into pleasure, and homicide is held but a sport. It is ill for a man to make himself merry with that which angers God. If sin were rightly considered, it were more worthy our tears than our sport; the fool laughs at it, but the saint weeps for it. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 14. **Having eyes full of adultery.**—*Adultery*:—1. It is a conquering sin, for it hath overcome the strongest. 2. It is a cheating sin, for, instead of repentance, it works the adulterer to labour a concealment. Instead of clearing their sin, they labour to cloak it. 3. It is a commanding sin; no iniquity that stands in the way must be refused if adultery be once admitted. 4. It is a condemning sin, and carries its own sentence about it. It must needs abandon all love of God, for that and the love of a harlot cannot stand together. As malice is damnable, because it is so diametrically repugnant to God who is love, so God is also purity, and therefore nothing more directly contrary to Him than uncleanness. I. Their eyes be the beagles that hunt after the game. 1. There is no sense which is not at the heart's command; but the principality of those servants is varied according to the disposition of their mistress. If the heart be gracious, the ear hath the superiority; if vicious, the eye. 2. The eye is of all senses the quickest of apprehension—a port to land the commodities of hell before the soul have warning. 3. The eye is the pander of a lustful heart; the window that lets in the infection, the first betrayer of the fort. Pliny writes of a chalky brimstone that draws to itself distant fire: the wanton eye attracts this adulterous fire to the heart. Alexander refused so much as to see Darius's wife, a lady of incomparable beauty, fearing lest he that had conquered the husband should be overcome by the wife. 4. Satan's first project is to take the eye; if that be once his friend, he hopes well of all the rest. Indeed, if the door stand open to the thief, what safety can be in the house? 5. Where be the eyes that have not been faulty? If the eyes have sinned, why should not the eyes be punished? Oh, let those eyes that have been the cisterns of corruption become the fountains of compunction! II. "ADULTERY" is the game, the beast they hunt. 1. The main attractive of the eye is beauty, and of this the fancy is informed by the eye; yet being so informed, then the eye is ruled by the fancy, and as that imagines her, so the eye sees her. Many a woman's beauty hath been her ruin; but blessing never forsook a beautiful soul. 2. But if a man's eye be delighted with beauty, may he not enjoy it with chastity? What a laborious, what a dangerous way the lustful finds out to his pleasure! 3. It is an adulteress they love, and that is but one bow short of Satan. We hate the Turks for selling Christians as slaves. How odious are they that sell themselves! III. "FULL OF adultery"—this is the pursuit of the game, full cry. The eyes do not engross all their uncleanness; they are not only full, and the other parts empty. The caterer fills his basket with provision, but this serves afterward to fill the mouth and to fill

the stomach. The eyes be first full, as the cistern; but the cistern serves all other offices of the house. Nor is this a fulness of satisfaction, for as "he that loveth silver shall never be satisfied with silver," so he that loves women shall never be satisfied with women. Unnatural desires are infinite: hunger is soon appeased with meat, and thirst allayed with drink; but in burning fevers, the more water is drunk, the more it is thirsted for. "Full." There is no mediocrity in sin: in extremes can be no mean; and every sin is an extreme, either deficient or excessive. (*Thos. Adams.*) **That cannot cease from sin.**—*The fixity of habit*:—"Having eyes full of an adulteress." All who possess eyes at all have them full of something. I have heard one of exquisite æsthetic sensibility, who had seen some of the glorious painted glass at St. Gudule, in Brussels, on a summer day, declare that for days his eyes were "full of those colours, especially the blue." The eye of the woman of "meek and quiet spirit," wherever circumstances may lead her, is full of love. Even so the sensualist's eye is "full of an adulteress," filled full, so that it can hold no more. The eyes are fixed in an evil expression which they can never lose. They give signal to all whom it concerns that they are ever on the watch. That which is choke-full often means, in the original, satiated. But such eyes are insatiate and insatiable. This is one of God's terrible voices of moral judgment, one of those hints which tell us what a man may become. Let us consider that law of human character which is the foundation of the law of Divine punishment, without which, indeed, the latter cannot be spiritually construed to the spiritual nature. Character, then, as the derivation of the word implies, has a tendency to become, and frequently does become, absolutely stereotyped, from a practical point of view. Generally speaking, up to a certain date, a man may issue a second edition of his moral life, revised and corrected, perhaps even entirely recast. Still a day comes when the second edition, with the "errata" expunged, is not possible any longer. The eye once "full of an adulteress" may be filled with dust, but the ineradicable image has been carried to, and abides for ever in, that "inward eye," which is the "bliss" or bane, the heaven or hell of "solitude." This is a solemn argument for youth, when the vapour of imagination and passion are beginning to condense into habit; for that portion of manhood during which habit is becoming of insoluble density. Let us beware of the lust of the eyes. Be ours the prayer, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou me in Thy way." Nor let any who ponders this argument turn from it with a sigh of despair, "For me it is too late." If we have enough of will left to desire earnestly a new mind, it is not too late. Such can still hear the voice—"Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." (*Abp. Wm. Alexander.*) **Covetous practices.**—*Covetousness*:—Some of us may remember the fable of a covetous man, who chanced to find his way one moonlight night into a fairy's palace. There he saw bars, apparently of solid gold, strewed on every side, and he was permitted to take away as many as he could carry. In the morning, when the sun rose on his imaginary treasure, borne home with so much toil, behold! there was only a bundle of sticks, and invisible beings filled the air around him with scornful laughter. *Covetousness*:—Oh do not so marry yourselves to money that you are resolved nothing shall part you but death; be not like the medlar, which is never good till it be rotten. A covetous man may be compared to a Christmas-box—he receives money, but parts with none till death breaks this box in pieces; then the silver and gold comes tumbling out. (*T. Watson.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **Following the way of Balaam.**—*Balaam*:—I. We begin with the GOOD PART of the character of Balaam. Balaam was a true prophet of God. He was the last prophet under the patriarchal dispensation. He had the knowledge of religion, faith in the future Messiah, and prayer for the great blessing—a death of peace and hope. II. Let us now consider the character of Balaam; as it may be called, THE BAD PART. The bad part of Balaam's character was that he united with his religion, faith, and prayer, the errors of the head, which ruined his religion, and the vices of the heart, which ruined his faith and prayer. He complied with the practices of the idolaters that surrounded him; and he was guilty of that love of money which made him desire the wages of unrighteousness and receive the rewards of Balak, against the warnings of his conscience and his knowledge of God. We must now consider the especial reason why the dumb ass, on which the prophet rode, was the fittest channel by which God would reprove, first, his idolatry, and then his covetousness. 1. And first the dumb ass was the fittest channel by which God would reprove the idolatry of Balaam. It was as if a voice

came from the God of Israel, saying to the prophet, "Wilt thou forsake the one true God, and join thyself, for the sake of money, to the foolish idolatry of the people around you? I will open the mouth of the most stupid of their idols to reproach thee, the prophet of God, to convince thee, and so convince them, that I am the only God, the only giver of all the usefulness of the instinct which has caused the dumb ass to be worshipped and honoured." 2. So also the ass was the fittest channel for the reproof of the covetousness of Balaam. The wild ass of the East was not, as is too often imagined, the same sort of animal as that among us. It was selected, because of its size and beauty, to be the bearer of kings, magistrates, and princes; and its use may be said, therefore, to be confined to those who were the leaders and the wealthy among the people. Now the only palliation that can be alleged for the love of money is the poverty which fears want, or which desires the advantages which money confers. Balaam had no excuse for the covetousness which loved the wages of unrighteousness, and the proof of all this was the mere fact of his possessing the animal which was possessed only by the rich, the great, and the wealthy. When the Lord, therefore, opened the mouth of the ass, it was as if God said, "Why should the prophet of the true God thus be led away by the hope of money? why should the prophet of the true God love the wages of unrighteousness? Is not the possession and the use of the dumb ass on which you ride, the proof, and the demonstration to all around you that you already enjoy all that human ambition is wont to desire, and all that human avarice is wont to covet?" Be content. The most wonderful of all God's miracles was wrought to prove to us God's abhorrence of the most usual of all the sins that beset us, that we may learn to avoid that "covetousness which is idolatry." (*G. Townsend, D.D.*)

Balaam:—Of the melancholy history of this wicked man let us make its proper use. 1. It teaches the danger of giving way in the first instance to temptation. After we have been once conquered, we have lost half our strength. 2. Again, we are taught by this story that a religious disposition makes always the greatest and best part of every man's character. Shining talents are what men desire, as they procure the admiration of the world; but we see in God's sight it is otherwise. He often gives them to the most unworthy. A good heart is worth them all, and will make us illustrious, when all the rest become nothing. 3. We learn, further, from this story, the dreadful state of being what the Scriptures call forsaken of God. 4. But the most obvious use of the story is to convince ourselves of the folly and wickedness of acting under two characters—of hiding a bad heart under the pretences of religion. What pains it costs—the constant attention to every word and action. In fact, it would cost less to be good in earnest. Rarely did hypocrisy ever carry its deceit to the grave. Will the best gains of hypocrisy repay us for a bad conscience? (*W. Gilpin, M.A.*)

The dumb ass . . . forbade the madness of the prophet.—*Lessons from Balaam's ass*:—Balaam's madness had turned him into a beast, and why might not one beast teach another? In some things the ass excelled her master. 1. She saw the judgment, he was blind: instinct better instructed her than reason and religion had enlightened him. 2. The ass had a tongue of equity; the prophet a tongue, hand, and heart of iniquity. 3. The ass was not capable of sin, and did therefore justify herself; the master was so mad upon sin that he would needs ruin himself. **Observations**: 1. The weaker vessel may hold the better liquor. The uncleansed lay hold on heaven, whereas men of knowledge often wallow in the lusts of flesh and blood. We are ordained to judge the angels; but if we degenerate from our prerogative, angels, men, infidels, harlots, yea, even beasts and stones, shall be our judges. 2. As Balaam proceeds in forwardness, so doth the ass in reprehension. At every turn she answered him, in every passage she was quit with him. We cannot run so fast but God can overtake us, nor be so cunning but He can teach even a beast to overreach us. 3. The sensual creatures are set to condemn our sins and to reflect our evils upon us. Peter hath a cock to tell him his cowardice, and Balaam an ass to reprove his avarice. There is no creature dumb when God bids it to speak. If there were no preachers to declaim, no conscience to accuse, the very creatures themselves would cry. The beds, boards, walls, windows, markets, closets should have tongues to condemn us. (*T. Adams.*)

Balaam:—To us the narrative as a whole is stamped visibly and broadly with the arrow-mark of heaven. As Canon Kingsley says, it is one which never would have been, never could have been, invented by the Jews. They never would have put into the mouth of a heathen prophet the sublime evangelic statements which Balaam utters. The character is evidently drawn from life. A few of those traits of truth and experience we shall proceed to notice. I.

The first thing which strikes us in Balaam's history is THAT WE HAVE HERE A VERY BAD MAN, THOUGH A TRUE PROPHET. He was covetous—"his heart was exercised with covetous practices," "he ran greedily after reward." Some of you may think that not a very great sin, but Scripture brands it as idolatry. Balaam, however, was worse than that. Like Simon Magus, he was desirous of turning the gifts of inspiration to low mercenary gain, and of making the things of the kingdom an affair of barter. Yea, worse than that. He rushed pell-mell to evil; and not only when remonstrated with did he refuse obedience, he became desperate in disobedience. There is no telling what a man may descend to! Gifts are not graces; great men are not always good men. Intellectual attainments, like some other things, may be valued too highly. Better the most drivelling idiot that crawls than the laurelled victor who, to attain his end, has prostituted his powers to the prince of darkness. II. WE HAVE A STRIKING INSTANCE OF APPARENT OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE WILL MASKING AN INSINCERE HEART. Balaam has been called a conscientious man. We should demur to that. Still, he had a remarkably clear idea of the fidelity of God, of His unchangeableness, of His unimpeachable righteousness, of His inflexible truth. He had a conscience, though very poorly he used it. Conscience was strong enough in him to make a coward of him; to make him now this, now that. It was not strong enough in him to lift him above the fascinating power of evil. Hence those inconsistencies which, like the confusing influences of light and shade, render this man as much a problem as any in history. Oh, whatever we are, God help us to be true! III. WE SEE HOW GOD FREQUENTLY CONCEDES IN JUDGMENT A MAN'S WISHES. Some of us have greatly wondered why God, the second time of Balaam's asking Him, said, "Go with the men"; and yet "that His anger should be kindled" because Balaam did precisely what He had told him to do. Now this difficulty is met by two passages of Scripture: one is in Ezek. xiv., where we are told certain of the elders of Israel came and sat before the prophet, and the Word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Shall I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face and cometh to the prophet, I, the Lord, will answer him according to the multitude of his idols." The other passage is in 2 Thess. ii.: "God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." He "had pleasure in unrighteousness." Do you think God was going to give that man repeatedly right and gracious answers when he knew that the thing he asked was displeasing to God? No! to the froward God will show Himself froward. If a man "will have none of the Divine counsel," it is no use repeating and repeating what God would have him do, nor is it becoming the majesty of God. He will say, "Well, then, you will not take no for an answer; I have told you the consequences; be it then even as you wish." Often there would be no surer way to afflict us than to give us what we wish. IV. HERE IS ILLUSTRATED THAT SECRET LAW BY WHICH THE SINNER IS ALMOST COMPELLED TO CONTINUE. He thinks he can stop when he pleases. No such thing! except the grace of God aids the endeavour. "Go with the men!" said the angel. I see that your heart still hankers after Balak's gold, you are not in earnest confessing your sin or in real acquiescence with the Divine judgment. "Go" then with them! Does not that illustrate the way of God's providence with thousands upon thousands? The sensualist no sooner has indulged a lawless passion than he begins to see the folly of it; but how few turn and implore help and ask pardon of Almighty God! Go on! says the angel. The fear of discovery, the growing power of habit, the augmented strength of evil passion, the shame of acknowledgment, the bonds of association, all, like the weeds around the drowning man, hinder endeavours at self-rescue. There is an inevitable pressure from behind which, once the false step is taken, almost necessitates continuance. V. WE HAVE HERE PRESENTED US THE PICTURE OF A GOD-DESERTED MAN, NOT AT FIRST, BUT FINALLY. If we may say so, at first God seemed to have a liking for that man; as indeed for what finally reprobate transgressor at one time had He not a liking? "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." (G. Short, B.A.)

Vers. 17-22. These are wells without water.—*False teachers*:—I. THEIR UNPROFITABLENESS. "Wells without water." 1. Pastors are like wells—(1) For constancy. They keep their residence; men know where to find them. (2) They are wells of piety; the water of life, the word of salvation is in them. (3) They are wells of sanctity, and therefore must be clean. (4) They are wells of knowledge,

and of sufficient depth, skilled in the mysteries of salvation. (5) They are wells of pity, full of compassion, yearning over the danger of men's souls. (6) They are wells of peace and amity, such as reconcile feuds and appease discords; as the water of a well serves to quench flames. (7) They are wells of charity, that do not only give good counsel with their lips, but good relief with their hands. 2. False teachers are "wells without water." A blind guide, an ignorant physician, a candlestick without light, a penny without provision, a well without water, is a miserable provision. Suppose we are thirsty and would drink, foul and would wash, hot and would be cooled, our houses are on fire and we would have them quenched; if we come to the well with our buckets and find it empty, we know not whether our grief or indignation be greater. II. THEIR VARIABLENESS. "Clouds that are carried with a tempest." 1. The fitness of the metaphor (Ezek. xx. 46; Deut. xxxii. 2). (1) Clouds are made to contain water, and preachers should be filled with wholesome doctrine. (2) Clouds are drawn up by the sun, and teachers called to that holy profession by the Sun of Righteousness. (3) Clouds are nearer to heaven than common waters, and ministers are advanced nearer to the secrets of God than other men. (4) Clouds hang in the air after a strange manner, and preachers live in the world in a wondrous sort; all the winds of the earth and furies of hell band against them, yet still they are supported by their Ordainer. (5) Clouds are set to distil rain upon the dry places of earth, and preachers to satisfy the thirsty soul. 2. The levity of these hypocrites. "Carried with a tempest." Some are not stable in the truth; but it is not possible for any man to be constant in errors, for the next fancy will take him off from the former. As wanton children are won to be quiet with change of toys, so the devil is fain to please such men with variety of crotchets. He forgets what he hath been, understands not what he is, and knows not what he will be. III. THEIR UNHAPPINESS. 1. The nature or quality of it—"the mist of darkness." Such a mist shall be on their souls, as comes upon a swooning man, who cannot see though his eyes be open, the organs being (for the time) incapable of illumination. 2. The congruity of it—"reserved." These black clouds did wholly endeavour to superinduce darkness on the Church, therefore the mist of darkness is reserved for them for ever. It is but justice if God be not found of those that were content to lose Him. 3. The perpetuity of it—"for ever." (*Thos. Adams.*) *Disappointing teachers*:—These false teachers bear the semblance of teachers, just as, for a little time, a place in Eastern lands where water has flowed will continue green, but disappoint the thirsty traveller who may be led by a little verdure to hope for water. There was water, and perhaps not long ago, but there is none now, and so with these deceivers. They give promise, but that promise is never realised. (*Prof. J. R. Lumby.*) *Wells without water*:—Water! How precious it is! Because God has given it to us so plentifully, we are apt to underestimate its worth. Were we tormented with thirst in the desert, we could consider water a priceless boon. In the East wells of water were very precious. Passing through the desert, the traveller would alight at one with joy, quaff the cooling draught, and then refreshed pursue his onward way. "Wells without water." Travellers in Eastern climes have often come across them. Hot and weary, they have gone with anticipative joy, only to be disappointed at finding parched emptiness. In passing through life's wilderness, have we not often come across "wells without water"? In the life-endeavour have we not often been disappointed? How many enter into business and anticipate success? They work with a will. But their efforts have all been "wells without water"! Others, again, have succeeded in business. But the dark shadow is there; and, so far as happiness is concerned, successful business men have found that mere earthly possessions have proved "wells without water." What a desire some persons have to be known! The essential characteristic of their existence is to be prominent. But in mere fame there is little or no satisfaction. Scotland was singing in her crowded towns and in her bonny glens the songs of her favourite poet, Burns, while he wrote as he lay in his last illness, not in the flight of poetic genius, but in the uncoloured utterance of homely prose—"I have known existence of late only by the presence of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain." Then followed these words of anguish: "I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope." When Dr. Johnson finished his dictionary, the more particular literary effort of his life, the Earl of Chesterfield offered that patronage to the completed work which he had refused to the struggling writer. Dr. Johnson replied: "The notice which you have taken of my labours has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary and cannot impart it; till I am known and do not want it." The mere notice of the titled

great, earthly reputation, worldly fame, these are but empty wells that mock the thirsty wanderer through the desert—"wells without water"! Some may say we do not aspire to fame. True, but is not excitement sought in other ways? Is happiness being sought in the attractions of society, or in any of the numerous vain amusements of the world? In all walks of life, in all the varied paths of the journey, we find "empty wells." They are on all sides of us. We see persons standing, thirsting, and unable to gratify their thirst, looking, with disappointment written on their careworn faces, into "wells without water." You have met with individuals cold, hard, selfish. They live merely for themselves. They have the human head, but the statue's heart. No word of sympathy escapes their lips, no look of pity comes from their cold eyes. To make appeals to them is like "dropping buckets into empty wells," which would certainly grow old in drawing nothing up! Then there are some who attempt to build wells. They dig deep. They pile one charitable action upon another. They exercise the greatest self-denial in carrying on their task, and when it is done they find their labour in vain. No man's thirst is slaked; it may be an elaborate work, but it is a piece of beautiful emptiness—one of the "wells without water." There is a well of living water. With joy the pilgrim can drink from the well of salvation, a well where the thirsty can drink to their heart's content, and thirst no more for streams that are impure. (*J. P. Hutchinson.*)

They allure . . . those that were clean escaped.—*Deceivers and deceived.*—I. THE DECEIVERS. 1. Their posture. (1) They think to carry it away with "words." (a) Error hath always most words; like a rotten house, that needs most props to uphold it. (b) In much speaking is foolish speaking: it is very difficult to speak much and well. The ship that hath more rigging and sail than ballast, will never make a good voyage. (2) Their full-mouthed speeches—"great swelling words." Nothing is more loud than error: the more false the matter, the greater noise to uphold it (*Acts xix. 34*). "Swelling words" are like the reports of ordnance—they blaze, and crack, and smoke, and stink, and vanish. (3) The last attribute of their speech is vain, "words of vanity." If the matter were good, yet many words were vain, great words were vain; but here both the matter and words and all are vanity itself. 2. Their imposture—"they allure." The metaphor is taken from fishing or fowling. Those fishes that were taken out of the feculent pond of this world, and put into the crystal streams of the church, are by these seducers again drawn out of the streams of the church into the pool of the world. The hook whereby they perform this is fraud: the same devil teacheth his trade to all his followers: the lion is strong enough, but the serpent doth the mischief. II. THE DECEIVED. "Those that were clean escaped." 1. They were not quite delivered from sin, but from the external profession of sin, and from the doctrine that maintains sin. The children of the world may outwardly be gathered to the congregation of Israel, yet not be of Israel. They are escaped from the lion and the bear, gross and raging impiety and idolatry; but in the house of God they are bitten by a serpent, sly hypocrisy. 2. They are again returned to error. What a poor way went they toward heaven, so soon to turn back! It is but Ephraim's morning dew; let the sun of prosperity rise but two hours high, the dew is gone. A Galatian humour, to begin in the spirit, and to end in the flesh; like a meteor or gliding star, that seemed in heaven, shot through the air, and lighted on a dunghill. (1) All sin is a labyrinth; the entrance is easy; all the difficulty is to get out again. (2) The practice of these deceivers is upon them that are escaped from their errors. The malignant jailer pursues after him that hath broken prison. 3 "Through much wantonness." This is that little postern set open, to which Satan is so much beholden for his readmittance. (*Thos. Adams.*) **While they promise them liberty.**—*The method of the seducers.*—I. THE ALLUREMENT OF THE WEAK. It was Christ's charge to Peter (*Luke xxii. 32*). It is Satan's charge to his agents—Now you are confounded, confound your brethren. II. THE WAY OF THIS ALLUREMENT IS BY PROMISE. 1. Promises are the cheapest things man can part with, and yet the strongest enchantments. 2. Fair promises are strong snares to entangle fools. 3. It is ill to promise and to deceive; but it is worse to promise with a purpose to deceive. 4. Seducers refuse no way, so they may deceive; they swear, they forswear, propose and interpose, to make strong their party. III. THE FORCE OF THAT PROMISE IS LIBERTY. Sensuality and a carnal freedom is the spell that conjures these wild spirits, and brings them in subjection to their heretical teachers. They may promise them civil liberty: this they are not sure to perform; or consciential: this they will not perform; or spiritual: this they cannot perform; but profane excess, riotous intemperance, the uncontrollable swing of their lusts, this

they will endeavour to perform. IV. THE CONVICTION OF THAT FORCE. "They themselves are the servants of corruption." All sin is a servitude; and that which flatters men with the greatest opinion of liberty, makes them the most miserable vassals (2 Tim. ii. 26). They may think that they have the world at command, and not the world them. They have a secret and insensible tether, which that enemy ties to their heels, and holds in his hand: while they run whither he allows them, they shall have scope enough; but if they offer towards goodness, he instantly snatches them up. V. THE PROOF OF THAT CONVICTION. "For of whom a man is overcome," &c. The metaphor seems to be taken from war; where the conqueror brings the vanquished into captivity. And this misery of the captive differs according to the disposition of the victor; if he be imperious, and given to cruelty, he doth so much the more embitter the slavery. 1. It is an ignominious state. 2. A hard and troublesome condition. 3. Intolerable. 4. Useless. 5. Irretrievable, sold to sin with small hope of recovery. 6. Pitiabie, the grief of every Christian. 7. Destructive. The end of every service is wages, and this is a wages without end, even everlasting pain. (*Ibid.*) *On spiritual or inward liberty*:—I. My text implies THAT VICIOUS MEN ARE SLAVES; that it is an absurdity in them to pretend to be advocates for liberty; and that consequently the practice of virtue is necessary to give men true liberty. The wicked men that St. Peter had in view opposed the restraints of law and authority—they vilified civil governors—renounced the obligations of righteousness; and by doing this they boasted that they stood up for liberty; not considering their own slavery, and not distinguishing between licentiousness and liberty. You must be sensible that these observations imply that there is a moral slavery which ought to be the principal object of our detestation, and consequently a moral liberty which ought to be the principal object of our attachment. My present business will be to explain this, and to show its importance and excellence. Now liberty being an exemption from all such force as takes away from us the capacity of acting as we think best, it is plain that whenever any passion becomes predominant within us, or causes us to contradict our sentiments of rectitude, we lose our liberty, and fall into a state of slavery. When any one of our instinctive desires assumes the direction of our conduct in opposition to our reason, then reason is overpowered and enslaved, and when reason is overpowered and enslaved we are overpowered and enslaved. On the other hand, when our reason maintains its rights, and possesses its proper seat of sovereignty within us, then are we masters of ourselves, and free in the truest possible sense. A submission to reason is not in any way inconsistent with liberty; on the contrary, it supposes natural liberty, and is the very idea of that moral liberty which is my present subject. The more we are in subjection to reason, the more power we have to do as we like. The dictates of reason are the dictates of our own hearts; and therefore the very reverse of anything that can be deemed force or slavery. II. TO MENTION A FEW REASONS IN ORDER TO RECOMMEND THIS LIBERTY TO YOU. The bare description of it is indeed enough to make every one desire it. It is replete with blessings and advantages. 1. Consider particularly what an honour there is in liberty, and what a baseness in sin. To lose inward liberty is to lose all that can procure esteem, and to become poor, abject, and impotent. 2. Let me desire you to consider what advantages and blessings liberty of mind will bring with it. The discerning faculties of the person who possesses this liberty must be more clear than that of any other man. There is in such a mind a consciousness of dignity, which is more desirable than any sensual gratification, which cannot be given by the possession of any worldly honours and titles. (*R. Price, D.D.*) *Moral theory of civil liberty*:—This is a true delineation of the fact that animalism leads to despotism, and necessitates it; and the whole chapter illustrates that fundamental idea. There are two essential conditions of civil liberty: first, self-government, and second, the civil machinery of free national life. Self-government is a better term than liberty. There is no such thing as absolute liberty. It is quite inconsistent with the very creative notion which we express. We gain strength and bodily ease and comfort in proportion as we obey law. We are not, therefore, free physically, in regard to the body; and just as little are we free mentally; for there is an order within, which is as real, and the observance of which is as indispensable to comfort and liberty, as the order of the body and its physical organisation. Nor are we absolutely free in our relations to the material world. Physical laws round about us are more potent than walls in a prison are round about the prisoner. Do, obey, and live; disobey, and die. A man is hedged up in his own nature; and he is hedged up just as much in the world in which he was born, and in which he moves. All these restraints would seem to be restraints upon the sum

of life and individual power; but if you analyse it it will be found that, while there is no such thing as absolute liberty, these restraints all work primarily against the animal nature. So that while a man is restricted at the bottom, he spreads out at the top, and gains again, with amplitude and augmentation, in the higher realms of his being, all that he loses by the restrictions which are imposed by great cardinal laws upon his lower nature. The more effectually, then, these lower elements are repressed, the more liberty is given to the affections. The degree of liberty attainable by an individual depends upon the restraint which he puts upon the lower nature, and the stimulus which he gives to the higher. The liberty which is attainable by masses of men living together depends on the training that the society which they constitute has had in keeping down the animalism, and exalting the true manhood of the citizens in the community. Society cannot be free, except as the reason and the moral sentiments have a sufficient ascendancy. You have often heard it said that a free government depends upon the intelligence and virtue of the citizens. This is an empirical fact. It is in accordance with the radical nature of man that it should be so. The first and most important condition of liberty, psychologically stated, is that men should learn how to restrain their lower, basilar, *passional* natures, and should be willing to restrain them, and so give liberty to their reason, their affections, and their moral sentiments. The other condition which we mentioned as indispensable to civil liberty is the possession of the machinery of free civil society. There is to be the presence of laws adapted to that state of things, and there is to be a knowledge of those laws. Ages were employed in experimenting and finding out what was the mode by which a free people might discuss, deliberate upon, and decide their own questions of policy. It has been a slow invention, improved and improving from age to age. These two elementary conditions—the moral condition of the people, and the apparatus of civil government adapted to freedom—must unite and co-operate, before there can be any permanent civil liberty in any nation. On this foundation I remark—1. The desire to be free is not a basis broad enough for liberty. All men like liberty, if by that expression is meant dislike of restraint; but if the love of liberty means the repression of all one's lower nature, and the education and dominancy of all one's higher nature, then I deny that men desire liberty. The love of liberty is, like virtue and religion, the result of culture in men. The love of liberty is a virtue. It is a moral inspiration. It is not merely a wild disposition to throw away government; it is a disposition to supersede the necessity of an outward government by the reality of a government within. Let me see a man that loves liberty, and I shall see a man that loves freedom not only for himself, but for others. And when it takes on this form, mankind and manhood have advanced far along the road of intelligence and true piety. 2. The adoption of free governments by an untrained and unrestrained people will not secure liberty to them. Liberty does not come from machineries, though it uses them, and must have them. You might build a hundred cotton factories in the wilderness where the Indians are, and the Indians would not on that account be an ingenious and manufacturing people. The manufacturer must precede the machinery, and know how to use it. You might carry cannon, and muskets, and rifles, and endless magazines of ammunition, into the midst of a peace-loving and cowardly nation, and that would not make them a war-like people. The instruments do not make courage, though where there is courage the instruments are indispensable to its use. And where armed tyranny prevails, the whole machinery of free nations substituted in its place does not make the nation free. A nation is not free until it is free in its individual members. Christ makes men free. The spirit of Christ—the spirit of faith, the spirit of self-denial, the spirit of self-government, the spirit of aspiration, the spirit of benevolence—that it is that makes men free. 3. The directest road to civil liberty lies in augmenting the true manhood of a people. You cannot make a people free that are ignorant and animal; and, on the other hand, you cannot for ever keep any people in bondage that are thoroughly educated and thoroughly moral. Schools, virtuous home-training, free religious knowledge, whatever will swell the manhood of the individuals of a nation—these are the means which produce liberty. If, therefore, one desires in Europe to sow the seeds of true liberty, I would not say, "Keep back books that teach about the machinery of society." Let them be instructed in those things. But do not rely on those things. Ply the bottom of society with schools. Ply the masses with those things which shall teach them how to live with organisation; how to deny themselves; how to live to-day for future periods of time; how to practise the simple virtues; and how to carry those virtues up to the

spiritual forms in which they are to eventuate. He that teaches men how to be true men in Christ Jesus is aiming as straight at liberty as ever any archer that bended the bow aimed at the target. That is the reason why true preachers are always revolutionary men. To preach a larger manhood is to unsettle, by prophecy, all thrones. You cannot force knowledge into a man; and just as little can you force liberty into men. It is a thing of development. It is a thing that cannot be brought into a man or a nation, but that has to be wrought out of the elements of the man, or of the nation. Make men's limbs so large that there is not iron enough to go around them. Make men's muscles, like Samson's, so strong that withes and cords are like flax touched with fire when they strain them. That will cure bondage; and that is the best way to cure it. Make men larger; make them measure more about the girt of the conscience, and less around the animalism, and then you cannot oppress them. 4. Modern nations, with a certain degree of civilisation, are all tending to civil liberty; and democracy, as it is called, is inevitable. This is admitted by all heads, crowned as well as others. It is only a question as to how long a time will be required to bring about the result. The universal brain is showing itself to be mightier than the class brain. The crowned head must give way to the thinking head of the millions. In this tendency, the first step should be popular intelligence, or real growth at the bottom of society. Then the institutions of liberty will come gradually themselves. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The temptation of liberty.*—Nothing more strikingly characterises the teaching of the early preachers of Christianity, while it attests their faithfulness, than the uncompromising distinctness with which they put forth the claims of the gospel to the whole obedience of mankind, and declared the peculiar characteristics of the Christian service. Self-crucifixion, the absolute submission of their wills to the law of another will, &c. Such doctrine is not acceptable now, and it was not when St. Peter wrote. Accordingly, we find that while the apostles were busily engaged in enforcing this doctrine, there were other teachers no less busily occupied in endeavouring to counteract their endeavours, and who, to this end, with a thorough knowledge of human nature, addressed themselves to just those cravings of that nature which are at once the strongest and the blindest. The teachers of Christianity preached obedience; they taught the necessity of self-subjugation; they enforced the duty, while they showed the blessedness, of submission to the law of God and of Christ. What, then, was the argument, and what the enticement, with which these false teachers endeavoured to hold men, and too often succeeded in holding them, in disobedience and rebellion? It was then, as now and ever, "liberty." Liberty! that first temptation that was whispered cunningly amid the fresh leaves and flowers of unfallen Eden, and which has smoothed the way to all other temptations and all other sins whatsoever. Liberty! that form of light with which Satan so often delights to clothe himself. Liberty! that treacherous phantom that has slain more living men—ay, slain them eternally—than all the blood-dripping tyrants of the world. Liberty! that fair child of heaven which for six thousand years men have blindly sought, and which not even six thousand years have taught them, can nowhere else be found than in the house of law. I. THE NATURE OF THE TEMPTATION WHICH THESE EARLY OPPOSERS OF THE TRUTH HELD OUT TO MEN TO KEEP THEM FROM SUBMISSION TO THE LAW OF CHRIST. 1. Doubtless the apostle exactly states the promise made by these opposing teachers; and it is therefore worth while to observe that no limit is placed to the range or application of the liberty promised. These teachers very well knew the corruption and weakness of the human heart; and while therefore they misrepresented the service of Christ as a needless and cruel bondage, they took care to place before men the service of sin as a full and perfect liberty. "They promise them liberty"—deliverance from the iron authority of the Divine will; deliverance from a sense of constant condemnation and restraint; freedom for their whole nature in all its parts; liberty to think and feel and do without hindrance and without fear. And what is this but the temptation which we every day see coiling itself around, and fixing its fascinating eye upon the hearts of men; and to the promise of which we see men everywhere striving to attain? 2. Observe how another fact is brought out by this statement of the apostle—the fact, namely, of a recognised line of separation dividing always between the servants of Christ and the servants of the world. It is its exclusiveness that makes Christianity so repulsive. It is because Christ will divide His claims with none other, that it is so easy to represent His service as a bondage, when compared with the "liberty" of the world. II. THE PROMISE MADE BY THE WORLD AND ITS VOTARIES OF AN ABSOLUTE LIBERTY IS FALSE AS A MATTER OF FACT. 1. Man, by the requirements of his very nature

and condition, must serve. He cannot be without a master—some dominant power, that is, ruling supremely in his heart; and as a moral being there are only two services between which he can choose—the service of good and the service of evil, the service of Christ and the service of the world. 2. There is no greater delusion than to imagine because a man has cast aside his allegiance to his Maker, or has even succeeded in excluding entirely all thought of his Maker from his heart, that therefore he is free. He is not free. There is no such deep bondage—a bondage fixing its relentless grasp upon the inmost powers of the soul—as the liberty of the world. The garlands of its holiday are flowers wreathed on chains; and although its victim himself, owing to the very stupor of his degradation, the delirium which falls on those long bound in prison, may come at times to be ignorant of his state, that state can in no wise be hid from any one who is not himself a servant of the world. No; he is not free. (1) He is held in bondage, first of all, to the world's opinions. Boasting, perhaps, of what he calls his intellectual freedom, scoffing, perhaps, at the authoritative teachings of God's Word, he is yet held in thralldom by the judgments of other men, and does not, in opposition thereto, obey the dictates of his own. (2) He is a slave again to his own body. His lower nature, that which allies him to the brute, rises up in proud supremacy, and rules triumphantly over all that connects him with his God. (3) He is a slave, moreover, to his own fears. Ever and anon his torpid conscience will uprear its crest and inflict its sting. III. The only question with which we, as wise men, are concerned is, WHICH OF THESE TWO IS THE BETTER SERVICE? WHICH WILL RESULT TO US IN THE GREATER RECOMPENSE OF REWARD? We have not spoken unfairly of the service of the world. We have admitted all its claims, so far as those claims are true. It promises liberty, and we have shown you the liberty that it gives. Undoubtedly there is an earthly gain and a present enjoyment to the natural heart in such freedom—the freedom of an untrammelled will, the freedom to enjoy without stint all the pleasures that this world can give; and if the full results, and therefore the final value, of man's acts were present and finished in the acts themselves, there would perhaps be little to be said. But the real advantage and value of all human acts, even the commonest, and therefore of all human states, are decided by their ultimate results, whether, as to time, those results are immediate or remote. To determine, therefore, the true, and consequently the abiding, value, whether of the service of Christ, or the service of the world, we must consider the permanent results of each as they remain fixed in our own nature, or affect permanently the conditions of our own existence. 1. Applying this test, what must we say of the service of the world? How can we characterise results which, as we have seen, are poor and miserable indeed, utterly unworthy of man, debasing and unsatisfying even upon earth, and, instead of brightening, covering with cloud and darkness his real existence, even the eternal existence of his soul? It is, as the apostle says, "corruption." Yes, "corruption"—slavery to this body which, with all its strength and all its pride and all its lust, shall presently be hid away from sight and sense as an offensive thing; slavery to this poor world of men around me, corruptible like me, and day by day dropping into this great charnel-house of earth; slavery to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which send their destroying power into eternity itself, and turn into "corruption" the immortal soul. 2. Test in the same way the service of Christ, and see if the Christian—Christ's true servant—is a slave. If deliverance from his greatest adversary, if superiority to all human power, if a constant sense of perfect security and peace—if this be slavery, then he is in bondage indeed; but if, on the other hand, these are the evidences of liberty, then is he free. Through the power of Christ he vanquishes the temptations that once vanquished him. Living a life of obedience like that of the angels, knowing, through the approving witness of the Spirit, that he is accepted as a repentant son by his loving Father, he lives, through faith, in that Father's home—that home so bright and beautiful upon the summit of the universe; and the laws of that home are the laws of his life. And so, living with angels, what cares he for unrighteous men? or what on earth can harm him? He is above all bondage and above all fear. Death itself has lost all power over him. Its darkness even now is filled with the kindling rays of eternal life. Is not this liberty? and is not such liberty worth seeking for? Is there a sane man here present who, determining this question from the true point of right judgment, even that bed of death which may be spread for him to-morrow, would not give all the honours and all the gains and all the joys that this world can offer to be—a freedman of God? (*W. Rudder, D.D.*) **The servants**

of corruption.—*The sinner's natural power and moral weakness:*—I propose to discuss the moral state of the sinner. I. THE FIRST IMPORTANT FACT TO BE NOTICED IS THAT ALL MEN ARE NATURALLY FREE, AND NONE THE LESS SO FOR BEING SINNERS. THEY NATURALLY HAVE FREEDOM OF WILL. This freedom is in the will itself, and consists in its power of free choice. To do, or not to do—in this is its option. It has by its own nature the function of determining its own volitions. The soul wills to do or not to do, and thus is a moral sovereign over its own activities. In this fact lies the foundation for moral agency. Still further: man can distinguish between those acts in which he is free, and those in which he is acted upon by influences independent of his own choice. He knows that in some things he is a recipient of influences and of actions exerted upon himself, while in other things he is not a recipient in the same sense, but a voluntary actor. The fact of this discrimination proves the possession of free agency. Again, the Bible always treats men as free agents, commanding them to do or not to do as if of course they had all the power requisite to obey such commands. A young minister once said to me, “I preach that men ought to repent, but never that they can.” “Why not preach also that they can?” said I. He replied, “The Bible does not affirm that they can.” To this I replied that it would be most consummate trifling for a human legislature, having required certain acts, to affirm that its subjects have the power to obey. The very requirement is the strongest possible affirmation that, in the belief of the enacting power, the subjects are able to do the things required. Freedom of will lies among the earliest and most resistless convictions. Probably no one living can remember his first idea of oughtness—his first convictions of right and wrong. It is also among our most irresistible convictions. The fact of personal responsibility is fastened on us so that we might as well escape from ourselves as from this conviction. II. While it is true, past a rational denial, that men have this attribute of moral liberty, IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT THEY ARE MORALLY ENSLAVED—in moral bondage. The liberty they have by created constitution; the bondage comes by voluntary perversion and abuse of their powers. The Bible represents men as being in bondage—as having the power to resist temptation to sin, but yet as voluntarily yielding to those temptations. What the Bible thus represents, experience proves to be true. Wicked men know that they are in bondage to Satan. What do you think puts it into the heart of young men to plot iniquity and drink it in like water? Is it not the devil? How many young men do we meet with who, when tempted, seem to have no moral stamina to resist, but are swept away by the first gust of temptation! Men are in bondage to their appetites. What can be the reason that some young men find it so hard to give up the use of tobacco? They know the habit is filthy and disgusting. So when a man is in bondage to alcohol, and so with every form of sensual indulgence. Satan helps on the influence of sensuality, and does not care much what the particular form of it may be, provided its power be strong enough to ruin the soul. It all plays into his hand and promotes his main purpose. So men are in bondage to the love of money; to the fashions of the world; to the opinions of mankind. By these they are enslaved and led on in the face of the demands of duty. Every impenitent man is conscious of being really in bondage to temptation. What man, not saved from sin through grace, does not know that he is an enigma to himself? What! does he not know that his weakest desires carry his will, the strongest convictions of his reason and conscience to the contrary notwithstanding? This is a most guilty state, because so altogether voluntary—so needless, and so opposed to the convictions of his reason and of his understanding, and withal so opposed to his convictions of God's righteous demands. To go counter to such convictions, he must be supremely guilty. Of course such conduct must be most suicidal. The sinner acts in most decided opposition to his own best interests, so that if he has the power to ruin himself this course must certainly do it. This is a state of deep moral degradation. Intrinsically it is most disgraceful. Everybody feels this in regard to certain forms of sin and classes of sinners. A drunkard we regard as a long way towards beasthood. Nay, rather must we ask pardon of all beasts for this comparison, for not one is so mean and so vile—not one excites in our bosom such a sense of voluntary degradation. So of the miser when he gets beyond all motives but the love of hoarding; when his practical question is—not, How shall I honour my race, or bless my generation, or glorify my Maker; but, How can I make a few coppers? Even when urged to pray, he would ask—“What profit shall I have if I do pray unto Him?” When you find a man thus incapable of being moved by noble motives, what a wretch he is! How ineffably mean! So I might bring before you the

ambitious scholar, who is too low in his aims to be influenced by the exalted motive of doing good, and who feels only that which touches his reputation. Is not this exceedingly low and mean? (C. G. Finney.) Of the same he is brought in bondage.—*A fatal promise*:—1. This conquest shows the falsehood of the tempter in his promise. They promise liberty, and here is the result—bondage. 2. This conquest shows the ultimate wretchedness of the victim. He is brought in “bondage.” What is the bondage? (1) Their slavery is the most real. Chains and prison walls can only enslave the body. (2) Their slavery is the most criminal. Corporal slavery is generally a misfortune; the sufferer is not responsible for his position. 3. Their slavery is the most lasting. Death destroys corporal slavery. (*Homilist*.) *On the slavery of vice*:—Bondage and subjection are disagreeable sounds to the ear, disagreeable ideas to the mind. The advocates of vice, taking advantage of those natural impressions, have in every age employed them for discrediting religion. To be free imports, in general, our being placed in such circumstances that, within the bounds of justice and good order, we can act according to our own deliberate choice, and take such measures for our conduct as we have reason to believe are conducive to our welfare; without being obstructed either by external force, or by violent internal impulse. This is that happy and dignified state which every wise man earnestly wishes to enjoy. The advantages which result from it are chiefly these three: freedom of choice; independence of mind; boldness and security. I. VICE is inconsistent with liberty, as it deprives sinners of the power of free choice by bringing them under the dominion of passions and habits. Religion and virtue address themselves to reason. But vice can make no pretensions of this kind. It awaits not the test of deliberate comparison and choice, but overpowers us at once by some striking impression of present advantage or enjoyment. It hurries us with the violence of passion, captivates us by the allurements of pleasure, or dazzles us by the glare of riches. The sinner yields to the impulse merely because he cannot resist it. After passion has for a while exercised its tyrannical sway, its vehemence may by degrees subside. But when, by long indulgence, it has established habits of gratification, the sinner’s bondage becomes then more confirmed and more miserable. For, during the heat of pursuit, he is little capable of reflection. But when his ardour is abated, and, nevertheless, a vicious habit rooted, he has full leisure to perceive the heavy yoke he has brought upon himself. Vice confirms its dominion, and extends it still farther over the soul by compelling the sinner to support one crime by means of another. II. THE SLAVERY PRODUCED BY VICE APPEARS IN THE DEPENDENCE UNDER WHICH IT BRINGS THE SINNER TO CIRCUMSTANCES OF EXTERNAL FORTUNE. One of the favourite characters of liberty is the independence it bestows. He who is truly a free man is above all servile compliances and abject subjection. But the sinner has forfeited every privilege of this nature. His passions and habits render him an absolute dependant on the world and the world’s favour; on the uncertain goods of fortune and the fickle humours of men. Having no fund within himself whence to draw enjoyment, his only resource is in things without. His hopes and fears all hang upon the world. This is to be, in the strictest sense, a slave to the world. Religion and virtue, on the other hand, confer on the mind principles of noble independence. The upright man is satisfied from himself. He despises not the advantages of fortune, but he centres not his happiness in them. III. ANOTHER CHARACTER OF THE SLAVERY OF VICE IS THAT MEAN, COWARDLY, AND DISQUIETED STATE TO WHICH IT REDUCES THE SINNER. Boldness and magnanimity have ever been accounted the native effects of liberty. The man of virtue, relying on a good conscience and the protection of Heaven, acts with firmness and courage; and, in the discharge of his duty, fears not the face of man. The man of vice, conscious of his low and corrupt aims, shrinks before the steadfast and piercing eye of integrity; is ever looking around him with anxious and fearful circumspection, and thinking of subterfuges by which he may escape from danger. The one is bold as a lion; the other flieth when no man pursueth. Corresponding to that abject disposition which characterises a bad man are the fears that haunt him. The terrors of a slave dwell on his mind and often appear in his behaviour. For guilt is never free from suspicion and alarm. I have thus set before you such clear marks of the servitude undergone by sinners as fully verify the assertion in the text that a state of vice and corruption is a state of bondage. In order to perceive how severe a bondage it is, let us attend to some peculiar circumstances of aggravation which belong to it. 1. It is a bondage to which the mind itself, the native seat of liberty, is subjected.

2. It is a bondage which we have brought upon ourselves. (*H. Blair, D.D.*) *Vicious bondage*:—I. THAT GOD ASKS US TO GIVE HIM OUR HEARTS. II. WHAT IS LIBERTY? Is it licence and lawlessness? Must all conduct be without order and without law in order to constitute it freedom? We know better. Look at Paris and the bloody Commune! There is no tyranny like that of lawlessness. The would-be sinner complains of being tied to the apron-strings of his mother in order that he may put himself under the bonds of Satan. He does this to prove his independence. But no man in any condition of life is allowed to act as he pleases. If he were, society would be impossible. III. WHERE THE WISEST LAWS ARE, THERE IS THE TRUEST LIBERTY. We voluntarily place ourselves under such laws that our rights of liberty may be protected. It is so in the state, so in society, so in religion. That cannot be a bond which carries with it an endorsement of the high nature within us. IV. THE BEGINNINGS OF EVIL ARE DANGEROUS. 1. It was a bondage of the soul, of the spirit, of the higher nature within us. The fetters of sin were riveted around these. 2. The aggravation of this slavery is its voluntary assumption. It is a bondage more galling because self-chosen. 3. In this slavery we become subjects to our own servants. It is a revolution in our moral nature, by which the highest parts become the lowest, the lowest the highest. (*H. Johnson, D.D.*) If . . . they are again entangled . . . the latter end is worse.—*Entangled again*:—I. A PROPOSITION. 1. "They have escaped." Next to the finding an unexpected benefit, it is a great happiness to escape an unsuspected danger; yea, the escaping of a great danger is more joy than the receiving of an ordinary benefit. 2. "The pollutions of the world." (1) The pollutions which we contract from the riches of the world. (2) The pollutions we derive from the honours and dignities of the world pride here challengeth the first place, and let her have it, even to be the queen of all sordid filthiness. (3) The pollutions we deduce from the pleasures of the world. Oh, what a torrent of turpitudes here stream in upon us! (a) Immoderate diet. (b) Drunkenness. (c) Lust. 3. "Through the knowledge," &c. (1) There is no knowledge to do good in corrupted nature and filthiness of the flesh. (2) There is no escaping out of this filthiness and corruption, but by knowledge. (3) No knowledge can deliver us, but that of our Saviour Christ. (4) No knowledge of our Saviour can effect this, but that which is sanctified with faith and repentance. II. A SUPPOSITION. 1. The easiness of falling back. "If"—it is no impossible thing. Yes, the commonness proves it too easy. Man goes forth in the morning weak and unarmed, to encounter with powers and principalities. To fight this combat he takes a second with him, and that is his flesh, a familiar enemy, a friendly traitor; the devil comes against him with his second, too, and that is the world. Soon doth the flesh revolt to the world, and both stick to Satan; so here is terrible odds, three to one. 2. The difficulty of recovering them, after their relapse. (1) "They are entangled," as birds are caught in an evil net; where the more they struggle to get out, the faster they stick. (2) "And overcome." That which puts a man from the use of his reason, and a Christian from his exercise of religion, overcomes him. The ambitious are overcome with the desire of honour, so that they are not their own men. Of all, the worldlings are basely overcome; for they think they have the world in a string, when the world hath them in a strong chain. (3) "Entangled and overcome"—put them both together. It is the depth of misery to fall under the curse of Ham, a servant of servants. III. A CONCLUSION. "The latter end is worse," &c. 1. Their sins are worse now than they were at first, therefore their estates must needs be so. 2. Besides all their other sins, they have the sin of unthankfulness to answer for. 3. Because custom in sin hath deadened all remorse for sin. 4. Because their hypocrisy prevents all ways of remedy. 5. Because they wilfully destroy themselves by renouncing all gracious remedies. 6. Because a relapse is even more dangerous than the first sickness; sooner incurred, more hardly cured. (*Thos. Adams.*) *A great gain, a great loss, and a great curse*:—I. A GREAT GAIN. What is the gain? An escape from "the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 1. The world is a scene of moral corruption. 2. To escape these corruptions is of the greatest importance to man. 3. This escape is effected through "the knowledge of Christ." Other sciences have signally failed to purify the world. II. A GREAT LOSS. Peter supposes the position of escapement, after being gained, lost. They are "entangled and overcome." 1. Good men, being moral agents, can fall. 2. Good men, in this world, are surrounded by influences tempting them to apostasy. 3. Good men in this world have fallen from the positions they have

occupied. David, Peter, &c., are examples. III. A GREAT CURSE. "The latter end is worse with them than the beginning." 1. Because he is the subject of greater guilt. 2. Because he has the elements of greater distress. 3. Because he is in a condition of greater hopelessness. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The danger of relapse*.—The infant faith of Christ had to encounter three mighty foes. First of all there was the Judaism on the foundation of which the new system was based, or rather the complement or fulness of which the new system was. The next enemy was the ancient Paganism. Here the conquest was more decisive, though the combat was the sharper. The third enemy of the early Church is not so easily recognised upon the surface of Holy Scripture as the other two, but it is there notwithstanding. The Acts of the Holy Apostles relate a strange passage as occurring at Samaria between St. Peter and Simon Magus, but they do not mention that Simon was the first heretic—was the most active propagator of that deadly Gnosticism which for so many centuries preyed upon the vitals of the Church, and even now in these last days from time to time shows itself in some new and strange manifestation. Oriental in its origin, it was founded in a belief of the doctrine of the antagonism between mind and matter, the one of which it held to be good, the other intrinsically evil. Such a system as this was essentially hostile to God's truth, and accordingly we find that St. John, in his Gospel and Epistles, St. Peter and St. Jude in the works attributed to them, devote themselves to the condemnation of the system. St. John applies himself to confute the doctrinal errors, and to show that Christ the Word is no mere æon, or personal attribute of the Deity, but very God of very God, as the Creed says. The other apostles direct their teaching against the moral effects of the same system, the vanity and conceit, the shallowness and pretence, the laxity and profanity of the adherents of this vain philosophy. Moreover, not only was the fight against these three foes carried on in fair and open field, but the times called for other solicitudes with regard to them. It was not that they injured the Church by assault from without and by resistance to its holy aggression; they more subtly worked as a leaven within the Church itself. We have then to inquire, How does this text apply to us? I. First of all, THIS TEXT STRIKES AT THE ROOT OF THE ERROR THAT GRACE IS INDEFECTIBLE: that a man once in the favour of God can never fall away from it. This is a very common belief in this country, and no wonder, for it is well suited to the self-righteousness and slothfulness of fallen human nature. The apostle, however, teaches the very contrary. An awful truth, then, is it that they who have at one time been truly faithful, may totally and finally fall away! II. But without taking into consideration such a fact as final reprobation succeeding upon the despite of the graces we have received, we have to consider the general proposition of our apostle, THAT THE CASE OF RELAPSE IS SO MUCH MORE DEPLORABLE THAN ANY OTHER SPIRITUAL CONDITION; that in the case of those that are entangled and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Why should this be so? 1. Because the fall is by so much more criminal by how much it has been committed voluntarily and with the eyes open. 2. And next, such an act implies not only rebellion and insolence, but also heinous ingratitude. 3. Relapse is dangerous, on account of the exceeding difficulty of recovery. As in the physical frame in illness a relapse is ever more to be dreaded than the original ailment, and makes the patient worse than he was before; so in the world of faith, the state of the Christian who, after baptism and repentance, falls again into the disorders he has forsworn, is so grievous, that the coarsest similes, such as the vomit of the dog, and the wallowing of the swine, are used by the apostle to picture his condition. In every kind of wickedness relapse is most dangerous, not only in destroying the power of resistance, but in many other ways: for perhaps the most fearful of all the results of sin is the withdrawal of the grace of God. However generous God may be of His benedictions (and never, never till the great day of account shall we know all that He has done for us), He cannot bear that they should be misused. Nor are we to maintain that this law refers merely to great and heinous crimes, such as intemperance, and impurity, and the like; the same runs through every infraction of God's law. Whenever a man relapses into any wilful sin of which he has repented, he incurs in a degree the condemnation of the text. Whatever his fault may be, ill-temper, touchiness, ambition, avarice, over-solicitude for the things of this life, &c. The conscience has fairly done its work, and being despised, in time refuses to act; the moral sense is blunted; the casuistry of indulgence begins to pervert the whole nature; God begins to withdraw His assistance, and the stereotyping of an evil habit begins to take effect! A grievous condition to be

in! As the man sunk in temporal misfortunes looks back on the days of his departed prosperity and esteems no kind of misery so great as the recollection of his former happiness, so one can conceive no picture so desolate as the retrospect of a man, plunged in some sin which is slowly and surely destroying him, to the scenes of his long lost innocence. He knows them well, he recognises their beauty, he bewails their loss as he turns from them with a sigh, but he cannot have the heart to conquer the evil one. But while I press these serious thoughts upon you, I would not have myself misunderstood. What I have said of deliberate relapse into sin, does not apply to those little backslidings which are the consequence of the weakness of our nature. The grand distinguishing idea between these two states, is the earnest will to keep straight and the fervid desire after holiness. Why should we be disheartened? Is not the Christian course a course of constant falls and risings again? (*Bp. Forbes.*) *The danger of relapsing*:—I. THE SINS OF

THOSE WHO RELAPSE ARE, WHILST CONTINUED IN, MORE HEINOUS. 1. Because committed against greater knowledge. The surest knowledge of moral duties is that which is attained by practice. It is, indeed, possible for a man to know his duty who never performs it; but still there is as much difference betwixt a speculative and a practical knowledge of our duty, as between our being acquainted with a road from a transient view of it in a map, and from our having frequently travelled over it. As well may an experienced pilot pretend not to know his compass, as he, who hath for some time steered his course by the laws of God, pretend to be ignorant of them. They have, during his integrity, taken up his thoughts; he must have frequently meditated upon them, in order to his regulating his actions by them; and when he hath reflected on his past actions, they have been the measure by which he hath examined the rectitude or obliquity of them. By these means they have made a strong impression on his mind, and he must offer great violence to himself before he can deface characters which are so deeply imprinted on his soul. 2. Because committed against greater strength to obey. Our spiritual enemies, when they have once been entirely defeated, cannot on a sudden recover their strength. 3. Because they tend more to the dishonour of God. He who hath for some time made himself remarkable by a strict observance of God's laws, hath thereby openly declared for the interests of virtue and piety. He is now to sustain no less a character than that of a champion for the cause of God, and men will be apt to judge of the merits of this cause by the conduct of him who pretends to maintain it. They will think it reasonable to form their opinions of religion by his, and to have no greater concern for it than he hath. 4. Because committed against greater obligations to obedience. Those who have conformed their lives to the precepts of the gospel, must be supposed to have been once convinced that a religious life was to be preferred to a wicked course; the nature of good and evil is not since changed; their experience cannot have convinced them of any mistake; there is no reason for altering their judgment; and whilst that continues the same, their practice ought to be conformable to it. But yet further, such men must reasonably be supposed to have made frequent vows of obedience. They have entered into a solemn covenant with God, and this covenant hath been often renewed.

II. THERE IS MUCH LESS PROBABILITY OF THEIR RECOVERING THEMSELVES OUT OF THIS SINFUL STATE BY REPENTANCE. 1. There is less probability such persons should ever go about to repent. Those evil habits which require much time to master, and which are not to be rooted out but by slow degrees, yet if after some abstinence they are again indulged, do return upon us with all their former strength. The relapsed sinner meets his former crimes with the same pleasure with which we are wont to receive an old bosom friend, and the intermission gives the sin at its return a new and better relish. 2. Should the relapsed sinner entertain thoughts of repentance, it is yet to be feared that this repentance may not prove effectual. In every work which we undertake, we proceed more or less vigorously in proportion to the different hopes we have of success. Now these are the circumstances of a relapsed sinner; his repentance is a work of great difficulty, and his hopes of acceptance are very faint. There must be some extraordinary effusion of God's grace to recall the relapsed sinner. But what reason hath he to expect this supernatural aid, who hath already so much abused it? III. Now if the sin and hazard of relapsing be so great, it will be THE DUTY OF ALL WHO YET STAND, TO TAKE CARE LEST THEY FALL; and of those who are fallen, to use all diligence to recover their ground. The state of the former is happy, but not secure, and therefore they ought to be upon their guard; the conduct of the latter is very dangerous, but not quite desperate, and therefore they ought to work out their salva-

tion with fear and trembling. (*Bp. Smalridge.*) *Apostasy*:—I. THE STATE SUPPOSED. 1. They had escaped, &c. An escape of any kind—from a prison, from shipwreck, from a railway accident, from a dangerous sickness, is ever deemed a cause of thankfulness, and, in some instances, is commemorated for many years after it. But the escape here spoken of is the greatest that a man can ever know. 2. These persons had again become entangled therein and overcome, or “having again become entangled therein,” they “were overcome.” How many sad illustrations of these words might be gathered from the annals of every Church! We have seen young men of great promise and of superior abilities rescued from the snare of the devil—from intemperance, dishonesty, or lust, and becoming earnest members of a Christian community, to the joy of many hearts; but in an evil hour they have listened to the voice of the charmer, they have been led back to their former sinful habits. 3. Hence, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning,” or “their last state is worse than the first.” It is our Lord’s own saying (*Matt. xii. 45*).

II. THE FULFILLMENT OF CERTAIN PROVERBS. 1. The dog possesses many valuable qualities, and for its fidelity and kindness is naturally a favourite. But it is often rapacious, and is especially greedy. It seldom knows when it has had enough; and when it vomits its food, it will, as I have seen it, return and lick it up again. Backsliders are compared to it in this respect. 2. The sow is an unclean animal, and loves filth of every kind; wash her, and as soon as she can she will plunge herself again into the mire, and is never so happy as when wallowing in some dirty bog. Are not sinners often like her? How many reformed drunkards have returned to the intoxicating cup, and plunged again into the filthiest excesses of their previous lives! (*Thoruley Smith.*)

Necessity of perseverance in well-doing:—If it be not enough for a Christian to begin well unless he continue in the profession and doing of that wherein he hath begun, then followeth it that perseverance is so needful, as without which we cannot see the face of God. This is required in the performance of every duty. Is it prayer? we must always pray. Is it thanksgiving? we must in all things give thanks. Is it fasting? we must continually cease from sin. Is it faith? we must never be without it. Is it obedience to God’s commandments? we must always perform it. Is it love unto our neighbours? we must continue therein. The like may be said of every other duty. It is not enough for a time to escape them who live in error, and thereafter give way unto them, but as Caleb and Joshua constantly followed the Lord, and were partakers of the promised land, so must we constantly go on in the course of godliness that we may obtain that kingdom of heaven. (*A. Symson.*)

Sin renewed after pardon:—Oh, tempt not God’s Spirit any more—ye have provoked Him too much already; let not your consciences soothe you up in your sins; remember that I do now give you warning of them, fall not therein. The more thou renewest thy sins the more thou feedest thy corruptions and makest them the more rebellious. A chained dog breaking loose becometh more fierce; a river long stopped, if a breach be made, runneth the more violently; so for thee to restrain thy sin for a time, and then to give way unto the same, is most dangerous. Thou fallest from God to the devil, from a holy profession to profaneness, thus showing thyself unthankful unto God. What should we not give to obtain grace, to get God’s favour? nothing should so entangle us, as that for the love thereof we should reject both God and grace. Oh, there is no loss compared to the loss of grace, to the loss of God’s favour; no ruin to the ruin of the soul; what will it advantage us, to gain the whole world with the loss of our souls? (*Ibid.*)

The way of righteousness.—*The way of righteousness* is so called, because both formally it is a righteous way; and effectively, it makes the walkers in it righteous. Certainly there is but one way to heaven, and this is it. There be many ways to some famous city upon earth, many gates into it. But to the city of salvation and glory there is but one way, one gate, and that is a narrow one too, the way of righteousness. There was a way at the first; the way of the law, or rather of nature; Adam was put into it, but he quickly went out of it. Since that, no man ever kept it one hour; but only He that knew the way, that made the way, that is the way, even the new way of righteousness, Jesus Christ. What then is the way of righteousness? (*John iii. 16*). This way hath two boundaries, repentance and obedience.

1. Repentance on the one side, a mourning for sins past; which is as sure an effect or demonstration of faith, as faith is a cause of the peace of conscience. 2. Obedience on the other side; for though we live by faith, yet our faith doth not live, if it produce not good works. We suspect the want of sap in the root of a tree, if we find barrenness in the branches. (*Thos. Adams.*) **The dog is turned to his**

own vomit again.—*The dog returned to his vomit* :—I. A CONCLUSION. 1. The verity of the proverb. Good proverbs are commended to us for five special excellences, wherein they transcend other discourses. (1) For their antiquity. The sayings of our fathers and ancestors have a reverend estimation among us; nor do we wrap them up in the bundle of our ordinary lessons, but preserve them as dear relics of their happy memories. (2) For their brevity. They are concise and compendious, and so more portable for the memory. (3) For their significancy, comprehending much matter in few words. (4) For experience. The sages have tried that doctrine themselves, which they commend to others. (5) For their truth. False proverbs are Satan's logic, which he hopes will be received for their wit, though they savour not of honesty or verity. 2. The verification of the proverb. "It is happened unto them." Swine and dogs will return to their old filthiness; but woe unto those men that shall degenerate into such brutish qualities! It becomes them worse than those beasts, and a far worse end shall come unto them than unto beasts. II. A COMPARISON. 1. Consider the two creatures together. (1) Sin doth liken men to beasts, to sordid beasts, and that in their basest filthiness. (2) God made us little inferior to angels, and we make ourselves little superior to beasts. 2. Severally. (1) The dog hath many good qualities, and is divers ways useful and serviceable to man; yet still he is a dog. A wicked man loseth not his substance, or faculties, so that he ceaseth to be specifically a man; but he ceaseth to be a good man. There is such a corruption diffused through all those powers and faculties, that he is a wicked one. (2) The hog is not without some good properties. There is no creature not endued with some goodness in its kind; though nature be corrupted, it is not abolished. But my argument is their filthiness. (a) The hog is a churlish creature, grudging any part of his meat to his fellows. And have we no such covetous men, whose insatiate eye envies every morsel that enters into their neighbour's mouth? (b) The swine is ravenous, and devouring all within his reach: a fit emblem of worldly men, who because they have no inheritance above, engross all below; nor is there any means to keep them quiet, till they see no more to covet. (c) Swine are ever rooting in the ground, and destroying the very means of increase. If the covetous could have their will, the whole earth should not yield a handful of corn, but that which grows on their own lands, or lies mouldering in their garners. (d) If the swine be troubled, he sets up his bristles, and foams with anger. Such a savage impatience possesses many hearts, that with fierce wrath they foam at their mouths, and strike with their tusks, and supply the defect of words with wounds. (*Ibid.*) "*No place like home*":—In a cellar I found a family consisting of five persons, all huddled together in a most miserable condition. Their story moved the compassion of a kind lady, who commissioned me to take better and more healthy lodgings for them at her expense, and remove them out of that wretched, damp place. She said she could get no sleep for thinking of these poor creatures. I soon obtained a two-roomed lodging for them, with a good fire, but this failed to please them as well as their old abode. The following day, on calling, I saw that they had darkened the windows with paper; "the light," they said, "made them feel so cold." In a day or two after, I found to my surprise that they had gone back to their "own sweet cellar." "There's no place like home." (*W. Haslam.*) *Altogether become abominable*:—To describe in all its horror the abysmal depth to which these false teachers have sunk, the apostle makes use of two proverbs, one of which he adapts from the Old Testament (Prov. xxvi. 11), while the other is one which would impress the Jewish mind with a feeling of utter abomination. The dogs of the East are the pariahs of the animal world, while everything pertaining to swine was detestable in the eyes of the Israelite. But all the loathing which attached to these outcasts of the brute creation did not suffice to portray the defilement of these teachers of lies and their apostate lives. It needed those other grosser features—the return to the disgorged meal; the greed for filth, where a temporary cleansing serves, as it were, to give a relish for fresh wallowing—these traits were needed ere the full vileness of those sinners could be expressed. (*J. R. Lumby, D.D.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1, 2. This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you.—*St. Peter's love token*:—I. THE NATURE OF IT—a letter written. What shall we render to the Lord for His mercy in writing these blessed covenants? II. THE NUMBER OF IT—a second after the former. "This second"; not so much fearing the miscarriage of the first, as hoping to work better confirmation by the next. III. THE TENOR OF IT—to stir up their minds. Why are the words of the wise compared to goads (Eccles. xii. 11) but to show that the best in God's team need pricking forward? IV. THE ORDER—by way of remembrance. This is a just order and method; first, to teach the way of the Lord, then to remind men of walking in it. We are not only called teachers, but remembrancers (Isa. lxii. 6). (*Thos. Adams.*) **I stir up your pure minds.**—

A Christian memory:—The power of memory is, perhaps, the most amazing part of our mental equipment. It is a golden thread that links infancy and age, on which are hung, like pearls, varied facts and experiences of every hue. Memory has her servant, recollection, an invisible librarian running about the chambers of the mind, to find what she calls for. Now God uses this faculty in the work of building up Christian character. 1. The gospel has a history to be remembered. 2. History repeats itself ordinarily; but this history of the gospel can never be repeated. Christ has suffered once for all. A Christian memory is swift to remember this. 3. In the revelation of His "memorial name" Jehovah has emphasised the significance of memory. He is not an abstraction, a far-distant personality, even, but "the Father of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob"—a historic God. 4. Again, keep in mind that the life of our Lord in glory is linked with that of His redemptive work on earth, as truly as your existence there, some day, will be connected with your residence here on earth. 5. Finally, a Christian memory holds in trust these historic dates of Christ and His redemption, because of the fact that they are to be the theme of adoring praise throughout eternity. (*J. M. English, D.D.*) **Mindful of the words which were spoken before.**—

Mindfulness:—I. THE OBJECT OF THEIR MINDFULNESS. 1. "Words," for their plain certainty; not shadows and abstruse paradoxes. 2. "Spoken before," for their antiquity; not things of yesterday; no new devices. 3. "By the prophets," for the authority; men that had their commission immediately from God Himself. 4. "Holy prophets," for the sanctity; they passed not through the lips of a Balaam, or Caiaphas. 5. "The commandment of us," &c. The prophets were legal apostles, the apostles are evangelical prophets. Both these came to the world with commandments. (1) Neither prophets nor apostles did ever command in their own names; but the former came with "Thus saith the Lord," and the other in the name of Christ. (2) St. Peter refers us to the words of the prophets and commandments of the apostles, and precisely chargeth our mindfulness with these lessons. (3) Neither the prophets without the apostles, nor the apostles without the prophets, but both together. The gospel without the law may lift men up to presumption; the law without the gospel may sink them down to desperation. (4) The rule of truth is delivered to us by the prophets and apostles. II. THEIR MINDFULNESS OF THAT OBJECT. This consists in two things: 1. Observation. God never meant His Word for a vanishing sound; that which is kept upon eternal record in heaven, and is a constant dweller in the elected heart (Col. iii. 16), must not be a sojourner, much less a passenger, with us. 2. Conversation. It is a barren mindfulness that does not declare itself in a holy fruitfulness. Conclusion: 1. Let us desire the faculty and facility of doing; earnestly to desire it is one half, yea, the best half. 2. Let us be thrifty husbands of time and means to be spiritually rich. 3. Let us reduce all to practice. (*Thos. Adams.*)

Compendious commandments:—Cultivate the habit of reflective meditation upon the truths of the gospel as giving you the pattern of duty in a concentrated and available form. It is of no use to carry about a copy of the "Statutes at Large" in twenty folio volumes, in order to refer to it when difficulties arise and crises come. We must have something a great deal more compendious and easy of reference than that. A man's cabin-trunk must not be as big as a house, and his goods must be in a small compass for his sea voyage. We have in Jesus Christ the "Statutes at Large," codified and put into a form which the poorest and humblest and busiest amongst us can apply directly to the sudden emergencies and surprising contingencies of daily life, which are always sprung upon us when we do not expect them, and demand instantaneous decision. (*A. Maclaren.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **There shall come in the last days scoffers.**—*The character of the last days*:—I. THE PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF THE DISPUTERS HERE DESCRIBED. To be a scoffer is sure no very laudable character, being the joint result of pride and malice, the doing mischief, and the doing it in sport. But as this temper is most injurious, it is also ignorant and indocile. The sure effect of knowledge is an humble sense of the want of it; the deeper we immerse ourselves in any art or science, the greater difficulties are started by us. But over and above the ingredients, of pride, ill-nature, and incorrigible folly, the mockers of the text are branded with immorality and vice—"to walk after their own lusts." And sure there cannot be a more prodigious impudence than that guilty persons liable to the severest punishments should dare to awaken observation by being sharp on others.

II. THE FORCE OF THEIR DISCOURSINGS. "Where is the promise of His coming?" The delaying of performance is no prejudice against it. With Almighty God everything, however distant it may seem, is actually present. First, the apostle denies the proposition that all things continue as they were since the Creation; and secondly, he denies the consequence drawn from thence, Though all things did continue, it no way follows they shall for ever do so.

III. AS THEY ARE A RECITAL OF A PROPHECY. The appearance of these scoffers in the world is itself a very signal mark of its approach (Jude 17, 18; 1 Thess. v. 1; Matt. xxiv. 37). Will they find arguments of mockery and laughter in the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? If they can do this, in God's name let them mock on, deny a future judgment, or what is more brave, let them dare it. (*John Fell, D.D.*)

The nature, folly, and danger of scoffing at religion:—I. TO CONSIDER THE NATURE, FOLLY, AND DANGER OF SCOFFING AT RELIGION, than which nothing can be more offensive to a considerate mind.

1. Is there anything ridiculous in the belief of a Deity, a supreme, infinite, and intelligent mind, the creator and governor of the universe? Is it absurd to assert that He who made the world exercises an universal providence and directs all the affairs of it? What is there ludicrous in any of the duties of piety, in a supreme reverence and love of God? What is there that has a ridiculous aspect, or can excite any but the laughter of fools, in justice, temperance, &c.? Again, is it at all unsuitable to our most worthy notions of God to believe, that when the world was universally corrupted, He would graciously interpose for the good of His creatures, and teach them their duty by an extraordinary revelation? Is it in the least irrational to suppose that this revelation has fixed, with the utmost distinctness, the terms of our acceptance with God, and thereby removed distracting suspicions and superstitious terrors?

2. Further, the grand principles and duties of religion are so far from having anything ridiculous in them, that they are some of the plainest and most obvious dictates of reason, which renders the guilt of the scoffer much more aggravated and his impertinence and folly more insupportable.

3. Let me only add that religion is of the utmost consequence to the comfort of men's minds, the peace of society, and the general good of the world. So that whoever sets himself to vilify these important truths not only fixes certain reproach upon himself by misplacing his ridicule on what has really nothing absurd in it, but is, in fact, whatever his intention may be, whether to gratify a trifling humour, display the forwardness of his genius, or corrupt the morals of the age, an enemy to society and the general happiness of mankind.

4. And as the guilt of these scoffers is very great, their danger is in proportion. For if the principles of religion should happen to be true, he that has so abused his reason, that noblest gift of God, as to employ it against his Maker, and all that is amiable and useful in human life, must expect to be treated with the utmost rigour and severity.

II. TO INQUIRE INTO THE CAUSES OF IT.

1. It sometimes springs from a levity of mind which disposes men to treat all subjects ludicrously.

2. Again, bantering religion frequently proceeds from ignorance and superficial inquiry.

3. Sometimes again it happens that the fashion of the age they live in, or the general humour of the company they frequent, makes persons set up for scoffers.

4. Scoffing at religion may, in some persons, proceed from a direct hatred of it, occasioned by a prejudice in favour of their vices. This was the case of the scoffers mentioned in the text, who are expressly described as walking after their own lusts. I may safely assert that immorality in the practice is the source of the most invincible prejudices against religion. How natural is it for those, who live as without God in the world, to wish that there was no such Being, that by destroying the first principle of all religion they may justify the want of it in their practice. I shall only add, that when men are averse to the principles of religion, they will naturally decline all further inquiries

into the reasonableness of them, and be fond of everything that looks plausible on the side of infidelity. Learn: 1. Into what extreme corruption the mind of man, which is indued with such noble faculties and formed for Godlike perfection, is capable of being sunk, even to mistake confusion for order and deformity for beauty? 2. Again, that we may not be imposed on by the scoffers of our own times, let us always take care to distinguish between reasoning and ridicule. We should examine what it is that is really ridiculous: whether it be religion itself, or something of a different nature substituted in the place of it. 3. Finally, that we may keep at the utmost distance from this crime, let us employ our reason in defending religion and representing it in a just and amiable light. Let our natural abilities be devoted to this service, and all our studies and improvements made subservient to it. (*James Foster.*)

The folly of scoffing at religion:—I. We will consider THE NATURE OF THE SIN HERE MENTIONED, which is scoffing at religion. "There shall come scoffers." In those times there was a common persuasion among Christians, "that the day of the Lord was at hand." Now this, it is probable, these scoffers twitted the Christians withal. They looked upon all things as going on in a constant course.

II. THE CHARACTER WHICH IS HERE GIVEN OF THESE SCOFFERS. They are said to walk after their own lusts. St. Jude, in his epistle, gives much the same character of them that St. Peter here does (vers. 18, 19). To deride God and religion is the highest kind of impiety. And men do not usually arrive to this degree of wickedness at first, but they come to it by several steps. I remember it is the saying of one, who hath done more by his writings to debauch the age with atheistical principles than any man that lives in it, "that when reason is against a man, then a man will be against reason." I am sure this is the true account of such men's enmity to religion—religion is against them, and therefore they set themselves against religion. Besides that, men think it some kind of apology for their vices that they do not act contrary to any principle they profess. III. THE HEINOUSNESS AND THE AGGRAVATIONS OF THIS VICE. If it prove true that there is no God, the religious man may be as happy in this world as the atheist. Besides that, the practice of religion and virtue doth naturally promote our temporal felicity. It is more for a man's health, and more for his reputation, and more for his advantage in all other worldly respects, to lead a virtuous than a vicious course of life. And for the other world, if there be no God, the case of the religious man and the atheist will be alike, because they will both be extinguished by death and insensible of any further happiness or misery. But then if the contrary opinion should prove true, then it is plain to every man, at first sight, that the case of the religious man and the atheist must be vastly different; then where shall the wicked and the ungodly appear? I will but add one thing more, to show the folly of this profane temper. And that is this: that as it is the greatest of all other sins, so there is in truth the least temptation to it. Profane persons serve the devil for nought. Lessons: 1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly of profaneness, which by some is miscalled wit. 2. To caution men not to think the worse of religion, because some are so bold as to deride it. 3. To persuade men to employ that reason and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purposes, in the service and to the glory of that God who hath bestowed these gifts on men. (*Abp. Tillotson.*)

The sin of scoffing at religion:—I. THE NATURE OF THE VICE. 1. It is not the serious inquirer that I complain of, let his objections be raised against whatever doctrines they may, but the individual who treats the subject with a spirit of levity, derision, and contempt. (1) In some instances this unhappy and unholy disposition goes so far as to despise every kind of religion, natural as well as revealed. (2) In other cases, the scorner appears in the character of a deist, who, while he professes to believe the truth, and to submit to the obligations of natural religion, attacks the system of Divine revelation. He reviles the Scriptures as forgeries. (a) Much unhalloved ridicule is thrown by some on what are considered by us as the most sublime and important doctrines of revelation—I mean the trinity of persons in the Godhead, and the atonement of our Lord. (b) The scorner will not unfrequently be found avowing his belief in the important articles which I have just mentioned, while, at the same time, he ridicules the only legitimate influence and valuable results of these doctrines. Has not the term saint, that highest appellation which can be given to man or glorified spirit, been bandied about society as a term of reproach? (c) Another way of scoffing at religion is to pitch upon the imperfections of good men and to expose them to public ridicule. But how hateful is the malignity which delights to throw all the praiseworthy parts of the character into the shade of one ludicrous trait. (d) It is a miserable device, which

many have had recourse to, to select the absurdities of fanaticism and the hollow pretences of hypocrisy, as they have been exhibited in some false professors, and thus to raise a prejudice against all genuine religion. 2. To inquire where and when the practice of scoffing is indulged in. (1) In the theatre. (2) How often the social circle is the scene of this unhallowed sport and the entertainment of the convivial party's heightened by profane ridicule. (3) How saturated with the sin of scoffing at religion are many of the publications, and much of the periodical literature of the present day. II. THE CAUSES OF SCOFFING. 1. There are many subordinate and proximate ones. (1) Of these, pride and an unmortified opinion of self takes the lead. (2) Scoffing is sometimes the result of a prevailing and indecent levity of mind, an habitual and indulged frivolity, which alike indisposes and unfits a man for any serious pursuit. (3) A silly affectation of novelty combined with a wish to be thought superior to the terrors of superstition, leads in many cases to the sin of ridiculing piety. (4) Many are led on to assume the character of the scorner by the power of fashion and the contagion of evil company. (5) Inability to attack religion in any other way induces some to assail it with their scorn. 2. But the chief source of scoffing is that which the apostle has mentioned in the text, "Scoffers walking after their own lusts."

III. THE CHARACTER OF THIS VICE. 1. It is irrational. Ridicule is neither the test of truth in others nor the way to obtain it for ourselves. 2. It is rude and uncivil. A decent respect is due to every man's convictions on the subject of religion, though they may be erroneous. 3. It is a most cruel and inhuman sin. Did he but consider how many there are who, amidst the vicissitudes and the trials of life, have no ray of consolation from any other source to fall upon their dreary path, would he follow them to their last refuge and attempt to drive them by unhallowed scorn even from thence? 4. It is a most hardening vice. The sacred writers speak of a scorner as almost irreclaimable. 5. But its impiety in the sight of God surpasses all description. Religion is at once the production and the image of Deity; and to scoff at religion, therefore, is to scoff at God. 6. It is a contagious and injurious vice. Scorners are the chief instruments of Satan, the promoters of his cause, his most zealous apostles, his most able advocates, and his most successful emissaries. IV. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE SCORNER. 1. Are there, tell me scoffers, no midnight scenes of terror and self-reproach? How will this be increased on the bed of death? 2. I cannot conceive of any character with whom Jehovah will be so awfully severe as the scoffer; his is the loftiest height of vice, and his will be the lowest depth of punishment. God's patience in bearing with such impious creatures is wonderful; and His justice in punishing them will be in proportion. 3. And then, who shall tell the secrets of his prison, or conceive of what the scorner shall endure in the dark world of hell? There will be no saint near him there on whom to utter the effusions of his ridicule. Not one flash of wit will for a moment relieve the darkness of eternal night; not one sally of humour resist the oppression of eternal despair.

(*J. A. James.*) Where is the promise of His coming?—*The delay of the advent of Christ*.—I. THE SCIENTIFIC DIFFICULTY. 1. So far as the objection relates to the delay of the second advent, it would seem that, in a scientific age like the present, it would least of all have weight. For the history of the earth, as related by geology, and the history of the cosmical system, as related by astronomy, present periods so vast, that the eighteen hundred years, during which Christianity has been evolving its work among men, shrink into utter insignificance in the comparison. Certainly, the man of science, of all men, should recognise the utter inadequacy of human standards of time as measures of the development of the plans of the Creator. 2. Again, so far as the objection relates to other aspects of the subject, such as the regularity and immutability of natural law which, it is alleged, forbid any such catastrophe as the end of the world, I suggest—(1) That creation is the fundamental fact on which all our knowledge rests. Science is compelled to admit the beginning of the Kosmos. The very principle of evolution which, in some form or other, is now generally adopted as a twin generalisation with gravitation, carries with it the idea of a beginning. Even if the Kosmos had been self-evolved, the seed out of which it evolved itself must be assumed. But does not this suggest that it is working towards an end? an ultimate solution? (2) That the three leading ideas involved in the second advent, and that which is associated with it, at least in perspective, the end of the world, find clear analogies in the latest theories of science. (a) The second advent involves the idea of the imagination of a higher stage of life and being for man—emancipation from old fetters, the ascent to a higher plane, the taking on a new body with new powers, and under new and higher

conditions. But this is just in the line of the story which science is telling us—whether in astronomy, geology, natural history, or sociology—the several spheres in which the law of evolution is traced. (b) The second advent involves the sudden manifestation of the Son of God, and a new birth of the world resulting from it. But again, the scientific man at our side teaches us that the ascent of matter and force to higher planes, though indeed in orderly succession, has not been by infinite gradation as upon a sliding scale, but always by paroxysms. The story of a chemist is a story of successive births of force into higher and higher forms, the transformation of dead into living matter, of physical into chemical force, and again of chemical into vital force. These are all instances of sudden births into higher conditions with new properties and powers which could not have been imagined before. (c) The second advent—or that great event which, in the perspective, is contiguous with it, though in reality it may lie far beyond it (like two distant peaks, which seem to spring from the same base though a wide valley really intervenes)—involves also stupendous natural phenomena—the regeneration by fire, the new heavens and the new earth. But here again the analogy of science is in harmony with the scriptural revelation; for the geologist, in telling of an internal treasure-house of fire, as well as the astronomer in his theory of “planetary old age,” clearly establish that harmony. And, moreover, if there is a law of conservation of force, there is also, as its antithesis, a law of dissipation of energy. Says Le Comte, “All scientific speculations on the subject of the final destiny of the Kosmos bankrupt nature. The final result is, the running down of all forms of force into heat, and so the final death of the Kosmos.”

II. THE HISTORICAL DIFFICULTY. Christ promised to come again in person to judge the world. He said, “Behold, I come quickly.” But He has not come. Long cycles of history have rolled round, yet still He comes not. Now how do we meet this objection? Exactly as St. Peter did—by reminding the objector that with the Lord “a thousand years are as one day.” He is the strong and patient worker. Whether we study the record of races or of civilisations, the conclusion is the same—that the God who orders the course of history does indeed reckon “a thousand years as one day,” maturing His purposes through long tracts of time, and refusing to hasten His work in obedience to the impatience of men. Great nations are not born in a day; strong civilisations are not the product of a generation; both are rather the resultant of a combination of forces and influences whose origin must be sought in remote antiquity. Judging, then, from the analogy of history, what should be the case of Christianity? Here was a new spiritual kingdom set up on earth, designed to be as wide as the world, and as universal as man. How would its results be reached? Surely we should expect that such a design could only be wrought out through long cycles of time; or, at least, this is certain, leaving out of view what *could* be done (for who shall limit the power of the Almighty?) if experience shall prove that the kingdom of God is to establish itself slowly and through long ages of development, this is only what the analogy of history would teach us to expect. But does not this slow ripening of the great periods of history and civilisation, while it removes the difficulty occasioned by the long delay of the second advent, create at the same time a presumption against the manner of its imagination? The Scripture picture represents a sudden event, a great crisis and catastrophe in the history of the world, in the second coming of Christ. But this, too, finds its frequent analogies in history. The records of mankind afford instances not a few of great crises in the history of cities and nations and races, when sudden destruction has overtaken them, when the long pent-up clouds of wrath have burst upon them and swept them away from among the families of the earth. Such was the case with Nineveh and Babylon. Such was the case with Accad, a city older than either of these, which was indeed the cradle of civilisation, but which so utterly disappeared, that its existence was not even known forty years ago, and was only brought to light by the discovery of the key to the arrow-headed characters, in which the story of the Accadians, with their laws and literature and religion, had remained securely locked up for more than three thousand years. Such was the case with Jerusalem, which when it filled up the measure of its guilt, perished in that sudden storm of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Such was the case with the Roman Empire, when it sank to rise no more before the devastating flood of the Northern barbarians. Similar examples are not wanting in modern history, illustrating the principle in question, and giving ground for the assertion that the analogy of history is in harmony with the prophecy that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night—a day of judgment and indignation and wrath to those who are disobedient and rebellious against the Son of God, but

a day of Redemption to all them that wait for His appearing. (R. H. McKim, D.D.) All things continue as they were.—*Man's external universe as read by the scoffing sceptic*:—I. THEY GET FROM IT A ONE-SIDED IDEA. The idea they obtained from the observation of nature was, that it was unchanging. "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue," &c. This is only partially true. We thank God for this constancy. Without it the farmer would have no motive to cultivate his field, the mariner no chart to guide him over the deep, the philosopher no data on which to prosecute his inquiries or to build up his science. All would be confusion. Man, without plan, and without hope, would move under the wild impulses which the casualties of the moment awakened. Still, nature has her changes. Nay, amidst all this constancy are there not incessant revolutions? Does not the inorganic change in its appearance? Old mountains, rivers, islands disappear, and new ones emerge. The vegetable and animal worlds succeed each other. Nay, perhaps there is nothing the same—all things change. A one-sided view of a many-sided thing is evermore erroneous. II. THEY APPLY THIS ONE-SIDED IDEA AGAINST THE WRITTEN WORD. "Where is the promise of His coming?" Now, has not the sceptic always read nature in this way? Whether he has looked at its astronomical, geological, or physiological phases, has he not always so read it as to get some false idea of it, in order to turn it against the Bible? III. THEY DO THIS FROM A SAD PERVERSITY OF HEART. They are "scoffers walking after their own lusts and willingly ignorant." (D. Thomas, D.D.)

Miracles are now neither necessary to the conviction of unbelievers, nor the conversion of sinners:—I shall consider the words as a standing objection of scoffers or free-thinkers against the truth and authority of the Christian religion. I. THAT MIRACLES ARE NOT NOW NECESSARY TO THE CONVICTION OF UNBELIEVERS. It is sufficient that we are assured there was a time when the Christian religion was confirmed by numerous and undoubted miracles. Those who contend for the continuance of miracles in order to evince more effectually the truth of revealed religion, proceed upon one of these suppositions. Either that it is necessary every particular person should for his own satisfaction be an eye-witness of some miraculous fact, or else, that once at least in every age and nation, God should exert His omnipotence, and the miracle be committed to some public and standing record for the information of those who were not eye-witnesses of it. As to what is here required in the last place, it is obviated by saying that we have all the evidence of the miracles recorded in the gospel, that any man, who is not an eye-witness of it, can have of a miracle done in his own age or nation. Upon the former supposition, miracles would be so frequent that they would become of little force or consideration. This is certain, that the effects which miracles have upon men depend upon a good, docile, and obedient temper of mind. He that is in this good disposition needs no further evidence of miracles for his conviction; but he that is not, would not be convinced by them, though we should suppose them more frequent. II. But if miracles are not necessary to the conviction of unbelievers, MAY THEY NOT BE NECESSARY TO THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS? or to reclaim those who already believe from walking after their own lusts, and bring them to repentance? I answer again in the negative. 1. The same motives which now induce men to put off their repentance would, in all probability, be as prevalent, though we should suppose miracles more frequent. Would a miracle tend to convince a sinner of the Divine authority of the laws of the gospel? That we here suppose him convinced of already. Would it tend to enforce his obedience to those laws by conveying any sanctifying graces into his nature? What would it then do in order to his conversion? You will say it might be an occasion of bringing him to a better temper of consideration, and to make him take up some speedy resolutions of amendment. It is granted; but then such a resolution is no more than what we see sinners taking up daily, and yet, notwithstanding this, how ordinary is it for them to shift off their repentance from time to time, till it be past time! 2. It is not reasonably to be expected such an impression should be of any long or lasting continuance. 3. Though what is here asserted could not be made appear from probable reasons and arguments; yet it is confirmed by experience and undeniable matters of fact. We have numerous examples in Scripture, and it may not be improper to instance some few of them to this purpose. (1) Who would have thought that Pharaoh, after all the miracles which were done before his eyes, and which he did not only see, but feel the dreadful effects of, should still have persisted in his disobedience to the commands of God? (2) So, again, notwithstanding the many miracles Moses afterwards wrought in the deliverance of the Jews, what little effect had they towards reclaiming them either from the error or evil of their ways!

1. And when I say that miracles are not now necessary to the conviction of unbelievers, I would be understood as speaking only of such unbelievers as live among Christians, and may at any time have the proofs of Christianity laid clearly before them. 2. If, then, God Almighty has afforded us all sufficient means to convince us of the truth of our holy religion, let us faithfully endeavour to employ those means to the ends they are designed; let us frequently reflect on the reasonableness of Christianity, and the evidence of its truth, that our faith may be built upon a solid foundation. (*R. Fiddes, D.D.*)

Vers. 5-7. **This they willingly are ignorant of.**—*Willing ignorance*:—Nelson, at St. Vincent, putting the telescope to his blind eye, and swearing that he could not see the signal to cease firing, affords an apt illustration of many who, for less worthy motives, will not, because they wish not, see the truth. I. **THE AVOWED INFIDELS AND ATHEISTS.** They are willingly ignorant—1. Of the teachings of the Bible which they affect to despise. 2. Of the evidences of its Divine origin and inspiration. 3. Of the evidences of the being, wisdom, and love of God. 4. Of the evidences of the Divine origin of Christianity. II. **MANY MEN OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE.** III. **MULTITUDES WHO PROFESS AND CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS.** All those who habitually neglect the sanctuary, and to whom the Bible is an unknown book. (*The Study.*) **The world that then was, . . . perished.**—*The flood*:—I.

A MALEFACTOR. "The world that then was." Locally, a piece of it perished: the earth; materially, a great deal of it perished: all the riches and commodities of the earth; principally considered, all perished but eight persons: formally, there was nothing left. Only God's quarrel to the world was for the men of the world; and His quarrel to the men of the world was for their sins. The world itself was, in this, like the sea; and sins, like the winds: the sea would be calm and quiet if the winds did not trouble it; if iniquities, like storms, had not put the course of nature into an uproar, the world had not perished. II. AN EXECUTIONER. "Being overflowed with water." This is an excellent servant to us, so God made it; but an ill master, so our sins make it. Nothing is so sovereign, which being abused by sin, may not, of a blessing, become a curse. III. **THE CONVENIENCY OF THE EXECUTION.** The water was not far to fetch; either with danger, as David's water from the well of Bethlehem, through an army of Philistines; or with labour, as Jacob's water from a deep well in the bowels of the earth; but near at hand, ready. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Man's external universe as regarded by the thoughtful Christian*:—What is the Christian's view of nature? The answer we get from this passage is—I. **HE REGARDS IT AS ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY THE DIVINE WORD.** "By the Word of God the heavens were of old," &c. It had an origin—it is not eternal; it arose not from chance, but from the Divine Word. II. **HE REGARDS IT AS DEPENDENT EVERY MOMENT UPON THE DIVINE WORD.** "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store." 1. That the past changes of nature are to be referred to the Divine Word. Peter here refers to one tremendous catastrophe. "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." The deluge was no accident. "I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth," &c. The earthquake, the tornado, the blight, the pestilence, all these things in nature come from the Word of God. His will is in all. 2. That the present existence of nature is to be referred to His Word. "But the heavens and the earth which are now by the same Word kept in store"—are preserved in their present state. If this is a right view of material nature, we may infer three important considerations. (1) That it is absurd to cite the so-called laws of nature against the fulfilment of God's revealed purposes. This is just what the scoffing sceptics did in the days of Peter. The laws of nature seemed against the deluge; but God purposed that these things should take place, and the laws of nature yielded. The laws of nature may seem against a resurrection, &c., but the purpose of God will be fulfilled. If material nature was originally produced by, and is ever dependent upon, the Word of God, we infer—(2) That there can be no real contradiction between its facts and those of the Bible. Moreover, if material nature was originally produced by, and is ever dependent upon, the Divine Word, we infer—(3) That its relation to the soul should be especially realised. As the Word of God is thus in material nature, material nature has a meaning. It is the voice of God to the human heart, a Divine appeal to the human conscience. Nature has a moral meaning, God's Word is in it. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **One day is with the Lord as a thousand years.**—*God's estimate of time*:—I. First, take this statement as a GENERAL PRINCIPLE, "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years," &c. 1. In opening up this general principle we remark that all

time is equally present with God. Childhood, manhood and old age belong to creatures, but at the right hand of the Most High they have no abode. Growth, progress, advancement, all these are virtues in finite beings, but to the Infinite the thought of such change would be an insult. Yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, belong to dying mortal, the Immortal King lives in an eternal to-day. This is a subject upon which we can only speak without ourselves fully understanding what we say, but yet, perhaps, a metaphor may tend to make the matter a little simpler. There is a river flowing along in gentle slope toward the sea. A boatman is upon it; his vessel is here; anon it is there; and soon it will be at the river's mouth; only that part of the river upon which he is sailing is present to him. But up yonder, on a lofty mountain, stands a traveller; as he looks from the summit he marks the source of the river and gazes upon its infant stream, where as yet it is but a narrow line of silver; then he follows it with his clear eye until it swells into a rolling flood, and he tracks it until it is finally absorbed into the ocean. Now, as the climber stands upon that Alp, that whole sparkling line of water adorning the plain is equally present to him from its source to its fall; there is not one part of the stream that is nearer to him than another; in the long distance he sees the whole of it, from the end to the beginning. Such, we think, is the stream of time to God. From the altitude of His observance He looketh down upon it and seeth it at one gaze; taking in, not at many thoughts, but at one thought, all the revolutions of time and all the changes of ages, and seeing both the thousands of years that have gone, and the thousands that are yet to come, as present at one view before his eye. 2. The text teaches us next that all time is equally powerless with God to affect Him. A day does not make any particular change in us that we can notice. But if you take fifty years—what a difference is perceptible in any of us! But as a day seems to make no change with us, so, but far more truthfully, a thousand years make no change with God. Ages roll on, but He abideth the same. We need be under no apprehension that God will ever be affected with weakness through the revolutions of time. The Ancient of Days, ever omnipotent, fainteth not, neither is weary. And as time brings no weakness, certainly it shall bring no decay to God. Upon His brow there is ne'er a furrow; no signs of palsy are in His hand. And as no weakness and no decay can be brought to God by time, so no change in His purpose can ever come through revolving years. To that whereto He hath set His seal He standeth fast, and what His heart decrees, that will He do. Moreover, as there can be no change in His decree, so no unforeseen difficulties can intervene to prevent the accomplishment of it. As long as there is a work to do, He shall do it; as long as there is an enemy to conquer, that enemy shall be overcome. 3. Yet further—no doubt the text intends to teach that all time is insignificant to God. Within the compass of a drop of water we are told that sometimes a thousand living creatures may be discovered, and to those little creatures no doubt their size is something very important. There is a creature inside that drop which can only be seen by the strongest microscope, but it is a hundred times larger than its neighbour, and it feels, no doubt, that the difference is amazing and extraordinary. But to you and to me, who cannot even see the largest creature with the naked eye, the gigantic animalcule is as imperceptible as his dwarfish friend, they both seem so utterly insignificant that we squander whole millions of them, and are not very penitent if we destroy them by thousands. But what would one of those little infusorial animals say if some prophet of its own kind could tell it that there is a creature living that could count the whole world of a drop of water as nothing, and could take up ten thousand thousand of those drops and scatter them without exertion of half its power; that this creature would not be encumbered if it should carry on the tip of its finger all the thousands that live in that great world—a drop of water; that this creature would have no disturbance of heart, even if the great king of one of the empires in that drop should gather all his armies against it and lead them to battle? Why, then the little creatures would say, "How can this be; we can hardly grasp the idea?" But when that infusorial philosopher could have gotten an idea of man, and of the utter insignificance of its own self, and of its own little narrow world, then it would have achieved an easy task compared with that which lies before us when we attempt to get an idea of God. 4. I think we ought also to learn from the text that all time is equally obedient to God. You and I are the servants of time, but God is its sovereign Master. II. GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A DAY. He can make a day as useful, and to Him it shall be as long as a thousand years. I think this is one of the most brilliant of the Church's hopes. We have been saying, "How many converts have been made by the Missionary Society during fifty or

sixty years?" and we have said, "Well, at this rate, how long will it be before the world is converted?" Ah! "At this rate"; but how do you know God's rate? God can do as much in a day as has been done in a thousand years that are past, if so He wills it. Only let Him will it, and there shall be one day written in the records of the Church that shall be equal in achievements, and in triumphs, to any thousand years of her history recorded aforesaid. This should lead us to remember that when God speaketh of judging the world at the day of judgment, He will find no difficulty in doing it. Two hundred judges might find it difficult to try in one day all the cases that might be brought before them in a single nation, but God, when He holdeth the great assize, shall be able to convict every guilty one, and to absolve every penitent, and that, too, in one day.

III. GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A THOUSAND YEARS. A day is to Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. "How long, how long?" the saints under the altar cry. "How long?" and the saints at the altar here-to-day take up the same waiting notes, "How long?" But He answereth, "I am not long. What if I have waited and the time is long to you; yet it is not long to Me." God bids you think for a moment, that if you really measure aright, it is no lengthened period of time that He has made the vision to tarry. For see you first, the time that has elapsed since Christ's crucifixion is not long compared with eternity. Then, again, when ye say that God is long in the accomplishment of His great purposes, remember that He has no need to be in a hurry. Whatsoever you and I find to do, we must do it with all our might: for there is neither work nor device in the grave whither we are hastening; but God liveth for ever. Besides, there is an advantage in His being slow—it tries our faith. To win a fight when it lasteth but for an hour, what is there in it? One gallant charge and the foemen have fled. Comrade, but that is a battle worthy to be written with your Waterloos and your Marathons, when hour after hour, and day after day, valour disdains to succumb, and patience endures the fight while foot to foot the soldiers stand. Further, it is well that God should thus be long, because He is unravelling revelation. The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to loose the seals, and to open the book for us, and year after year He reads another page, and yet another in the Church's history. If Christ should come to-day, if we should have no more conflicts, no more trials, then we might suppose that the book had come to its brilliant golden finis; but if it keepeth on a thousand years to come, so much the better: the glowing eyes of angels wish not for the end of the story, and the bright eyes of immortal spirits before the throne, when it shall be all over, shall not regret that it was too long. No, let it go on, great Master; let a thousand years run on; our loving hearts will patiently bear it, as though it were but one day. And more: the victory of Christ at the end will be all the greater, and the redemption all the more glorious, because of this long time of strife and confusion. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Time a rate of motion:—The apostle evidently wishes us to look upon the flight of the years more as God in His eternity looks down upon them. We are to approach the idea of eternity not by multiplying years together in indefinite figures of time, but more truly by remembering that with the Eternal our measurements of time have no importance. I. I ask you to reflect, first, THAT TIME IS A GIFT OF GOD TO THE CREATION. Time is a bequest from the Eternal conveyed and secured in the constitution of the creation. These visible, revolving worlds are by nature temporal. Time is the rate of motion determined by the Creator in His own thought of the worlds. Now, inasmuch as time itself is an original gift of God to the creation, we may well stop to reflect upon the value of this gift. It is one of the primal evidences of the benevolence of the Creator. This original providence of perfect time for the world, true to the infinitesimal of a second through the ages of ages, is evidence of the far-seeing thoughtfulness of the Creator. It is the first condition and means of conveyance of all other good gifts of God. Time is the *magna charta* of all man's rights upon the earth. The ancient order of the heavens is the surety that our God is not a Sovereign who has made us of His mere pleasure, but one who has made all things according to His good pleasure; and whether man's works upon the earth be good or evil, this solar system which God made shall keep true time without variability, or shadow of turning, until the end comes and time shall be no longer. II. Keeping in mind this fact that time is a gift of God to the creation, reflect, secondly, THAT WHAT WE KNOW AS TIME IS ONLY THE PARTICULAR RATE OF MOTION TO WHICH OUR LIFE ON THIS EARTH HAS BEEN ADJUSTED. For example, you can easily imagine that the human race might have been put to school upon a planet of swifter revolutions than our earth, and all our vital powers adapted to the more rapid succession of

day and night upon that orb—our pulses made to beat proportionally quicker, and the whole mechanism of life and thought made to run more swiftly—so that the same human history might be lived through upon that faster world. So, on the other hand, God might have graduated our rate of living and thinking to the motions of a slower planet than this earth, and still our consciousness of the duration of the years, our sense of time, have remained precisely the same. Time, then, is only a relative thing, the rate of motion of the mechanism; nothing of absolute determination or worth in itself. God has chosen this earth for our time-keeper, and adjusted our consciousness of life to its rate of motion; God has determined the existing time-rate of human history for us, out of many possibilities of different time-rates, for reasons which He thought best, and which we do not know. I may make this idea of the relative nature of time still plainer by reminding you how often in our own experiences we escape from the ordinary course of the world's time, and in a sense make our own time for ourselves, as we live in memory or in anticipation. Fear and hope, sorrow and joy, thought and action, when intense, have a certain witchery and mastery over our time; and not the revolutions of the earth, but the beatings of our spiritual pulses, and the life of our hearts, make our days short or long upon the earth. We mortals are all of us swept along in the flood of the years; yet it seems as if we have power in sudden upspringings of thought to leap, as it were, out of this stream of time and change, and to catch some gleam upon our spirits of a higher element of existence, like God's eternal light, and then we fall back again into the hurrying stream which is our proper element of existence now. All this superiority of soul to time in memory, thought, and hope, means that there is something timeless and deathless within us—something of the being of the Eternal in the living soul of man. You and I are made of the dust of the earth; but within these bodies bound to the earth, and destined to-morrow to return to its dust, is a godlike something which refuses to measure its life by the revolutions of the stars; a something which sinks back into its own consciousness of being, and in its brooding thought and love forgets the passing hours and separations of this mortality; a mystery of spirit within man which by its own thought of God and immortality proves itself to be above the course of nature, and possessed of a Divine birthright. First of all, let us take the help for faith in God's character which the text was intended to give. We wonder how God can live these long ages in the calm blessedness of His presence around our human history of sin and death: where is the promise of His coming? But be not ignorant of this one thing—God does not measure His times by our clocks; a thousand of our years is as one day to Him. Everything depends upon the point of view from which things are judged; and God looks from eternity to eternity! You look out in the morning, and see a cloud overhanging the top of a mountain. At noon you glance up, and the south wind still leaves its vapours upon the mountain. At evening you may notice that the cloud is still there, though beginning to be changed by the setting sun into a glory. It has been a short day to you in your business and your pleasures. But had you been on the mountain waiting for the cloud to lift, and hoping for a clear broad view, the hours would have lengthened, and as you watched the time and the shiftings of the mists, the day would have seemed almost endless. We are now under the cloud—a very little cloud of sin and sorrow, it may be—a passing cloud—in the large, bright universe of God! We are waiting for the hour of clear revelation; and this world-age seems long. But what is it to Him who inhabiteth eternity—who sees all around? Again, these reflections may serve to teach us afresh the real value of time to us. Time, I have said, is simply the rate of the mechanism; hence it is worth in any life simply what it is used for—what is worked out in it. We should look upon our lifetime as a means towards an end—time the means, and a Christlike character, worth God's keeping in His own eternity, the end of our life here. The one thing needful is that the soul go hence clothed in Christ's wedding garment; not how long a time God gives us to dress our souls for that perfect society. Has He not already given us time enough? (*Newman Smyth, D.D.*) *God's eternity considered in reference to the suspension of His promised purposes:—I. ENDEAVOUR TO ILLUSTRATE THEIR IMPORT, AND ESTABLISH THE TRUTH OF THE PROPOSITION WHICH THEY CONTAIN.* These words are designed as an answer to the objections which irreligious scoffers advance against the certainty of the accomplishment of the Divine declarations, founded on its long delay. 1. Every portion of duration is something real, and has a true and proper existence; but the epithets great and small, when applied to this (as well as to anything else), are merely comparative. We should consider fifty years as

forming a very large portion of human life ; but the same number of years in the history of an empire would be justly considered small. Thus is the same quantity either great or small, as you place it by the side of something much inferior to it in magnitude, or much superior. 2. Hence it results that absolute greatness belongs only to what is infinite ; for whatever falls short of this, however great it may appear, its supposed greatness is entirely owing to the incidental absence of another object that is greater. 3. In duration, absolute greatness belongs only to eternity. 4. We must then conceive that He who has subsisted throughout eternal ages ; who knows “no beginning of days, nor end of years” ; who possesses eternity ; to whom all its parts (if we may be allowed so to speak) are continually open, both past and future ; must have a very different apprehension of that inconsiderable portion of it we call time, from creatures who are acquainted with no other. Nor let any one object, and say it must appear as it is, and therefore there is no reason to suppose it appears to Him different from what it does to us. No doubt it appears to Him exactly as it is. His apprehensions are, unquestionably, agreeable to the nature of things ; but it does not follow from thence that it must appear in the same light as it does to us. That each portion of duration appears to Him real, we admit : we are not contending for its being annihilated in His view. Something it is, and something it appears, unquestionably, in His eyes. The measure by which God estimates time is, consequently, quite different from that which we are compelled to apply in its contemplation. We measure one portion of duration by another ; He measures time by eternity. How inconceivably different must be the apprehension arising from these different methods of considering it !

II. THE USE TO WHICH THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT MAY BE APPLIED. 1. It removes the ground of objection against the fulfilment of the Divine declarations, arising from the accomplishment being long delayed. 2. It accounts for the peculiar cast of Scripture language, when employed in announcing the coming of Christ, and the end of all things. 3. Though we cannot immediately change our senses, let us endeavour to conform our ideas and convictions to the dictates of Infallible Wisdom on this subject. Let us consider the whole duration of things here as very short. (*R. Hall.*) *Heaven's clock* goes at a different rate from our little timepieces. (*A. Maclaren.*) *God's calm view of events in time* is one of the marks of Divinity. For not only is it true that a thousand years are to God as one day to us, but it is also true, as St. Peter tells us, that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years” are with us. We know what the effect of a thousand years past (for of a thousand years to come we cannot know the effect) is upon the human mind. We regard things that happened a thousand years ago very calmly, without any of the passion which thrilled the breasts of the men who lived when the events we now read of in history were taking place. That is the way in which God regards events the very day they happen. They are to Him as if they had happened a thousand years ago ; so calm is the Divine temper, so far from the impatience and haste characteristic of us men who live for threescore years and ten. This comes of His being the Everlasting One. Yet, strange to say, while God takes things so calmly and never hurries, He at the same time never forgets. A thousand years are to Him as one day to us. He is as much in earnest in His purpose at the end of a millenium as we are with ours the day we form it. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) **The Lord is not slack . . . but is long-suffering.**—*Reasons why God delays the punishments of wicked men* :—

I. THAT MEN MAY BE BROUGHT TO A SENSE OF THEIR CONDITION, and led to use those methods which may serve to avert God's anger. **II.** That in many cases READY PUNISHMENT CANNOT BE INFLICTED ON BAD MEN WITHOUT LAYING A CONSIDERABLE SHARE OF IT ON THE GOOD, and therefore God spares them for the present that the righteous may not be involved in the calamities of the wicked. **III.** THE AGENCY OF ILL MEN MAY BE MADE USE OF IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT MANY GREAT DESIGNS OF PROVIDENCE, and, in particular, the delays of vengeance on some ill men may serve for the chastisement of others. **IV.** BUT IT IS MUCH ONE, WITH RESPECT TO THE DIVINE BEING, WHEN PUNISHMENT IS INFLICTED ON ILL MEN IF IT BE INFLICTED AT ALL : one day is with Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Nor can the sinner, if he reflects, take any great satisfaction in thinking that those punishments are distant which are yet certain. **V.** THAT THE PRESENT DELAYS OF VENGEANCE, IF THEY DO NOT WORK THEIR PROPER EFFECTS AND LEAD MEN TO THAT REPENTANCE THEY WERE INTENDED TO PRODUCE, WILL BUT AGGRAVATE THEIR RUIN. (*Bp. John Conybeare.*) *God's forbearance to sinners* :—**I.** I AM TO GIVE SOME ACCOUNT AND TO ASSIGN SOME REASONS OF GOD'S FORBEARANCE TO SINNERS. **1.** That the delay bears no proportion either to the eternity of His own or to the

future continuance of our being. 2. God never intended this world for the place of our final recompense, and therefore is the less concerned to interpose with frequency for the immediate punishment of the sinner. 3. We may presume it designed in much mercy to sinners that He does not catch at every advantage. 4. It is designed to lead us to repentance. There are critical junctures in religion, as well as in life and fortune. II. THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE HE WILL NEVER TAKE VENGEANCE. The reasons which account for His forbearance destroy that inference. 1. If the end of the world and the dissolution of all things be the vengeance expected, it was no way proper to raise so vast a fabric except it had been designed for some ages' continuance. 2. For if sin could never be committed without immediate vengeance closely pursuing it, there could be no proper foundation of reward to our obedience. 3. Whatever continuance the world may seem made for, yet the lives of particular men are short and uncertain. III. THE DELAY OF HIS VENGEANCE CAN BE NO JUST REASON FOR OUR CONTINUANCE IN SIN. It does not lessen our danger; it gives no colour to the notion that God is an unconcerned spectator of wickedness. But now His present forbearance makes proof that He will hereafter pursue the wicked with His vengeance. IV. HIS LONG-SUFFERING IS MUCH RATHER AN ARGUMENT TO US TO FORSAKE SIN, AND TO PROCEED HENCEFORWARD IN ALL HOLY OBEDIENCE. 1. It is so in point of gratitude, because we have seen that it is an effect of His mercy. 2. But if the motives of gratitude fail of persuading us, we should at least consider that our interest is very deeply concerned in this matter. For it is a very great aggravation to turn the means of grace into occasions of sin. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*) *The long-suffering of God a proof of His power*:—Suppose I were one of those scoffers, what should I be most inclined to doubt from observing how God's threatenings did not take effect? I suppose the power of God. I should be inclined to say, "God has threatened what He is not able to perform; hence, the reason why sun, moon, and stars still rise and set in their appointed order." Well, if this were my way of arguing, would it be any answer to me to say, "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward." Yes, indeed it would. There is no proof of the Divine power so great as the Divine long-suffering. How beautifully does one of our collectors express this truth! "O God, who declarest Thine almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity." Now, before beginning to prove to you that long-suffering is a great proof of the power of God, we would allow this idea to be at variance with that most commonly entertained. We have only to make mention of the power of God, and the thoughts are instantly far away amid the fields of immensity, busying themselves with accumulations of the workings of Almightyness—star upon star, and system upon system. And, from the fact of creation, we pass onward to that of preservation: we tell you that the complicated machinery of the universe is superintended and upheld by God. Far be it from us to imply that such a mode of demonstrating the power of God is other than correct. But it would appear to be possible, that whilst searching through the universe for evidence of the power of God, we may pass by the more signal demonstration lying individually in ourselves. We speak not of the testimony which is undoubtedly given by the construction of our bodies, and by the surprising manner in which the material incloses the immaterial. But there may be evidence which is still more overlooked, and that, too, an evidence which each may fetch from his own experience and his own habits. Towards each transgressor there has been an exercise of long-suffering on the part of the Almighty; so that if the greatest demonstration of God's power be God's long-suffering, then each of us may find in himself that great demonstration in all its completeness. With an hatred of sin which outruns our conception, and much more our imitation, God is looking down on every misdoing by which the earth is polluted. He is present at the perpetration of each species of crime—standing by the blasphemer whilst pouring out his curses, and by the murderer whilst bearing down on his victim. If this fact be pondered, it must always startle us. And yet He strikes not. We just ask you to imagine a tender-hearted man standing by whilst some monster of his species was foully ill-treating some fellow-creature or animal. Suppose him possessed of the most perfect ability of putting a stop to the cruelty, and awarding due punishment. The first impulse would be to exercise this ability. And if, in place of yielding to the impulse, he should reflect within himself—If I spare this guilty one awhile, if I visit not on him, on the instant, his iniquity, he may possibly repent—why we do not deny that, by a great effort, reflection might carry over the impulse, and the man might pass on in the hope of future amendment, resolved to administer no present correction. We allow that there is no actual impossibility against the

exercise of such forbearance. But we think you will all agree that a vast moral effort would be needed for the repressing his feelings. Long-suffering is power over one's self. If, then, it be reverent so to speak, God's long-suffering is power over Himself. And assuredly God's power over Himself must be greater than the power which He puts forth when He deals with what is material and finite. You may read of such instances as of a man in the hardihood of his Atheism challenging, so to speak, the Deity to prove His existence by striking him to the earth. "If there be a God, let Him show Himself, by smiting me, His denier." Now you can hardly picture to yourselves a Being exercising over Himself so much control as that, with all the apparatus of fiery reply at His disposal, He should not answer the challenge by levelling him who utters it with the ground. Can you measure to me the effort which it would be to the Creator to keep back the thunderbolt and chain up the lightning? Yet the Atheist is allowed to depart unscathed. What lesson does the believer in God derive from this absence of all anger. He learns God's might a hundredfold more from the unbroken silence of the firmament than he would do from the hoarse tones of vengeance rushing down to the destruction of the rebel. The Atheist overthrown is as nothing to the exhibition of the Atheist spared. We shall probably arrive at right apprehensions of God's long-suffering as connected with God's other attributes, if we carefully review two simple facts. The first is that God can punish every sin; the second, that God can pardon every sin. It is essential to the long-suffering of God that each of these assertions should, in the largest sense, hold good. Unless there be the power of punishing, there can be no long-suffering; for long-suffering necessarily pre-supposes that the Being, who might on the instant take vengeance, passes over for a while the iniquity. On the other hand, unless God can pardon every sin, what is there in His long-suffering? We can have no idea of long-suffering except as exhibited in our text—that it is bearing with the offender in order that, time being given him to consider his ways, he may yet by repentance turn away punishment. If we can satisfactorily show that God is pre-eminently powerful, inasmuch as He is both the punisher and the pardoner of sin, we shall have established the point under debate—that God's long-suffering is a great measure of His power. You will readily admit that it is proving God powerful to prove Him superior to every creature, so that were the whole universe banded against Him, it would have no power in trenching upon His sovereignty. But how can we more thoroughly assure ourselves of God's superiority to every creature than by ascertaining that over every creature who swerves from obedience God can exercise the office of avenger. Whoever the creature who apostatises from God, whether standing high or low in the scale of intelligence, beyond all question the power of God can reach to restrain or crush this creature. It may indeed be that the creature is permitted to go on in rebellion; and thus no direct evidence is given of the supremacy of God. Wherein, then, would be the proof of God's power? Simply in God's long-suffering. Long-suffering is the greatest exhibition of power on this side the day of judgment. It is our evidence that God now possesses all that God shall then exercise. And when I am told that God is long-suffering, and no limitations are placed on the attribute, you bring before me a picture as overwhelming in its details as stupendous in its outlines. I see at once that if God can be long-suffering, then God can punish every sin. He could not be long-suffering unless He could punish; He could not punish unless He were supreme. And then observe, secondly, that God can pardon every sin. Of all extraordinary truths, perhaps the most extraordinary is that sin can be forgiven. It may be a bold thing to say; but if you examine carefully, you will see that there is a strong sense in which it may be said that long-suffering is not natural to God. For was God long-suffering without effort? Could He be long-suffering without a preparation? He could be long-suffering only as He had resolved to give up His well-beloved Son to the fiercest agonies and the foulest wrongs. And when I think of the difference between God, the Creator of worlds, and God, the Pardoner of sin, the one done without an effort, and the other demanding an instrumentality nobly sublime; the one effected by a word, the other wrought out in agony and blood—oh! the world created is as nothing to the sin blotted out! That God can pardon is the very summit of what is wonderful; and, therefore, O Lord, do I most know Thee, the Omnipotent, when I behold in Thee, the Long-sufferer! (H. Melvill, B.D.)

The patience of God.—I. CONSIDER THE PATIENCE AND LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD TOWARDS MANKIND, AS IT IS AN ATTRIBUTE AND PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE NATURE: "God is long-suffering to us-ward." 1. The patience of God is His goodness to sinners in deferring the punishment due to them for their sins;

and the moderating as well as the deferring of the punishment due to sin is an instance likewise of God's patience; and not only the deferring and moderating of temporal punishment, but the adjourning of the eternal misery of sinners is a principal instance of God's patience; so that the patience of God takes in all that space of repentance which God affords to sinners in this life—nay, all temporal judgments and afflictions which befall sinners. 2. It is not necessarily due to us, but it is due to the perfection of the Divine nature; it is a principal branch of God's goodness, which is the most glorious perfection of all other; and therefore we always find it in Scripture in the company of God's milder attributes. 3. Give some proof of the great patience and long-suffering of God to mankind. And this will evidently appear if we consider these two things—1. How men deal with God. Every day we highly provoke Him; we grieve and weary Him with our iniquities (Isa. xliii. 24). 2. The patience of God will farther appear if we consider how, notwithstanding all this, God deals with us. He is patient to the whole world. He "prevents us daily with the blessing" of His goodness, prolonging our lives and vouchsafing many favours to us. But the patience of God will more illustriously appear if we consider these following particulars—(1) That God is not obliged to spare and forbear us at all. (2) That God spares us when it is in His power so easily to ruin us. (3) That God exerciseth this patience even when we are challenging His justice to punish us and provoking His power to destroy us. (4) That He is so very slow and unwilling to punish and to inflict His judgments upon us. (a) God's unwillingness to punish appears in that He labours to prevent punishment; and that He may effectually do this He endeavours to prevent sin, the meritorious cause of God's judgments; to this end He hath threatened it with severe punishments that men may fear to offend. (b) He is long before He goes about this work. Judgment is, in Scripture, called "His strange work"; as if He were not acquainted with it and hardly knew how to go about it on the sudden (Deut. xxxii. 41). (c) When He goes about this work He does it with much reluctance (Hosea xi. 8). He is represented as making many essays and offers before He came to it (Psa. cvi. 26). God withholds His judgments till He is weary of holding in, as the expression is (Jer. vi. 11), until He can forbear no longer (Jer. xlv. 22). (d) God is easily prevailed upon not to punish, as in the case of Nineveh. With what joy does He tell the prophet the news of Ahab's humiliation! (e) When He punisheth He does it very seldom rigorously and to extremity, not so much as we deserve (Psa. ciii. 10). (f) After He hath begun to punish, and is engaged in the work, He is not hard to be taken off (2 Sam. xxiv.). Nay, so ready is God to be taken off from this work, that He sets a high value upon those who stand in the gap to turn away His wrath (Numb. xxv. 11–13). 5. The patience of God will yet appear if we consider some eminent instances of it. His forbearance is so great that He hath been complained of for it by His own servants. Job, who was so patient a man himself, thought much at it (Job. xxi. 7, 8). Jonah challengeth God for it (Job iv. 2). II. THAT THE PATIENCE OF GOD AND THE DELAY OF JUDGMENT IS NO GROUND WHY SINNERS SHOULD HOPE FOR IMPUNITY: "God is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness." III. THE TRUE REASON OF GOD'S PATIENCE AND LONG-SUFFERING TO MANKIND: "He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." This is the primary end of God's patience to sinners; and if He fail of this end through our impenitency He hath other ends which He will infallibly attain; He will hereby glorify the riches of His mercy and vindicate the righteousness of His justice; for God does not lose the glory of His patience, though we lose the benefit of it, and He will make it subservient to His justice one way or other. Lessons: 1. That nothing is more provoking to God than the abuse of His patience. 2. That the patience of God will have an end. 3. That nothing will more hasten and aggravate our ruin than the abuse of God's patience. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *Man's external universe as maintained by God for a moral purpose:—*I. THAT MAN'S EXTERNAL UNIVERSE IS MAINTAINED BY GOD. 1. However long He may continue to uphold it, He does not overlook the claims of His justice. There are before Him "a day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2. However long He may continue to uphold it, duration is nothing to Him. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." He is not limited to time as we are. 3. However long He may continue to uphold it, He does not forget His promise. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness." 4. However long He may continue to uphold it, His forbearance is manifest through the whole. He "is long-suffering to us-ward." II. THAT MAN'S EXTERNAL

UNIVERSE IS MAINTAINED BY GOD FOR A MORAL PURPOSE. "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." What is the purpose? Why is this world kept in existence for so many ages? Is it that men might luxuriate amidst animal gratifications, revel amidst the elements which minister to the senses, and pander to the passions? Is it that they might train the intellect to think, and to fill the mind with knowledge? Not even this. It is the moral restoration of man. "That none should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

1. This moral restoration of man requires "repentance." 2. This moral restoration of man is according to the Divine will. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *God true to His purpose* :—

Sometimes in architecture and sculpture designs are formed as an exercise of skill, without any intention of embodying them in work. And sometimes politicians frame schemes which are intended only for Utopia, and for the carrying out of which no attempt will be made. But God's design is for execution and His scheme for embodiment. A purpose to work out His design has firm hold of every portion and feature of that design. (*S. Martin.*) **That all should come to repentance.**—

The rules and directions for the right performing the duty of repentance :—1. The first is this, implore repentance at the hands of God (2 Tim. ii. 25).

2. Have due regard to the sacred Word. Suppose we were travelling in the dark, what could we do better in such a case than procure a light to guide us? Naturally we are in the darkness of ignorance and mists of error, and want to be illuminated in the right way (Psa. cxix. 105; 2 Pet. i. 19). And that the Holy Scripture has a peculiar efficacy to purify from sin, which is done by repentance, is evident (Psa. cxix. 9).

3. Consider the nature of God. As His word rightly heard, so His nature duly contemplated, will be not only a mighty antidote against sin, but as strong an inducement to repentance. Now the nature of God we may best learn from His glorious name (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7). God in His nature is holy, and even essentially and infinitely holy (Isa. lx. 3).

And can we endure to rest in wilful sin when it is an evil abominable to God, and makes us as odious to Him as it is in its own nature? Reflect then seriously again, that He is just too. And as His perfect purity sets Him against sinners, so His absolute justice inclines and constrains Him to punish all that persist in it. And then we may consider further that He is powerful too, and armed with omnipotence. And so He is able to punish us (Psa. lxxvi. 7).

4. Place the promise and assurance of pardon before your eyes (Ezek. xviii. 30; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts iii. 19, v. 31). 5. Fix your thoughts upon Christ's sufferings. They were various, sharp, and terrible; but all for our sins. (*R. Warren, D.D.*)

God's willingness to pardon :—I. THAT GOD IS "NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH," APPEARS BY HIS OWN POSITIVE DECLARATIONS. II. THAT GOD

"IS UNWILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH," IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE INVITATIONS WITH WHICH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES ABOUND. III. THE SAME TRUTH IS STILL FURTHER ILLUSTRATED BY THE ENCOURAGEMENT GOD EVERYWHERE PRESENTS TO THOSE WHO SHOW AN INCLINATION TO RETURN. IV. THE SAME TRUTH IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE THREATENINGS AND WARNINGS WHICH ARE GIVEN TO PERSONS AND NATIONS BEFORE DESTRUCTION COMES ON THEM. V. THE DELAY OF JUDGMENT ILLUSTRATES MY TEXT. VI. THE MOST NOTORIOUS CHARACTERS ARE SPECIFIED IN THE OFFERS AND INVITATIONS OF MERCY WHICH WE FIND IN SACRED SCRIPTURE. VII. THE DEATH OF CHRIST IS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROPOSITION IN THE TEXT. VIII. THE MEANS EMPLOYED TO KEEP UP THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST BEFORE THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH DECLARES THE SAME TRUTH. IX. THE PAINS TAKEN TO REMOVE DISTRUST PROVE THAT GOD IS "NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH." He not only gives us His declaration that He is not willing that any should perish, but He gives us His oath. X. THE PROPOSITION CONTAINED IN THE TEXT IS ILLUSTRATED BY MANY EXAMPLES: Manasseh. Thief on cross. (*W. Freeland, LL.D.*)

God's unwillingness :—I. What does the apostle mean here by the expression "PERISH"? What is it to perish? This will be most appropriately answered in the words of Holy Scripture. Paul called it "Being punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. i. 9). "Sudden destruction" (1 Thess. v. 3). "Swift destruction" (chap. ii. 1). "The vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). II. WHAT REASONS HAVE WE TO CONCLUDE THAT ANY WILL THUS PERISH? 1. Fallen angels have perished (Jude 6).

2. Sodom and Gomorrah have "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire" (ibid. 7).

3. Other men deserve to perish. "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin." 4. That part of the punishment which consists in natural death is daily being inflicted before our eyes. 5. God has said that some characters shall perish. "He that believeth not shall be damned." III. But who are thus in danger? 1. "Despisers" (Acts xiii. 41). 2. Profane persons, and all who "forget God" (Psa. ix. 17). 3.

All the impenitent (Luke xiii. 5). 4. All unbelievers (Mark xvi. 16). IV. How are we to understand the expression God is NOT WILLING that any should perish? Hell does not exist without His permission! Death is His messenger! The judgment of the great day will be held by His appointment! But then—1. God will not punish without occasion. Nor 2. Till the guilt of man has rendered it necessary. Nor 3. Without having provided a remedy:—the best possible remedy. Nor 4. Without having authorised the publication of that remedy. Nor 5. Without having implored men to accept it. Nor 6. Without having given space for repentance. 7. Nor will He inflict eternal judgment on one soul which has not proved its final enmity to Him, to truth, to holiness. V. WHAT EVIDENCES HAVE WE THAT GOD IS “NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD THUS PERISH”? 1. The evidence arising from His character. 2. From His word. 3. From His oath (John iii. 16). 4. From the gift of His Holy Spirit. 5. From the revelation of His truth. 6. From the exaltation of Christ as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance. 7. From the promise of the personal help of the Holy Spirit—to them that ask it. 8. From every instance of true repentance which has occurred. 9. From sparing mercy from day to day. 10. From warnings, exhortations, invitations, directions, promises, &c., without number. VI. WHAT IS THE IMPERATIVE AND ONLY ALTERNATIVE that men may not perish? We answer, “repentance.” (*The Evangelist.*)

Ver. 10. **The day of the Lord will come as a thief.**—*The day of the Lord:*—I. The text first points us to a period advancing rapidly upon us, in the future; and as such DIFFERS FROM ANY OTHER WHICH MAY HAVE MARKED AN EPOCH IN THE SUCCESSION OF AGES SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN. 1. The bright display of the Lord's attributes which will then be made. 2. The affairs of the mediatorial kingdom of grace, the reign of Christ, as such, will then be completed. 3. The exhibition of His equity, which will then be made in the regular dispensations of His providence among men. 4. The Lord will then receive in and from His people glory and renown. II. THE DECLARATIONS MADE IN THE TEXT CONCERNING ITS COMING. 1. The certainty of it. 2. The sudden and unexpected manner of its approach. (1) To excite men to watch for the event. (2) The knowledge of the exact time might alarm men, and prevent attendance to the present duties of life. III. SOME OF THE OCCURRENCES OF THE DAY OF THE LORD. (*J. Thompson Smith.*) *Preparation for death and judgment:*—I. THE PERIOD REFERRED TO. There have been memorable days in the history of the world and in the histories of nations. 1. On that day the dispensation of mercy will close. 2. It will be the day of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Believer, it will be the consummation of thy bliss to have a perfect sight of Christ “without a veil between,” and to bear an exact conformity to His likeness. But O sinner! how wilt thou meet His frown? 3. It will be the day of the Lord's especial honour. 4. It is the day on which all His declarations will be fulfilled and verified—His declarations of mercy to His people and His threatenings of destruction to the impenitent and unbelieving. II. THE DUTIES TO WHICH ITS EXPECTED COMING CALLS US. 1. We should watch against a spirit of slothfulness and indifference. 2. We should anxiously desire to be found ready whenever that day may come. (1) Reconciliation with God is necessary. (2) A close and humble walk with God is requisite. (3) Frequent meditation on the consequences of that day will prepare us for its coming. III. MOTIVES TO LEAD US TO THE DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES. 1. The uncertainty of the time when this day shall come. 2. The danger and ruin resulting from the want of preparation for its coming. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) **The heavens shall pass away with a great noise.**—*The destruction of the universe:*—1. The destruction of the universe affords us a picture of the power of our Judge. How powerful is this Judge! Who can resist His will? 2. The conflagration of the universe affords us a picture of the horrors of vice. Behold how far God carries His resentment against sin. Heavens, earth, elements, are ye guilty? But, if ye be treated with so much rigour for having been the unconscious instruments of the crime, what must the condition of the criminal be? 3. In the burning of the universe we find a representation of the vanity of the present world. What is this world which fascinates our eyes? It is a funeral pile that already begins to burn, and will soon be entirely consumed. The hope of an imaginary immortality hath been able to support some men against the fear of a real death. The idea of existing in the minds of those who exist after them hath, in some sort, comforted them under the miserable thought of being no more. Hence pompous buildings, hence rich monuments, and vainglorious titles inscribed on marble and brass. But behold the dissolution of all those bonds, and the memory of all that is fastened to

the world will vanish with the world. 4. The conflagration of the universe furnisheth a description of the world to come. Ye often hear us declaim on the nothingness of earthly things. How is it that God, who hath resolved to render us one day happy, doth not allow us to continue in this world, and content Himself with uniting all happy circumstances in our favour? Ah! a life formed on this plan might indeed answer the ideas of happiness which finite geniuses form, but such a plan cannot even approach the designs of an infinite God. A life formed on this plan might indeed exhaust a terrestrial love, but it could never reach the love of an infinite God. To accomplish this love there must be another world; there must be new heavens and a new earth; there must be objects far more grand.

5. Finally, the destruction of the universe displays the excellence of piety. Oh that I could represent the believer amidst fires, winds, tempests, the confusion of all nature, content, peaceable, unalterable! (*J. Saurin.*) **The earth also . . . shall be burned up.**—*The world on fire*:—I. THE LAST GENERAL CONFLAGRATION. In this Epistle there is one truth very plainly taught, namely, that this present world is to be consumed by fire. We learn also that this conflagration will take place in connection with the judgment, for “the heavens and the earth which now are, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” We gather also from our text that this fire will burn up all the works existing upon the earth—everything which man has constructed shall perish. Chemists tell us that the great noise which Peter speaks of would certainly accompany such a combustion. The whole world shall become one molten mass again, and this terrestrial firmament shall cease to be. We may here note that the prophecy that the earth will thus be consumed with fervent heat is readily to be believed, not only because God says it, but because there are evidently the means at hand for the accomplishment of the prophecy. Pliny was wont to say that it was a miracle that the world escaped burning for a single day, and I do not wonder at the remark, considering the character of the district in which he spent much of his time. In visiting the country around Naples the same thought constantly occurred to me. Yonder is Vesuvius ready at any moment to vomit fire, and continually sending up clouds of smoke. Then go across to the Solfatara on the other side of Naples, stand at the vent of that ancient volcano and listen to the terrific rumblings which attend the rush of steam and sulphur; then stamp your foot or dash a stone upon the ground, and hear how the earth resounds; it is evident that you are standing over a vast cavern. Look around you and remark how the earth steams with sulphureous exhalations. Observe, also, how the earth in some places has risen and fallen, again and again. Yet this volcanic region around Naples is but one of the many ventholes of the great fires which are in the bowels of the earth; three hundred or more burning mountains have already vomited flame. According to the belief of many geologists, the whole centre of the earth is a mass of molten matter, and we live upon a thin crust which has cooled down, and is probably not so much as one hundred miles thick. The probabilities are that the whole internal mass is in a liquid, and, perhaps, in a gaseous state. Astronomers tell us that within the last two hundred or three hundred years some thirteen fixed stars have disappeared, and according to their belief they have been burned up. If such things happen in other worlds, is there anything improbable in the belief that the like will occur to us? But if there were no internal sea of fire, and no instance of other worlds being consumed by fire, who can guess the power which lurks in electricity, and other subtle forces? God’s dreadful armies lie in ambush everywhere. He has but to speak the word, and the servants of His omnipotence will rise, terrible in their destructive power. Earth is as a pile of wood, and the torch-bearers stand ready to kindle it at any moment. Although we read of the world being burned by fire, we are not told that it will be annihilated thereby. We believe from various things which are hinted at in Scripture, though we would not dogmatise, that this world will be refitted and renovated; and in that sense we expect new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Luther used to say that the world is now in its working clothes, and that by and by it will be arrayed in its Easter garments of joy. One likes to think that the trail of the old serpent will not always remain upon the globe, and it is a cheering thought that where sin has abounded God’s glory should yet more abound. II. The apostle has drawn PRACTICAL INFERENCES. “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” What connection can there be between the burning of the globe and holy conversation and godliness? The first connection is this. Our position as Christians is at this moment like that of Noah

before the destruction of the world by water. What manner of person ought Noah to have been? I should suppose such a man, daily expecting the rain to descend and the flood to burst up from beneath, would lead a life very free from worldliness, a life the very reverse of the rest of his fellow-men. Now our life ought to be like that of Noah. Look around on the beauties of nature, and when you enjoy them say to yourself, "All these are to be dissolved and to melt with fervent heat." You understand that the things which are seen are but a dream, that the things unseen are alone substantial. Therefore sit loose by all things below the moon, and clutch as with the grasp of a dying man the things eternal which God has revealed to you. Such conduct will separate you from your fellow-men. As there is down deep in your heart an object different from theirs, and as you set a different estimate on all things, your conduct will be wide apart from theirs; being swayed by different motives, your life will diverge from theirs, and they will misunderstand you, they will impute ill motives to you. I remark further, that the nearness of the Lord as suggested by the fact that the world is to be destroyed, according to His word, suggests holiness. The sinner finds a reason for sin when he says, "God is not here: everything goes on in the ordinary way: God does not care what men do." "No," says the apostle, "He is not away, He is here, holding back the fire forces; He is reserving this world a little while, and by and by He will let the fires loose and the world will be destroyed. He is not far off: He is even at the door." How can ye sin against One who is so close at hand? The apostle says, "What manner of persons ought ye to be?" Remember he was talking to saints, and he teaches us that even saints ought to be more saintly than they are. We have not attained to what we ought to be, and I may say to the best child of God here this morning, "There is a yet beyond." And then he goes on to specify two branches of holy life. "In all holy conversation," that is to say, all holy behaviour towards men; "and godliness," that is, all pious dealing towards God. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

*On the dissolution of the world:—*I. CONTEMPLATE THE SUPREME BEING DIRECTING THE DISSOLUTION, AS HE DIRECTED THE ORIGINAL FORMATION, OF THE WORLD. II. Let us contemplate THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD AS THE END OF ALL HUMAN GLORY. This earth has been the theatre of many a great spectacle, and many a high achievement. III. CONTEMPLATE THE SOUL OF MAN AS REMAINING UNHURT IN THE MIDST OF THIS GENERAL DESOLATION, when the whole animal creation perishes, and the whole frame of nature falls into ruins. Here, then, let us behold what is the true honour and excellence of man. IV. WE CONTEMPLATE THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD AS THE INTRODUCTION TO A GREATER AND NOBLER SYSTEM IN THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD. We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (H. Blair, D.D.) *Man's external universe as awaiting a tremendous crisis:—*There is a spiritual conflagration now going on. Christ came "to send fire on the earth." His word like a fire consumes the false and the corrupt. But the conflagration in the text is a material one. I. THAT THE CHARACTER OF THIS CRISIS WILL BE VERY TERRIBLE. 1. The agent by which it will be accomplished, "fire," is terrible. Fire, when not in its latent but active state, is the most terrible force in the world. There is agony in its touch. Forms the most beautiful it turns to ashes. Water, which destroyed the old world, is in some of its forms a terrible power, but life can subsist in it. You can touch it without pain, you can float on its surface, you can construct a vessel to bear you over its surging floods and seas. But not so with "fire." No ark will bear you over a fiery deluge. 2. The extensiveness of its scene makes it terrible. "The heavens shall pass away." "The earth also and all the works that are therein." 3. The tumult with which it will be attended is terrible. "A great noise." There are some sounds that shake one's very soul with horror. The howl of the wind rising into the tempest, the rumble of the approaching thunderbolt, the wild and dismal roar of the ocean when lashed into fury—these are all sounds more or less of terror. But there are animal sounds still more so. The groans of the dying, the moanings of bereaved love, the shrieks of an agonised heart—these are fearful sounds. What a noise is produced by a little bonfire, what a noise, too, by a little steam from the engine; but what must be the noise of burning forests, and boiling oceans, of falling cities and rocking mountains! This "great noise" will be very terrible. 4. The unexpectedness with which it will come is another element of terror. "It will come as a thief in the night." It will not come as a thief in some respects. (1) A thief comes without warning. (2) A thief has no right to come. (3) A thief may be resisted. There is a possibility of turning him back; but not so with this crisis. It must come. II. THAT THE APPROACH OF THIS CRISIS IS VERY CERTAIN. 1. It is certain that there

is a point in the future that will terminate men's present connection with this earth. 2. There is conclusive evidence that this period will be attended with a conflagration. III. THAT THE PROSPECT OF THIS CRISIS SHOULD EXERT ON MANKIND A HALLOWING INFLUENCE. The apostle states two effects which the prospect ought to produce upon us—1. Practical holiness in every part of our life—"Holy conversation and godliness." If all our material interests are thus to pass away, with what earnestness ought we to cultivate those principles of character, those dispositions of mind, and those habits of life which will abide for ever? 2. An earnest longing of the soul for the future. "Looking for and hasting," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Elements that will enhance the final conflagration* :—Since the noblest attribute of water is its blandness, who would be prepared to find that, chemically speaking, it is remarkable for its fiery composition? When its two constituents are burned in the oxy-hydrogen blowpipe, they produce a flame of extraordinary ferocity. Such is the violence with which they combine that it is necessary to keep them from mingling, except in small quantities, unless they are just at the point of ignition. Dr. Clarke placed a brick screen between himself and the dangerous gases when he first experimented on their power, but was nearly killed by an explosion. Perhaps, when the world and all the works that are therein shall be burned up, the ocean may really be the magazine from which fuel may be drawn to support the great conflagration. But let this be as it may in God's good counsel, is it not a startling thought that water, the uncompromising adversary of fire, should be compounded of two elements whose conjunction is accompanied by a passionate burst of flame and a terrible eruption of caloric? (*Scientific Illustrations.*)

Vers. 11-18. **Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved.**—*Immortality and science* :—It is a singular fact that these words have far more probability of truth than they had a generation ago. Then, the stability of the physical universe was held to be a settled fact of science; it is not so regarded now. If this world and the universe of worlds are to undergo at times such catastrophes as science and Scripture indicate, even to possible destruction, where shall immortal man abide? Physical science chiefly touches human destiny at two points of what is technically known as the principle of continuity; namely, the resolution of thought and feeling into molecular changes, and the development of man from preceding lower orders of life. The principle is thought to militate against immortality, as it implies that all the potency of life is within matter, and that all mental and moral activities are but the operation of organised matter. Under this hypothesis thought and feeling are resolved into the whirl of molecules and the formation and destruction of tissue, a wholly material process, necessary in its character and admitting of no permanent personality. To find anything outside of this all-comprehending law of which immortality can be predicated, anything that survives when the bond breaks that holds the whirling atoms together, is an impossibility under this conception. On the contrary, its analogies seem to point to an opposite result. It is not strange that the dreariness of such conclusions repels the mind towards some better hope, and that physicists are working other veins of truth if for no other end than to escape the horror of desolation their own triumphs have compelled them to face. Mr. Fiske says: "There is little that is even intellectually satisfying in the awful picture which science shows us of giant worlds concentrating out of nebulous vapour, developing with prodigious waste of energy into theatres of all that is grand and sacred in spiritual endeavour, clashing and exploding again into dead vapour balls, only to renew the same toilsome process without end—a senseless bubble-play of Titan forces, with life, love, and aspiration brought forth only to be extinguished." Such sentiments characterise the ablest physicists of the age. We reach at last either nothingness, or a cinder, or a ceaseless clash and repulsion of vapour-balls called worlds, with possible moments of life amidst vast cycles of lifeless ages. We reach the end of a road, but find nothing to tell us why it exists. The question forces itself upon us, if by looking in other directions we cannot reverse this process and find some worthy end of creation, something instead of nothing, the play of mind instead of the whirl of molecules, life instead of death. The recent verdict of science as to the fate of the material universe drives us with irresistible force to belief in an unseen, spiritual world—not the belief of religious faith, but of cold, hard reason. The other main point at which physical science touches human destiny is in connection with that part of the doctrine of physical evolution which holds that all forms of life are developed from preceding forms under the impulse of some unknown force—a theory not yet

exactly defined, and far from being fully proved. Take the extremest form of evolution—matter having all the potency of life within itself—it does not necessarily exclude future existence. If matter can attain to mind that longs for immortality, may not its potentiality be able to achieve it? If it can develop the conception, may it not be able to develop the fact? If the question still recurs, at what point in the process of evolution, granting its truth for the moment, the principle of immortality is inserted, or gets possession?—a question of great pungency under the principle of continuity, we answer it by instancing an analogy. At what point of its growth does a plant acquire the power of self-perpetuation? As a shoot it utterly perishes if cut down; the lusty after-growth of stem and branches also withers into nothingness; the flower is not “a self-reviving thing of power”; but the flower, gathering light and dew into its glowing bosom, intermingles with them its own life essence and so bears a seed around which it folds its faded petals as a shroud, and falls into the dust, no longer to perish, but to live again. This is more than illustration, it is an argument. A living thing under the law of development comes to have a power of self-perpetuation that it did not have at first; why should it not be so with the life that has culminated in man? He is the flower of life, and in his heart alone may there be found the seed of eternal existence. But this phase of the subject is unsatisfactory; it is not necessary to consider it under these suppositions, and we turn to another. We want not mere continuance, but some solid ground for belief in personality after death. Evolution cannot impair the fact of personality here or hereafter, simply because man transcends nature, which is the field of evolution. Man may comprise all that has gone before him in nature, but he is not summed up by it. As the grand proof of this, we adduce the fact of the moral nature with its prime characteristic of freedom. Mr. Darwin himself admits that “free-will is a mystery insoluble to the naturalist.” Necessity, which is the equivalent of law, never could evolve freedom. But choice, or freedom, is the constituting characteristic of man, upon which is built the whole fabric of his life and moral nature. It makes him a person; it is the basis of his history. It puts him above the order and on-going of nature. Professor Tyndall says that the chasm between brain-action and consciousness is impassable, that “here is a rock upon which materialism must split whenever it pretends to be a complete philosophy of the human mind.” The admission is valuable, not merely because of its origin, but for its impregnable truth. With such a chasm between the two parts of man’s nature—molecular processes and perpetual flux on one side, and conscious identity, moral sense, and freedom on the other side—we need not feel troubled at anything physical evolution may assert of man: it simply cannot touch him. We may now build our argument as to his destiny, unhindered by any clamour that may reach us from the other side of this chasm—a chasm that science itself recognises in our composite nature. But other difficulties may arise, such as the thought that this sense of personal identity may be temporary, that as our life was drawn out into separateness from the great ocean of being, so, having some cycle within itself, it will sink back into it, as a star rises and sets. Age and infancy are very like, especially when each is normal; sleep and unconsciousness mark both. As there is no identity before infancy, is there any after age? The fact that, notwithstanding the extreme plausibility of this familiar analogy, the human mind has never accepted the suggestion, has great significance; it has instinctively felt that this resemblance does not indicate a reality. Descartes argued: “I think, therefore I am.” Had he continued, I am, therefore I shall continue to be, he would have uttered as cogent logic. Granted the consciousness of personality, and it is impossible to conceive of non-existence. If self is a unit, and not a conglomerate of atoms, how is it to be got out of existence? But it may be said, if there is another life, there must be another world. Where is it? Of what composed? If it is within the limits, or under the laws of matter, it can have no endurance. The soul must have a sphere like itself, permanent, unfluctuating. Surely if philosophy may create a universe in which to float the worlds, and convey those quiverings of burning suns that we call heat and light, it will not withhold a fit sphere for the soul when it breaks away from the bonds of matter. We base our proof, however, not on mere analogy, but on the simple ground that the nature of the soul demands a proper and answering sphere, as wings demand air, and fins water. Otherwise, creation is without order and coherence. Were we to search for this sphere of the soul, we would not look for it in any refinement of matter, nor in any orb beyond the “flaming walls of the world,” but rather in an order over against this visible order, as mind stands over against the body. If, however, it be said that the mind must always have a body,

or something like it, to hold it up, a *sub-sto*—a something like quicksilver upon a mirror, to take up and turn back its operations, something to sustain reaction and perhaps necessary to yield consciousness—we may follow a hint dropped by science in its latest suggestions. Physicists of the highest rank hold to the existence of a pure or non-atomic fluid filling all space, in which the worlds swim, a sort of first thing to which atomic matter is a second thing. But while science thus acknowledges a non-atomic fluid filling the inter-stellar spaces as a basis upon which the universe is a cosmos, or a united whole, it cannot impugn the analogy of a non-atomic soul fluid, or ether, as the basis or body upholding the mind, if we care to claim it. As we can imagine all the worlds from “Blue-eyed Lyra’s topmost star” to the smallest asteroid, swept together into some far-off corner of space—a not improbable result—and leave it clear of atomic matter yet filled with ether ready to float and unite another universe, so the material atomic body may be swept away and gathered to its original dust, leaving the immaterial body intact, a basis for the mind and its action as it had been before. Science and Revelation here draw very near to each other, science demanding a non-atomic substance as the only possible basis of conscious identity, and Revelation asserting “there is a spiritual body,” and “God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him.” (*T. T. Munger, D.D.*)

Disturbances in nature an argument for holy living:—Nothing preaches to us such a sermon of the vanity of man, his works, his ambition, his art, his fashion, his pleasures, his proud over-weening science, as the instability of earth and of its final dissolution. But these extraordinary movements of Nature have for us a vastly higher argument than this. 1. In these terrific convulsions of the natural world there are found motives of unusual moment for highest, holy living. The force of this argument will perhaps be most felt when we consider, first, the vital relation which exists between this dissolution of nature and the sin of man. The fatal effects of sin were not limited to the boundaries of human nature, but they reach out into all the boundaries of creation, everywhere bringing blight and derangement. The imperfect and abnormal growths in tree and plant; the pains, diseases, death, which riot among these mute, inanimate things; the distempers and sorrows of the inferior animals; the drear waste of deserts, the thawless regions of ice, the fierce and fitful agitations in nature, the internal fires and ferments, ocean tempests and distractions, are palpable symptoms of organic difficulty and incurable sickness throughout the whole natural world. Ought we not to find in this exhibition of nature’s unrest and discord an irresistible argument for holiness of life? How can we delay to forsake that against which nature from the first rebels, against whose influence the very earth protests in her volcanic thunders and her profound shudderings. 2. Again we find an argument for holy living when we consider the vital relation which exists between this dissolution of nature and the restoration of man. Dissolution is not annihilation, it is simply transformation. These are not the death-pangs, but the birth-throes of nature. They clearly foretell a new creation, in which all that so terribly blights and mars the present one shall be absent. Does not the thought of all this come at last to press home upon us as with a tremendous argument to live in all godliness of life? No man of impure habits or misshapen character and deformed repulsive life shall range through that fair region, for there the river of life flows pure from the eternal throne, and instead of the thorn there is the fir tree, and instead of the brier there is the myrtle tree. (*G. B. Spalding, LL.D.*)

The dissolution of the world:—

I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD. That all these things shall be dissolved is a doctrine expressly delivered in Scripture, and by many impressive allusions brought home to the human heart. The day no sooner dawns and gains its meridian splendour than it begins to decline and ends in night. Spring no sooner introduces the bloom of summer than autumn assumes its reign, and then the devastations of winter desolate all the beauties of the year. Around us all things continually change, and life itself is ever passing away; grey hair and the faded look soon remind us that old age is at hand. Nothing is stable on earth. Cities, states, and empires have their period set. The labours of men perish; the monuments of art moulder into dust; even the works of nature wax old and decay. The world was created for the pleasure of God; and, when its destined course is fulfilled, He commands its destruction. He saw it meet that when the probationary course of the generations of men was finished, their present habitation should pass away. Of the seasonableness of that period He alone can judge. But amidst this great revolution of nature our comfort is that it is a revolution conducted by Him, the measures of whose government are all founded on godness. Over the shock

of the elements and the wreck of nature eternal wisdom presides. It is the day of the Lord, and from the terrors His faithful subjects shall have nothing to dread.

II. THE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED COMING OF THIS GREAT EVENT. How miserable they whom it shall overtake in the midst of dark conspiracies, criminal deeds, or profligate pleasures! III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD TO MAN. IV. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE DISSOLUTION OF ALL THINGS OUGHT TO PRODUCE UPON OUR LIVES. It ought to produce a seriousness of thought, at all times, upon the mind. (*D. Malcolm, LL.D.*) *The end of all things*:—We think it quite unnecessary to travel into the question whether these words mark an annihilation of matter, or only its purification preparatory to its re-appearance in some better form; it is sufficient for our purpose that the effect shall be the same as if the whole were taken down, and star after star and system after system departed from the vast fields of space.

I. There are two ways in which the assertion as to the dissolution of all material things may be considered and applied; we may speak of them as to be dissolved, either as they are in themselves, or as they are possessed by us.

1. And first as to the fact, literally taken, that "all these things shall be dissolved." We must pause to note the sublimity and augustness of the fact that the Almighty is to remain unchanged and unchangeable, whilst the very heavens and suns and stars are dim with age. We find His eternity before the series commenced, and we find it when the series shall have passed. Who amongst us does not feel rebuked by the truth now presented to his attention, if indeed he be living in the preference of the objects of sight? 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"; man of avarice! persist in digging for gold, and consume thy days and nights in heaping up riches; man of ambition! still toil for distinction, and spare no sacrifice which may gain the honour of this world. But now, all ye worshippers of visible things, that immortal yourselves ye choose for your portion what is infinite and perishable. Appointed yourselves to an endless duration, ye place your happiness in objects that are to last for a time and then wholly disappear. "All," yea "all these things shall be dissolved."

2. But we observed to you that there was another sense in which this declaration might be taken—regard being had to the shortness of our own lives, rather than finite duration of all visible things. Even if there were never to come an appointed change over the visible universe, if the sun were never to be extinguished nor the earth consumed, ye cannot deny that so far as ye yourselves are concerned "all these things" would have to "be dissolved." We will not argue with the sensualist in the midst of the fascinating objects wherein he delights; we will not argue with the miser whilst the gold glitters and sparkles before him; we will not argue with the philosopher as the broad arch of the heavens fixes his study; but we will argue with them amidst the graves of a churchyard, and our reasoning shall be its inhabitants of all ages and all ranks. We need not continue our progress through the melancholy spot; but will any of you go away from the churchyard unimpressed with the feeling that all created good can be enjoyed but for a short time, and therefore that it is not the good which should engage the affections of creatures appointed for immortality?

II. But let us endeavour to place before you this inference in a somewhat clearer point of view. The apostle argues that forasmuch as all visible things are to "be dissolved" they ought not to engage our affections; in other words, he argues from the transitoriness of all that earth can give to the folly of making it our chief good; and we wish to prove to you that the argument is in every way sound and logical. You must admit in the general that the worth or the value of a possession depends in great measure on the length of time for which it is to be enjoyed. The objects of human pursuit are for the most part precious in men's eyes in proportion to their probable duration, and you take the most effectual way of depreciating them by proving them transitory in respect to themselves, or transitory in respect to their possessor. And if this be true, there ought to be needed nothing but an actual consciousness of the shortness and uncertainty of life, in order to our estimating at their true worth the riches and honours and pleasures of the world. It would cause the gold that ye covet to look dim, and the honours that ye envy to fade in your estimation, and the knowledge for which ye toil to seem of little worth, and the pleasures which ye crave to appear to you insipid, were ye indeed in the habit of expecting your decease, and were ye really to count yourselves "strangers and pilgrims upon earth." It is only because there is no such feeling, and practically no such computation that ye are yet so fascinated and engrossed with what the world can bestow

on its votaries. III. If there be one effect which more than another this consideration of the dissolution of all visible things is adapted to produce, it is a willingness "to do good and to communicate." Shall we, if indeed it be only for a brief time that we can have possession of earthly things—shall we either selfishly hoard them or squander them on our own gratification, when we may "make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," and secure, by our acting as stewards rather than proprietors, unfading riches in that day when the earth and heavens shall flee from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne. (*H. Melville, B.D.*)

What manner of persons ought ye to be.—*Things and persons, here and hereafter* :—

I. AN IMPORTANT CLASSIFICATION : "Things" and "persons." 1. Things. We call the visible universe the great system of things. We need sometimes to remember that they are things only. The uplifted mountains which awe us with their sublimity are simply things. The animal and vegetable creations belong to the same category. There are endless varieties of life, instinct, structure, and form ; but all are things. The possessions on which men so much pride themselves, and which attract such consideration from their fellows, are things, and nothing more. Our very bodies, so closely related to ourselves—inseparably united with us for this life—are yet not ourselves. They are but things. Youthfulness, elasticity, and bloom ; age, debility, and decay, are not ourselves, nor our friends ; they are things only—frail and changing things. 2. Persons. Persons are endowed with intelligence and will ; they discern both right and wrong ; they love and loathe. What a tremendous prerogative, to be a person ! What high fellowship ! God is a Person. So are angels. Man is the image of his Maker. What a pinnacle of danger is this ! What a fall is possible from hence ! Things exist for persons, not persons for things. Creation is for God, not God for creation. Nature, like the Sabbath, is for man, not man for nature, not man for the Sabbath. The popular philosophy of our day reverses this order. Its practical teaching is, that persons exist for things. As long as you court men, not for what they are, but for what they have, you put things above persons. In the Divine intention things are subordinate to persons. Business, riches, competence, poverty, are tests of men. They are instruments of education and discipline. None of these things are for themselves ; they are ordained for persons—for the development of the mind and conscience and heart of man. The solemn question about every one is—ought to be now—will be hereafter—not, What has the man made by business ? but, What has business made the man ? The world's creed is—Man exists for business, not business for man. The same perversion is visible in the misuse of the human body. One needs sometimes to ask, Which is the man, the body or the soul ? The outer man is designed to be the hourly test of the inner man. The end of the thing is answered, when the intellectual, moral, and spiritual habits of the person inhabiting and using it are expanded and perfected. The husk is shed when stem and leaf appear.

II. AN INSTRUCTIVE CONTRAST : "Things" shall be "dissolved" ; "persons" must continue "to be." 1. "Things" shall be "dissolved." The globe is but our larger habitation, and, like the body which we occupy, it will not survive its uses. It is not "shall be dissolved." It is, "are being dissolved." Future events are close to the vision of the seer. There is something of the remotest future in every immediate present. "We all do fade as the leaf." The elements of death, to which we must succumb at the last, work in us through childhood, youth, and maturity. So, too, the seeds of the final ruin are sown in the world now, and grow from hour to hour. 2. "Persons" continue to be. "Persons" cannot "dissolve." The consciousness of existence and the sense of responsibility are indestructible. They may be bedimmed, but not extinguished. The intellectual and moral energies of the soul are a fire which may be buried, and, for a while, be constrained to smoulder ; but, uncovered to the air, it will break forth once more into dazzling flame. Ah ! what changes persons can pass through, and still remain the same ! What differences there are between childhood and age, and yet the individual continues as before ! A man may so alter his earthly condition that the past may become a dream, and will no more be realised in the present. He may modify and even cancel all the judgments which he ever held, and may reverse all his moral principles and religious hopes. But not even a suspicion will ever cross his mind to confuse the unquestioned conviction that, as a person, he is unaltered and the same. Life and death, the grave and judgment, heaven and hell, immortal activity and endless years will never bedim the individuality of a single soul. Personality in every deathless spirit shall stretch in a line of unwavering light to all eternity. III. A SOLEMN INFERENCE : "Seeing then

that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be."

1. Ye ought to live in the hallowed discharge of all duty towards God and man.

(1) "In all holy conversation." The word is plural, "conversations." As usual in our version, conversation means conduct. The plural indicates no particular conduct, but all conduct without exception. (2) "And godliness." The plural occurs here also, "godlinesses." Godliness is all thought, feeling, and conduct which are possible to a man towards God. This is man's action towards heaven, as the former is man's action towards earth. Penitence for sin; faith in Christ, whose blood was shed; the eager pursuit of the Holy Spirit's grace, that godliness with you may be likeness to God; these and all emotions, resolutions, and actions which can cleanse the conscience, pacify the heart, and refine the character, are to distinguish men who recognise that "all things are dissolving," that "persons" are immortal, and may be for ever blessed. 2. In the holy fulfilment of all duty to man, and in the sacred enjoyment of all hallowed privilege from God, ye are to expect the grand consummation, and by the same conduct to hasten it on.

(1) "Looking for the coming of the day of God." The word means watching and waiting. It is looking, not doubtfully, but in expectancy. This state of mind is the fruit of "all holy conversations and godlinesses." It cannot be projected by a wish. It can no more be extemporised in the Christian life than can an elaborate Corinthian capital or an ethereal group of sculpture be flung off and finished with a blow. Languishing piety and increasing worldliness will not attain it. If you would reap the harvest, you must sow the seed, and protect the rising growth from all blight and injury. (2) "And hastening the coming of the day of God." "All holy conversations and godlinesses," not only create the state of expectancy, but in the design of the Almighty they bring on the day. The great system of "things" is passing to dissolution, let holy "persons," who will mount above the ruin and live for ever, hasten the blissful hour. (*H. Batchelor.*) *What manner of persons Christian professors ought to be:—*I. ZEALOUS AND IN EARNEST AS TO THE CONCERNS OF RELIGION. "What shall it profit a man, if," &c. II. PENITENT AND BROKEN-HEARTED (Psa. li. 17). III. BELIEVING ON CHRIST AS SET FORTH IN THE WORD (John vi. 27-29). IV. PATIENT AND RESIGNED. Because—1. Their sufferings less than they deserve. 2. Christ suffered more for them. 3. They suffer for their profit. V. BENEVOLENT, CONDESCENDING, AND MERCIFUL. Because Christ has been so to them (2 Cor. viii. 9; 1 John iii. 16, 17). VI. CIRCUMSPECT. Because their danger is great. VII. GRATEFUL. Because all their blessings are undeserved. VIII. HOPEFUL. Because what God has done for them ensures everything. IX. READY FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THEIR PRESENT STATE, AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF THAT TO COME. Learning hence—1. Christianity, when reduced to practice, is beneficial to others as well as to ourselves. 2. Christianity at a low ebb amongst us. 3. God will help those who are seeking to be what they should be (Phil. iv. 13). 4. The consideration of what we should be teaches us our need of Christ in everything (Gal. ii. 19, 20). (*H. Foster, M.A.*) *Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.—**Desire for the day of God:—*I. THE PRIVILEGE AND DUTY ENJOINED. Christians should live and walk as on the borders of eternity, dying daily. This "looking for" the coming of Christ is similar to that of the watchman who waits with earnest solicitude for the dawn of day. It is the look of desire, not of regret; of hope, not of fear; and hence it is added, "hastening to" the coming of the day of God. The Christian ought to do this in two ways—1. In desire. As he approaches the heavenly country he ought to breathe more of its atmosphere; to become more and more engrossed with those foretastes which faith gives him of its blessedness. 2. In preparation. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH WE MAY ATTAIN TO THE EXERCISE OF THIS DUTY AND THE ENJOYMENT OF THIS PRIVILEGE. III. THE BLESSED CONSEQUENCES WHICH WOULD RESULT FROM OUR HABITUALLY LOOKING FOR AND HASTENING UNTO THE COMING OF THE DAY OF GOD. 1. It would make us watchful and circumspect. 2. It would support us under the trials of life. 3. It would make us bold in our Master's cause. 4. It would lead us to form proper notions of worldly things. 5. It would cause our light to shine brighter amongst men. (*W. C. Wilson, M.A.*) *Advancing the Second Advent:—*From the Bibles that have marginal readings it will appear that these words admit of a different construction—"Looking for and hastening to Christ or cause Christ to hasten to us. But the intention is that we should do both—"Hastening unto," and ourselves "hastening," "the coming of the day of God." But now the question presents itself—"Can anything which a man does really 'hasten,' by a single moment, the Second Coming of Christ?" It is

a question which, in fact, loses itself in a far greater one—"Can the acts of the Almighty, which are all pre-determined from all eternity, be affected by anything which His creatures do?" In every age Christians are to be praying and labouring for the extension of the gospel over the whole earth. And so labouring and so praying they may command results. The Church shall grow, souls shall be saved, God shall be glorified. But, nevertheless, all this is only the earnest of a better dispensation—the falling drops which tell that the shower is coming. "But can mortal wishes, or mortal feelings, accelerate that 'day of God'?" Assuredly. God has oftentimes, in His mercy, changed His times for His people's sake. Many things have gone back. Death has retired for fifteen years. The destruction of a city has been postponed indefinitely. Great calamities, threatening a king and his people, have been handed down to the third and fourth generations. But, has anything, with God, gone forward? "In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days." What does that "shortening" mean? That the day of deliverance was put forward "for the elect's sake." Then here is a great and happy event "hastening" on for man! What, then, must we do "to hasten the day of God"? 1. Pray for it. What is the promise, ought always to be, emphatically, the prayer of the dispensation. 2. Let the Church live in love and union, in order that a united Church may attract her Lord to "come." 3. Make great efforts for the evangelisation of the world. 4. Cultivate personal holiness. Will He "come" until His Bride has put on her jewels? And when she is decked, and when she is meet indeed, can He stay away? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The day of God*:—Can it be that God has left large tracts of present time to themselves; that He has retreated into some distant future, when He will exert a jurisdiction that does not now belong to Him? Certainly not. This were irreconcilable with any true idea of the Omnipresent and the Eternal. All days most assuredly are His, who is the Lord of time. Each hour, each minute, as it passes by, is passed beneath His eye, or rather within His encompassing presence. I. BY "THE DAY OF GOD" IS MEANT A DAY WHICH WILL NOT MERELY BE HIS, AS ALL DAYS ARE HIS, BUT WHICH WILL BE FELT TO BE HIS—a day in which His true relation to time and life, which is, in the case of the majority of men, only dimly perceived, will be unreservedly acknowledged; a day which will belong to Him, because in the thoughts of every reasonable creature of His hand, whether it will be for weal or for woe, He will have no rival. II. "THE DAY OF GOD" MEANS, AGAIN, A TIME WHEN ALL HUMAN THINGS WILL BE RATED AT THEIR TRUE VALUE; when man's life, and all that belongs to it, will be seen in the light of the infinite and the eternal, and therefore in its relative insignificance. "The day of God" thus tacitly implies a contrast; it means that the days of man's earthly life and all that concerns it will have passed away (*Isa. ii. 12-17*). Most men who have lived until middle life have experienced something that will enable them in part to understand this. You have gone on for years without any shock to the even tenour of life. You may have fallen under the empire of nature and the empire of your bodily senses, and everything belonging to this world may have come to be seen in exaggerated proportions, because you have lost sight of a higher. Now, a state of mind like this is abruptly broken in upon by a great trouble, by a loss of income, by a loss of reputation, by the death of a dearly loved relative, by a break-up of your health. He finds that he has made too much of it, both in detail and as a whole, and he wakes up to see that there is another world beyond it, compared with which, at its very best, it is poor and worthless indeed. This is for him a true "day of the Lord"; and in the light of that day he learns this truth, that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodness of man as the flower of the field," and that while "the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, the Word of our God shall abide for ever." And every such experience in life is a preparation for the awful day, when we shall learn, as never before, the insignificance of all that only belongs to time. III. "THE DAY OF GOD" MEANS THE DAY OF UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT. Certainly God is always judging us. Moment by moment we live beneath His all-seeing eye; He registers each act, each word, each thought, each movement of passion, each truancy of the will, each struggle by His grace to live for Him, each victory over the craft and subtlety of the devil or man. Yes, He is always on His throne of judgment, but this does not prove that no time is coming when He will judge as never before. The predicted day of judgment will differ from the continuous judgment that always is exercised by the Divine Mind as it gazes upon a moral world in two respects—in its method and in its finality. It will be carried out, that last judgment, by the

Man Christ Jesus in person. And as the last judgment will be administered by a visible judge, by our dear Lord, who was crucified for us, and who rose from the grave, and who ascended into heaven, so it will be final. There will be no appeal, no rehearing, no reversal possible. Every grace responded to, or neglected, will be taken into account. Every thought, word, act, habit, all that has gone to make up our final self—and everything from the cradle to the dying hour, most assuredly, contributes something—all will be taken fully, unerring into the reckoning. And thus, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is called an "Eternal Judgment," meaning a judgment from which there is no appeal, in the new and everlasting age. We cannot picture to ourselves this judgment; but that does not prove that it will not take place. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The influence of belief in the coming of the day of God:—*I. The expectation of a coming day of God affects Christian thought, in the first place, BY REMINDING US OF WHAT HUMAN LIFE REALLY IS AND MEANS. Springing, as it does, out of the very idea of duty, being, as it is, the inseparable concomitant of a reasoned conception of right and wrong as the law planted within us by some moral being, who must have the will and the power to enforce it, the expectation of a coming judgment at once raises man into his true place as the first of created beings here below; and yet, withal, it keeps him there. In short, the knowledge that we have to be judged at once guarantees our dignity and defines our subordination. It is only as moral beings having free-will that we are capable of undergoing judgment at all; and, as having to undergo it, we are necessarily and infinitely below Him whose right and whose duty it is to judge us. II. A second way in which the expectation of the coming of the day of God powerfully affects Christian thought is THAT WHICH ILLUMINATES THE SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. The sense of responsibility is as wide as the moral sense of man; that is to say, it is as wide as the human race. This primal idea, rooted in our first instinctive perceptions of moral truth, that we are responsible beings, necessarily implies that some one exists to whom this responsibility is due. Who is it? We look around us, and we see, most of us, some fellow-creatures to whom we have to answer for our conduct. The child knows that he must answer for it to his parents—to his mother in early, to his father in later years. The schoolboy thinks of his master, the clerk of his employer, the soldier of his commanding officer. As we get higher in the scale of society, it may seem at a distance that there are personages so exalted as to be subject to no human masters to whom their responsibility is due; but in reality it is quite otherwise. Those who govern us are answerable to what is called public opinion for their conduct of public affairs. That is to say, they have to give an account, not to one, but to many millions of their countrymen. But if conscience speaks to us at all with clearness and honesty, it tells every one of us one thing about such responsibilities we owe to our fellow-creatures, and that is that such responsibility covers only a very small part indeed of our actual conduct. A great deal goes on in every life which is either right or wrong, yet for which a man feels in no way accountable to any human critic or authority whatever. Is he, therefore, not accountable for such acts and words as do not fall within human jurisdiction? And this knowledge obliges us to look often and beyond this human world to One to whom our responsibility is really due. As He only can take account of that which is withdrawn from the eyes of our fellow-men, so He assuredly does take account of all in which others may have a right to do so. We are responsible to God—yes, all who seriously believe that He exists as the moral Governor of this world which He has made must admit this responsibility. But, then, the question arises: When is the account to be rendered? That God keeps His eye upon it day by day in the case of every one of us is as certain as that He exists. It is faith in a future judgment which makes the sense of responsibility living and operative, by making the prospect of a real reckoning definite and concrete. III. Belief in a coming day of God AFFECTS OUR WHOLE VIEW OF HUMAN HISTORY AND OF HUMAN LIFE. When we take up a volume of ancient history, or of the history of our own country, of what does it mainly consist? It describes royal and noble personages succeeding one another—their birth, their training, their coronations, their deaths. It describes the varying fortunes of multitudes of human beings associated together as what is called a nation, their privations, their conquests, their gradual improvement, the crimes for which they are collectively responsible. In short, we read history too often as though it told us all that was to be said about man, as though when man had done with this earthly life there was really an end. Ah! we forget the truth which makes history so inexpressibly pathetic, that all is not really over

with those whom it describes, that they have only ceased to be visible, that the most important part of their career yet awaits them, viz., the account they have to give of it. Our Saxon forefathers, and the Britons whom they so ruthlessly exterminated, and Alfred, and Edward the Confessor, and William the Conqueror, and Rufus, and Cœur de Lion, and John, and the great Plantagenets, the Edwards and the Henrys, and Elizabeth, and Mary Stuart, and Charles, and Cromwell, and the Georges, and the Pretenders, and the great statesmen who fill the canvas of the first half of this century, and the men of the first Revolution, and the Napoleons, down to those who left us but yesterday—depend upon it they are no mere names; they are still living beings; and this is the fact, the pathetic fact, common to all of them, that they are waiting for the final judgment, and they already know enough to know what it will mean to each one of themselves. This view of history, considered in the light of a coming day of judgment, extends itself at once and inevitably to human life in our own day and immediately around us. Our first and, so to call it, our natural view of human beings around us takes note of their positions in this world, and of the points wherein they differ from or resemble ourselves. We think of them as better or worse off, as more or less educated, as friendly or as distant acquaintances, as belonging to a past or to a younger generation, or to our own, as standing in this or in that relation to the public life of the country, as belonging to this or to that profession, as occupying this or that or a third position in the social scale; but once let us have steadily thought out the truth that, like ourselves, every human being is certainly on his trial and his judgment before Him, and how insignificant do all those considerations about our fellow-creatures appear in the light of this tremendous fact! Yes, those possessors of vast influence, which they use, if at all, for selfish ends; those owners of accumulated wealth, which they spend so largely, if not altogether, upon themselves; those men of cultivated minds, who regard cultivation as an end in itself, and without a thought of what it may be made to do for others or for the glory of God; yes, the consideration that all, all will be judged, and that every hour that passes brings them nearer to the judgment, makes us think of human life around us in quite a new light. (*Ibid.*) *The day of God*:—I. THE SOLEMN EVENT WE SHOULD ANTICIPATE. “The day of God, wherein,” &c. 1. The day of His glory. 2. The day of His power. 3. The day of His wrath. II. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE IT SHOULD PRODUCE. “Looking for and hasting unto,” &c. 1. It should duly interest our minds. 2. It should duly influence our conduct. “Looking for and hasting unto the day of God” comprehends earnest desire and diligent preparation. III. THE IMPORTANT REFLECTIONS IT SHOULD SUGGEST. 1. The awful nature and effects of sin. 2. The emptiness and vanity of the world. 3. The necessity of seeking an interest in Christ. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **Look for new heavens and a new earth.**—*New heavens and new earth*:—A question here arises whether the new heavens and new earth will be created out of the ruins of the old. The idea of the annihilation of so many immense and glorious bodies, organised with inimitable skill, is gloomy and forbidding. It ought not to be believed without the most decisive proof. On the other hand, it is a most animated thought that this visible creation which sin has marred will be restored by our Jesus. 1. The words which are employed to express the destruction of the world do not necessarily imply annihilation. The figures taken from the wearing out of a garment and from the vanishing of smoke do neither of them import the destruction of substance. For the substance of a garment when it moulders away, and of smoke when it vanishes, is not annihilated; only the form is changed. Is it said that the world shall perish? The same word is used to express the ancient destruction of the world by the flood. Is it said that the world shall have an end and be no more? This may be understood only of the present organisation of the visible system. The natural power of fire is not to annihilate, but only to dissolve the composition and change the form of substances. 2. Our text and several similar passages compel me to believe that new material heavens and a new material earth will be raised up to supply the place of those which the conflagration shall have destroyed. This being allowed, it seems more natural to suppose that the old materials will be employed than that they will be annihilated and new ones created in their stead. We know that the glorified bodies of the saints will be formed of materials which now exist on the earth, and that even the glorious body of Christ is formed of no other. 3. The new heavens and new earth seem eminently represented as a part of the vast plan of

restoration which Christ undertook to accomplish. But it is not the part of Christ in this work to create out of nothing, but only to renew. 4. The time of Christ's advent to judgment is called "the times of restitution of all things." 5. But the passage on which the advocates for renovation chiefly rely remains yet to be produced (Romans viii.). If, then, by "the creature" is meant "every creature" or "the whole creation," how is the whole creation to "be delivered," in the resurrection, "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God?" Not by annihilation, but by a glorious renovation. But why, if the heavenly bodies are to be continued in existence, should they be dissolved by fire, since they are not, as far as we know, defiled, as our earth is, by sin? One end of their dissolution may be that by a different composition of their materials they may be rendered more pure and glorious. Another end may be to make a memorable display of God's abhorrence of everything which has had the most distant connection with sin. They have ministered to apostate man and lighted him in his course of rebellion. Lift up your heads, ye people of God, and sing, for your redemption draweth nigh. What though you are poor in this world, the new heavens and new earth will be all your own. Ye who must now walk on the earth lame and halt, while the world rattle by you in their splendid equipages, shall shortly make easy excursions from star to star, and from world to world. (*E. Griffin, D.D.*)

The new creation.—I. REFLECT ON THE GREAT CREATION AND THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN MAKING THE INFINITY OF WORLDS. That there is no adequate purpose it would be absurd, indeed almost blasphemous, to suppose. The tornado may work blindly as it tears down the forest trees in its fury; but how unworthy would be such blind, aimless work on the part of the Infinite God! A giant may put forth his portentous strength in mere vain display; but could God exert such stupendous energy in order that some fraction of its wonder might dazzle the few beholders in one world? Surely a devout faith, as well as a reasoning intelligence, must conclude that the purpose which alone explains the creation and arrangement of our earth is that it should be the home of life, and of beings able to apprehend God's will, is the actuating purpose of all the rest of the creation. II. BUT IN THIS WORLD, AT LEAST, THERE HAS BEEN FAILURE. In man's inmost nature there has been a collapse. High faith and loyalty, integrity and pureness, persistent endeavour for the right—all this has broken down, and man's moral and spiritual nature is in ruins. But into the midst of the ruin of human hope there has come the all-renewing power of a great redemption. III. HOW BOUNDLESS IS THE PROSPECT OPENED OUT TO MAN BY THIS NEW HOPE! What infinite possibility and promise of the development and application of human faculty! what a future for the researches of science and the plastic skill of art! and what sacred joy in the perfected and permanent relationships of human society! IV. OUR ATTENTION IS DIRECTED TO THE REGNANT PRINCIPLE OF THE NEW UNIVERSE. Where vice reigns all is hell; where vice and virtue are in conflict life is mingled joy and pain; but where triumphant righteousness makes its abiding home there must be health without any lurking incipency of sickness, joy without threat of grief, love without peril of parting, and life without possibility of death. "Wherein dwelleth righteousness"—as the very coherence of the texture of the new world, and the pervasive and penetrating energy of the new life. And for this ultimate triumph of righteousness God is our guarantee. (*T. F. Lockyer, B.A.*)

A new heaven and a new earth.—I. THE EVENTS LOOKED FOR. 1. First, the destruction of the world that now is. Not only the heavens, but "the elements." Light, heat, air, moisture—all these are to come under the action of the final fire. Then "the earth," where God planted Eden of old, and whose virgin soil was trodden by sinless humanity; earth, where are Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary, with all their holy memories of suffering and of rejoicing and of triumph. Then not only earth, but the things that are on the earth; all that human art and human labour and human skill may have added to the earth or reconstructed out of material things. Then the means—fire. Fire is the mightiest force with which we are acquainted in the material world. Science has taught us that no material has been found as yet which fire cannot melt. And fire is not only the mightiest force, but it is the most universally diffused. We find it everywhere—in the vegetable, in the animal, and in the mineral. There is fire in the tree which grows, and hence the savage will take two sticks, and, rubbing them briskly together, he produces a spark and flame. Though there is much of moisture in the wood, nevertheless he can produce fire from it. There is fire in the very stone on which you tread. Hence the sparks that you see struck forth beneath the prancing steed, or

sometimes occasioned by your own sharp footsteps. There is fire in the water. If there were not it would all be frozen. Fire enters into the constitution of our own body. There is heat in the skin and in the flesh, in the blood and in the bone, and in the sinew; and it causes life to kindle from the sole of the foot to the very crown of the head. This earth of ours was once a sea of molten lava. It is now cooled at the surface, and this constitutes the crust of the globe; but if you were only to dig down seven miles through that crust, you would still come upon the ocean of liquid lava. And God has only to let loose this treasure of fire from its secret place, and then it will rush with destructive fury from world to world and from system to system. No wall can be constructed as a barrier to check its progress. Then you will observe another thing—the manner. “Pass away with a great noise.” The manifestations of God to man are sometimes calm and peaceful and assuring. At other times His manifestations are accompanied with things that awaken terror or create alarm. So it was in connection with Sinai. Then this great crisis is designated the day of the Lord—the day of the Lord Jesus. Why is it designated the day of Christ? (1) It will be the day of the Lord Jesus, because the transactions of the day will be all based upon the mediatorial work of Christ. (2) Because it will be the day for the vindication of Christ against all the falsehoods and the prejudices and the wrong judgments which men have entertained concerning Christ. (3) Then it is the day of the Lord as distinguished from man’s day. It is your day now; and I say to young men it is your day now to do as you please—to rebel against God. But it will be the Lord’s day when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved. 2. Next, the reconstruction of a new earth out of the material of the old. The renewal of the earth and the heaven will be a something that will take place after the destruction of the old earth and the old heaven. Now we must bear in mind that in the material world nothing is annihilated. He will want all the gold to pave the highways of the New Jerusalem. He will want the diamonds and the precious stones to gem the battlements of the city of the saints. He will put them all into one seething cauldron and melt and purify and purge them, and make them fit material for the erection of the future home of the saints. “We look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. They shall inherit the earth, and the wicked shall not have a part in it at all. But is this old earth to be cursed for ever? No. Jesus Christ’s work as Redeemer would not be complete. After He has saved man, He will have to effect the restitution of things as well as of men. He will have to extract the curse from the heart of the earth, and so silence the cry of a groaning creation. And let me say that this new heaven and new earth, in its purified form, will be far superior to our old home. What do we find here? Beasts of prey are prowling the deserts. In the new heavens and the new earth “no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon.” In the old earth venomous vipers and poisonous reptiles are crawling, and sometimes they inflict pain, and even death, upon our fellow-men. But in the new heavens and the new earth nothing that hurts and destroys shall ever be seen in all God’s holy mountain. In this old earth what do I find? The air is laden with pestilence and desolation and death. But in the new heavens and the new earth the atmosphere shall be purged of all deleterious influences, and the inhabitants shall never say “I am sick.” Here time lays its destroying hand upon the mightiest monuments that man has ever reared. But in the new heavens and new earth “neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and thieves do not break through and steal.” Immortality is possessed by everything there. The inheritance is “incorruptible and undefiled, and it fadeth not away.” In the new heavens and in the new earth there shall be no more sea, no element of destruction there. And then I look at the heavens above me, so magnificent on a bright starry night; but I cannot help being reminded of the alternations of heat and cold, of the insufferable heat of summer and the greater heat endured in other portions of the world than ours, and of the insufferable cold of winter. But in the new heavens and the new earth there will be no such alternations. There is no need of the sun or of the moon, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof. In this old earth the hearts of righteous ones are wounded and pierced to the very quick by the wickedness of those around them. But in the new heavens and in the new earth there “dwelleth righteousness.” There will be no sorrow or suffering through the wickedness of men rebelling against the Lord most high. II. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE WITH THESE THINGS BEFORE US? “Be diligent”—that is, “Do your best, that ye may be found of Him in peace.” Oh! is it possible to be at peace when the world

is in a blaze? Yes, thank God, it is possible to be at peace then. But how are we to be at peace under such conditions? "Found of Him without spot and blameless"—"without spot" inwardly; "blameless" outwardly. A pure heart and a pure life. There will be nothing to fear then. Suppose two men standing side by side at that day gazing upon the upheaving of all things. The one man has been a millionaire commanding his broad acres and his ample revenue, but has died without Christ. The other man has died in the poor-house, and gone to heaven by faith from his humble abode. The two stand side by side. Ah, which of the two would you prefer to be, then? The one loses all. The fire burns all he ever possessed. The other loses nothing. The flames cannot touch his possessions. He has a pure heart, a clear conscience, a spirit delivered from sin; and the fires cannot touch them. (*Richard Roberts.*) *The final heaven*:—There was but one word between chaos and creation—there need be but one between the sustentation and the dissolution of the universal frame. And we are looking for these things! To this promise we hope to come! It is the goal of consummated bliss! I. LET US ENDEAVOUR FROM THIS DESCRIPTION TO SUGGEST TO OUR MINDS THE TRUE NATURE OF THAT PERFECT FELICITY AND SATISFACTION WHICH ARE RESERVED FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD. 1. The scene we occupy was evidently intended for a great system of life. There is scarcely spot or element in which it may not be found. It is a great contrivance for all the forms and kinds of existence. It would be unmeaning, running to waste, but for this intention. Air, land, water are crowded with their several tribes. The happiness of every one is consulted, function and habitude agree most perfectly with the province and support provided for them, and none who survey and reason out the final causes of things can doubt the will of the great Master and Lord of all. Still he who was made the last of all earthly creatures is the greatest: to him they are all tributary and ministering, and God has given him dominion over them. Then, assuredly, when there shall be new heavens and a new earth, man, the capital figure of the present system, shall still be more prominently raised. He shall there need for help no inferior creatures. Their spirit has gone downward to that earth which is no more. But he is not alone. The ministering spirits which ministered to the heirs of salvation during this life shall be his companions amidst these fairer fields. 2. The world in which we dwell, with all its proper appendages of circumambient air and supernal light, is a material fabric. If, therefore, new heavens and a new earth shall be constituted, they must be material and related to space, or the figure does not hold. And everything concerning that abode would seem to confirm it. It has its entrances, its dimensions, its boundaries, that which can be "seen," that which may be "heard." The flesh of the risen saints is seen in those borders. The glorious body of the Eternal Son is the centre of all the beatific attractions and influences. 3. The visible works of God are the means by which intelligent creatures rise in their thoughts to Him and judge of Him. These are the monuments of His existence and natural perfections. Heaven and earth but vary and multiply the perfect demonstration of a First Cause, His skill, His might, and His bounty. When we read, consequently, of "the new heavens and the new earth," we cannot fail to infer that they shall be impressed with the same designations. How shall the depths of those heavens, how shall the ever-spreading horizons of that earth, be "sought out" and interpreted for the praises of Him whose glorious majesty shines forth from their incomparable frame! 4. The community of the saints is now a most pleasing fact: they are one. A new heaven and a new earth shall now embrace their whole multitude. God hath prepared a habitation for them. They are all brought home. 5. While the present state of our sojourn abounds in multitudinous life, while it is chiefly administrative to the life of man, we cannot but be amazed at the contrivance and the fulness of those provisions which give general life, and peculiarly that of man, its greatest possible happiness and freest possible exercise. We, however, boast a life of higher functions and aims. To be spiritually-minded is life and peace. The spirit of life breathes it into our soul. Though the sky and earth cannot affect this new mode of being, this life of faith, yet the passions and concerns of the present do war perpetually with it. But "the new heavens and the new earth" shall as much favour the inward life, the life of the spirit, as these mundane conveniences and laws now sustain our inferior life. 6. If the future condition of happiness and glory which shall be prepared for the redeemed may be thus expressed, we may expect that, notwithstanding the difference between it and "this visible, diurnal sphere," there shall be certain points of resemblance. What are now the marks of

our dwelling? Heavens—earth. How is our eternal abode described? New heavens—new earth. Is not there in the former an analogue to the latter? Is not the second the reflex of the first? Was there not a shadowing out of ideas which shall seem familiar to the saints in that glory? That which is inferior in appetite and instinct is done away. But is there no beauty in form and colour which the eye may behold? Are there no ravishing harmonies for the ear? Everything here may be but rudiment and cypher to be evolved and interpreted in far distant seats of the universe. By a graduated scale we may now rise through an ascending series of progressive changes until we reach the climax of all. 7. But this supposed parallelism, however unequal, between these different scenes of existence, comprehends an exercise of distinct and perfect memory. The “terrible crystal” of the new heavens, the fair paradise of the new earth, must recall the old. 8. The manner in which the present heavens and earth are supplanted by the new declares that a measure of happiness is ensured by the exchange which perfectly corresponds to the solemn revolution. Joy is the invariable fruit of a rightly appreciated Christianity. 9. Nothing more distinctly marks the evil of sin than the variance which is often supposed in Scripture between man and the scenes of his habitation. These are bid to rise up and declare against him. He is represented as alone “coming short of the glory of God.” They are true to their purpose, while he has turned aside from the end for which he was created and endowed. Hence those awful apostrophes with which inanimate objects are invoked, as if even they could but condemn him. They are summoned, like so many witnesses and justices, to denounce his crimes. But “the new heavens and earth” shall environ nothing which can offend. They shall correspond with whatever they embrace. Their pure elements shall only encompass the pure. 10. Since heaven and earth combine all our ideas of the fair and grand, since these complete our present sphere of life and action, the continuance of such machinery in a future state must intimate to us the diversity of its good. Herein is every constituent of our pleasure, whether sensual or intellectual. From above or beneath we derive all our gratifications. There is endless variety. 11. We have no such images of permanence as those works of God concerning which we speak. “For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.” “They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure.” “The earth abideth for ever.” God suspends the proof of his faithfulness upon these ordinances, upon the covenant of day and night. Yet are we forewarned of their wreck. If, then, these monuments of whatever is durable are themselves to be destroyed, if the azure fade and the globe decay, how certainly may we regard in the new heavens and earth the voucher of a proper immortality! Their sun shall no more go down. Their refulgent tissues shall not decay. They are the perfect signals of a duration which admits no intervals and wants no monitors—which cannot be broken into ages nor counted out by stars! 12. The power of God to protect and bless is not infrequently rested upon His creative achievements. “My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” “The Lord that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion.” “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, which made heaven and earth.” The mourner, the oppressed, the persecuted have sought unto Him who had done all these things—His aid and benediction they could not henceforth distrust nor slight. The meek of the earth were safe beneath the care of Him who made it. The new heavens and earth are fashioned by the same omnipotent artificer, the God of truth and of salvation, and in the same manner does He design that they should support the quietness and assurance of His people for ever! He who reared them shall be their God so long as they endure. They are the standard evidence and voucher of what He can and will work on their behalf. II. LET US EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE ON WHICH THIS FIRM EXPECTATION RESTS. To Abraham a covenant was given in which were contained many promises of a more than earthly kind. He had the seal of righteousness by faith. From him was to descend a spiritual seed. We believe in the Lord, and He counteth it to us for righteousness! We take this ancient warrant, which no time can impair nor cancel—a warrant distinct, successive, cumulative—and “according to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness.” Christianity, which brings life and incorruption to light, which is the promise of eternal life, exhibits the true and alone hope of this surpassing condition. We have everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. We depend upon the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. Promise is a form of Scriptural revelation and encouragement with which we are

familiar. It is an infinite condescension in God thus to bind Himself, and to speak to His servants, "for a great while to come." (*R. W. Hamilton, D.D.*) *New heavens and new earth*:—1. We know historically that earth, that a solid, material earth, may form the dwelling of sinless creatures in full converse and friendship with the Being who made them. Man, at the first, had for his place this world, and at the same time, for his privilege, an unclouded fellowship with God, and for his prospect an immortality which death was neither to intercept nor put an end to. He was terrestrial in respect of condition, and yet celestial in respect both of character and enjoyment. This may serve to rectify an imagination, of which we think that all must be conscious—as if the grossness of materialism was only for those who had degenerated into the grossness of sin. Were our place of everlasting blessedness so purely spiritual as it is commonly imagined, then the soul of man, after, at death, having quitted his body, would quit it conclusively. That mass of materialism with which it is associated upon earth, and which many regard as an incumbrance, would have leave to putrefy in the grave, without being revisited by supernatural power, or raised again out of the inanimate dust into which it had resolved. There will, it is true, be a change of personal constitution between a good man before his death and a good man after his resurrection—not, however, that he will be set free from his body, but that he will be set free from the corrupt principle which is in his body—not that the materialism by which he is now surrounded will be done away, but that the taint of evil by which this materialism is now pervaded will be done away. And this will be his heaven, that he will serve God without a struggle and in a full gale of spiritual delight—because with the full concurrence of all the feelings and all the faculties of his regenerated nature. The great constitutional plague of his nature will no longer trouble him; and there will be the charm of a general affinity between the purity of his heart and the purity of the element he breathes in. But the highest homage that we know of to materialism is that which God manifest in the flesh has rendered to it. That He, the Divinity, should have wrapt His unfathomable essence in one of its coverings; that He should now be throned in universal supremacy, that substantial and embodied humanity should be thus exalted, does this look like the abolition of materialism, after the present system of it is destroyed; or does it not rather prove that, transplanted into another system, it will be preferred to celestial honours, and prolonged in immortality throughout all ages? 2. But though a paradise of sense, it will not be a paradise of sensuality. There will both be heavens and earth, it would appear, in the next great administration—and with this speciality to mark it from the present one, that it will be a heavens and an earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness." Were it the great characteristic of that spirituality which is to obtain in a future heaven, that it was a spirituality of essence then occupying and pervading the place from which materialism had been swept away, we could not, by any possible method, approximate the condition we are in at present to the condition we are to hold everlastingly. But when we are told that materialism is to be kept up, and that the spirituality of our future state lies not in the kind of substance which is to compose its framework, but in the character of those who people it—this puts, if not the fulness of heaven, at least a foretaste of heaven, within our reach. We have not to strain at a thing so impracticable as that of diluting the material economy which is without us—we have only to reform the moral economy that is within us. This will make plain to you how it is that it could be said in the New Testament that the "kingdom of heaven was at hand"—and how, in that book, its place is marked out, not by locally pointing to any quarter, and saying, Lo here, or lo there, but by the simple affirmation that the kingdom of heaven is within you. And hence one great purpose of the incarnation of our Saviour. He came down amongst us in the full perfection of heaven's character, and has made us see that it is a character which may be embodied. We learn from Christ that the heavenly graces are all of them compatible with the wear of an earthly body and the circumstances of an earthly habitation. And had we only the character of heaven, we should not be long of feeling what that is which essentially makes the comfort of heaven. Let us but love the righteousness which He loves, and hate the iniquity which He hateth, and this, of itself, would so soften and attune the mechanism of our moral nature, that in all the movements of it there should be joy. Let the will of God be done here as it is done there, and not only will character and conduct be the same here as there, but they will also resemble each other in the style though not in the degree of their blessedness. And here we may remark that the only possible

conveyance for this new principle into the heart is the gospel of Jesus Christ. (T. Chalmers, D.D.) *Man's external universe as assuming a real form*:—I. THAT THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH WILL EMERGE FROM THE RUINS OF THE PRESENT. This is far the most probable for the following reasons—1. Our planet has already undergone changes somewhat analogous. Geology would give us to understand that this globe has passed through numerous changes. 2. The apparent indestructibility of matter. 3. The moral events that have transpired on this earth. 4. The context makes it evident. Lest the reader should fancy that the fire should entirely destroy this beautiful world, it was natural for St. Peter to intimate that a new heaven and a new earth would grow out of it. II. THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH WILL BE THE ABODE OF "RIGHTEOUSNESS." "Wherein dwelleth righteousness." This is its moral glory, this it is that marks it off in glorious contrast from its present character. This world at present is like the house of the old leper, every part defiled. But "righteousness" will dwell in its future state. 1. It will dwell universally. 2. It will dwell supremely. Now, wherever found, it is in a servile state. Right is under the foot of might. 3. It will dwell exclusively. There will be nothing of an opposite character. 4. It will dwell permanently. Its regions will never be invaded, its authority will never be shaken, its glory will never be overshadowed by evil. This indwelling righteousness is its glory. The most bright and majestic objects of nature looked at through a corrupt heart are uninteresting. No one can see God's beauty in the external world who has not moral beauty within; no one can catch the sweet harmonies without who has not the moral harmonies within. The soul is the measure and mirror of man's universe. III. THAT THE NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH ARE OBJECTS OF PROSPECTIVE INTERESTS TO THE GOOD. "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth." This looking implies two things—1. Sufficient evidence to believe that these new heavens and earth will appear. Looking means expecting—expecting implies reason. 2. A conviction that some advantages will accrue from the appearance. Looking implies desire—desire implies the desirable. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *The qualities of the new earth*:—I. THIS EARTH IS PERISHING. All the productions of nature, all the works of art, all the arrangements of policy that regard it, perish; man, its lord and master, is short-lived and perishing. II. THE NATURE OF THE EARTH WHICH IS TO SUCCEED THE PRESENT. 1. The earth beyond the grave is new; by which we are to understand that it is as perfect in its structure and as attractive in its appearance as if it had just come from the hands of its Creator. No inundations have deluged it; no torrents have disfigured it. No lapse of years impairs its beauty, or introduces among its objects anything like ruin. 2. In the earth beyond the grave "dwelleth righteousness"; by which we may understand that it is the habitation of the righteous, and the place where their work of righteousness is rewarded. Conclusion: 1. The illustration of the text shows the value of righteousness. Revolutions shake the thrones of princes; but righteousness is raised on everlasting foundations, and they who have taken their seat there cannot be moved. 2. The doctrine of the text enforces heavenly mindedness. Set thy affections on that world which is lasting as thyself, and which only is capable of yielding thee perfect bliss. 3. The doctrine of the text enforces trust in God. He whose word made and will unmake the world is the only stay for you. 4. The doctrine of the text should awaken devout gratitude to Christ. (W. Thorburn.) **Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent.**—*Wonders in man's future history*:—I. THAT THE WONDERS IN MAN'S FUTURE ARE TRANSCENDENTLY GREAT. "Such things." II. THAT THESE WONDERS ARE ANTICIPATED BY SOME. "Ye look for such things." 1. They are expected for very good reasons. (1) They are certain. (2) We have an interest in them. These are good reasons. 2. They are expected with very different feelings. By some with indifference, by some with dread, by some with rapturous joy. III. THAT THESE WONDERS DEMAND PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS. How shall I become prepared to meet them? The text suggests two things as an answer. 1. Reconciliation with God. "Found of him in peace." 2. Sanctification. "Without spot and blameless." IV. THAT THESE WONDERS DEMAND CHRISTIAN EARNESTNESS. "Be diligent." 1. Think of the greatness of your work. 2. The brevity of your probationary period. (F. F. Thomas.) *Christian diligence, with its motives and end*:—I. PERSONS ADDRESSED. "Wherefore, beloved," &c. 1. Beloved of God. That the people of God are beloved by Him, we infer from the titles by which He distinguishes them (Deut. xxxiii. 12; Neh. xiii. 26; Dan. ix. 23; Mal. iii. 17; Rom. ix. 25). 2. Beloved of each other. II. EVENTS ANTICIPATED. "Ye look for such things." III. A CHARGE GIVEN. "Be diligent." Diligence is opposed to idleness,

slothfulness, or inattention. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) “*Be diligent*”—I. THE CLEAR HOPE WHICH SHOULD FILL OUR FUTURE. “Seeing that ye look for such things.” What things? Peter has been drawing a very vivid picture of the end, in two parts, one destructive, the other constructive. Opticians make glasses with three ranges, and write upon a little bar which shifts their eye-pieces, “Theatre,” “Field,” “Marine.” Which of the three is your glass set to? The turn of a button determines its range. You can either look at the things close at hand, or, if you set the eye-piece right, and use the strongest, you can see the stars. Which is it to be? The shorter range shows you possibilities; the longer will show you certainties. The shorter range shows you trifles; the longer, all that you can desire. How many hopes we have outgrown, whether they were fulfilled or disappointed. But we may have one which will ever move before us, and ever draw our desires. The greater vision, if we were only wise enough to bring our lives habitually under its influence, would at once dim and ennoble all the near future. II. THE DEFINITE AIM WHICH THIS CLEAR HOPE SHOULD IMPRESS UPON LIFE. If you knew that you were going to emigrate soon, and spend all your life on the other side of the world, in circumstances the outlines of which you knew, you would be a fool if you did not set yourself to get ready for them. The more clearly we see, and the more deeply we feel, that future hope, which is disclosed for us in the words of my text, the more it will prescribe a dominant purpose which will give unity, strength, buoyancy, and blessedness to any life. “Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent.” For what? “That ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” Every word is weighty here. 1. “That ye may be found.” That implies, if not search, at least investigation. It suggests the idea of the discovery of the true condition, character, or standing of a man which may have been hidden or partially obscured before—and now, at last, is brought out clearly. 2. Then, note, “Found in Him,” or, “in His sight.” Then Christ is the Investigator, and it is before “those pure eyes and perfect judgment” that they have to pass, who shall be admitted into the new heavens and the new earth, “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 3. Then mark what is the character which, discovered on investigation by Jesus Christ, admits there: “without spot and blameless.” There must be the entire absence of every blemish, stain, or speck of impurity. “Blameless” is the consequence of “spotless.” That which in itself is pure attracts no censure, whether from the Judge or from the assessors and onlookers in His court. In Peter’s other letter Christ Himself is described as a Lamb “without blemish and without spot.” And thus the character that qualifies for the new heavens is the copy in us of Jesus Christ. Still further, only those who thus have attained to the condition of absolute, speckless purity and conformity to Jesus Christ, will meet His searching eye in calm tranquillity and be “found of Him in peace.” The steward brings his books to his master. If he knows that there has been trickery with the figures, and embezzlement, how the wretch shakes in his shoes, though he may stand apparently calm, as the master’s keen eye goes down the columns! If he knows that it is all right, how calmly he waits the master’s signature at the end, to pass the account! If we are to meet Jesus Christ with quiet hearts, and we certainly shall meet Him, we must meet Him “without spot and blameless.” III. THE EARNEST DILIGENCE WITH WHICH THAT AIM SHOULD BE PURSUED, IN THE LIGHT OF THAT HOPE. Peter is fond of using the word which is here translated “be diligent.” Hard work, honest effort, continuous and persevering, is his simple recipe for all nobleness. The word includes in its meaning earnestness, and it very frequently includes that which is the ordinary consequence of earnestness—viz., haste and economy of time. 1. Be in earnest in cultivating a Christian character. 2. Make it your business to cultivate a character like that of Jesus Christ. 3. Make haste about cultivating a Christlike character. The harvest is great, the toil is heavy, the sun is drawing to the west, the reckoning is at hand. There is no time to lose; set about it as you have never done before, and say, “This one thing I do.” (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Christian diligence*:—I. THE STUPENDOUS EVENTS WHICH ARE EXPECTED. II. THE IMPORTANT DUTY WHICH IS REQUIRED. 1. The opposite of that moral stupidity which prevails among men. 2. The reverse of that indolence of soul, with which so many engage in the affairs of salvation. 3. The opposite of a worldly spirit. III. THE HAPPY END TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. 1. “That ye may be found of Him in peace”—not in affluence, honour, ease or indulgence; but in peace—(1) With all mankind; (2) With your own heart; (3) With God, your reconciled Father. 2. “Without spot” (1 John i. 7). Let us plunge with confidence into this fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Let us also be diligent, not only that we may be made, but also

that we may be preserved pure. 3. "Blameless"; your holy love so manifest, your justification and acceptance so clear, that bad men and devils dare not, good men and angels cannot, and God will not, lay anything to your charge. (*Jas. Bromley.*) **That ye may be found of Him in peace.**—*Peace with God*:—1. Observe, that whatever be our state or character, we shall all be found of God. If we are sinners, and die such, our sins will find us out. 2. As all will be found of God at last, so there are some who will be "found of Him in peace." Such as have had the enmity of their hearts slain by Divine grace. This it is that heightens every other blessing, alleviates every affliction, and supports in the agonies of death. 3. In order to be found in peace at last, it is needful that we seek it here with diligence. Let us carefully examine into the state of our souls. Occupy till He come, and then His coming will be neither a terror nor surprise. 4. Let us now inquire who they are that will be found of God in peace. (1) Those only whom God finds in this world, and brings into a state of grace. (2) Those shall be found of God in peace who here have found Him. Some seek and find Him in the closet, some in the public assembly, and some on a sick and dying bed. Some in their youth, and others in more advanced years. If we do not find Him as a friend and a father, He will find us as a judge and avenger. (3) Those only will be found of God in peace who are found in Christ. This is what Paul so earnestly desired: "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him." (4) Those only will be found of Him in peace in whom some good thing is found towards the Lord God of Israel. Our nature must be renewed. (5) Those only will be found of God in peace whom He finds walking in the paths of peace. Religion does not so much consist in talking of God as in acting for Him; not in theory but in practice. Improvement: 1. The subject administers reproof to the careless, who content themselves with some sluggish attempts, but who are never in earnest about salvation. 2. We may hence learn that it is possible for persons to be satisfied about themselves, and to have a kind of peace in their own minds, and yet not be found of God in peace. 3. We see the suitability and importance of the advice given us in the text: "Be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace." (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Vers. 15, 16. The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.—*The longsuffering of God*:—I. THE FACT OF THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD. Sentence of condemnation is not speedily executed. The blessings of health and prosperity often accompany the sinner all through his course of rebellion. The patience of God appears inexhaustible. II. THE GENEROUS OBJECT OF GOD'S LONGSUFFERING. 1. God bears with transgressors not because He is ignorant of their actions. 2. Not because He is indifferent to their actions. 3. Not because He wants the power "to avenge Him of His adversaries." 4. God bears with sinners because His name and His nature is love. (1) It is the actual design of God by this longsuffering to bring men to salvation. (2) The tendency of this longsuffering, as well as God's design, is to salvation. (3) The actual effect of this longsuffering on the part of God is salvation. But though the longsuffering of God be thus designed to be salvation, yet "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." There is a period to the Divine patience. (*G. T. Noel, M.A.*) *The forbearance of God, ending in the salvation of men*:—I. THE LONGSUFFERING OF THE LORD. 1. It may be defined as the suffering of opposition, injuries, and insults, for a long time without punishing them. 2. The instances and displays of the longsuffering of God are amply recorded in the Bible. 3. And the world, through all the ages of its being, has presented the same picture. What has been the history of every nation? of every city? of every village? of every family? of every person? A record of Divine patience. 4. Let us suggest a few considerations calculated to put the longsuffering of God in a clear, strong light. (1) The pointedness of our offences. It is this which gives to sin its evil. It is pointed against God. It is a thrust at His throne. (2) That entireness which belongs to the sin of man. No counterbalancing conduct. There is no mixture in the conduct of unconverted men towards God. There may be some things well towards man. But towards God all is wrong. (3) The inexcusableness also of offences against God tends to enhance our views of His longsuffering. Has God ever given you any reason to treat Him as you have treated Him? (4) The ingratitude of our offences must also be remembered. (5) The implacableness of offenders against God renders His longsuffering the more remarkable. II. IN WHAT SENSE THE LONGSUFFERING OF THE LORD IS SAID TO BE SALVATION. 1. It is only by a reference to the great purpose of salvation that we can satisfactorily account for the longsuffering of the Lord. 2. Consequently the longsuffering of the Lord is to afford adequate occasion and room for carrying the plan of salvation

into execution. 3. It is therefore a standing indication to men of the willingness of God to save. 4. It is then a motive to induce men to be saved. It is part of that goodness which leadeth men to repentance. 5. But salvation is often the blessed result of Divine forbearance. This is its grand issue. The longsuffering of the Lord is salvation in actual effect and eternal consequences. It ends in this. III. ENFORCE THE INJUNCTION TO ESTIMATE RIGHTLY THE LONGSUFFERING OF THE LORD. "Account that the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation." See that you put this interpretation upon Divine forbearance, esteem it as salvation. 1. Do not then make it the food of scepticism. This was the wretched mistake of those ungodly persons of whom the apostle had spoken. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; regard a man so with that shall he also reap," whether it be early or late. 2. Neither regard the longsuffering of the Lord as connivance. Do not think that because He does not smite, He therefore smiles. 3. Nor must you account that the longsuffering of the Lord is security. Whilst you are saying peace and safety, sudden destruction may come upon you. Account that the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation. Regard this as the end. Believe that you are allowed and encouraged to seek that end. Let the longsuffering of God be your introduction to His mercy. You may turn this stream of life into poison and death. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

*God's longsuffering: an appeal to the conscience:—*I. ADMIRE THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD. 1. Admire the longsuffering of God as to peculiar sins. Look, they make images of wood or stone, and they say "These are God," and they set up these things in the place of Him that made the heavens and the earth. How does He bear it—He that sitteth in the heavens, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways? Others, even in this country, blaspheme God. And oh, how is it that God bears it when they dare imprecate His curse upon their bodies and their souls? Besides, there are those who use fair speech, and yet blaspheme most intolerably. How is it that the Thrice-holy One bears with them? And then there are others who wallow in unmentionable impurity and uncleanness. The moon sees a world of foulness, fornication, and adultery: and yet, O God, thou bearest it! And then, when I turn my thoughts another way, to the oppression of the poor, to the grinding down of those who, with the hardest labour, can scarcely earn bread enough to keep body and soul together, how does the just God permit it? 2. Especially notice that this longsuffering of God is seen in peculiar persons. In certain persons sins are greater than the same sins would be in other people. They have been favoured with a tender conscience, and with good instruction, so that when they sin they sin with a vengeance. 3. It is wonderful that God should have such longsuffering when we look at the peculiar circumstances under which some men sin. (1) Some men sin against God wilfully, when they have no temptation to it, and can plead no necessity. (2) Some manifest the longsuffering of God very wonderfully in the length of time in which they have been spared to sin. Remember that it would be easy on God's part to be rid of you. One wish, and the sinner will never provoke Him any more, nor refuse His mercy again. He will be gone out of the land of hope. II. TAKE THE RIGHT ACCOUNT OF THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD. "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." What does this mean? 1. Does it mean, first, as to the saving of the many? The Lord Jesus Christ is, as I believe, to have the pre-eminence. Christ came not to destroy the world, but that the world through Him might be saved; and so, as every year rolls by, let us account it salvation, and spend and be spent in the hope that by any means we may save some. 2. The next meaning of this is to any of you who are unconverted. I want you to account that the longsuffering of God in sparing you means to you salvation. Why are you here to-night? Surely it is salvation. I met years ago a soldier who had ridden in the charge of Balaclava. He was one of the few that came back when the saddles were emptied right and left of him. I could not help getting into a corner, and saying to him, "Dear sir, do you not think that God has some design of love to you in sparing you when so many fell? Have you given your heart to Him?" I felt that I had a right to say that. Perhaps I speak to some of you who were picked off a wreck years ago. Why was that? I hope it was that you might be saved. You have had a fever lately, and have hardly been out before. Why were you saved from that fever when others were cut down? Surely it must mean salvation. When Master Bunyan was a lad, he was so foolhardy that, when an adder rose against him, he took it in his hand, and plucked the sting out of its mouth, but he was not harmed. It was his turn to stand sentinel at the siege of Nottingham, and as he was going forth, another man offered to take his place.

This man was shot, and Master Bunyan thus escaped. We should have had no "Pilgrim's Progress" if it had not been for that. Did not God preserve him on purpose that he might be saved? 3. This text seems to me to have a bearing upon the people of God. "Account that the longsuffering of God is salvation." I must turn the text to give you really what lies in it. It is salvation to a man to be put side by side with Christ. If you have to bear the jests of the ungodly—if God spares them, and permits them to persecute you, be glad of it, and reckon it as salvation, for now you are made partaker of Christ's sufferings. What more salvation do you desire? Remember, too, that when the ungodly persecute the righteous, they give them the mark of salvation, for of old it was so. He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit. Once more: reckon the longsuffering of God, when it permits the ungodly to slander and injure you, as salvation, because it tends to your salvation by driving you nearer to the Lord. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The longsuffering of God:—God bears long with sinful men, to give them further opportunities of securing salvation. 1. It is remarkable, however, that the longsuffering of God has, in many instances, just the contrary effect. "Because sentence is not speedily executed against an evil work, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set within them to do evil." When the prophet Isaiah denounced the judgments of God, he was met with the reply, "The vision that he seeth is afar off;" and when his prophecy was not immediately fulfilled they said, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth." Myriads have been ruined for ever by abusing the longsuffering of God. They never intended to brave His wrath, but they saw so little cause for immediate alarm that they ventured a little further, until they had gone too far to retrace their steps. Have you ever noticed that our Saviour seldom warns us against a deliberate rejection of the gospel offers? He knew that such guilt would be rare. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And how often does the Saviour call upon us "to watch," and warn us that His coming will be "as a thief in the night"! 2. And it is astonishing with what ingenuity men can encourage this presumptive confidence in the longsuffering of God. Listen, for instance, to their remarks at funerals. If it be an aged person that has deceased, they say, Ah! he had lived to a good old age, and it was a matter of course that he should die. If it be an infant that is cut off, they say, There are so many diseases to which little ones are subject. In another case the remark concerning the deceased will be, He has been very imprudent, and brought his death upon himself. Or, in yet another case, This person has long been declining, and had the seeds of death within him; but I have no such symptoms of decay or dissolution. All this is to keep off the idea of dying, and to encourage the hope that the longsuffering of God will wait yet longer. 3. Indeed it is an easy matter to encourage a vain trust in the longsuffering God if we are so disposed. How many things there are to help on presumption if we are inclined to indulge it! Time flies silently. Sickness and death do their work very silently. Men do not fall like the leaves in a cold climate, where a single night's frost can strip every tree of its verdure; but the process is rather like the falling of the foliage in a tropical region, where leaf drops after leaf, and is succeeded by another springing forth in its place, so that the eye scarce notices the change. See how noiselessly even our religious opportunities slip away from us! Many have spent the greatest part of their earthly Sabbaths, and scarce reflected that they are gone. God does not, in general, deal with us by startling methods; He uses these as rarely as the thunders and earthquakes of the natural world, but speaks to us for the most part in gentle and persuasive tones. 4. It may be asked, perhaps, why did God adopt such a method of dealing with us? If He had struck the offender dead by a visible interposition; if He had called from heaven, as He did to Saul of Tarsus, to persuade us to repentance, we should have been awed into obedience. But it would have made but little difference if God had dealt with us by startling methods. One who will slumber may be startled out of it a few times, but by and by he would sleep as the sailor does amid the rocking billows on the mast-head. Now, let me ask, what better mode God could have adopted of saving souls than that which for years He has been using without success? Do you say that the reason and understanding must be convinced before one can become a Christian? And has not God done enough to satisfy your reason? Do you say that the heart must be moved by love and mercy, and not by terrors? Have there not been mercy and love in God's dealings with you? If the compassion of our God was not infinite, these protracted sins against His longsuffering would a great while ago have drawn down His wrath. 5. And it is because that righteous anger may finally be incurred that I would urge

you to sin no more against the longsuffering of God. These days are passing off with so little to excite your fears; these seasons, when you have little concern for your souls, are most of all to be dreaded. They are sealing your destiny, as the whirlpool draws in the boat without a single ripple for some time to betray its influence, until at last destruction roars around, too late for retreat. These fair days of seeming peace which God is giving you, are the working days for laying up the eternal harvest. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *The longsuffering of God to be accounted salvation*:—Our own existence here is a proof of the longsuffering of God. By our apostasy we have forfeited all title to His favour and protection. That sentence, however, is not yet executed. I. THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT IS TO BE CONSIDERED GENERALLY AS A LAW, OR RULE, OR PRINCIPLE, OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. The longsuffering of God is salvation, not directly in itself, but indirectly in subordination to a fixed plan and purpose of salvation. It is not the longsuffering of God that saves a single sinner, but the love of God in Christ; and His longsuffering contributes to the sinner's salvation in no other way than by placing within his reach, and pressing upon his acceptance, the gospel overtures of mercy. God has but one method of saving sinners. It is not His longsuffering that saves them, but that grace for the exercise of which, on their behalf, His longsuffering affords scope and space. On this point be not deceived. Consider not God as acting merely from the impulse, so to speak, of personal feelings of compassion, when He spares. Regard Him as sustaining a public, an official character, in which He has high authority to vindicate, and good government to maintain. True, He is full of tenderest feelings of pity to you personally; but, then, as a judge may not gratify his personal feelings as a man, without reference to his state and duty as a judge upholding law and order, so God, in His compassionate regard to you, lays not aside His regard to the claims of His own sovereignty, and the sanctity of His own administration. The very giving up of His Son to be sin for you is the proof also of His concern for the honour and the majesty of that justice which was to be preserved un tarnished at such a cost. It is in the character of a just God and a Saviour that He is longsuffering; not in relenting pity, reversing His sentence of judgment. This great salvation He now offers to you. Be not so infatuated as to think you may dispense with it. II. THIS LAW OR PRINCIPLE OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT, THAT THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD IS TO BE ACCOUNTED THE SALVATION OF MAN, MAY BE APPLIED TO THE CASE OF TEMPORAL JUDGMENTS, and may explain the Lord's method of dealing with us in regard to those evils to which, even in this life, as sinners we are exposed. 1. God, in sending temporal judgments, often gives previous warning, and interposes delay, that by timely precautions they may be averted; and in this sense His longsuffering is to be accounted salvation. Do your part to render harsher measures needless, by taking warning in time. 2. There is another way in which the longsuffering of God is manifested in the sending of temporal judgments. He gives us time, not perhaps to avert them altogether, but yet so to prepare for their coming, that, when they do come, they shall come as fatherly chastisements, not as judgments in fact at all, but as mercies. And, in this sense—a far higher and more important sense than is implied in the removal of any temporal calamity—the longsuffering of God is to be accounted salvation. III. But the most important view for us to take of the maxim of our text is in its application to THAT JUDGMENT OF ETERNAL WRATH IN THE LIFE TO COME, TO WHICH WE STAND EXPOSED. Here it is especially that the longsuffering of our Lord is to be accounted salvation. In this view of it, our text suggests the true explanation of that most perplexing of all enigmas—the present state of sinners on the earth seeming to be tolerated by a holy and righteous God. It is a state, we now see, in which God is longsuffering that man may be saved. Be it remembered, however, it is only a respite, and a respite which does not by any means or of necessity imply an ultimate reprieve. You are spared for a little, but you are spared for a particular purpose; and if that purpose be not attained, there is no other resource—the sentence must take effect. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*)

Vers. 15, 16. Our beloved brother Paul . . . in all his epistles.—*St. Paul and his writings*:—This passage proves that, at the time Peter wrote, some epistles of Paul existed, and intimates that they were written according to a kind of wisdom which he had supernaturally received. It proves, also, that they were considered of much authority. This passage declares, also, that, from some cause, either in the writer or the subject, there were some things in these epistles hard to be understood, and likely to be perverted. It is my present design to give you, in the first place,

the history and character of St. Paul, and then to consider the causes of that obscurity in his writings of which Peter complains. I. THOSE PORTIONS OF HIS LIFE WHICH TEND MOST TO ILLUSTRATE HIS CHARACTER ARE HIS CONDUCT BEFORE HIS CONVERSION, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT REMARKABLE EVENT. In the history of Paul we have two different men to describe, the persecutor and the apostle. Nothing can be imagined more complete than the change of views in this apostle, yet he preserves through the whole of his life what may be called the original stamina of his character. There is nothing which impeaches his integrity, or which ought to render us suspicious of his moral character. He was only actuated by a species of mistaken zeal, which has been common enough in every age. But God had marked out this young man for the most eminent apostle of that faith which he was now intent upon exterminating. If we suppose Paul's character such as I have represented it to be, there wanted nothing but to show to this young man, by the irresistible evidence of his senses, that this very Jesus, whom he regarded as a crucified, detestable malefactor, was really alive in power to turn the whole current of his conduct, sentiments, and character. This mercy God granted him. In summing up the traits of Paul's character, you will observe how singularly he was qualified for that office to which he was especially destined, the apostleship of the Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire. He was the only one of the apostles who appears to have had what may be called a liberal education, or, at least, who had any tincture of the literature and philosophy of the Greeks. The mission which was given him demanded not only a strength of genius like his, but an ardour which no discouragement should quench. I will close this division of my subject with two reflections. 1. In the first place, notwithstanding the extreme ardour of this apostle's imagination, nothing which he has left us discovers anything of fanatical delusion. 2. How important must that cause be which such a man as Paul could maintain with such amazing exertions, such unwearied zeal, through a long life of such discouragements, privations, persecutions and indignities, even to the hour of his martyrdom! He saw the happiness of the world suspended on the reception of Christianity. He found that the dearest interests of the souls of men were entrusted to him. II. I proceed to STATE, AND, IF POSSIBLE, TO ILLUSTRATE, THE SOURCES OF THE OBSCURITY WHICH PARTICULARLY ATTENDS THE APOSTOLICAL PARTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. 1. The first source of obscurity is, that they are private letters, addressed to particular societies, or individuals, upon particular occasions. 2. Another cause of the obscurity of Paul's epistles is, the peculiar genius of the man. His imagination was easily inflamed with the subject on which he was writing. The motions of his mind were exceedingly rapid. 3. The education and peculiar circumstances of Paul contribute, also, to the obscurity of his epistles. Paul was a man whose head was filled with the Jewish learning of his age; and he, no doubt, writes often like one whose early notions were formed in the school of Gamaliel. Hence he uses many words in a signification which is now extremely difficult to settle. The word "justification" is a remarkable instance of this. It is doubtful, in some instances, whether he means by it a benefit relating only to this life, or extending to our eternal condition. The term "law" is another of similar ambiguity; and it is only by careful attention that we can determine, in particular passages, whether the apostle means by it the whole Jewish dispensation or the ceremonial part of it, or that moral law which is equally obligatory on every rational creature. 4. A fourth source of obscurities in the epistles is to be found in a maxim of interpretation which has too much prevailed without reason: "that we must expect to find in the present circumstances of Christianity a meaning for, or something answering to, every appellation and expression which occurs in Scripture; or, in other words, the applying to the personal condition of Christians at this day, those titles, phrases, propositions, and arguments which belong solely to the situation of Christianity at its first institution." (*J. S. Buckminster.*) *The authority of Church guides*:—I. And that which first entitles the governors of the Church to a superiority over their subjects is that special ORDINATION AND COMMISSION which they have received from Christ to instruct the world in all necessary truths, and that charge which He hath laid upon others to obey them. II. The reasonableness of this submission will appear from those PROMISES OF ASSISTANCE which Christ hath made to them. And those are illumination, direction, and power. Illumination in things obscure; direction in things difficult; power to encounter and overcome all opposition. III. The reasonableness of this submission will appear from their STUDY AND LEARNING in Divine matters, and from the far less knowledge and ordinary capacity in others. IV. The necessity of this sub-

mission appears as it is THE ONLY MEANS TO RESTORE PEACE AND UNITY TO THE CHURCH; HAPPINESS AND TRANQUILITY TO THE STATE. (*Miles Barne, D.D.*) In which are some things hard to be understood.—*Why Scripture is hard to be understood*:—The mysteries of salvation are hard but to our understanding; the difficulty is not in their own nature but in our capacity. As some rural inhabitant being admitted into a royal palace admires the building, and is transported with the rareness and magnificence of it; and much of it he understands: when he comes into the hall he knows that that is a place for feeding; when into the gallery, he knows that to be a place for walking; when into the bed-chamber, he knows that to be a place for sleeping; but into some rooms he is brought, no whit inferior to the former for state and pleasure, the use whereof he knows not; will he now censure the architect for making of such unnecessary and superfluous places? or not rather lay the blame, where it is, upon his own ignorance? The Scripture is a goodly edifice, the Almighty King's palace; whereof Paul was one of the master builders. When we read his epistles we are surveying the rooms and receptacles; some whereof we easily apprehend, as 1 Tim. i. 15, Rom. viii. 1, Phil. iv. 8, 1 Thess. v. 17; but searching further, we light upon some curious rooms, bearing as much art and majesty in them as the rest, but more obscure and mystical, and veiled with the curtain of awful secrecy; such are certain doctrines of St Paul; we are not forbidden to view them, and review them, to study and meditate on them; but if we cannot perfectly understand them, far be it from us to tax St. Paul of obscurity; no, let us impute the fault to our own simplicity. (*Thos. Adams.*)

Biblical difficulties:—I. AS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE INSPIRED. 1. To those who reject the Bible on account of its difficulties. The Bible does not profess to be a book easily understood. Its difficulties are—(1) Consistent with its character. It is a revelation of the Infinite directed to the finite. (2) Consistent with its intention. The Bible is an educational book. The school book which the student has mastered ceases to be educational. 2. To those who arrogate a thorough comprehension of the Bible. II. AS PERVERTED BY THE UNGODLY. 1. The perverters are here described. "Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." 2. The perversion is here indicated. "'They wrest'—pervert. The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from a word meaning a windlass, winch, instrument of torture (*σπρεβλή*), and means to roll or wind on a windlass; then to wrench or turn away as by the force of a windlass; and then to wrest or pervert. It implies a turning out of the way by the application of force. Here the meaning is, that they apply those portions of the Bible to a purpose for which they were never intended." 3. Their destiny is here stated. "Their own destruction." What is spiritual destruction? The destruction of all the blessings that can make existence worth having—life, peace, hope, &c. Such is the perversion of those difficulties, but what is the proper use of them? (1) They should superinduce humility. Before their majesty the intellect should fall prostrate. (2) They should stimulate intellectual inquiry. They challenge thought—their oceans ask you to navigate them, their hills to climb their summit, their mines to dig and be made rich. (3) They should point to a future life. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

The mysterious doctrines of Christianity:—I. We must observe, THAT IN A DIVINE REVELATION MYSTERIOUS DOCTRINES COULD NOT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED. No man hath seen God at any time—clouds and darkness are round about Him—His judgments are unsearchable; and His ways past finding out. II. THAT FROM THE LIMITATION OF OUR FACULTIES OUR INFORMATION MUST, OF NECESSITY, HAVE ITS LIMITS. In sciences merely human, one discovery does little else than produce the desire of more. Our utmost attainments are still unsatisfactory and incomplete. Were the mysteries which at present perplex us fully explained, others would be brought within our view. How far soever we might be permitted to advance, we must at last reach the point where our faculties would fail us. III. These mysteries in religion ARE SUCH ONLY WITH REFERENCE TO OUR UNDERSTANDINGS. To us that is difficult which we cannot perform; that is mysterious which we cannot comprehend. But the difficulty and the mystery depend less upon the objects themselves than upon the narrowness of our capacities. In our future state of existence we shall probably be allowed to acquire much higher degrees of information than we at present possess. IV. IT WILL TEND STILL FURTHER TO RECONCILE US TO THE MYSTERIOUS DOCTRINES OF OUR FAITH, IF WE SERIOUSLY REFLECT THAT THERE ARE MYSTERIES EQUALLY UNSEARCHABLE IN ALMOST EVERYTHING AROUND US. Not a subject can be named which the human mind can be said fully to understand. Lessons: 1. The difficulty and obscurity inseparable

from some of the articles of our faith is an obvious reason that, whenever they are discussed at all, they should be discussed with caution and diffidence. 2. The doctrines, however, which we cannot comprehend, it is still incumbent upon us to believe. We pursue, not what we know, but what we think, will promote our own good. And the same principle prevails in the religion that we profess. 3. Finally, while we admit that the Christian revelation has its mysteries, like every other work of its Divine Author, and like that Author Himself, we maintain that it teaches plainly all that is necessary for us to know or to practise. (*W. Sparrow, D.D.*) *The difficulties of Scripture*:—The writings of St. Paul, occupying as they do a large portion of the New Testament, treat much of the sublimer and more difficult articles of Christianity. There is a great deal made known to us by the Epistles, which could only imperfectly, if at all, be derived from the Gospels. It was to be expected that the New Testament would be a progressive book; the communications of intelligence growing with the fuller opening out of the dispensation. And it is a natural consequence on the greater abstruseness of the topics handled, that the apostle's writings should present greater difficulties to the Biblical student. With this admission of difficulty we must join the likelihood of misconception. If a man have error to maintain he will turn for support to passages of Scripture of which, the real sense being doubtful, a plausible may be advanced on the side of his falsehood. But you will observe that, whilst St. Peter confesses both the difficulty and the attendant danger, he gives not the slightest intimation that the Epistles of St. Paul were unsuited to general perusal. Had St. Peter intended to infer that, because obscurity and abuse existed, there ought to be prohibition, it is altogether unaccountable that he did not lay down the inference. A fairer opportunity could never be presented for the announcement of such a rule as the Roman Catholic advocates. After all, it is not so much the difficulty which makes the danger as the temper in which the Bible is perused. We desire to bring before you what we count important considerations, suggested by the announcement that there are difficulties in Scripture. There "are some things hard to be understood." We lay great stress on the fact that it is an inspired writer who gives this decision. The Bible attests the difficulties of the Bible. If we knew the Bible to be difficult only as finding it difficult, we might be inclined to suppose it luminous to others though obscure to ourselves. We should not so thoroughly understand that the difficulties which one man meets with in the study of Scripture are not simply produced by his intellectual inferiority to another—no, nor by his moral or spiritual inferiority—but are, in a great degree, inherent in the subject examined, so that no equipment of learning and prayer will altogether secure their removal. We take into our hands the Bible, and receive it as a communication of God's will, made, in past ages, to His creatures. And we know that, occupying, as all men do, the same level of helplessness and destitution, so that the adventitious circumstances of rank and education bring with them no differences in moral position, it cannot be the design of the Almighty that superior talent, or superior learning, should be essential to the obtaining due acquaintance with revelation. There can be no fairer expectation than that the Bible will be intelligible to every capacity, and that it will not, either in matter or manner, adapt itself to one class in preference to another. And when, with all this antecedent idea that revelation will condescend to the very meanest understanding, we find, as it were on the covers of a book, the description that there are in it "things hard to be understood," we may, at first, feel something of surprise that difficulty should occur when we had looked for simplicity. And undoubtedly, however fair the expectation just mentioned, the Bible is, in some senses, a harder book for the uneducated man than for the educated. So far as human instrumentality is concerned, the great mass of a population must be indebted to a few learned men for any acquaintance whatsoever with the Scriptures. Never let learning be of small account in reference to religion. But after all, when St. Peter speaks of "things hard to be understood," he cannot be considered as referring to obscurities which human learning will dissipate. He certainly mentions the "unlearned" as wresting these difficulties, implying that the want of one kind of learning produced the perversion. But, of course, he intends by "unlearned" those who were not fully taught of the Spirit, and not those who were deficient in the acquirements of the academy. The "unlearned," in short, are also "the unstable": it is not the want of earthly scholarship which makes the difficulties, it is the want of moral steadfastness which occasions the wresting. We have nothing, therefore, to do in commenting on the words of St. Peter with difficulties which may be caused by a defective, and removed

by a liberal, education. The difficulties must be difficulties of subject. It were a waste of time to adduce instances of the difficulties. I. WE WOULD SHOW YOU THAT IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED THAT THE BIBLE WOULD CONTAIN "SOME THINGS HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD." We should like to be told what stamp of inspiration there would be upon a Bible containing nothing "hard to be understood." Is it not almost a self-evident proposition that a revelation without difficulty could not be a revelation of divinity? You ask a Bible which shall, in every part, be simple and intelligible. But could such a Bible discourse to us of God, that Being who must remain necessarily and for ever a mystery to the very highest of created intelligences? Could such a Bible treat of purposes which extend themselves over unlimited ages? Could such a Bible put forward any account of spiritual operations, seeing that, whilst confined by the trammels of matter, the soul cannot fathom herself, but withdraws herself, as it were, and shrinks from her own scrutiny? Could such a Bible, in short, tell us anything of our condition whether by nature or grace? But it is not the manner in which they are handled which makes them "hard to be understood." The subject itself gives the difficulty. If you will not have the difficulty you cannot have the subject. You must have a revelation which shall not only tell you that such and such things are, but which shall also explain to you how they are: their mode, their constitution, their essence. And if this were the character of revelation it would undoubtedly be so constructed as never to overtask reason; but it would just as clearly be kept within this boundary only by being stripped of all on which we mainly need a revelation. A revelation in which there shall be nothing "hard to be understood" must limit itself by the powers of reason, and therefore exclude those very topics on which, reason being insufficient, revelation is required. There is no want of simplicity of language when God is described to us. But who understands this? Can language make this intelligible? We might argue in like manner with regard to every Scriptural difficulty. We account for the existence of these difficulties mainly by the fact that we are men, and, because men, finite in our capacities. Let there be only the same amount of revelation, and the angel may know more than the man because gifted with a keener and more vigorous understanding. And it is evident, therefore, that few things could have less warranty than the supposition that revelation might have been so enlarged that the knowledge of man would have reached to the measure of the knowledge of angels. We again say that there is no deficiency of revelation, and that the difficulties which occur in the perusal of Scripture result from the majesty of the introduced subjects and the weakness of the faculties turned on their study. And we are well persuaded that, however disposed men may be to make the difficulties an objection to the Bible, the absence of those difficulties would have been eagerly seized on as a proof of imposture. There would have been fairness in the objection. It can only be viewed as a necessary consequence on the grandeur of the subjects which form the matter of revelation that, with every endeavour at simplicity of style and aptitude of illustration, the document contains statements which overmatch all but the faith of mankind. And, therefore, we are bold to say that we glory in the difficulties of Scripture. We can feel the quick pulse of an eager wish to scale the mountain or fathom the abyss. But at the same time we know, and we feel, that a Bible without difficulties were a firmament without stars. We know, and we feel, that the vast business of our redemption, arranged in the councils of the far-back eternity, and acted out amid the wondering and throbbings of the universe, could not have been that stupendous transaction which gave God glory by giving sinners safety, if the inspired account brought its dimensions within the compass of a human arithmetic, or defined its issues by the lines of a human demarcation. And, therefore, do we also know and feel that it is a witness to the inspiration of the Bible that, when this Bible would furnish us with notices of the unseen world hereafter to be traversed, or when it would turn thought on the Omnipotent, or when it would open up the scheme of the restoration of the fallen; then, with much that is beautifully simple, there are mingled dark intimations, and pregnant hints, and undeveloped statements before which the weak and the masterful must alike do the homage of a reverent and uncalculating submission. We do not indeed say—for the saying would carry absurdity on its forefront—that we believe a document inspired because in part incomprehensible. But if a document profess to be inspired, and if it treat of subjects which we can prove beforehand to be above and beyond the stretchings of our intellect, then we do say that the finding nothing in such a document to baffle the understanding would be a proof the most conclusive that what alleges itself divine deserves rejection as forgery. II. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH FOLLOW, AND THE

DISPOSITIONS WHICH SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED BY, THE FACT WHICH HAS PASSED UNDER REVIEW. We see at once from the statement of St. Peter that effects, to all appearance disastrous, are produced by the difficulties of Scripture. The "unlearned and unstable" wrest these difficulties to "their own destruction," and, therefore, by what process of reasoning can they be proved advantageous? We have shown you that the absence of difficulties would go far towards proving the Scriptures uninspired; and we need not remark that there must be a use for difficulties if essential to the complete witness for the truth of Christianity. But there are other advantages which must on no account be overlooked. We only wish it premised, that though the difficulties of Scripture—as, for example, those parts which involve predestination—are wrested by many "to their own destruction," the "unlearned and unstable" would have equally perished had no difficulties whatsoever existed. They would have stumbled on the plain ground as well as on the rough: there being no more certain truth in theology than that the cause of stumbling is the internal feebleness and not the external impediment. A man may perish ostensibly through abuse of the doctrine of election. But would he not have perished had he found no such doctrine to wrest? Ay, that he would; as fatally and as finally. It is the love of sin, the determination to live in sin, which destroys him. This being premised, we may enlarge on the advantages resulting from the fact that Scripture contains "some things hard to be understood."

1. And first, if there were nothing in Scripture which overpowered our reason, who sees not that intellectual pride would be fostered by its study? You can make no way with the disclosures of Holy Writ until prepared to receive, on the authority of God, a vast deal which, of yourself, you cannot prove, and still more which you cannot explain. A Bible without difficulties would be a censor full of incense to man's reason. And if the fallen require to be kept humble, if we can advance in spiritual attainment only in proportion as we feel our insignificance, would not this conversion of the Bible into the very nurse and encourager of intellectual pride, abstract its best worth from revelation; and who, therefore, will deny that we are advantaged by the fact that there are in Scripture "things hard to be understood"? 2. We remark again, that though controversy has its evils, it has also its uses. It is not the stagnant water which is generally the purest. We hold that heresies have been of vast service to the Church, in that they have caused truth to be more thoroughly scanned, and all its bearings and boundaries explored with a most painstaking industry. It is astonishing how apt men are to rest in general and ill-defined notions. If never called to defend the truth the Church would comparatively lose sight of what truth is. 3. When I read the Bible and meet with passages which, after the most patient exercises of thought and research, remain dark and impenetrable, then, in the most especial degree, I feel myself immortal. The finding a thing "hard to be understood" ministers to my consciousness that I am no perishable creature destined to a finite existence, but a child of eternity, appointed to survive the dissolutions of matter, and to enter on another and an untried being. If the Bible be God's revelation of Himself to mankind, it is a most fair expectation that, at one time or another, the whole of this revelation will be clear and accessible. We can never think that God would tell man things for the understanding of which he is to be always incapacitated. Such are certain of the advantages which we propose to investigate. III. It yet remains THAT WE BRIEFLY STATE, AND CALL UPON YOU TO CULTIVATE, THE DISPOSITIONS WHICH SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO THE STUDY OF A BIBLE THUS "HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD." We would have it therefore remembered, that the docility and submissiveness of a child alone befit the student of the Bible; and that, if we would not have the whole volume darkened, its simplest truths eluding the grasp of our understanding, or gaining at least no hold on our affections, we must lay aside the feelings which we carry into the domains of science and philosophy, not arming ourselves with a chivalrous resolve to conquer, but with one which it is a thousand-fold harder either to form or execute, to yield. The Holy Spirit alone can make us feel the things which are easy to be understood, and prevent our wresting those which are hard. Never, then, should the Bible be opened except with prayer for the teachings of the Spirit. You will read without profit as long as you read without prayer. (*H. Melville, B.D.*)

Hard things:—1. We believe the hard things were left in the Bible for a lofty purpose. God wished us to think and reason. God had a great purpose to fulfil in the training of the race. Hence both in nature and in the Bible He allows perplexing questions. He can only discipline man's thinking by allowing him to be subject to perplexity. We believe, then, that God purposely left certain difficulties in the Bible to create diversity, to foster the thinking power, and to lead to the

exercise of that charity that never faileth. Instead of codification and finality, there is always something to cause fresh thought, to interest by its newer suggestions—something to quicken mind and lead the soul to listen to the whispers of the Holy Spirit. 2. We have to recognise that danger arises from the presence of the “hard things” in the Book. Peter saw that, and said that the “unlearned and unstable” would “wrest them to their own destruction.” Such, by a twist of an obscure text, would bolster up unbelief or find countenance for a pet idea. They will find even excuse for sin by twisting some word. The ill-tempered will quote, “Be ye angry,” and leave out the words “sin not.” The covetous man will defend greed by “Be diligent in business,” and leave out “serving the Lord.” The neglecter of worship will quote “The Sabbath was made for man,” and go off to indulge in that which will not help him to keep holy the Sabbath day. 3. Some things in life as well as in the Book are “hard to understand.” (*F. Hastings.*)

Obscure passages in the Bible:—“What would you think of a very hungry man, who had not eaten a morsel of food for the last twenty-four hours, and was asked by a charitable man to come in and sit down at a richly covered table, on which were large dishes of choice meat, and also covered ones, the contents of which the hungry man did not know, instead of satisfying his exhausted body with the former, he raises one cover after another and insists on finding out what these unknown dishes are composed of? In spite of all the advice of the charitable man to partake first of the more substantial dishes, he dwells with obstinate inquiry on nicer compounds, until overcome with exhaustion he drops down. What do you think of such a man?” “He is a fool.” (*Dr. Leiber.*) **They that are unlearned and unstable wrest.**—*Wresting Scripture:*—I. THE MEN WHOSE EVIL HANDLING OF THE SCRIPTURE I AM GOING TO POINT OUT are described generally in our text as “unlearned and unstable.” Those meant by “unlearned” are men who, whatever be their human knowledge, have either never “learned of the Father,” or who are at best, “unskilful in the Word of righteousness” (Heb. v. 13); and, he adds, “unstable men”—men who, if in some degree enlightened, yet are not established in the faith; but are like “children driven to and fro and tossed about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. iv. 14). II. NOW LET US SEE WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH THIS OFFENCE AGAINST GOD’S BOOK MAY BE COMMITTED. 1. One of the most awful ways of wresting Holy Scripture is where men try to draw out of its pages a justification of their sins. David, they say, was once guilty of adultery—Jacob, of deceit—and Peter of a lying oath; and yet they were good men. And this, they think, is either a warrant or excuse for the sins in which they live themselves. Oh! when men read a portion of God’s Word which describes some evil deed, and are tempted from His silence to suppose He disregarded it, let them look at other portions. Let them think of His most holy laws; let them mark His terrible threatenings “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. i. 18). 2. Another grievous way of wresting Scripture is where men try to draw out of its doctrines a justification of their doing nothing for their souls. 3. A third way in which Holy Scripture may be “wrested,” and often, I fear, is so, is as follows. Men adopt a certain set of doctrines as their own, these doctrines may seem to be the language of certain texts of Scripture, but are evidently contrary to others. What, then, do they do when they are pressed with all those passages which make against them? Why, they try to give these passages another meaning. They find out some ingenious method of explaining them away, or of adapting them to their own peculiar views. 4. I will speak of one instance more of the “wresting” of the Scriptures. It is where men quote Scripture, as Satan did (Matt. iv. 6), by halves, so as to make it seem to speak the thing they wish. How awful is that threatening which is addressed in the Book of Revelation to all such triflers with the Bible! (Rev. xxii. 18, 19). III. HOW, THEN, ARE WE TO ESCAPE THE GUILT AND DANGER OF WRESTING HOLY SCRIPTURE? 1. The chief means, most assuredly, of avoiding such a guilt as this, is to pray for the Spirit as our Guide and Interpreter in reading His own Book. 2. Let me recommend to you, again, some frames of mind in which we must ever pray and strive to open the Lord’s Book. (1) One is a sense of our own ignorance, with a desire, a most unfeigned desire, to be led and taught of Holy Scripture. (2) Again, it is a great point to study Holy Scripture in simplicity of mind without any prejudice or bias. (3) He who would shun the sin of wresting Holy Scripture must study it with diligence. He must take all the pains he can to ascertain its real meaning. (4) So as not to wrest it to your own destruction—study it as a sinner searching for a Saviour. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*)

Vers. 17, 18. Beware lest ye also . . . fall.—*Seducers of faith*:—1. Let us shun the society of idolatrous seducers, and hate the very air they breathe. We shall hardly win them to goodness; their familiarity will easily possess us of their wickedness. 2. The greater show of sanctity that error puts on, the more suspicious let us be of the intended mischief. 3. Let us consider that these seducers help to overthrow us, but what help is there in them to raise us up? (*Thos. Adams.*) *Christian perseverance*:—I. THE NATURE OF THAT DUTY WHICH IS HERE RECOMMENDED. The apostle does not address himself here to such as were unacquainted with the ways of godliness, but those who had been initiated in the Christian profession. It is not enough for us to begin well, and to set out hopefully in the exercises of religion, but we must run till we have reached the goal. II. ARGUMENTS WHICH MAY REASONABLY INCLINE US TO THE PRACTICE OF THIS DUTY. 1. The easiness of proceeding in a virtuous course when once we are made familiar with it, should powerfully persuade us to persevere in goodness, and not to fall from our own stedfastness. 2. The great advantages which will redound to us from the performance of this duty should powerfully persuade us to persevere in godliness and not to fall from our own stedfastness. 3. The dangers and inconveniences of a contrary proceeding should powerfully persuade us to persevere in goodness and not to fall from our own stedfastness. III. SUCH RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS AS MAY DULY QUALIFY US FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY. 1. Let us endeavour to strengthen our good resolutions. 2. Let us be perpetually upon our guard, and keep a vigilant eye over all our actions. 3. Let us be frequent in the exercises of religious duties, especially in such as are more solemn and public. 4. Let us be fervent in private prayer to Almighty God; that He will assist us with His Holy Spirit, and give us grace to proceed without danger of falling. (*N. Brady.*) *Young Christians*:—Your little child hangs over the taffrail of the steamboat and says, "Father, what is that black thing in the water?" You say, "That is a buoy, showing there is a rock underneath, and danger there." So the Apostle Peter in the text points out the perils of the Christian voyage. It would be a strange thing if all our anxiety about men ceased the moment they were converted. You would almost doubt the sanity of that farmer who, having planted the corn and seen it just sprout above ground, should say, "My work is all done. I have no more anxiety for the crop." You have only just been launched; the voyage is to be made. Earth, and heaven, and hell are watching to see how fast you will sail, how well you will weather the tempest, and whether at last, amid the shouting of angels, you shall come into the right harbour. I. HOLD BEFORE YOUR SOUL A VERY HIGH MODEL. Do not say, "I wish I could pray like that man, or speak or have the consecration of this one." Say, "Here is the Lord Jesus Christ a perfect pattern. By Him, with God's grace, I mean to shape all my life." You have a right to aspire to the very highest style of Christian character. I admit that a man cannot become a Christian like that without a struggle; but what do you get without fighting for it? In the strength of Christ go forward. God is for you, and if God be for you, who can be against you? Remember that God never puts you in battle but He gives you weapons with which to fight. II. ABSTAIN FROM ALL PERNICIOUS ASSOCIATIONS, AND TAKE ONLY THOSE THAT ARE USEFUL AND BENEFICENT. I know young people who have meant well enough, but they have floated off into evil influences, and they have associated day by day with those who hated God and despised His commandments, and their characters are all depleted. I can see they are changed for the worse, but they are not aware of it. Oh, young man, come out of that bad association. Stand back from that furnace in which so many young Christians have been destroyed. III. BE ACTIVELY EMPLOYED. Who are the happy people in the Church to-day? The busy people. The very first prescription that I give to a man when I find him full of doubts and fears about his eternal interest is to go to work for God. Here is a wood full of summer insects. An axeman goes into the wood to cut firewood. The insects do not bother him very much, and every stroke of the axe makes them fly about. But let a man go and lie down there and he is bitten, and thinks it is a horrible thing to stay in that wood. So there are thousands of Christians now in the Church who go out amid great annoyances in life—they are not perplexed, they are all the time busy; while there are others who do nothing, and they are stung, and covered from head to foot with the blotches of indolence, and inactivity, and spiritual death. IV. BE FAITHFUL IN PRAYER. You might as well, business man, start out in the morning without food and expect to be strong all that day—you might as well abstain from food all the week and expect to be strong physically, as to be strong without prayer. And the only difference between this Christian who is getting along very fast in the

holy life, and this one who is only getting along tolerably, is that the first prays more than the last. V. BE FAITHFUL IN BIBLE RESEARCH. A great many good books are now coming out. Glorious books they are. But I have thought that perhaps the followers of Christ sometimes allow this religious literature to take their attention from God's Word, and that there may not be as much Bible reading as there ought to be. You go to the drug store and you get the mineral waters; but you have noticed that the waters are not so fresh or sparkling or healthful as when you get these very waters at Saratoga and Sharon—getting them right where they bubble from the rock. And I have noticed the same thing in regard to the truth of the gospel. While there is a good deal of the refreshment and health of the gospel of God as it comes through good books, I find it is better when I come to the eternal rock of God's Word, and drink from that fountain that bubbles up fresh and pure to the life, the refreshment, the health of the soul. (*T. de Witt Talmage.*)

Spiritual steadfastness.—I. A SPIRITUAL STEADFASTNESS MAY BE OBTAINED. The Prophet David commands it, prays for it, and confesseth that some did obtain it, possess it. And doth not the apostle also persuade to the same, crying, Be steadfast, immovable? Who, then, hath cause to question the truth of this doctrine? If any shall, reason may relieve him. For, is not a man a subject capable of it, may he not be fitted to receive it? Is not the faculty of his understanding, in respect of its essence, sound? His will of power, strongly, since his fall, bent to action? And hath he not affections, violent, passionate? Again, shall we think anything impossible with God? And if this were not thus, for what end was preaching appointed, sacraments ordained, and prayer commanded? Are these given in vain? Finally, let me ask thee a question, Shall not Christ be of ability to recover what Adam of imbecility lost? The Holy Ghost to build what the unclean spirit did destroy? Spiritual steadfastness is a firm retention of the degree of grace received. Observe further that this steadfastness is habitual, practical. Again, habitual steadfastness is in the understanding, will, and affections. As for practical steadfastness, that is external, internal. II. THE CAUSE OF THESE DECLININGS. And they be within us, without us. First, melancholy, for it is a true axiom that the soul follows the disposition and temperature of the body. Secondly, some raging lust, unmortified affection. When such a passenger is in the ship of man's soul, like another Jonah it will unsettle all. If the reins hang under his feet, the strongest, readiest footed beast may stumble. Cut all the feet equal the table stands steadfast, else not. Thirdly, unbelief, what mists will this raise in our understandings. How subtly will this sophister argue, dispute, what? Where is the promise of Christ's coming? Fourthly, carnal confidence, that is, whatsoever we trust in except Christ Jesus. Fifthly, weakness of grace, to speak properly this is not a real or positive cause of declining, yet by occasion may have a finger in the business. Sixthly, want of knowledge experimental. Now the contrary of all these we have mentioned will be excellent helps for the firm retention of grace received. Wherefore keep thy body in good plight, feed on choice meats, walk in pure air, use moderate labour, recreation. Mortify also fleshly lusts, crucify the whole body of sin, for in so doing thou shalt remove rubs out of the way, curb the old man, and bind him to good behaviour. See in like sort thou increase thy faith, and that will expel infidelity—consume it as fire doth stubble. And shall not hope in Christ make the new man lusty, arm him against fear, foil despair, and in all assaults cheer up his spirits? Be sure to grow in grace, for is not a feeble person subject to trip, to stumble when able bodies hold out, march valiantly, win the field? And thus much of the inward causes of declining; the other, from without us, follow. First, wavering minded companions. He who walks with such will in time walk as such. Secondly, the fierce trial of affliction. Thirdly, personal wrongs, undeserved injuries. Fourthly, public scandal. Fifthly, example of supposed great ones. For some are like a strong poison that dispatcheth its patient quickly, others a lingering disease which killeth certainly though not suddenly. These things being inserted let us proceed. First, when we have not so clear an apprehension of the worth of grace, and the means to procure it, increase it, as in former time. If the glory thereof be darkened, and we account faith, love, hope, but as common favours, in some degree we are declined. Secondly, if we want an eager appetite after the doctrine of sound words, the bread and water of life, feed on them more for fear and fashion than love and affection, we have just cause to suspect ourselves. Thirdly, a neglect of our particular calling. For a diligent hand maketh rich, as well in spiritual as corporal things. Unthrifths and loiterers always die beggars. Fourthly, when we feebly perform holy actions, or fearfully omit them. Fifthly, a fifth symptom is a quiet concoction of what hereto-

fore we have distasted, spued out, holding the same, as then, for loathsome meats. A soul in her best plight, as she abhors the greatest so hates the least known evil. Sixthly, finally, when men offend, and will not endure reproof. And may a spiritual steadfastness be fallen from? Then try thyself if thou be or not revolted. Tradesmen keep a register of all their proceedings, cast up their accounts yearly, take a strict view how they have decreased or increased their substance; and should not Christians be as wise in their generation? First, we must call to remembrance what truths in the understanding, or in our conversation, we have fallen from, and so return unto them. Secondly, we are to consider what sin we have embraced, whether it be an error in judgment or practice, and if we clearly discern any, then to cease from it. First, cast in thy mind what an uncomfortable condition thou art fallen into, compare it often with the times of old. Do not slavish fears upon the least occasion arise in thy soul? Secondly, consider that greater evils than these may attend thee. This may suffice to have spoken of the last branch of our text, the other succeedeth. "Lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked." Error leadeth from steadfastness. He who is led with error is always unsettled. For error leads from God. And is not He the best stay, and very centre whereupon all the creatures are settled, established. Again, whither leads error to any constant object? Is it to the world? Doth not the fashion of it pass away? Think it not strange, then, if they who err from the doctrine of godliness be unstable in all their ways. What marvel is it that men walking on craggy rocks, steep mountains, and unequal ways, trip, stumble, and catch a fall? Whereas the apostle calls it the error of the wicked, we may collect, that the way of error, by a peculiar prerogative, is the way of the wicked. True it is that error is called a way, but a crooked, wandering, and evil one. For as the commandments of God are styled ways, so are the doctrines of men. Thus far we are agreed; but what may be the reasons hereof? 1. Because the wicked invent them, are the prime authors of them. For what a man effecteth is properly said to be his own. 2. Again, in regard they conserve and support them. 3. This way is not from God; He disclaims it. For all His paths are holy, and good, and true. "Beware lest ye also," &c. The note which issueth out of this phrase is this, that by one error many may be seduced. As first, from the quality of error, for it is of a spreading nature. Besides, error is easy, pleasant; and what is agreeable to the flesh of multitudes is followed. The way of truth is straight, narrow. Moreover men are wonderfully prone to follow examples, the worst, not the best. And by one error may many be seduced; then get a good eye, a sound judgment; exercise thy wits, that thou mayest discern between truth and falsehood. Error being discovered is to be avoided. (*John Barlow, D.D.*) "*Beware*":—It is a word for trespassers, and God puts it up in all the by-ways of temptation. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *Salutary warnings*:—There are evils which give warning of their coming. Drunkenness does not seize upon a man suddenly. It gives warnings often and many. Avarice, and a number of other vices, can be detected long before we are within their reach. There are infallible indications by which we may be warned. The approach of vice is like the approach of the rattlesnake. This horrible reptile, one of the most venomous of serpents, warns man involuntarily against its formidable presence. At the end of its tail there is placed a rattle, which consists of a string of hollow, dry, and semi-transparent bones, which constantly clatter against each other as the reptile moves, with a hoarse, dull, echoing sound. The bony rings increase in number with the reptile's age, and it gains an additional one, it is said, at each casting of the skin. The warning which it is thus compelled to give of its approach enables those who hear to escape an awful death. Happy are those men whose ears are open to the warnings which social monsters, far more horrid than even the rattlesnake, in like manner invariably give of their presence and movements, and, profiting thereby, manage to escape. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Stop the beginnings of sin*:—I have seen the little pearls of a spring sweat through the bottom of a bank, and penetrate the stubborn pavement, till it hath made it fit for the impression of a child's foot, and it was dispersed like the descending dews of a misty morning, till it had opened its way and made a stream large enough to carry away the ruins of the undermined strand, and to invade the neighbouring gardens; but then the despised drops were grown into an artificial river, and an intolerable mischief. So are the first entrances of sin stopped with the antidotes of a hearty prayer, and checked into sobriety by the eye of a reverent man, or the counsel of a single sermon; but when such beginnings are neglected, and our religion hath not in it so much philosophy as to think anything evil so long as we can endure it, they grow up to ulcers and pestilential

evils; they destroy the soul by their abode which, at the first entry, might have been killed by the pressure of a little finger. (*Jeremy Taylor.*)

Ver. 18. **But grow in grace.**—*Religious growth*:—Almost every created thing seems to have within it the principle of growth. The tree grows from a seed. The bird, fish, beast of field, all come to maturity by growth. The human body grows from feeblest infancy into the strength of manhood. And mind grows as well as matter. The reasoning faculty, the imagination, the memory, expand and strengthen. So, too, the moral and spiritual affections of the soul. Hence religion, which consists of love to God and man, may grow also. I. **GRACE**, in its strict sense, is the free favour of God to the unworthy. The grace of God toward men produces piety; grace is the cause, piety the effect. 1. To grow in grace is to grow in virtue, faith, meekness, gentleness, patience, a spirit of forgiveness, usefulness. 2. In this growth of all right principles there will be going on at the same time in the soul the weakening and decay of all wrong principles. II. We may overlook too much **THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS GROWTH**. We may be in danger of feeling that when one is introduced into the kingdom by conversion and the joining of the Church, the great work is done. Not so our Saviour. How much He laboured to train His disciples. III. **HAVING LIFE BY UNION WITH THE SAVIOUR, WE GROW IN GRACE BY USING THE MEANS OF GRACE**. There is a law of spiritual growth just as fixed as the law of natural growth. The means of grace, suited to advance us in the Divine life, are daily provided, not only in the house of God, but in every engagement of the world. Every human being you meet may offer you a means of grace, for there is a Christian feeling to be cherished toward all, and a Christian way of treating all. IV. **That we may grow in grace, we need to USE THE MEANS OF GRACE IN THEIR DUE PROPORTION**. Meditation is good, but where it becomes exclusive it is evil. So outward activity, in labouring for the salvation of men, is of the highest importance; but let this absorb the Christian, and the most fruitful piety will wither and die. V. **NOR ARE WE TO DESPISE OUTWARD FORMS AND SYMBOLS AS HELPS IN RELIGIOUS GROWTH**. It may be asked, What matters the form if I have the spirit? But will you have the spirit as fully without the aid of the form? We are not purely spiritual beings; we are body as well as spirit. And there is an action of the body that harmonises with and helps the spirit. Nor can devotion prosper well without set seasons; we need the aid of habit to assist in the formation of spiritual character. VI. **He who will grow in grace must be READY TO SUFFER**. The natural life in us dies not without some species of internal agony. For one Christian God has one form of trial; for another, another form. VII. **GROWTH DEMANDS EARNESTNESS**. No one grows who does not mean to grow. VIII. **GROWTH DEMANDS EXERCISE**. As fast as we learn duty, we must apply it. "To him that hath shall be given." Every act of faith increases the principle of faith; as every battle Washington fought for his country only increased his patriotism. (*John MacLeod.*) *Growth in grace*:—I. **THE MEANING OF THE EXPRESSION ITSELF**, "Grow in grace." The Christian is not a lifeless machine. He is not to satisfy himself with going through a cold round of duties. Wherein are you improved? II. **THE MEANS OF GROWING IN GRACE**. 1. Faith, to be strong, must be exercised. Commit your ways to God. Trust Him. Your faith will increase. 2. Another means which may be suggested is prayer. If you will only wrestle with God in prayer as Jacob did, you will succeed. 3. I may specify Scriptural reading. 4. A further and most important means for advancing in our heavenward journey is meditation upon the promises of God. 5. I will only mention one other means of growth in grace, self-examination. Prevention is better than cure; when you know your deficiencies, then you may guard against them; thus mischief may be kept away. III. **WE ARE NOT TO SUPPOSE, HOWEVER, THAT OUR COURSE IS TO BE ONE OF CONTINUED SUCCESS**. There are many hindrances. 1. I may name, as the chief hindrance, the corruption of our hearts. 2. Connected with this hindrance is that which I may term the weakness of the flesh. 3. I pass on to that indifference to the truth of religious doctrines now so common amongst men. It leads men away from the contemplation of Christ. It makes them afraid to maintain their cause boldly before their fellows. Their minds become less affected with the sense of the preciousness of Jesus. IV. I will not add any lengthened detail of the ENCOURAGEMENTS to seek this growth in grace. The certainty of success. Your Father which is in heaven will help you. (*H. M. Villiers, M.A.*) *Signs of growth in grace and motives inviting to it*:—I. By the grace of God we understand the favour or love of God; but in the Christian Scriptures it means **THAT ESPECIAL**

EXERTION OF HIS LOVE, WHICH IS APPLIED TO MANKIND AS SINNERS, AND TO THE RECOVERY AND FINAL SALVATION OF A GUILTY WORLD. II. WHAT THAT IS IN WHICH OUR GROWTH IN SUCH GRACE MAY BE DISCERNED. 1. It may be in an especial manner discerned in humility. The virtue required of us is no abjectness of spirit. It is that heart which feels its own infirmities and sins. 2. An abjuration of our favourite sin. 3. A genuine love of virtue for the love of God, and a uniform preparation of heart against the various temptations which may assail us. "If the first sparks of evil were quenched, how should they ever break forth into a flame? How shall he kill, who dare not be angry? Be adulterous in act, who does not transgress in desire? III. Permit me to remind you of THE SOLEMNITY AND GRANDEUR OF THE DOCTRINES WHICH YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST COMPRISES. Say, therefore, whether this knowledge of your Lord and Saviour lead you not to those virtues which we have now been discussing, as adapted to your state of grace. Say whether under such a God anything can be so indispensably requisite as humility; whether under such a Saviour anything can be so required as abjuration of sin; whether under such a Comforter anything can be so becoming as firmness of heart; whether under such promise of forgiveness and of glory anything can come so directly from the soul as sorrow for our sin. (*G. Mathew, M.A.*) *The Christian's improvement*:—I. THE SEVERAL STEPS AND STAGES OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PROGRESS. II. THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE OF THIS GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT. 1. That our sincerity in religion can no otherwise be well approved. 2. Our perseverance cannot be ensured whilst we are at a stand. 3. As grace is the seed of glory, that seed must rise by gradual advances to its full maturity. III. SOME OF THE MEANS WHEREBY WE ALL MAY BE THUS BUILT UP. 1. Since those habits of virtue which are essential to our improvement are contracted by a frequent repetition of single acts, let us by all means cherish the opportunities of exerting those acts. 2. Therefore we should work up our minds to a full persuasion that religion is the most important business of our lives. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*) *Growth in grace*:—I. IT WILL APPEAR TO BE HIGHLY REASONABLE, YEA NECESSARY, THAT YOU GROW IN GRACE, AND THAT BOTH IN RESPECT OF YOURSELVES AND IN RESPECT OF GOD. First, in respect of yourselves, and that upon this fivefold account. 1. Because your present condition which you are now in requireth it. It is true in the first creation of the world all creatures and species of things were made perfect. Trees and plants sprung up to their height at the first. But it is not so since either in nature or grace. Thus our state being imperfect here, and we coming not to a height at once, it is requisite that we increase our strength gradually; that is, that we be every day growing, and that we constantly make accessions to our feeble virtues and graces. 2. A continual growth in grace is very reasonable and necessary, because our duty is so large and comprehensive. "The commandments of God are exceeding broad." Christianity especially is a vast work. 3. We cannot show the truth of grace in us unless we daily increase; for this is one great sign of it, and that an inseparable one. The true sons of Sion go from strength to strength (*Psa. lxxxiv. 7*). It is a sign of insincerity and unsoundness to sit down and rest satisfied with a mean degree of holiness. "He was never good indeed," saith St. Bernard, "who endeavoureth not to be better." 4. Growth in grace is necessary in order to joy and comfort. But as growth and increase in grace are requisite in respect of ourselves, so, secondly, in respect of God, and that upon this fourfold account. 1. Because growth in grace is answerable to God's expectation from us. 2. This is answerable to Christ's design, as you read in *John xv. 5*. 3. This is answerable to the means appointed by God and Christ, as praying, the Word read and preached, the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the gifts and graces of others, holy conference, meditation, and the like. 4. By our growth in grace God is most signally glorified. II. HOW YOU MAY EXAMINE YOURSELVES AS TO THIS weighty matter, that you may know you are of the number of those persons who really grow in grace. 1. He that truly grows in grace hath a greater sense of his defects and failings than ever he had before. First, a greater sense of the shallowness of his understanding. Secondly, of the sinfulness of his life. In the first place, he daily grows more apprehensive of the defect of his knowledge. Again, if we grow in grace, we shall have every day a greater sight and sense of our sins. 2. Profound humility is an undeniable mark of a man that increaseth with the increase of God. 3. If your desires of grace increase, it is an argument that your graces themselves do so. The sharpness of the appetite is some indication of bodily growth and nourishment. If you experience these fervent longings, you may conclude that the graces of the Holy Spirit grow in you.

4. The true growth of a Christian is proportionable and uniform; by which I mean that he is one who grows in all his parts. The new man is not monstrous in its accretion. 5. You may know your growth in grace by the easiness you find in religion. You will certainly perform all duties with facility and dexterity. 6. There will be uneasiness and pain as long as you are hindered from religious exercises and holy duties. Lastly, if your conversation be in heaven, if your thoughts, desires, and longings tend thither, if you ardently wish to depart and to be with Christ, this is a good evidence of your growing in grace and goodness. But yet here great caution is to be used, lest you be mistaken in this important point which I have been treating of. You must therefore remember these four things—

1. When I say that every true believer grows in grace, it is not meant that he doth so every moment or every hour of his life. As it is in the natural body, there may be some disease or malady that will retard the growth for a time.
2. All Christians have not a like growth.
3. All graces grow not alike in the same person.
4. Remember this also, that grace may grow insensibly sometimes; it may increase, but you may not perceive it.

III. TO DIRECT YOU TO THE USE OF THOSE MEANS WHEREBY YOU MAY MOST EFFECTUALLY GROW IN VIRTUE AND GODLINESS. You will certainly make great progress in religion by an uninterrupted exercise of your graces and by a constant performing of your duties. Think not highly of yourselves by reason of any progress you have made. For this may stop you, but it will never promote your farther proceeding. Set before you the examples of the eminent saints and servants of God. It will not be amiss to observe the practices and examples of the wicked. They stand not still, they increase in vice; like crocodiles, they grow as long as they live. Every day adds to their hatred of God and goodness, to their love of sin and vice, and to their dextrous practice of it. Lastly, observe how in all other things men strive who shall make the greatest proficiency, and let this be one help to further your growth in grace. You will find that Christians are compared in the gospel to merchants, bankers, stewards, who are persons that are busy to increase their own or others estates. This may teach the professors of Christianity what they are to do, viz., to improve what they have. Add to your attainments, be they never so great.

IV. TO PRESS THIS DUTY UPON YOU BY SOME COGENT MOTIVES. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *Soul education*:—I. *Soul education is growth.* This implies—1. That the soul is a vital existent. That soul education is a growth, implies—2. That the soul is a vital existent possessing developable powers. There are living things that have not the power of growth. Some, perhaps, have been created with their nature fully developed. There is no power in them of coming to any higher point. And others have passed through all the stages of development, and are exhausted. It is not so with the soul. Its potentialities are unbounded. Omniscience only knows what greatness of intellect, grandeur of character, splendour of achievements, come within the power of every mind, however humble. That soul education is a growth, implies—3. That the soul is a vital existent, possessing developable powers, requiring developable conditions. The seed may contain a germinant power capable of covering continents with fields of golden grain; yet if it remains shut up in the granary, or buried under a rock, it will never be anything more than dry dust. It is so with the soul. Soul education, then, is growth. Not the growth of anything imparted to it, but the growth of itself; not the growth of any of its particular faculties, but the growth of its entire self, simultaneously and symmetrically.

II. *Soul education is growth in CHRIST.* “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” These two words represent the two great elements by which alone the human soul can be educated. “Love and truth.” 1. Christ is the ideal after which the soul is to grow. 2. Christ’s character is the element in which alone the soul can grow. His “grace” and His “knowledge” furnish the only atmosphere in which the human soul can healthfully live, thrive, and grow. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Growth in grace:—I. *WHAT IS MEANT BY GROWING IN GRACE?* To grow in grace is to increase in a spirit of conformity to the will of God, and to govern our conduct more and more by the same principles that God does.

II. *SOME THINGS THAT ARE NOT EVIDENCES OF GROWTH IN GRACE ALTHOUGH THEY ARE SOMETIMES SUPPOSED TO BE SUCH.*

1. It is not certain evidence that an individual grows in grace because he grows in gifts. We naturally increase in that in which we exercise ourselves. We may pray ever so engagedly, and increase in fluency and apparent pathos, and yet have no grace.
2. Growing in knowledge is not evidence of a growth in grace. In hell no doubt they grow in knowledge, but never in grace.
3. It is not evidence that a person grows in grace because he thinks he is doing so. A person may be

favourably impressed with regard to his progress in religion, when it is evident to others that he is in fact declining. III. SOME THINGS THAT ARE EVIDENCES OF A GROWTH IN GRACE. 1. When an individual finds he has more singleness of heart, and more purity of motive in his conduct, it is evidence that he is growing in grace. 2. An individual who grows in grace is more and more actuated by principle, and less and less by emotion or feeling. By principle, in contradistinction from feeling or emotion, I mean a controlling determination in the mind to do right. 3. Another important evidence of growth in grace is more love to God. By this I do not mean that there will be in all cases a conscious increase of emotions of love to God, but that there will be a strengthening of real attachment to God's character and government. And this increased attachment will evince itself in a growing veneration for all the institutions of religion, and for all the commands of God. 4. Another evidence of growth in grace is when a person increases in love to men as well as love to God. 5. Those who grow in grace feel more and more self-loathing. This is the natural result of having a clear view of God. It makes a person sink down in self-abasement. 6. An increased abhorrence of sin is another mark of growth in grace. When a person feels, day by day, less and less disposed to compromise with any sin, in himself, or in others, it is a sign that he is growing in grace. 7. He who grows in grace has less relish for the world. He has less and less desire for its wealth, its honours, its pleasures. 8. Increasing delight in the fellowship of the saints is another evidence of growth in grace. 9. He who grows in grace finds it more and more easy to exercise a forgiving spirit, and to pray for his enemies. 10. Growing more charitable is an evidence of growth in grace. But he is more ready to ascribe a person's apparently wrong conduct to mistake, or misapprehension, or some other cause, than to direct evil intention. 11. Having less and less anxiety about worldly things is an evidence of growth in grace. 12. Becoming more ready to bestow property is a sign of growth in grace. 13. He feels less and less as if he had any separate interest. It is a great thing, in regard to growth in grace, to feel that all you have is Christ's, and that you have absolutely no separate interest in living, or in dying, or in holding property, or children, or character. 14. It is an evidence of growth in grace when a person becomes more willing to confess faults to men. 15. Growing in grace raises a person more and more above the world. The growing saint regards less and less either the good or ill opinions of men. He feels that it is of little importance, only as it may affect his usefulness. IV. HOW TO GROW IN GRACE. 1. Watch against besetting sins. (1) Levity. (2) Censoriousness. (3) Anger. (4) Pride. (5) Selfishness, in all its forms. Here is the great root of all the difficulty. This is the foundation, the fountain, the substance, and sum total, of all the iniquity under heaven. Watch here; look out constantly; see where self comes out in your conduct, and there set a guard. (6) Sloth. (7) Envy. If you see others going ahead of you in prosperity, in influence, or in talents, examine your feelings, and see whether you are pleased at it. If the sight give you pain, beware! (8) Ambition. By this sin angels fell, and it is impossible to grow in grace without suppressing it. (9) Impure thoughts. It is necessary to make a covenant with our eyes, and with our ears too, and all our senses, or they will prove the inlet of temptation and sin. If you find yourself in danger, turn your thoughts away instantly. 2. Another direction for growing in grace is, take care to exercise all the Christian graces. Exercise yourself especially in those things where you find yourself most deficient. If you are exposed to a particular sin, guard there. If you are deficient in a particular grace, exercise that. (1) Suppose you are naturally worldly-minded, and in danger of being carried away by the love of the world. Shut down the gate, and determine that you will on no account add to your wealth, or lay field to field. (2) Suppose you are in danger of being flattered and lifted up with pride. As a reasonable being you are bound to know this, and be on your guard. (3) If you find that you are reluctant to confess your faults, break right over it, and confess to everybody that you have injured. Practise it on all occasions, till you get the victory. 3. Exercise decision of character. To walk with God a man must walk contrary to the course of this world. He must face public sentiment. 4. To grow in grace, a man must possess great meekness. If a man suffer himself to be fretted by opposition, and thrown into a passion by obstacles that are thrown in his way, he may rest assured that Satan will manage to keep him in such a state of mind that he will by no means grow in grace. V. SOME THINGS THAT ARE EVIDENCES OF DECLENSION. 1. The person who grows weary of being asked to give for promoting the kingdom of Christ is evidently declining. 2. Becoming backward to converse

on the subject of religion, and particularly to converse on spiritual, and experimental, and heart-searching points, is evidence of declension. 3. When a person is less disposed to engage in the duties of devotion, public, social, or private, it is a sign of declension. 4. Taking more delight in public meetings than in private duties and secret communion with God, is another evidence of a declining state. 5. Feeling less delight in revivals of religion is a sad token of declension. 6. A person that becomes captious about measures used in promoting revivals is in a declining state. VI. HOW TO ESCAPE FROM A STATE OF DECLENSION. 1. You must admit the conviction that you are in a state of declension. 2. Apply to yourself all that God says to backsliders, just as if you were the only individual in the world in that condition. 3. Find out the point where you began to decline. See what was the first cause of your backsliding, and give that up. You will often find this first cause where you did not expect it, in something which you called a little matter, or that you tried to make yourself believe was not a sin. 4. Give up your idols. If it be an article of property, dispose of it in some way; give it away, sell it, burn it, away with it, rather than have it stand between you and God. 5. Be careful to apply afresh to the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon and peace with God. Remarks: 1. There is no such thing as standing still in religion. 2. The idea that persons grow in grace during seasons of declension is abominable. Their whole progress is the other way. 3. There are but few persons that do grow in grace. How many, instead of setting themselves resolutely to obey God, and setting their faces as a flint against all sin, passively commit themselves to the stream, and expect to be wafted home to glory in this lazy way, without the trouble of a conflict. 4. We see the great fault of ministers. How little pains they take to train up young converts. 5. Unless ministers grow in grace it is impossible for the Church to grow. "Like priest like people" is a maxim founded on principles of correct philosophy. 6. Great pains should be taken by young ministers to grow in grace. 7. It is just as indispensable in the promotion of a revival, to preach to the Church, and make them grow in grace, as it is to preach to sinners, and make them submit to God. (C. G. Finney.)

Soul culture:—The words are suggestive of two thoughts: that growth implies life, and that life requires culture. I. Life is characterised by RECEIVING. There are four things indispensably requisite to the growth of plants. The elements essential to the growth of spiritual life are analogous. 1. There must be light. The Word of God is to the growth of a soul as necessary as light to vegetation. 2. There must be also heat. Knowledge without life—truth without love—resembles a frosty moonlight. Flowers open to the sun, and hearts open to Christ, when the constraining power of His love is felt as a burning heat. The soul must build its conservatory on the south side of the temple of truth. This will make the soul of the Christian a Divine sunflower. 3. Moisture is essential to the growth of plants. In rain and dew the tree receives those influences without which neither beauty nor fruitfulness can exist. What moisture is to vegetation the Spirit of God is to soul-growth. 4. To the growth and healthiness of vegetation there must be air. "Of all common things, air is the most common. No space or place is accessible to us that is not filled with it. It is, of all material wants, that which is most indispensable to our existence. The character of a tree, plant, or flower will be determined by the air of the neighbourhood where it is planted. Impure air will affect the vitality of a plant as truly as it does the lungs of an animal. "The life of God in the soul of man" cannot thrive save in an atmosphere somewhat congenial with its heavenly character. It must move in an air higher and purer than that of earth. We must know what it is to have "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," and with His saints. To "grow in grace" we must surround ourselves with the elements of a Divine life. The character and complexion of our daily life will be the natural result and outgrowth of the company we keep, the society in which we move, the religious atmosphere we breathe. II. The second property of life is that of GIVING. The flower gives its fragrance and loveliness; the plant its nourishment and healing; the tree its shadow and fruit. The animal gives its strength of sinew, bone, and muscle. Man does the same, with the additional contribution of intellectual strength. Without this giving forth there would be no true or perfect development of life. The man that lives for self is a man of stunted growth. A Christian that lives for self is a spiritual dwarf. (A London Suburban Minister.)

A psalm for the New Year:—I. A DIVINE INJUNCTION WITH A SPECIAL DIRECTION: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "Grow in grace." What is this? It must

be in the outset implied that we have been quickened by grace. Dead things cannot grow. Growth shall prove your life. Grow in that root-grace, faith. Seek to believe the promises better than ye have done. Let your faith increase in extent, believing more truth; let it increase in firmness, getting a tighter grip of every truth; let it increase in constancy, not being feeble or wavering, nor always tossed about with every wind; let your faith daily increase in simplicity, resting more fully and more completely upon the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. See to it that your love also grows. If ye have loved with a spark, pray that the spark may become an all-consuming flame. Ask that your love may become more extended—that ye may have love unto all the saints; more practical, that it may move your every thought, your every word and deed; more intense, that ye may become as burning and shining lights whose flame is to love God and man. Pray that ye may grow in hope, that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; that ye may by hope enter into the joys of heaven while ye are on earth; that hope may give you immortality while you are yet mortal—may give you resurrection before you die. Ask that you may grow in humility, till you can say, "I am less than the least of all the saints"; that ye may grow in consecration, till ye can cry, "For me to live is Christ: to die is gain"; that ye may grow in contentment till ye can feel, "In whatsoever state I am, I have learned therewith to be content." Advance in likeness to the Lord Jesus, that your very enemies may take knowledge of you that ye have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. Pray that ye may grow downward; that ye may know more of your own vileness, more of your own nothingness; and so be rooted in humility. As ye root downward, seek to grow upward. Send out the topshoot of your love towards heaven. Then pray to grow on either side. Stretch out your branches; let the shadow of your holy influence extend as far as God has given you opportunities. But see to it also that ye grow in fruitfulness, for to increase the bough without adding to the fruit is to diminish the beauty of the tree. We are not compared to trees, but to children. Let us grow as babes do, nourished by unadulterated milk. Steadily, slowly, but surely and certainly. Little each day, but much in years. But do ye inquire why and wherefore we should thus grow in grace? Let us say that if we do not advance in grace it is a sorrowful sign. It is a mark of unhealthiness. It is an unhealthy child that grows not, a cankered tree that sends forth no fresh shoots. More; it may be not only a sign of unhealthiness, but of deformity. If a man's shoulders have come to a certain breadth, and his lower limbs refuse to lift him aloft, we call him a dwarf, and we look upon him with some degree of pity. Now to grow may be, moreover, the sign of death. It may say to us, Inasmuch as thou growest not, thou livest not; inasmuch as thou dost not increase in faith, and love, and grace; and inasmuch as thou dost not ripen towards the harvest, fear and tremble lest thou shouldst only have a name to live and be destitute of life, lest thou shouldst be the painted counterfeit; a lovely flower-picture drawn by the painter's skilful hand, but without reality, because without the life-power which should make it bud and germinate and blossom and bring forth fruit. Grow in grace, because to increase in grace is the only pathway to enduring nobility. Oh! would ye not wish to stand with that noble host who have served their Master well, and have entered into their eternal rest? But to grow is not only to be noble—it is to be happy. That man who stays growing refuses to be blessed. Forward is the sunlight! forward is victory! forward is heaven! But here, to stand still is danger; nay, it is death. O Lord, for our happiness' sake, bid Thou us advance; and, for our usefulness' sake, let us ascend. I have thus explained the Divine exhortation; but you perceive it contains a special injunction, "And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We must see to it that we ripen in the knowledge of Him—of Him in His Divine nature, and in His human relationship to us; in His finished work, in His death, in His resurrection, in His present glorious intercession, and in His future royal advent. We must study to know more of Christ also in His character—in that Divine compound of every perfection, faith, zeal, deference to His Father's will, courage, meekness, and love. Above all, let us long to know Christ in His person. This year endeavour to get better acquaintance with the Crucified One. Grow in the knowledge of Christ, then. And do ye ask me why? Oh! if ye have ever known Him you will not ask that question. He that longs not to know more of Christ, knows nothing of Him yet. II. A GRATEFUL THANKSGIVING, WITH A MOST SUGGESTIVE TERMINATION: "To Him be glory both now

and for ever. Amen." The apostles very frequently suspended their writing in order to lift up their hearts in praise. Praise is never out of season, and it is no interruption to interrupt any engagement in order to laud and magnify our God. "To Him be glory." Yes, to Him, ye atheists, who deny Him; to Him, ye Socinians, who doubt His Deity; to Him, ye kings, who vaunt your splendour, and will not have this man to reign over you; to Him, ye people, who against Him stand up, and ye rulers who against Him take counsel; to Him, the King whom God hath set up upon His holy hill of Zion; to Him be glory. To Him be glory as the Lord: King of kings and Lord of lords; "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." To Him be glory as Saviour. He alone hath redeemed us unto God by His blood; He alone hath "trodden the wine-press," and "cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength." "To Him be glory." Church of God respond! Let every pious heart say, "To Him be glory." But the apostle adds "now"—"to Him be glory now." Oh, postpone not the day of His triumph; put not off the hour of His coronation. Now, now; for now, to-day, He hath raised us up together, and made us sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. "And for ever." Never shall we cease our praise. Time! thou shalt grow old and die. Eternity! thine unnumbered years shall speed their everlasting course; but for ever, for ever, "to Him be glory." But, now, there is a conclusion to this of the most suggestive kind—"Amen." 1. First, it is the desire of the heart, "Behold, I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." We say "Amen" at the end of the prayer to signify, "Lord, let it be so"—it is our heart's desire. 2. But it signifies more than this; it means the affirmation of our faith. We only say amen to that which we really believe to be true. We add our affidavit, as it were, to God's promise, that we believe Him to be faithful and true. 3. But there is yet a third meaning to this amen. It often expresses the joy of the heart. As you see King Jesus sitting upon Mount Zion with death and hell beneath His feet, as to-day you anticipate the glory of His Advent, as to-day you are expecting the time when you shall reign with Him for ever and ever, does not your heart say "Amen"? 4. But, lastly, amen is sometimes used in Scripture as an amen of resolution. It means, "I, in the name of God, solemnly pledge myself that, in His strength, I will seek to make it so; to Him be glory both now and for ever." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Of growth in grace:*—I. HOW MANY WAYS MAY A CHRISTIAN BE SAID TO GROW IN GRACE? 1. He grows in the exercise of grace; his lamp is burning and shining. 2. He grows in the degree of grace (*Psa. lxxxiv. 7*). II. WHAT IS THE RIGHT MANNER OF A CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH? 1. To grow less in one's own eyes. 2. To grow proportionably—in one grace as well as another. 3. When a Christian has grace suitable to his several employments and occasions. III. WHENCE IS IT THAT TRUE GRACE CANNOT BUT GROW? 1. It is proper for grace to grow; it is the seed of God. 2. Grace cannot but grow from the sweetness and excellency of it; he that hath grace is never weary of it, but still would have more. 3. Grace cannot but grow from a believer's ingrafting into Christ; he who is a scion, ingrafted into this noble, generous stock, cannot but grow. IV. WHAT MOTIVES OR INCENTIVES ARE THERE TO MAKE US GROW IN GRACE? 1. Growth is the end of the ordinances. 2. The growth of grace is the best evidence of the truth of it. 3. Growth in grace is the beauty of a Christian. 4. The more we grow in grace, the more glory we bring to God. 5. The more we grow in grace, the more will God love us. 6. What need have we to grow in grace? There is still something lacking in our faith. Grace is but in its infancy and minority, and we must still be adding a cubit to our spiritual stature. 7. The growth of grace will hinder the growth of corruption. As some plants have an antipathy, and will not thrive if they grow near together, as the vine and the bay tree: so, where grace grows, sin will not thrive so fast. 8. We cannot grow too much in grace; there is no excess there. The body may grow too great, as in the drowsy; but faith cannot grow too great: "your faith groweth exceedingly"; here was exceeding, yet not excess. As a man cannot have too much health, so not too much grace. 9. Such as do not grow in grace, decay in grace. "Not to advance in the path of life is to return." 10. The more we grow in grace, the more we shall flourish in glory. V. HOW SHALL WE KNOW WHETHER WE GROW IN GRACE? 1. The signs of our not growing in grace, but rather falling into a spiritual consumption. (1) When we have lost our spiritual appetite. (2) When we grow more worldly. (3) When we are less troubled about sin. 2. The signs of our growing in grace. (1) When we are got beyond our former measures of grace.

(2) When we are more firmly rooted in religion, rooted in Him, and established: the spreading of the root shows the growth of the tree. (3) When we have a more spiritual frame of heart. More spiritual in our principles, affections, and performance of duty. (4) When grace gets ground by opposition. The fire, by an antiperistasis, burns hottest in the coldest season. The martyrs' zeal was increased by persecution. Here was grace of the first magnitude. VI. WHAT SHALL WE DO TO GROW IN GRACE? 1. Take heed of that which will hinder its growth—the love of any sin. 2. Use all means for growth in grace. It is better to grow in grace than gifts; gifts are for ornament; grace is for nourishment, to edify others, to save ourselves. VII. HOW MAY WE COMFORT SUCH AS COMPLAIN THEY DO NOT GROW IN GRACE? They may mistake; they may grow when they think they do not. The sight Christians have of their defects in grace, and their thirst after greater measures of grace, makes them think they do not grow when they do. Let Christians be thankful for the least growth. If you do not grow so much in assurance, bless God if you grow in sincerity; if you do not grow so much in knowledge, bless God if you grow in humility. If a tree grows in the root, it is a true growth; if you grow in the root grace of humility, it is as needful for you as any other growth. (*T. Watson.*) *Christian growth*:—The command is that we enlarge ourselves; that we pass up by graduation from one class to another class in the great school of life, of action, of understanding. The injunction presupposes that we are capable, that we have faculties susceptible of being disciplined and trained. It presupposes that we are intelligent and ambitious after good, and desirous of higher attainment. The germ idea contained in the word "education" is that of leading forth the natural capacity of the man. An educated person is a person who has been led forth, or brought out, or developed from what he was into something larger, and fuller, and more complete. Moral education is, therefore, the leading forth of the moral capacity of man. Human nature is a nature of capacity; it is susceptible of great development in any direction and toward any state of being. It can be led out toward the good or toward the bad; can be made to seek its affinities among the high or the low. It can be influenced toward heaven or it can be influenced toward hell. As far as we can see, there is no limit to this development of man's capacity. The whole human machinery impresses one in its every part with the idea of motion, and the assertion that the mind and soul will ever come to a dead standstill, whether here or in the hereafter, is one repugnant to the very genius of their construction. The endless activity of God, according to its capacity to receive it, seems to have been imparted to His last and finest creation, man. Now, this marvellous being, whose capacity of growth is endless, is located in the midst of a thousand incentives of growth. Regard him simply as an animal, and what that he needs does the earth and the air refuse him for food? Look at him, as a student, as an embodiment of mental faculties, and behold how multitudinous are the objects that elicit his inquisition. The earth on which he walks swells with problems that challenge solution; the air he breathes is charged with forces and combinations of elements which provoke him to analysis. Contemplate him as a social being, and see in the midst of what quickening and vital associations he lives. Love, sympathy, tenderness, mercy, pity—each through its own channel sends down its crystal stream to swell the tide of his ever-widening life. Or examine him in his spiritual connections. What capacity of moral discernment do we not find in him? What magnificent equipment of sensibilities is his; what profound depth of life he has; what energy to aspire, what power to feel, what force to execute, what ability to acquire impressions distinguish him? The education of such a being must be, to every thoughtful mind, one of the gravest subjects within the whole range of human inquiry. The worst thing that any man can do is to think of himself as a creature of little value. I care not how ordinary you may be in your own eyes; I care not how little gifted you may be as others might judge, still I beg you to remember that you are of the highest dignity in the eye of your Maker. It is safe to say that there is not a creation of God, there is not a combination permitted by Him, the object of which is not man's education. You are to look upon the whole world in all its growths, in all its ever-revolving changes, as ordained for your instruction and assistance. There is not a tree, there is not a spire of grass, there is not even a daisy-head that you passed this summer in the fields, that was not created and put in growth and bloom for you. Wisdom as to these is wisdom as to God, and he is wisest as regards the Creator who comprehends most clearly all the use and relation of created things. Now, bearing these things which we have

suggested in mind, we submit to you, if the appliances for the leading forth of your nature, in all manner of admirable ways, is not a matter of wonder and gratitude. If you will put yourself in connection with all these helps, so bounteously given; if you will only co-operate with the agents and agencies devised in your behalf, how can your natures fail to be daily enlarged by what is about you? Who can say what knowledge a babe gets out of its mother by feeling with its little hands about the mother's face? This we must remember also, that we are not educated along one line or by a single contact with men, but along many lines and by means of association with many. Hence God groups us. Like stars, men are clustered in constellations, and move on in systems, mutually attracting, mutually repelling each other. There is no education equal to that which a man or woman can get in the sweet school of family life. It is the school in which love should be master and mistress. In it the only law known should be that of affection; the highest privilege, that of serving. This family life may be lived in humble circumstances, as men count surroundings; but its influence on your soul may be as precious, and the results as happy, as if you had lived within the sentinel-guarded doors of a palace. As Christianity enlarges the domain of its sovereignty over men, this family principle gets wider and wider application. The ties of blood cease to bound the limits of affectionate regard, and a spiritual brotherhood unites you to a larger circle. Ultimately the whole race will be kin to each member of it. In order that this education of human nature may go forward unto its complete triumph, it is necessary that every organisation, every form of government, and the entire social structure, should be of a proper kind. There is no pressure that can be brought to bear upon a man more potent than that of organisation. If the organisation of the family be wrong in its spirit, in its tone and temper, then will each member of the family be wrong in his or her tone and temper. A family whose government rests on the principle of force, of authority that speaks only by the infliction of punishment, will make children in it cowardly, hypocritical, and brutal. A Church whose organisation rests on a bigoted foundation will make its members bigoted. The influence of its pulpit, and even of its prayers, will educate men and women into narrowness of thought and harshness of opinion. You cannot base a Church of Christ on anything less wide, less liberal, less sympathetic, than the heart of Christ. Education is thus for ever progressive, and the human mind at the dawn of each generation goes in search of the undiscovered as birds go forth from their groves with the coming of every morning to canvass the fields for their food, and feel in the movement of their flight the joy of a fresh experience. Thus you see that education includes the idea of growth. The educated man is the grown man. He has grown out of old forms of thought into new ones. He has left one plane of feeling and been lifted to a higher plane. That which was difficult for him to understand has become plain. He walks as those who walk in the light. Christianity, as measured by its effect on humanity, if properly interpreted and understood, is movement. It builds no permanent encampment for its followers. Its army is for ever on the march, and every night finds them in a new camp-ground. We must remember that we are all school-children in spiritual education. We are not far advanced—we are on the lower benches, and are sitting at the feet of the Master. We are not studying the high sciences of God. We are not able to fathom the "deep things" of His will. We are only being instructed in the first lessons of good manners. We are only being taught, here and now, how to behave. By and by, when we have learned how to behave, when we have become obedient, cheerful, patient, and good; by and by, when our spiritual senses have become organically so developed as to create a hunger for finer knowledge, and have begun to long to see the things that eye hath not seen, and to hear the things that ears have never heard, God will lift us and honour us with higher seats where the older scholars sit, and we shall begin to be wise as well as good. For this education of which I am talking, this leading out of man's moral faculties, is a thing not of to-day, nor a movement of time as men count time; it is a thing of the ages. It is a movement which rolls itself on into eternity. As to extent, there is no end to it. I close with this word of cheer. The theme suggests it. Whatever your state spiritually may be, you need not remain in it. You can grow out of that state into a better one. You who have failed can grow out of your failure into success. You who are despondent can grow up into the condition of hopefulness. You who are sad God will lift into joy. You who are in the midst of sin can be redeemed out of that sin, and become upright. You who are weak in the structure of your virtue can be braced with the

bands of everlasting power. The heavens are full of attractions, and by their sweet might you can be lifted until you stand higher than the stars. (*W. H. H. Murray.*)

Growth in grace:—I. WHAT IS IT TO GROW IN GRACE. 1. The Christian should be ambitious to increase in the number of his graces. 2. We should grow in the measure of our graces. 3. We should grow in the use of our graces. II. WHY GROWTH IN GRACE SHOULD BE SOUGHT. 1. Because God has afforded a variety of helps to promote it. 2. As we are otherwise in continual danger of losing what we have already obtained. 3. Our advancement in glory will be in proportion to our present improvement in grace. III. HOW GROWTH IN GRACE IS TO BE ATTAINED. 1. Ascertain that the good work is really begun. 2. Cherish a lively sense of your imperfections. 3. Carefully avoid whatever would hinder your growing in grace. 4. As you must be diligent in the use of the means of grace, so you must take care not to place any confidence in them. (*S. Lavington.*)

Growth in grace:—I. A SENSE OF INSUFFICIENCY IS AN INDISPENSABLE PREREQUISITE TO GROWTH IN GRACE. II. BUT A SELF-RENOUNCING DEPENDENCE ON DIVINE HELP MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO SUPERSEDE OR TO SLACKEN YOUR OWN ENDEAVOURS. III. GROWTH IN GRACE IS A PROCESS WHICH CANNOT GO ON WITHOUT SOONER OR LATER MANIFESTING ITSELF BY ITS FRUITS. 1. A growing reliance on Christ. 2. Increasing power over temptation. 3. The increasing influence of conscience. 4. Increasing disinterestedness of religious feeling. 5. Increased complacency in thinking of death and eternity. (*J. M. McCulloch, D.D.*)

Grow in grace:—1. In growing better, the first thing is to become good; or rather this is preliminary to all improvement. The foundation must be laid before the building can rise. No digging about and enriching, no ever so auspicious alternation of sun and shower can bring forward a plant which has no life in it. Yet in morals this is what some are endeavouring to do; they would feed death and cultivate sterility. The sinner must pass from the state of nature to that of grace before he can grow in grace. 2. Then the soul being born again, the principle of spiritual life being communicated to it, it must have nourishment in order to grow; the principle of spiritual life is not independent of aliment any more than that of animal life. Now truth is the nutriment of the soul, and it must be taken, or the soul will not grow, and in a little while will cease to live. They say it is no matter what a man believes, or whether he believes anything, so he but practises aright, which is as if one would say, it is immaterial what a man eats or whether he eat at all, so he but lives. Can he live without eating, and eating wholesome food? If error is not injurious, poison is not; and if ignorance is not hurtful, starvation is harmless. The man who is indifferent to the interests of truth is also to those of virtue. It is impossible to love the one without loving the other. Truth is the principle and pabulum of virtue. The Word of God must be understood, believed and meditated on, and especially its testimony concerning Christ, otherwise there can be no growth in grace. 3. The exercise of the moral powers and gracious dispositions in you is essentially necessary to their growth and expansion. How can one grow in benevolence or in compassion unless he obeys its dictates? in temperance unless he habitually practises temperance? how increase in humility unless he frequently humble himself? And as they cannot be exercised without trials and afflictions, hence the necessity of these to the growth of those virtues and the perfection of the human character. God is the author, upholder, and finisher of good in us. No use of means, and no making of exertion are of any avail without His secret, spiritual efficiency; hence a spirit of dependence on God must be cultivated and exercised, and hence is prayer an indispensable means of growth in grace. The Holy Spirit is promised only to them who ask Him. 5. Watchfulness is another important means of growth in grace. The plant of grace requires the most anxious attention and the most constant care. It has many enemies—some that grub the earth, and some that infest the air—and it is exposed to many evil influences. It must be assiduously watched. 6. Christians are members of a mystical body of which Christ is the head, and from Him, in consequence of this connection, they derive strength, grace, nourishment, and every needed good. Now faith is the bond of this union, and the stronger the faith, the closer the bond, and the more free the communication. Hence, if one would grow in grace, he must habitually exercise faith in Christ, and increase in faith. 7. Striving against sin is all-important to growth in grace and holiness. 8. Sensual indulgence is a formidable foe to growth in grace; and, when carried far, is incompatible with its existence. Hence the necessity of abstinence and self-denial. 9. The love of the world is another enemy to holiness. There is a wonderful moral efficiency in the

Cross of Christ to destroy this inordinate affection. 10. Finally, the promises exert a sanctifying influence when contemplated and applied (2. Pet. i. 4). (*W. Nevins, D.D.*) *Growth*:—I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS GROWTH IN GRACE. I do not for a moment mean that a believer's interest in Christ can grow. I do not mean that he can grow in safety, acceptance with God, or security. I only mean increase in the degree, size, strength, vigour, and power of the graces which the Holy Spirit plants in a believer's heart. I hold that every one of those graces admits of growth, progress, and increase. I hold that repentance, faith, hope, love, humility, zeal, courage, and the like, may be little or great, strong or weak, vigorous or feeble, and may vary greatly in the same man at different periods of his life. One principal ground on which I build this doctrine of "growth in grace," is the plain language of Scripture. "Your faith groweth exceedingly" (2 Thess. i. 3). "We beseech you that ye increase more and more" (1 Thess. iv. 10). "Increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. i. 10). "Having hope, when your faith is increased" (2 Cor. x. 15). "The Lord make you to increase in love" (1 Thess. iii. 12). "That ye may grow up into Him in all things" (Eph. iv. 15). "I pray that your love may abound more and more" (Phil. i. 9). "We beseech you, as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more" (1 Thess. iv. 1.) "Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. ii. 2.) "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. iii. 18). The other ground on which I build the doctrine of "growth in grace," is the ground of fact and experience. What true Christian would not confess that there is as much difference between the degree of his own faith and knowledge when he was first converted and his present attainments, as there is between a sapling and a full-grown tree? His graces are the same in principle; but they have grown. Let us turn away to a more practical view of the subject before us. I want men to look at "growth in grace" as a thing of infinite importance to the soul. 1. "Growth in grace" is the best evidence of spiritual health and prosperity. In a child, or a flower, or a tree, we are all aware that when there is no growth there is something wrong. 2. "Growth in grace" is one way to be happy in our religion. God has linked together our comfort and our increase in holiness. He has graciously made it our interest to press on and aim high in our Christianity. 3. "Growth in grace" is one secret of usefulness to others. Our influence on others for good depends greatly on what they see in us. 4. "Growth in grace" pleases God. The husbandman loves to see the plants on which he has bestowed labour flourishing and bearing fruit. It cannot but disappoint and grieve him to see them stunted and standing still (John xv. 1, 8). The Lord takes pleasure in all His people, but especially in those that grow. 5. "Growth in grace" is not only a thing possible, but a thing for which believers are accountable. II. THERE ARE MARKS BY WHICH GROWTH IN GRACE MAY BE KNOWN. 1. One mark is increased humility. 2. Another mark is increased faith and love towards our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. Another mark is increased holiness of life and conversation. 4. Another mark is increased spirituality of taste and mind. 5. Another mark is increase of charity. 6. One more mark is increased zeal and diligence in trying to do good to souls. III. THE MEANS THAT MUST BE USED BY THOSE WHO DESIRE TO GROW IN GRACE. 1. One thing essential to growth in grace is diligence in the use of private means of grace. 2. Another essential is carefulness in the use of public means of grace. 3. Another essential is watchfulness over our conduct in the little matters of every-day life. 4. Another essential is caution about the company we keep and the friendships we form. 5. There is one more thing which is absolutely essential to growth in grace, and that is regular and habitual communion with the Lord Jesus. (*Bishop Ryle.*) *Christian life a growth*:—I. THE HEART MUST BECOME ROOTED IN LIVING, CHRIST-LIKE PRINCIPLES. II. THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS TO BE CULTIVATED. III. DUE ATTENTION MUST BE GIVEN TO THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT. IV. THE LAW OF GROWTH WORKS ITS PURPOSE THROUGH CHANGING SEASONS. V. THE GROWING LIFE WILL MANIFEST ITSELF. (*W. Currie.*) *Growth the test of Christian life*:—The want of growth is the want, generally speaking, of organisation. Rocks do not grow, soil does not grow. Growth belongs to the higher stages of development, and as things grow, not by accretion, but by definite formation, by their growth we judge of their vitality. When anything ceases to grow its end is near. Any man that has ceased to grow is waiting for his undertaker, and the longer he has to wait the greater is the pity for everybody about him. There are, of course, in so compound a creature as man, several concentric circles of growth. There is bodily growth, but that usually takes care of

itself, and needs no exertion. Then there is physical culture, a growth not in dimensions alone, but in other ways. One may develop strength; it may be increased by his purpose. One may develop activity; one may develop skill of hand or alertness and quickness of foot. This is the lowest form of growth, and yet the lowest growth even of the body is a worthy one, and justifies our endeavour. A healthy and well-developed body is a chariot fit to carry a hero's soul. To grow up in good sound health, without violation of the great canons of morality, and with the law of moderation fixed upon every appetite and passion, is itself no insignificant ideal for a young man or woman. But, then, we are familiar, in this land where education is almost an atmosphere and a byword, with growth in intelligence and knowledge. These two things are very different. Intelligence implies a certain condition of the knowing faculties. Knowledge is the fruit of intelligence. There is just as much difference between them as there is between skill and the product of skill, or between husbandry and the harvests that husbandry can produce. A man may have intelligence and scarcely any knowledge. A man may have a good deal of knowledge and hardly any intelligence. But where one has both intelligence and knowledge, and is growing in them both, that is a transcendently noble thing. It is the direct tendency of intelligence and knowledge to produce morality. I declare that education, or the development of the knowing parts of a man, gives him so large a view of the field of life that he is more likely to see that morality is safety than if he were ignorant; and that the general fact stands proved that intelligence and knowledge tend, on the whole, by immense measure, toward goodness, respectability, virtue, and morality. So if we grow in aptitude for intelligence and knowledge we shall make a long stride away from animalism, and from the dangers that beset the passions and appetites of human life. Now, while bodily growth, intellectual growth, and growth in knowledge are to be esteemed, and are not to be thrown into the shade by any misconception of the value of grace and religion, I affirm that the highest growth, because it is the one that carries all these others with it more or less, or blesses them, is growth in grace. Self-sacrifice, that is one element of it. Meekness and humility are other elements of it. Good nature, which is called kindness in the text of Scripture, is another element of it. Easiness to be entreated is one of the elements of growth. In regard to that manhood which springs from the activity of our highest spiritual and moral functions, in regard to this eminent spiritual-mindedness, I must say that it does not belong to the cave nor to the cloister. The serene wisdom of love, and the guidance of God's presence with a man, will prosper him more, in the long run, in every relation of life, than the turbulent wisdom that springs from vanity, from pride, from avarice, from passion. Men adopt a lower form of power when they undertake to carry out the ends of life by the selfishness that prevails in human society. It requires more skill in the beginning to wield this higher power—to learn the trade, that is, of piety in its application to life. It also requires more time for reaping the fruit. Some harvests are sown in autumn, and the sun leaves them; but they come to ripeness next summer. Some things can be sown in spring and reaped before midsummer. In regard to moral and spiritual elements, it takes more time to develop them and procure their final results in secular wisdom than it does to take the lower and superficial forms and achieve success, but when once they are established they do not go back. A man that fears and loves God, and therefore stands intact under the temptations of life, men will give large premiums to get. It is ripening growth that is demanded. In other words, it is not enough for our religion that we have revivals of it; it is not enough that we have flashes of any or all of these spiritual feelings and experiences. What is wanted is, that they shall become steadily a part of us and abide in us, so that they constitute our character. Then growth in grace amounts indeed to a sure victory. The piety that comes and goes is better than nothing—scarcely more than that; but the higher spiritual qualities of a man's nature that abide with him, and grow stronger, and throw their roots deeper, and take hold on life with more multiplied hands, are the qualities that constitute the true man. When such things shall have been thoroughly developed, the stability and habitualness of the highest Christian experiences will work spontaneity. The mind's action in this channel will become automatic. Then, too, there will be harmony. It will not be simply a few feelings that will run in this line, but the whole soul. Like an orchestra well trained, it will be harmonious, and will increase in force from year to year. For while prophecy and teaching and knowledge do not abide, while we are in the childhood of the human race, and know everything only in fragments and parts,

there are some things that death itself does not change. We are told that they are faith, hope, and love. These go on ineradicable and unchangeable. Such men walk with God. If you liken human life and development to a dwelling, the lower story is on the ground, and made of clay. How roomy and how full of men that live next to the dirt! Above that, however, is a story of iron. There are men of energy, and of a ruling purpose irresistible, seeking and gaining their ends at all hazards, and this story is populous too. The next story is dressed in velvet and carved wood, and here are they that dwell in their affections, and are brought together by the sympathy of a common gentleness and kindness, but on the lower levels of life. Above that is a room of crystal and of diamonds, and there are but few that dwell in it. From its transparent walls one may behold the heavens and the earth. Out of it men may see the night as well as the day—men who live a life so high, so pure, and so serene that they may be said to dwell at the very threshold of the gate of heaven itself. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Growing in grace.*—It is implied that we are not perfect in grace, that there is wide room for growth. Another thing implied is that we may and can grow if we will. God knows our abilities and our inabilities, our dispositions and indispositions, the moral outflow and the moral recoil, and, knowing all, He says, "Grow in grace." I. DIRECTIONS. How to grow in grace? We cannot but remember that growth, to be real and healthy, must be free. It may seem, therefore, an impertinent thing to interpose directions at all. But in truth we do not interpose them with any authority. We shall bring them, such as they are, within sight. Use them if they are suitable. If not, find other modes more akin with your spirit's life. Only grow. 1. Might not one try this among other things, at least for a little while—say for one week—that one shall take a strong morning thought concerning it. 2. Then, in the next place, let there be an actual arrangement of things, in so far as he has the power—of the employments and circumstances of the day—with express view to the accomplishment of this the supreme purpose. 3. If in the general review and arrangement of the life some things are found, perhaps in the very structure of it, or hanging closely to the structure, which are seen to be hindrances, then let them be laid aside without reserve, without delay. A thing may not be a sin, and yet it may serve the sinful cause as effectually as if it were. If you planted apple trees in your orchard in the hope of feasting your eyes in a while with their wealth of blossom and heaping your baskets with the sweet-smelling fruit, would you hang weights on the branches to see how much they would bear and still grow? Would you gather up the withered branches and hook them on to the fresh green ones? If you did they might not kill them, but would they not mar the beauty, would they not hinder the growth? It may seem to be hardly necessary to say anything regarding the renunciation of sin as such. We have spoken of hindrances both slight and serious. Now let me say that a man should hold himself ready to take all gracious helps for gracious growing. These helps are manifold and very near. It is therefore exceedingly important that the soul should be in a receptive state. Everything about the kingdom of grace is in such a state of readiness that in a moment God can give help if the soul is prepared to take it. Now to be ready does not mean having an assemblage of great thoughts in the mind. It does not mean having the feelings or the frame of the heart in a theological or so-called evangelical state. It means being humble and looking up with desire to God. One more hint. It is this. That we should maintain a constant connection with the fountain-head of grace in God by everything which constitutes prayer. God's windows are open. God's fountains are flowing. God's lights are streaming, and His vital airs are breathing forth, and every prayerful spirit will catch a double measure of those heavenly gifts and treasures as they come. II. INDUCEMENTS. 1. The first is the ease with which this growing can be accomplished when we heartily incline to it. If we would but hold ourselves in simplicity in the garden of God, and abide where we are planted, by His rivers of water, the fruit would be in season and the leaf would never wither. 2. Another inducement is found in the principle of necessary growth which belongs to every rational soul. We must grow in something, and if not in grace, you know in what the growth will be. "Ye therefore, beloved, beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." And now, when you see the danger, how are you to act to avoid it? "Grow in grace." That will keep you safe and well—in the right faith, in the right practice. If we do not believe the truth and grow in that we shall soon be heretics, holding fallacies, believing lies. If we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, and grow by that pure and infinite affection, the longing, unportioned heart

will soon have another in His place. It will wind itself, like the ivy, around anything that comes, be it no better than mouldering wall or rotting tree, rather than live in vacuity or sink into utter negation. We must grow; then let our growing be in lily-like beauty, in cedar strength, in "smell as Lebanon." Every other kind of growth is uncertain, limited, transient. But growth in grace is for ever; there is nothing in grace which indicates, far less necessitates, decay. It is for every place; for land and sea, for earth and heaven. It is for all time, now and evermore. It is for the whole nature of man—body, soul, and spirit. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The growth of grace*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THEIR GROWING IN GRACE.

1. They must exercise grace more constantly. 2. Uniformity as well as constancy is implied. Some shine in one grace and some in another, while very few shine in all the beauties of holiness. II. WHY GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO THE GROWTH IN GRACE. 1. Knowledge tends to increase their obligations to grow in grace. The knowledge of duty always increases an obligation to do it. 2. Divine knowledge not only increases the obligations of Christians to grow in grace, but actually increases the holiness of all their holy affections. The degree of holiness in every exercise of love to God is always in proportion to the light or knowledge which the person has at the time of exercising that particular grace. A Christian has a much clearer and more extensive view of God at one time than at another, and his love is always virtuous in exact proportion to the degrees of his present knowledge. One exercise of faith is more virtuous than another, because the believer may have much greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ at one time than he has at another. The same holds true of submission, joy, gratitude, and every other Christian grace. The celebrated Howard, who spent his property and his life in relieving the objects of charity in Britain and in various other parts of Europe, was a man of benevolence, and his benevolence was in proportion to his knowledge. As he had a far more extensive view of the miseries of mankind than Christians in general, so his exercises of kindness and compassion were much more virtuous than theirs towards similar objects. III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR GROWING IN BOTH THESE RESPECTS. 1. The honour of religion requires Christians to grow in knowledge and grace. Though the men of the world are disposed to despise religion, yet they are constrained to respect it in those professors who appear to be both knowing and growing Christians. 2. It is of great importance that Christians should grow both in knowledge and in grace, not only on the account of others, but on their own account. (1) For, in the first place, their growth in these respects will be the most effectual security against the gross and dangerous errors to which they are continually exposed in their present imperfect state. (2) Growth in knowledge and grace will happily tend to remove darkness and doubts from the minds of Christians. (3) Furthermore, growth in knowledge and grace will prepare Christians for the delightful and acceptable performance of every duty. (4) It is, finally, of great importance that Christians should make continual advances in knowledge and grace to prepare them for the closing scene of life. If they neglect to improve their minds in knowledge and their hearts in holiness they may expect to live in bondage and die in darkness, for Christians commonly die very much as they live. IMPROVEMENT. 1. If knowledge be necessary to promote the growth of grace, then the most instructive preaching must be the most profitable. 2. If religious knowledge be conducive to the growth of religious affections, then that religious conversation among Christians is the most useful which is the most instructive. 3. If Divine knowledge has a tendency to promote all the Christian graces and virtues, then growing Christians have an increasing evidence of their good estate. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Growth:—I. I ask, first, INTO WHAT WE ARE TO GROW? Now, the Revised Version throws some light upon the connection of the two things specified in my text by a very slight but significant alteration. It reads, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." Both are connected with Him; He is the source of the grace; He is the object of the knowledge. Thus we get the thought that all our Christian progress, in its deepest meaning, consists in penetrating more deeply into Christ, and what He has and is. We hear a great deal about "progress" in these days; and very much of it consists in departure from Jesus Christ. Those of us who know and possess most of Him have but a drop from the great ocean; one sparkle from the star; a pittance from the storehouse. We have an infinite treasure, and our growing wealth consists in our pressing further into its rooms filled with bullion, and taking more and more of Him into ourselves. For, again, the true notion of Christian progress consists in the growing reception of a gift. We

advance, not by our own unaided efforts. Reception is growth; and the more we open our hearts to receive, the more we advance in the Christian life. Instead of toilsomely trying to struggle up the steep mountain, we are borne up on wings as eagles. Hence the blessed distinctive mark of Christian progress is that, in the midst of the most strenuous efforts, there may be perpetual calm. To have more of Christ—that is growth. But if we look at the two points which the apostle separates here, a word may be said about each of them. Our reception of Jesus Christ is a growing reception of His grace. Now, “grace” here seems to mean, not so much His undeserved love to inferiors, as the consequences of that love in His gifts to us. Or, to put it into other words, what is meant by “the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” in this connection is the bestowing upon us, in our spirits, that we may work them out and manifest them in our lives, all the excellences and virtues of a Christlike character. And I lay this on your hearts, that growth in grace is not so much the blessedness of private, personal experience, or the welling up of certain emotions in heart and mind, as conduct in the life, aspiring after, and showing in exercise “whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.” If these things be in you, and grow in you, you are growing in grace. Then consider the other side of this exhortation—grow in the “knowledge of Christ.” That probably concerns mainly what we call intellectual processes, and yet not altogether. For if it is a Person that is known, then the process of knowing cannot be altogether a mere matter of dry brain-work. It may be enough to begin the Christian life that a man should have but a little acquaintance with Jesus Christ, but there is not enough to keep it up unless that acquaintance is ever growing, becomes tenderer, deeper, quieter, more assured, more impossible to be ever altered. There is no fear of exhausting Christ. But we may look at this exhortation in a slightly different way. “Grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ” means not only grow in personal acquaintance with Him, but grow in the perception of the truths which are embodied in His person and work. Now, there is a great deal of so-called progress in Christian knowledge which largely consists in getting away from the initial truths and going out into other regions. That is not growth; that is decay. For the initial truths are the most important truths, and when a man has learned that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” he has learned what only needs to be pondered upon and followed out, and above all lived by, in order that it shall open into a boundless universe of truth and wisdom. Progress into Christ is like that of the bee that buries itself more deeply into the flower, and draws honey from its innermost recesses. First Christ may be seen as but a speck, then He is a disc of brightness in the dark, and then he is a flaming sun that lightens all the sky.

II. HOW ARE WE TO GROW? My text is a commandment; therefore growth comes through our own efforts. Now, there are many metaphors in the New Testament for this conception of Christian progress. One set of them represents it as being spontaneous, automatic, effortless. As, for instance, when our Lord says, “First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear”; there is no effort there. But that is only one side of the truth. Another side to the answer to the question, How we are to grow? is involved, as I have just said, in the fact that we are commanded to do so. So, very characteristically, when the Apostle Paul speaks of this same subject he rarely uses the metaphor of growth. And what are the figures which he prefers? The race, which implies strenuous strain of the muscles, and is not to be won without effort, dust, and sweat. The fight, for there is resistance to be faced and overcome. With these figures my text falls in, and suggests that there can be no growth in the Christian life without strenuous endeavour. No doubt the progress of the Christian life consists mainly in reception, but reception is not passive. If you do not hold the cup out, it will not be filled. What, then, have we to do? First, and mainly, to keep very near to our Lord. Communion with Jesus Christ is the secret of all growth. If we are close by Him, He will pour Himself into our hearts. Food is needed for growth. If a Christian starves his soul by neglecting to feed on the bread which came down from heaven, no wonder that he is stunted. Exercise is essential for growth. Unused muscles atrophy, like the fakir’s arm that has been held up for twenty years in one position, and now is stiff and rigid as a bar of iron. Use the grace that you have, and practise the truth that you are sure of, and the grace will grow and other truths will be made clear.

III. LASTLY, WHAT HAPPENS TO US IF WE DO NOT GROW? My text begins with a “but,” and that throws us back to what goes before. The connection which is thus established is very noteworthy and monitory. “Beware lest ye also . . . fall from your own steadfastness; but

grow." So, then, the only way to prevent falling is growth; and if you are not growing, you are certainly falling. No weight will stand at rest on an inclined plane. If it is not being hauled up it will be hurtling down. The student who is not advancing in his science will forget what he has learned. Water that stagnates gathers a scum. The talent that is wrapped in a napkin rusts; and the oxidising diminishes its weight and also dims its brightness. I feel that all our churches are full of cases of arrested development. Let me put a plain question: Are we more like Jesus Christ than we were a year ago? Let us remember that the process of growth begun here will go on for ever. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Growth:—I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GROWTH. 1. The first characteristic of growth that we would notice is its silence. It is of all things the most calm, the most quiet, the most dignified. Whatever else may give rise to agitation and commotion and excitement, it is not spiritual growth. To this the analogy of nature clearly points. This the Great Teacher Himself flatly affirms. "The Kingdom of God," He says, "cometh not with observation." Silently the Spirit of Truth makes use of the instrumentality of the truth in communicating to our nature that life without which we know not what it is to live. Silently the same Spirit helps us to draw from the storehouse of the truth the nourishment that is needful to sustain and strengthen the life that has been given. Thus it is that the process of spiritual growth begins, and thus it is that it is carried onward and forward toward a higher and fuller development. 2. A second characteristic of growth is, that it is a gradual process. People sometimes feel discouraged by the littleness of their attainments in the Christian life and the tardiness of their spiritual growth, and too often there is cause for humiliation on this score; but, for my part, I would prefer the slowest rate of progress that is compatible with growth to that unnatural rapidity of development that is sure to fall into rapid consumption. If the progress of the cornstalk which comes to maturity in a few months be scarcely measurable at the interval of a week, and if the progress of the oak tree which comes to maturity in a century or more be barely observable in a year, what are we to say of that spiritual growth which shall not be consummated and completed until all the cycles and the æons of eternity have run their course, and become buried in the bosom of the infinite past? If the interval at which progress may be measured and ascertained is to be lengthened in proportion to the period of growth, how long must that interval be in the case of the Christian's advancement in the life divine? 3. There are many other characteristics of growth, but of these we shall mention only one, and that is the tendency of growth whenever found to develop in a definite direction. Nature has a certain model or type to which the growth of the seed must conform. And she keeps that before her, and to the best of her ability she builds up blade and stalk and ear after the fashion of this particular model. So it is with the acorn. It grows after a long lapse of years into an oak. This is the type toward which nature was working all the time. To the filling up of this model the growth of the tree always tended. So it is with everything else in nature. So it is with the Christian. Spiritual growth is in a definite direction. It tends to a perfect type. It advances in the direction of Christ. II. This brings us naturally to consider in the next place the CONDITIONS OF GROWTH. 1. There is first the condition of previous life. As well expect a corn seed to grow into an oak as expect the man who is destitute of spiritual life to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." How does that life become ours? It is not ours by nature. It is ours only in union with Christ. 2. The other condition of growth to which we would refer is the presence of favourable surroundings, or to put it in the language of modern science, the existence of an appropriate "environment." Spiritual life is what you might call a hardy plant. It will grow in almost any situation, in castle and cottage, under peasant's roof-tree, under monarch's dome, in the shop and the counting-house and the study, in the factory and the market, and the farm. But when all this has been allowed, it must still be admitted that neither soil nor atmosphere in this world is such as to ensure a perfect growth. The perfect type cannot be cultivated in this unsuitable soil and in this unfavourable climate. It needs to be transplanted to another sphere, to a more kindly soil and to a more congenial clime before the perfect ideal can be approached or approximated. Meantime it is our duty and our privilege, by Divine grace, to make the most of the circumstances in which we find ourselves here. But further, we are to grow in the knowledge of Christ. And how do you grow in the knowledge of a person? By associating with him. By attending carefully to the different ways in which he reveals himself. If you would know Christ you must make Him

your constant companion and counsellor, you must speak with Him, and above all you must hear Him speak with you. (*W. J. Lowe, M.A.*) *The means of growth in grace*:—I. THE ORDINANCES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ARE MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT IN RELIGION. 1. Divine revelation, by its influence on the understanding, the heart, the will, and the conscience of man, in every condition of life, promotes the Christian's growth in holiness, in comfort, and in usefulness. 2. The sacraments are means of improvement in religion. 3. Conversation among private Christians is one of the means of growth in knowledge, in holiness, and in usefulness. It is itself a part of our religious enjoyments; and the means of increasing both the desire and the capacity for more enjoyment. 4. Prayer. II. JUDICIOUS REFLECTIONS UPON OUR PERSONAL CONCERNS, IN THE LIGHT OF DIVINE REVELATION, HAVE A GREAT INFLUENCE UPON OUR RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT. 1. Let us consider the sinfulness of our disposition and deportment. 2. A due consideration of God's providence respecting us tends to our personal progress in true religion. 3. Meditations on the love of God are conducive to the improvement of the Christian character. 4. Judicious reflections upon our own mortality, and the future state which we are daily approaching, have a tendency to prepare us for both. III. DIVINE INFLUENCES ARE REQUIRED AND EMPLOYED IN THE PROGRESSIVE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SAINTS. 1. The Spirit presents to the saints the proper objects of pursuit. 2. The Spirit directs the affections of the heart to spiritual objects. 3. Divine influence strengthens the saints for every duty. Conclusion: 1. I observe that there are different degrees of gracious attainments, and I urge upon all ranks the duty of further progress—"Grow in grace." 2. Be not discouraged although your progress in religion is neither as uniform nor as rapid as you first expected it should actually prove. (*A. McLeod, D.D.*) *Growth in the grace of Christ*:—1. Have we not need to grow in the lowliness of Christ? 2. The unselfishness of Christ is brought out by the evangelists in a striking manner. 3. An uncompromising enemy of Pharisaism and all hypocrisy, there was not the slightest taint of cynicism or misanthropy in Christ. 4. Notice one more outstanding feature in the character of Christ—His beautiful enthusiasm in the cause—that is, our cause—which He has espoused. Such an example of joyful self-sacrifice the world never witnessed before, and never will do again. "Grow in the grace of Christ," that is, if true Christians, we have the grace of Christ in some germinal measure: but that is not enough, there must be growth in it, and continual growth in it. To a sincere follower of Christ there can be no contentment with partial growth. (*W. Skinner.*) *Growth in grace by ordinary means*:—This higher life is attained and maintained chiefly by the diligent and right use of ordinary means—prayer, praise, worship, reading the Word, &c. Extra means may stimulate, but they do not largely feed; hence, those who principally depend on the irregular, the sensational means, are always spiritually poor and feeble. The stimulant is in excess of the nutriment, and is followed by reaction and exhaustion. All God's highest and best works are accomplished by ordinary means, by light, and heat, and moisture; by regular and orderly growth. The thunder, whirlwind, and flood, though useful at the time, yet contribute but a small share in effecting the grand result of Nature's processes. It is so in the spiritual world. The thing most needed is not extra means, but extra diligence in the use of ordinary means. (*R. Chew.*) **And in the knowledge of our Lord . . . Jesus Christ.**—*Growth in grace and knowledge*:—The best persons have need of improvement. The possibility of growing in grace will be readily admitted by the true Christian. But what is meant by growing in the knowledge of Christ? 1. By the knowledge spoken of, first, we may understand the evidences of the Christian religion. 2. But that knowledge in which Christians should grow may be taken to include, or even to consist of, a familiar acquaintance with the contents of the Bible, both historical and prophetic, doctrinal and practical. 3. There is a species of knowledge in its very nature progressive, and which above all other knowledge it concerns us to acquire; I mean self-knowledge. Our growth in this will also cause us to grow in the knowledge of Christ, and show us the need we have of a Redeemer. But there is another branch of self-knowledge equally proper for man to study; I mean not the weakness of his nature, but the strength. As none ever pushed his capacity for intellectual improvement as far as it was able to extend, so in matters of morality, few or none ever exerted their strength as far as it would have carried them in the pursuit of virtue. (*A. Gibson, M.A.*) *Growing in the knowledge of Christ*:—I. WHAT IT IS TO GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. 1. The knowledge of Christ is of the greatest excellency. Other kind of knowledge is like light from the stars; this like beams

from the sun. To know Christ assimilates and makes us like Him. 2. The knowledge of Christ is of absolute necessity. 3. The knowledge of Christ is by supernatural revelation. 4. The knowledge of Christ was communicated in a degree under the Old Testament. 5. The revelation of Christ under the New Testament is more clear. Therefore to be ignorant of Him is the more without apology. 6. All true believers in Christ have some knowledge of Him (Rom. x. 14). 7. Those who know most of Christ know Him but in part. Therefore are they to be urged to grow in knowledge. (1) Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies a fuller apprehension of His Godhead. (2) A clearer sight of His humanity. (3) A more plain discerning and full persuasion that He was foreordained to be a Redeemer. (4) A greater insight into His sufferings. (5) A more fruitful eyeing of His resurrection and going to His Father. (6) Greater satisfaction about His imputed righteousness. (7) A more constant and fiducial eyeing of His intercession, and the pity and compassions of Him that intercedes. (8) Being better acquainted with His great power, and continual presence with His Church which is so nearly related to Him. (9) A better understanding of Him as "Mediator of the New Covenant." (10) A more earnest looking for His appearing. II. WHAT PROPERTIES ARE REQUIRED IN THIS KNOWLEDGE. 1. This knowledge of Christ should grow more and more certain. 2. It should more and more humble the Christian. 3. It should grow more spiritual. 4. It should encourage to a more settled reliance upon Him. 5. It should raise Him higher and higher in Christians' estimation. 6. It should have a great aspect upon whatever else is revealed in the Word of God. 7. It should be operative still in a greater measure. 8. It should cause great glorying and joy. III. HOW TO INCREASE AND GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

1. Be sensible of your remaining ignorance. 2. Compare all other knowledge with this, and see the vast difference in point of excellency. 3. You must not lean to your own parts and understandings. 4. Heedfully attend to the word of the truth of the gospel. 5. Look unto Jesus Himself (Col. ii. 3). 6. Cry for more knowledge, and eye the promise of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. 7. Take heed of seducing spirits. 8. Abstain from worldly and fleshly lusts. 9. Associate yourselves with those who have a great measure of the knowledge of Christ. 10. Let your end in desiring a greater degree of the knowledge of Christ be right. Not that you may be puffed up in your own minds, or admired of men; but that Christ may be more admired and esteemed by you. IMPROVEMENT. 1. To unbelievers. (1) Christ is willing to receive the very worst of you, upon your returning and believing. (2) Christ is willing to give Himself to you. 2. To saints. (1) Improve the knowledge of Christ with reference to God Himself. (2) To the law of God. (3) To sin.

(4) To angels both good and bad. (5) To this present world. (6) To duties, grace, and perseverance. (7) To comfort. (*N. Vincent, M.A.*) *Growth in the knowledge of God*:—To increase in the knowledge of God is distinctly commanded, not in this passage alone, but in very many. The progress of the mind in the knowledge of physical truth, scientific truth, depends very much upon the exercise of the senses upon matter; but the growth of knowledge in moral truth depends upon the exercise of moral feelings. While sense is the source of physical or scientific knowledge, disposition is the source of the knowledge of moral truth. Growth in the knowledge of a Divine Being unites both of these. 1. The earliest knowledge which we have of Divine existence is derived, undoubtedly, from teachers and parents. It differs, therefore, in children, according to the instruction which they receive. It is ampler or scantier, it is more wisely or less wisely imparted, according to circumstances. If the notion entertained by children could be analysed, I think it would be found to consist largely of the social and moral qualities which exist in the family, framed and bordered with their imaginations, in which physical qualities largely inhere. 2. I suspect that the next stage of growth consists in clothing these abstract notions, which we gain very early, and which are taught out of catechisms, with the facts of the history of the Lord Jesus Christ as they are narrated by the evangelists. So that it may be said of hundreds of people, that their God is literally, yet entombed in the Bible. They do not use these records as building materials out of which to develop an ever-increasing conception of heavenly excellence. 3. But if one be of a devout nature, and he be earnestly alive to moral growth, then his reading and his childhood instruction, after being subject to reflection, to mental digestion, will carry him forward one step further in the growth in the knowledge of God. His conception of the Divine nature will begin to enlarge and fill out in every direction if only there is a real, active, earnest moral life going on within him. In this work the imagination will

be the architect, reason will be the master-builder, and the materials will come largely from experience. Men's minds are magnets. One man going into the Bible, or into the realm of experience, his mind seeks that which shall feed his strongest faculties—his ideality, his self-esteem, his conscience, and his reason; and he draws those elements out, and leaves all the others. He sees those, and feels those, and he is astonished if anybody can resist the evidence which is so irresistible to him. He has a Calvinistic conception of God which is overwhelming to him, and to every other man who is organised just as he is. But here is another man that stands near him whose magnet draws another kind of filings, and who is just as true to himself. He has an inward want of a conception that is all beaming, and genial, and sweet, and tender. He does not disbelieve in righteousness, nor in conscience, nor in law, nor in government; but he is relatively insensitive to these as he is sensitive to those other elements. This man's constitutional endowment draws to him all that goes to make up this partialism, and he is amazed to hear one talk so like a fool as his brother does. He has read the Bible, and he has seen no such evidence as that which his brother professes to have seen. Why, to him it is as clear as noonday that God is all summer. A third man, standing and looking upon these disputants, says, "They are fools, both of them. I do not think God cares much about government, or much about this benevolence. It seems to me that God is a lover of things in order, full of taste, full of proportion, and full of harmony. He is all music, and all blossom, and all beauty as I conceive Him." That part of this man's mind which craves these things being most sensitive, he takes just that class of materials. His magnet draws those things and no others. 4. There is a powerful influence at work in the formation and growth of the knowledge of God as derived from experience. If a person lies sick, to him all the world is cut off, all hopes are ended, all life seems sad. He does not turn to the jubilant side of God. He turns to those sides on which God declares that He comforts the sorrowing as a mother comforts her children. Another person is put in circumstances by God's providence where he needs perpetual nerve and perpetual enterprise. The sterner, the more active elements of the Divine nature, are congenial to his want and to his experience. And so he ponders these most, and comes to these most. Is one discouraged? He looks for something in his God that shall encourage him. Is one sad from remorse and repentance? He looks to the forgiving side of God. Is one set to defend the truth in a period of backsliding and persecution? He instinctively goes after the prophet's God. 5. One of the most powerful influences, aside from those which I have mentioned, for the shaping of our conceptions and the development of our knowledge of God, is the necessity or the attempt to employ the Divine nature in the rescue and education of our fellow-men. To bring the Divine nature home to all the phases of character which surround us, to all the conditions of life, and to the subjugation of the strong attributes of the mind; to find men just where they are in all their infinite variations of condition; to find that which arrests their attention; to find that which shall inspire in them some moral reaction; to find that which shall feed them—this is one of the most potential of all influences for developing in you the growth of the Divine idea. For there is no material like human nature, and there is no dignity like working in it, and there is no grandeur like success in thus working. It is declared that he who saves a soul from death shall shine like the stars of the firmament in the future kingdom of God. These are the principal ways that suggest themselves to me in which we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And if we be living Christians, true men, we are growing. Our conception of the Divine nature never remains at the same stage for any considerable length of time. It is enlarging itself by experience; it is enriching itself by the position and circumstances in which we are placed, so that no man can compass in words what he believes of God. If he believes all things that come through his intensified affections, through his various wants, and through the wants of those round about him, these, methodised by reflection, and vitalised by imagination, constitute an air-filling notion of God, so vast and so continually changing that anybody would say, "It is impossible for a man to write what he thinks or to say what he thinks"—as we should suppose it would be if God is infinite and is overflowing according to the conception which the thought of infinity inspires. And so every creative mind, every active mind, that is really in union with God, by prayer and affinity, and is working like Him, as well as with Him, and day by day is still augmenting in these various ways his realisations of God, having the Divine spirit in him, and growing evermore up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Jesus Christ—every such man has a growth of which he

himself is not conscious, and which he never can and never could represent to others. This view should lead persons to study and consider what their condition is—whether they have any living influential conception of God. You have been taught that He is the Ruler, that He is the Governor. Is He your Guide? Is He your Master? Is He your Friend? Is He your Companion? Does He smile on you? Does He converse with you? Is He the Toiler with our toil? Does He rest when you rest, and travel when you travel? Do you live and move and have your being in Him? If so, you have a God, and you have reason for endless congratulation and joy. One evidence that we have a true conception of God is, that it is growing. Why, the whip that stood before my door has become a bush; and the bush has become a large shrub, and the shrub is mounting up into a tree, and the tree shall yet spread its branches wide abroad. And that little germ which first came up, and that vast tree, are the same, although they have differed every year more and more by development and growth. And so does our conception of God grow abroad, multiplying its branches, and sub-dividing them into infinite twigs, but they all cohere in the unity of the original idea of conception. Growth does not imply the abandonment of our former notions, then. It is simply the unfolding, in a line or direction, more, not less, and differing, not by rejecting one element and inserting another, but by making each element that was true yesterday more true to-day by fulness, variety, and application in all directions. And this variety, renewing multiplicity and intensity of conception, is of more benefit to man than are selectness and definiteness of statement. That which you see most in God I am not bound to beat down because I see another quality more than you see it, and do not see the one that you see as much as you see it. Men are the complements of each other. Some men interpret God through beauty. They are my brothers, though I may be deficient in interpreting the Divine nature through this quality. I am your brother, though I may not gain the same conception of God that you do. One stands in Milan Cathedral, under the nave, and looks up into those mysterious depths until he seems as though he would exhale and fly into space. There, in the brooding darkness, the feeling of reverence weighs upon his very soul. And the Milan Cathedral to him is that which it seems to be when the low-lying sun has shot through the window and kindled the whole interior. At the very same moment there stands upon the roof another man, and about him are those three thousand statues carved and standing in their several niches and pinnacles; and everything looks like the bristling frost-work in a forest of icicles; and far above and far on every side swell the lines of beauty. How different is his conception from that of the man who stands in the nave below! But, at the same time, a man stands outside looking at the cathedral's fretted front and its wondrous beauty and diversity; while a fellow-companion and traveller is on the other side looking also at the exterior. Here are four men—one before the structure, one behind it, one on the roof, and one in the interior! and each of them, as he gives his account of the Milan Cathedral, speaks of that which made the strongest impression upon his mind, and that most carried him away. But it takes the concurrent report of these four men to represent that vast work of architecture. Is it so with a man-built cathedral? and shall it not be so with the mighty God who is from eternity to eternity? Is there any man that can take the reed of his understanding and lay it along the line of God's latitude and longitude as if he were measurable as a city? Is there any man that can cast his plummet into the depths of the Infinite and say, "I have sounded God to the bottom"? Each man has that conception of God which he is capable of receiving. This is added to the common stock. And it is these concurrent differences, these harmonious separations, that make the symphony of knowledge. We do not want unison: we want harmony. Harmony is made by different parts, and not by the repetition of the same sounds and tones. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Growth in the knowledge of Christ*:—At first sight it would appear as if Peter had inverted the natural order of things when he puts growth in the "knowledge" of Christ, after and not before, growth in the "grace" of Christ. How can we grow in the grace of Christ if we do not first possess a knowledge of Him? To know Christ, in the highest sense of that word, we must first seek to grow in the grace which distinguished Him so signally among the children of men. I stand with a great artist before a famous picture. I make bold in my ignorance of art to confess that I can see nothing extraordinary in it at all. "What," exclaims my companion, somewhat indignantly but with great enthusiasm, "don't you observe the splendid manipulation?" and forth he launches into a glowing analysis of the picture before us. While he is explaining I can discern more clearly

than I did before what made the picture famous in the eyes of others, but yet at the close I had to exclaim, "Well, my friend, I have no doubt I would speak as you have done if I had your eyes, but I confess I don't see what makes you so enthusiastic. I should much like, however, to possess your knowledge and enthusiasm, and shall be glad if you will only show me how." "There is only one way of possessing the knowledge," replies my companion; "you must begin to learn the first elements of drawing and colouring, and as you progress in the acquisition of the art of painting you will know." Without striving to grow in the graces of the painter's pencil, you will never understand the feelings of the painter himself. Turning now to moral qualities we are not infrequently surprised by the strength and the beauty of character which some of our fellow-creatures display. Here is one with a spirit which nothing can ruffle or disturb. To us, so easily provoked, so hasty to resent, so strong in speech "not seasoned with salt," that person is a mystery. "There is but one way to a knowledge or understanding of this man. We must begin where he began, by curbing the hasty passions of the heart, by continuous efforts to return good for evil, and then, by striving, to grow in his grace, we will be in a position to grow in knowledge of him. So it is with regard to the knowledge of Christ. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Before we can be said to know the spirit, the life, of our Master, or enter upon the full possession of the truths He came to reveal, we must first strive to grow in the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. By knowledge of Christ it will be seen that we mean such an entering into sympathy with the springs and motive forces of His life as shall, by its gradual increase, lead us into the perfection of spiritual life.

1. Those who have had much to do with newly-quickened souls, or those who can recall the first experiences of the Divine life within their own hearts, will hear me out in this, that love to Christ is, at such a time, the one absorbing passion of the soul. The mind seems able only to grasp one truth—and it is a grand one—"Jesus so loved me that He gladly endured the shame and agony of the Cross in order to save me." Love is the first beautiful impulse of the heart. It is the root of all the virtues. It may be blind in the first stages of its existence, but it soon attains, at least, to partial vision—vision which will grow from more to more if rightly used. We often love each other impulsively, but there is little harm done if the impulse will but lead up to reason. But the test of growth in the knowledge of Christ is when we love Him for what He is in Himself, and not so much for what He has done. The latter is not free from a taint of selfishness. Applying this test to Christ, do I love Him most because He is the incarnation of virtue and goodness? Then is my love not altogether worthy of Him. It has, at any rate, lost the alloy of impulse and selfishness, so apt to spoil the most precious ore of the heart.

2. The soul does not long remain under the genuine influence of Christ when it learns that to live like Him is better than simply to love Him, however ardently. It is necessary that the Saviour should be first revealed to the sinner in the first act of salvation, but once this is accomplished the Teacher sent from God leads the soul up from himself, so to speak, to a knowledge of the Holy Ghost and God the Father. When adopted into the family of God, we have many graces lying dormant, and not a few faculties impaired or withered by courses of sin. We need the Holy Ghost to quicken those graces in life, and to put new life into those withered faculties. This fact we will come to recognise only when comparing our lives with that of Christ: we then see our barrenness and emptiness. Love for Him will lead us in that case to desire to be like Him. But to live the life of Christ we need a nature balanced and sustained like His. How shall we reach this most desirable state of life? By the influence of the Holy Spirit alone. "He will take the things of Christ and show them unto us." But to live this life, what is it? Simply this. I recognise that God has given me powers and virtues as well as the opportunity to exercise them, and that, therefore, He means me to use them for some purpose. Now, what is that purpose? The answer is found in Christ. Here is a Divinely inspired and quickened life; how is it spent? In making sorrow less, in making joy more to abound. That is the simple philosophy of the life of Christ. This then is to be my life—a continual expenditure of vital forces in order to complete the work which Christ began—the redemption of the whole world from the blight of sin. Can any grander conception of life enter your imagination? Did we but possess more of the spirit of our Master we would gladly suffer a daily crucifixion if thereby we could bless the race. Yes, a true-hearted heroic man will always consider that good service is infinitely better than joy which is selfish, and will therefore look upon life as the vantage ground of Divine service and not of selfish pleasure. This we learn; up to

this state we may hope to climb by growing in the knowledge of Christ. 3. Life, then, to us should not, and in fact does not pass like a dream of bliss. No one who has eyes to see can ignore the cruel wrongs, the sickening spectacles of lust and crime with which the world is full. No one with ears to hear can deny that the air is full of discords, and the ear is often stretched and strained in vain to catch the undertone of harmony which some hope and some alleluia may be heard underneath. The penalty of growth in true life is growth in care, mental perplexity, and pain. The more we know, the more of mystery there is to us, the more Christ-like we are, the more sensitive we become to the desolation which sin has wrought in this beautiful world of ours. Hence we come to recognise the need of another truth which most likely has not hitherto come prominently in view—that for our life to be vigorous and well sustained under all circumstances we must have our faith firmly grounded in the Fatherhood of God. Resting by a firm faith on the omnipotence, the unerring wisdom, the infinite love of God, the heart will bravely face the blinding storm of life, heroically grapple with its mysteries, and hush its doubts and fears with the inspiring whisper, “The Father reigneth.” (*W. Skinner.*)

*On growth in the knowledge of Christ:—*I. To GIVE SOME ACCOUNT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. 1. The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is necessary to salvation. 2. The knowledge of Christ is attained by the study of the Holy Scriptures. 3. The saving knowledge of Christ is effectually obtained by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. 4. The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is desirable and delightful. II. What is implied in growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; or WHAT OF CHRIST HIS DISCIPLES should grow in the knowledge of. 1. They should grow in the knowledge of the Person of Christ. 2. Believers should grow in the knowledge of the love of Christ. 3. They should grow in the knowledge of the perfection of the righteousness of Christ. 4. They should grow in the knowledge of the word and way of Christ. III. To SPECIFY SOME OF THE EVIDENCES THAT THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST ARE GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. 1. He will be rising higher and higher in the estimation of your souls. 2. You will be growing in a filial dependence on Him. 3. The more you grow in the knowledge of Christ the more you will be assimilated to His glorious image. 4. The more you grow in the knowledge of Christ you will the more cheerfully worship, honour, and obey Him. (*John Jardine.*)

*Increase in the knowledge of Christ:—*When the Pilgrim Fathers first came to America they did not discover all—the iron, the coal, the natural gas. So with Christ. There are many needs in us of which the young convert dreams not. (*D. Watson.*)

Amelz

