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Bible.
A book of Old Testament
lessons for public reading

OTHER BOOKS BY PROFESSOR ROGERS

**THE RELIGION OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA
CUNEIFORM PARALLELS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT
A HISTORY OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA
THE RECOVERY OF THE ANCIENT ORIENT
GREAT CHARACTERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

A BOOK OF OLD TESTAMENT LESSONS

For Public Reading in Churches

A LECTIONARY

Edited

With Introduction and Notes

By

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VOLUME II
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES



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CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| PREFACE | 7 |
| INTRODUCTION | 13 |
| I. FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT. Jeremiah 31. 10-14, 27-34. | 37 |
| II. SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT. Micah 4. 1-7; 5. 2-4... | 39 |
| III. THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT. Isaiah 40. 1-17, 27-30.. | 41 |
| IV. FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT. Isaiah 10. 33-11. 9 and 12. 1-6..... | 43 |
| V. CHRISTMAS DAY. Isaiah 7. 10-14; 9. 2-7..... | 46 |
| VI. FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS. Isaiah 32. 1-5; 35. 1-10..... | 49 |
| VII. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS. Isaiah 42. 1-16. | 51 |
| VIII. FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. Isaiah 44. 6-23... | 53 |
| IX. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. Isaiah 55. 1-13. | 55 |
| X. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. Hosea 11. 1-12. 6 | 57 |
| XI. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. Amos 8..... | 59 |
| XII. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. Ezekiel 33. 1-20.. | 62 |
| XIII. SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. Ezekiel 34. 1-16, 25-31..... | 64 |
| XIV. SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY. Genesis 1. 1-2. 3..... | 66 |
| XV. SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY. Genesis 3..... | 68 |
| XVI. QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY. Genesis 6. 5-8, 13-22; 7. 23, 24; 9. 8-17..... | 71 |
| XVII. FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT. Jeremiah 8. 4-22; 9. 1..... | 73 |
| XVIII. SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT. Genesis 22. 1-19..... | 75 |
| XIX. THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT. Genesis 37. 3-12, 17-35... | 77 |
| XX. FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT. Exodus 3. 1-15..... | 79 |
| XXI. FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT. Exodus 33. 7-23..... | 82 |
| XXII. PALM SUNDAY. Zechariah 8. 14-23; 9. 9, 10..... | 84 |
| XXIII. GOOD FRIDAY. Isaiah 52. 13-53. 12..... | 86 |
| XXIV. EASTER DAY. Exodus 12. 1-14..... | 89 |
| XXV. FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. Isaiah 52. 1-12..... | 91 |
| XXVI. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. Exodus 16. 2-15.. | 93 |
| XXVII. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. Deuteronomy 4. 1-20. | 95 |
| XXVIII. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. Deuteronomy 6. 4-25..... | 97 |
| XXIX. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. Deuteronomy 8. 2-20. | 99 |
| XXX. SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY. Deuteronomy 30.. | 101 |
| XXXI. WHITSUNDAY. Joel 2. 21-32..... | 103 |
| XXXII. TRINITY SUNDAY. Isaiah 6. 1-13..... | 105 |
| XXXIII. FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. Joshua 1. 1-17.... | 107 |
| XXXIV. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. Judges 4. 1-16, 23. | 109 |
| XXXV. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. 1 Samuel 1. 1-5, 9-28..... | 112 |
| XXXVI. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. 1 Samuel 3. 1-4. 1. | 114 |
| XXXVII. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. 1 Samuel 17. 1-4, 8-11, 32-37, 40-54..... | 115 |
| XXXVIII. SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. 2 Samuel 12. 1-23.. | 117 |
| XXXIX. SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. 2 Samuel 18. 1-15, 24-33..... | 119 |
| XL. EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. 1 Chronicles 29. 1-20..... | 121 |

| | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|--|-----|
| XLII. | NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 1 Kings 3. 4-15 . . . | 123 |
| XLIII. | TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 1 Kings 6. 1, 38; 8. 12, 13, 22, 23, 27-40, 54-58 | 125 |
| XLIII. | ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 1 Kings 10. 1-13. | 128 |
| XLIV. | TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 1 Kings 12. | 130 |
| XLV. | THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 1 Kings 17. . . | 132 |
| XLVI. | FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 1 Kings 18. 1, 2, 17-39 | 134 |
| XLVII. | FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 1 Kings 19. | 136 |
| XLVIII. | SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 2 Kings 5. 1-19. | 139 |
| XLIX. | SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 2 Kings 6. 8-23. | 141 |
| L. | EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | 2 Kings 22. 3-20. | 142 |
| LI. | NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Jeremiah 5. 1-6, 15-29. | 144 |
| LII. | TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Jeremiah 7. 1-15 and 26. 7-16. | 146 |
| LIII. | TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Daniel 5. | 148 |
| LIV. | TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Proverbs 3. 1-20. | 151 |
| LV. | TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Proverbs 8. 1-21. | 153 |
| LVI. | TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Proverbs 31. 10-31. | 155 |
| LVII. | TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Job 5. 6-26. | 157 |
| LVIII. | TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Job 28. | 159 |
| LIX. | SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT. | Ecclesiastes 11. 1-4, 6-10; 12. 8, 13, 14. | 161 |

ALTERNATIVE LESSONS

| | PAGE | |
|--|---------------------------------|-----|
| I. FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT. | Isaiah 1. 1-20. | 167 |
| II. SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT. | Isaiah 5. 1-20. | 169 |
| III. THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT. | Isaiah 25. 1-9. | 171 |
| IV. FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT. | Zechariah 2. | 173 |
| VIII. FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. | Isaiah 51. 1-16. | 175 |
| X. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. | Hosea 14. 1-9. | 177 |
| XIII. SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. | Micah 6. 1-8. | 179 |
| XVII. FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT. | Genesis 18. | 181 |
| XXIV. EASTER DAY. | Ezekiel 37. 1-14. | 184 |
| XXVII. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. | Isaiah 60. | 186 |
| XXXI. WHITSUNDAY. | Exodus 34. 1-10, 29-35. | 188 |
| XLIV. TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Habakkuk 2. 1-14. | 190 |
| XLVI. FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Amos 5. 4-24. | 193 |
| L. EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Jonah 3. 1-4, 11. | 195 |
| LIII. TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Ezekiel 14. | 198 |
| LIV. TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Nehemiah 8. 1-12. | 200 |
| LVI. TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. | Haggai 2. 1-9. | 202 |

PREFACE

THE public reading of the Holy Scriptures has fallen upon very sad days, in respect of the Old Testament, in all churches which have no lectionary established and commanded. The duties of a professorship, rather than the care of a church, have for a third of a century carried me on various errands of preaching, lecturing, attendance upon committees or conventions into many Baptist, Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. In them all I have seldom found provision made for anything like a regular reading of two lessons, one from the Old and the other from the New Testament. In many a selection of the Psalter is read responsively, and then the New Testament lesson, while the Law, the Prophets and the Wise Men bring no word to common worship and instruction. If the preacher intends to preach from an Old Testament text, he may read the passage, or one related to it; or if his text be from the New Testament, he may make use of some Old Testament lesson which points toward it or gives it some light or contrast. Apart from these or other more or less related instances the reading of the Old Testament in the ears of a worshiping congregation has disappeared from among us, but for the few, here or there, who love it and are deeply conscious that it has a living message for to-day.

Wherever and whenever the Old Testament is read at all the selection from it tends strongly, among these great and powerful churches, toward the repetition of a few favorite passages which run in a little round and very largely in Isaiah. Beyond this the great deeps of the divine story, or address of God to the souls of men, lie unexplored, or but lightly traversed. So much is this true in

my experience that I used to say at times in my Old Testament lecture room that I had never heard a passage from Jeremiah read in the public congregation. Then one day one of my own students, preaching in the chapel, read from the greatest of the prophets, having quietly remarked to his fellows in advance that I should never be able to say that again! The sense of humor has happily not departed from theological students!

As the years went forward I found myself more and more lamenting the neglect of the Old Testament, and as far as my feeble voice could reach urging young men entering the ministry to find some way, each for himself, to better the condition, to make the prophets, at least, vocal once more. Perhaps it helped. I do not know. But I kept turning it over in my mind seeking some way of encouragement and help until in 1912 I began to make a little Old Testament lectionary, and only now is it finished and very humbly and earnestly and imploringly offered for any use little or much that few or many may find for it.

In the Introduction I have written a little sketch of the story of the rise and development of lectionaries; I would it might be read, for it should suggest that we have made far less use of the Old Testament in these days than our fathers, whether spiritually ours in Judaism or more closely ours in Protestantism. I could not look forward very hopefully toward the adoption of any scheme of lessons for twice on Sunday, nor for lessons that were very long. I have therefore made lessons for but one service, but with a goodly selection beyond the ordinary year and alternatives from which an evening lesson might be drawn when occasion served. The lessons are arranged according to the Church Year, but there is no special need so to use them unless one wills. Very few are so closely attached to any church season that they might not be quite appropriately read at any other season. If one would follow

closely or slightly the Church Year, the calendar will make it easy to find the day; if not, the lessons are numbered simply, and the index will make it easy to find any one.

The choice of these lessons has been spread over years. Some come from the old Church of England lessons, others from the new plan of the same church, to which allusion is made in the Introduction. Some come from John Wesley's selection, others from the lectionaries of the churches of Lutheranism both European and American; still others have been suggested by selections made for literary quality such as the beautiful one by Sir James George Frazer,¹ and perhaps a very few are personal. The list has suffered many revisions, passages have gone in and been taken out, some have been shortened and others lengthened. The order has been bettered, and, alas! perhaps worsened, while the list has lain for weeks or months before another revision; but enthusiasm and interest never died out.

The text chosen is in the most part simply the Revised Version, not the American Standard. It has been carefully compared with the Hebrew Text and then treated conservatively and tenderly but with the eye ever fixed on its purpose. It is not for the study, but for public oral reading. It ought not to have a strange, but a familiar sound, yet, if possible, it should convey meaning to the ear, not merely to the eye. Therefore, when sense demanded and Hebrew permitted or required, I have changed a word or altered a phrase; or when the Septuagint offered what seemed a better sense, it has occasionally been followed, and in a very few cases even a conjectural emendation adopted. I hope this has all been done discreetly; it has surely been done cautiously and advisedly. Let him who likes it not change it with his pen before he reads.

If these lessons are to be of real use and value to God's

¹ Passages from the Bible Chosen for Their Literary Beauty and Interest. 1895. 2nd Ed., 1909.

people, they must be taken seriously and used after every effort has been made to make intelligent practice of them. No man will move a congregation to interest or give it real instruction who is not instructed and interested himself. If it be well worth while to preach the word after all possible preparation, it is surely well worth while to read with understanding from the Holy Scriptures. As a slight help I have been so bold as to write a few words of introduction and annotation for each lesson. They are offered very modestly and with much hesitation. They make not the slightest pretension of forming a Commentary, and there are no earthquaking discoveries in them. They may be too slight to be of use—then pass them by and take time and pains to consult the great commentaries. They may contain suggestions as to date, authorship, or meaning contrary to your views, dear Reader—then leave them coldly alone and betake you to the text itself. Do not permit them to spoil your hope of instructing the people out of God's Word simply because man's comment has seemed unwise, ill advised, unnecessary, or even foolish. But in your own way and after your own general view of the Scriptures as a whole make yourself familiar with the lesson you are to read and then read it as though you thought it was really a message from God through his servants or an account of his dealing with them. Read weightily, earnestly, at times with deep solemnity and God's people will listen. How should one expect them to listen or to care if the Bible be read, as I have sometimes heard it, as though preacher or pastor cared nothing for it, and would hasten swiftly over it?

Should you sometimes pause in the reading to give an explanation or a word of exposition and enforcement? I dare not answer that with any assurance. I have heard Spurgeon do it with telling effect, with perfect taste and quite evidently with profit. But it was not done by chance

or in a passing whim. He had thought it out in advance, and the congregation was prepared and expectant. It was indeed a wonderful sight to see six thousand people open their Bibles when the moment for reading had come, and then find the place when he had announced the passage to be read. He waited until the whisper of swiftly turned pages had ceased, and then read and paused over a difficult phrase and spoke when he thought it was needed. It was wonderfully done. But he was a consummate master of the art. If it be not very well done, perhaps 'twere better left undone.

How should the lesson be introduced? This also must have a very doubtful answer. The committee which carried out a Revision of the Lectionary of the Church of England has a word in its report about this, which runs thus: "We are of opinion that the reading of Lessons in church would become more generally instructive if they were prefaced by a brief Introduction; and that an Authorized Book of such Introductions might advantageously be issued." This has not yet been done, but I should like to venture a suggestion to the Reader that he sometimes try to give a few words to an effort to prepare the people's minds for the lesson which is to follow. But, again, it were better left undone than done without thought and care. Let us do honor to the Scriptures by the word with which we introduce them, not dishonor them with some lightly tossed word, cheaply bought, pointless and without weight. Yet it were easier to omit than to make wise comment before or during the reading and somebody should be wisely daring and try it.

Finally, O thou that shall read to God's people out of Holy Writ, dost thou miss here some great passage? I should not wonder at that. Never mind. Use your liberty which this book is not intended to abridge and read what you will. I have meant only to help, but I plead

in extenuation of faults and omissions that I have not been hasty, for eight years have passed since the book was begun, and much thought and time and care, aye, and labor also have gone into it. May God bless the effort and the result to the good of Christ's Church.

ROBERT W. ROGERS.

The Bodleian Library,
Oxford,
October 25, 1920.

INTRODUCTION

THE practice of reading a portion of Holy Scripture as a part of divine service in the Christian Church derives from the synagogue of the Jews. Much in the early worship of Christians, in the ordering of services and in the building of churches comes from the same source, but nothing taken by Christianity from Judaism was so important in itself and so far reaching in its influence as this. It has been most justly said that "the custom of reading portions of the Pentateuch at the synagogue on Sabbath and holy days and at other stated times of the year, [was] an institution which made Judaism one of the most powerful factors of instruction and education of the world. Through it the Torah became the property of the whole people of Israel; and through it also the Gentiles were won for Judaism; even the rise of Christianity and Islam was made possible chiefly through the customary reading from the Law and the Prophets."¹ The meaning of this is that the early Christians who came out of the synagogue into the fellowship of Christ came instructed in the Law and with ears attuned to the preaching of the prophets, and their Christian teachers, who declared that Christ was the fulfillment of the law and the Messiah of the prophets, were speaking to men who had heard the very words of the Law and the predictions of the prophets read in their hearing and had carried away in mind and heart many a phrase which made music in their ears as their teachers declared that it was of Jesus that the prophet spake, that it was toward him that the law was a schoolmaster.

How early the public reading of the Old Testament began in Judaism is unknown. Josephus quite character-

¹ Kohler, Kaufmann, Reading from the Law. Jewish Encyclopedia, vii, 647.

istically ascribes it to Moses himself, saying, "The lawgiver showed the Law to be the best and the most necessary means of instruction by enjoining the people to assemble not once or twice or frequently, but every week while abstaining from all other work in order to hear the Law and learn it in a thorough manner—a thing which all other lawgivers seem to have neglected."² In this he was probably relying upon a biblical allusion which does not support his sweeping statement, yet has an interest of its own, "And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the set time of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing" (Deut. 31. 10, 11). This passage shows that by the time of Josiah (B. C. 621), and perhaps as early as Hezekiah (circa B. C. 700) it had become a practice among the Jews to read publicly certain writings counted as of value for religious instruction. What these were no one knows, and it is hazardous to speculate. We are upon safer ground when we come down to the period of Ezra-Nehemiah, when Ezra brought from Babylon a roll of the Law and caused it to be read publicly in the people's hearing (Neh. 8. 1-18). This was but a single reading, not likely to have been repeated soon, nor have we the slightest clue as to when the custom of regular reading may have been introduced, nor where, nor by whom. Where fact is wanting conjecture has been frequent and enthusiastic, and it has been assumed, again on the basis of Deuteronomy (31. 10), that a seven-year cycle of readings was devised, and that from this two three-and-a-half-year cycles of readings were devised. There would appear to be no sound reason for this supposition, and the earliest known system divided the Pentateuch into one hundred and fifty-five sections by

² *Contra Apionem*, ii, 17.

which the Law was read through in three years. This was the Palestinian system and prevailed, apparently, until the thirteenth Christian century. This was succeeded by the division, now generally considered to be the normal standard, by which the Pentateuch is divided into fifty-three or fifty-four sections, by which the Law was read through in one year. By the Sephardim, or Jews of Spain and of the western countries generally, these sections of the Law are called Parashah (plural, Parashiyyoth), while the Ashkenazim, or Jews of Germany call each section a Sidra (plural, Sidroth) and give the name "Parashah" to the smaller portions read on festivals, or to one of the seven subsections of the Sabbath-morning lesson. These sections, thus appointed would seem very long to Christian congregations. Thus, for example, the whole book of Genesis is read in twelve Sabbaths, as follows: I. Gen. 1. 1—6. 8; II. Gen. 6. 9—11. 32; III. Gen. 12. 1—17. 27; IV. Gen. 18. 1—22. 24; V. Gen. 23. 1—25. 18; VI. Gen. 25. 19—28. 9; VII. Gen. 28. 10—32. 3; VIII. Gen. 32. 4—36. 43; IX. Gen. 37. 1—40. 23; X. Gen. 41. 1—44. 17; XI. Gen. 44. 18—47. 27; XII. Gen. 47. 28—50. 26. This may serve as an example of the high importance attached by the Jewish Church to the Law and indicate the passionate desire to educate her people in the sacred law. To accomplish the reading of such long passages it was necessary to give a large part of the service to this one exercise, and in order that the reading might never take place with a wearied voice it became customary to divide each of these long passages into seven sections, each to be read by one person. The persons thus called to read were the seven elders who sat upon the platform. Besides the Sabbath reading chapters were selected for reading upon the various fast and feast days, as, for example:

Passover: first day, Exod. 12. 21-51;
second day, Lev. 23. 1-44;

Passover: third day (half holy day), Exod. 13. 1-16;
fourth day, Exod. 22. 24—23. 19;
fifth day, Exod. 34. 1-26;
sixth day, Num. 9. 1-14;
seventh day (holy day), Exod. 13. 17—15. 27;
eighth day, Deut. 15. 19—16. 17.

The Law was read always from a parchment roll, written by hand upon calfskin or sheepskin with an ink most carefully and skillfully made from lampblack. The text was Hebrew, without vowel points, accents, or any verse divisions, but with the Parashah (or Sidra) divisions marked either by a new line, or by a space left blank in a line. This roll or scroll was mounted upon rollers, then wrapped in a white band and richly encased in a silk or velvet robe. The rollers had usually tips elaborately ornamented with silver. Three or more such rolls were in the possession of every synagogue, and at the eastern end of the edifice there was a cabinet in a recess in which the rolls were kept. This was called the *Hekal* (Temple) or *Kodesh* (sanctuary) and before it was suspended the *Ner Tamid*, a lamp kept perpetually lighted. To give yet greater honor to the Law, the sanctuary was opened with much ceremony, both solemn and fitting. When that point in the service is reached the Minister announces the names of those who are to have the honor of bringing the Roll of the Law from the *Hekal* or "Ark," whom he precedes thither, and the congregation rises as he says: "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and thy pious ones shout for joy. For thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed." As the doors of the Ark are opened, the minister chants: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us together exalt his name." As the sacred roll is borne to the reading desk the congregation, still standing, repeats a declaration of faith and joy beginning, "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool, for he is holy"

and continuing: "The Law which Moses commanded us, is the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. It is a tree of life to those who lay hold of it; and the supporters thereof are happy. Its ways are pleasant ways and all its paths are peace. Abundant peace have they who love thy Law: and none shall obstruct them. The Lord will give strength unto his people: the Lord will bless his people with peace." Then when the Law has been divested of its coverings, it is elevated by one of the bearers, who turns it to the four sides from right to left, pausing at each, so that all the congregation may see the writing, whereupon they say: "And this is the Law which Moses set before the children of Israel. The Law which Moses commanded us is the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob." "The way of God is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a shield to all those who trust in him."³

After all this the readers read the lesson of the day. How wonderful is the care of modern Judaism to honor the Law, how anxious that all who attend the Sabbath service should be made to feel that the word of God is central and paramount. Who shall say that the continuance of Jewish faith, amid many temptations to forsake or forget or even to pass to Christianity is not largely due to this honoring of the Book, this serious effort to make every one attend to its reading and to learn to honor it himself?

Splendid and wise and good as all this was in itself and for its purposes, there still remained a great gap in the public instruction of the people, and that was the absence of the prophetic Scriptures, without which no fully rounded view of the faith of Israel could possibly be presented. To meet this need a scheme for the reading of selections from the Prophets appeared in the synagogues, but at

³ The liturgical forms here quoted are taken from "The Book of Prayer and Order of Service, according to the custom of Spanish and Portuguese Jews," edited and revised by Moses Gaster. Oxford, 5661-1901; Vol. i, pp. 110, 111.

what period it is no longer possible to learn. It has been suggested that it originated in the time of Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, whose persecution of the Jews (B. C. 168-165) was supposed to have led to the reading of the Prophets when he forbade the reading of the Law, but there is not a scintilla of evidence to support the suggestion. It seems, however, reasonably certain that the Prophets were read before the Christian era, though the order and form may not have been quite definitely fixed at so early a date.

The portion from the Prophets which was read on the Sabbath after the reading of the Law is called *Haphtarah* (conclusion), the plural of which is *Haphtaroth*. The selection of appropriate passages was difficult; and there was no absolutely definite standard on which the selection was based. Whenever it was possible to find some link it was done. Thus, for example, when Section II of Genesis was read (6. 9-11. 32) it was followed by Isaiah 54 because of verse 9, which reads, "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee." The case here was excellent, but often the appropriateness was very shadowy, resting only upon a remote similarity of ideas as when Section I, Gen. 1. 1-6. 8, was coupled with Isaiah 42. 5-43. 11 because of its first verse (5) which reads, "Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein." A still more weak connection is to be found when the Law passage Num. 1-4 is followed by Hos. 2. 1-22, solely because of one word in Hos. 2. 2.

The length of the Haphtaroth is much less than the length of the passages from the law, being only from ten to fifty-two verses, and the selection came to be definitely fixed

so that it was possible to provide for every syn'agogue a list of the passages from the Law (Sidroth) and the corresponding lesson from the Prophets (Haphtaroth). It is to be remembered that the word "prophet" as used by the Jews includes books which among Christians are commonly though erroneously called historical books. The arrangement followed in the Hebrew Bible divides the Scriptures into three classes—the Law, the Prophets, and the writings (Heb., *Kethubim*; Gr., *Hagiographa*). The Prophets are subdivided into the Early Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve, that is, the Minor Prophets). This corresponds to a real difference in character between the different books, and it is to be lamented that the early English versions followed the arrangement of the Vulgate, which depended upon the Septuagint. The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are written by prophetic hands and in the prophetic spirit and are different in spirit from Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, which represent the interpretation of God's will and works as the priests understood them. To classify Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings with the prophets is to recognize this difference and make a proper use of it. With this in mind we can understand the choice of the Haphtaroth, the selections from which are taken from Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Habakkuk, Zechariah, and Malachi. The favorite book is Isaiah, which appears on fifteen of the fifty-four Sabbaths.

It is believed that the selections of the Haphtaroth for feast days may have been made as early as the second century of the Christian era, but the definite selection for Sabbaths came much later, for as late as the second century the choice of a prophetic passage was still left to the last of the readers of the Torah. In early times it was

customary to follow the reading of the prophetic passage with comment or an address. The classic instance is narrated by Luke (4. 17ff.) in which Jesus having read the lesson from Isa. 61. 1, 2 interpreted it, applying it to himself. In the Jewish Calendar of lessons as later arranged this passage from Isaiah is not read, the passage which is read beginning at 61. 10 (61. 10—63. 9) with which is read from the Law Deut. 29. 10—30. 20.

The honor paid to the reading of the Law is hardly equaled, in modern times, when the prophets are read, yet have they also their praise in good measure. After the Law has been read and the time has come to read the Haphtarah, or lesson from the prophets, a blessing is pronounced in these words: "Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God! King of the universe; who hast chosen good prophets; and found delight in their words, which were delivered in truth. Blessed art thou, O Lord! who hast chosen the Law, thy servant Moses, thy people Israel, and the true and righteous prophets." And after the reading follow the words, "Our Redeemer! the Lord of Hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel," and there follows a long prayer which is here set down in part: "Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God! King of the universe; Protector of all the worlds, who art righteous in all generations; the faithful God, who promisest and performest; speakest and accomplishest; for all thy words are true and just. Faithful art thou, O Lord, our God! and thy words are faithful; for not one of thy words shall return back fruitless. . . . For the sake of the Law, the worship, and the Prophets, and this Sabbath . . . blessed be thy name in the mouth of every living creature, continually, and for evermore."

So down the ages, not in less but in greater measure, has the Jewish Church honored the Holy Scriptures and given them a place above all else in public worship. From the synagogue the Christian Church learned to make the

reading of Scripture a part of divine service, and to this we must turn to see, so far as scanty materials will permit, how the Scriptures found a place and how in the course of time an order for their reading was established, or how in other branches or parts of the universal Christian Church the order disappeared and the reading was left to choice or even to caprice.

The earliest allusion to public reading of the Scriptures in the Christian Church is found in the injunction laid upon Timothy, "Till I come give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching" (1 Tim. 4. 13). This command did not concern his private but his public reading, as the words "exhortation" and "teaching" make plain, and is further supported by the command, "Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee" (verse 16). There is no specification of that which was to be read, but it was the Old Testament, upon which the Lord himself had fed his soul, and upon which his church should be nurtured both then and forever afterward. By the side of the Old Testament lessons there were soon Christian documents to be read, as we are reminded in the command, "When this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea" (Col. 4. 16); and again, "I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren" (1 Thess. 5. 27); and yet again in the words, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Rev. 1. 3). Here we have the beginnings of the custom of public reading of the Scriptures, but there is no hint of any order or prescription about them. As the early church was much busied with the effort to convince Jews of the Messiahship of Jesus, we shall probably not go far astray if we surmise

that the Messianic parts of the prophets would be those chiefly used, and they for controversial purposes with the Jews, or to establish Jewish Christians in the new faith.

When the second century is reached the custom of reading lessons has become fixed, and Justin Martyr is able to mention it as well known: "On the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits."⁴ Within half a century later Tertullian makes several references to the reading of Scripture and the singing of Psalms,⁵ and again of the reading of Scripture in the ordinary worship,⁶ and still further of the reading of the Epistles,⁷ and in some other passages makes allusion to the Prophets and Gospels. There was then a steady progress toward a regular system of reading, and in the first half of the third century Hippolytus gives this direction: "Let Presbyters, subdeacons, and readers, and all the people assemble daily in the church at time of cockcrow, and betake themselves to prayers, to psalms, and to the reading of the Scriptures, according to the command of the apostles; until I come attend to reading."⁸ There is still no prescribing of what was to be read, but in this same century the first traces of fixed lessons are to be discerned. Origen⁹ gives the first known hint when he says that the book of Job was read in Holy Week. And John Cassian goes so far as to seek a heavenly sanction (circa A. D. 380) for the order which he knew, saying, "Throughout the whole of Egypt and the Thebaïad the number of Psalms is fixed at twelve both at Vespers and in the office of Nocturns, in such a way that at the close

⁴ Apology, 1, 67.

⁵ de Anima, 9

⁶ Apol. 39.

⁷ de Praescript. Haeret., 36.

⁸ Canon xxi.

⁹ Commentaries on Job, lib. i.

two lessons follow, one from the Old and the other from the New Testament. And this arrangement, fixed ever so long ago, has continued unbroken to the present day throughout so many ages, in all the monasteries of those districts, because it is said that it was no appointment of man's invention, but was brought down from heaven to the fathers by the ministry of an angel."¹⁰ It is clear that there was a fixed order for the use of the Psalms, and it seems here to be implied that there was likewise a fixed order for other books. However that may then have been in Africa, there were certainly such lessons elsewhere, for Saint Basil the Great¹¹ mentions fixed lessons for certain occasions as taken from Isaiah and Proverbs, while from Chrysostom¹² and Augustine¹³ we learn that Genesis was read in Lent, and Job and Jonah in Passion Week. There was then a clear tendency toward prescribing lessons for certain great periods in the Church Year, but there must have still been large liberty of choice during the rest of the year.

By the time when the Apostolical Constitutions was written, probably by a Syrian Christian and perhaps as early as A.D. 340 or as late as A. D. 380, we have a still more plain declaration about the progress toward a definite lectionary. The passage is so interesting in itself, that it needs no apology for lengthened quotation. It is addressed to the Bishop and begins: "When thou callest an assembly of the Church, as one that is the Commander of a great ship, appoint the Assemblies to be made with all possible skill, charging the Deacons, as mariners, to prepare places for the brethren, as for passengers, with all due care and decency. And first let the building be long, with its head to the east, with its vestries on both sides at the east end, and so 'twill be like a ship. In the middle let the bishop's

¹⁰ *de caenob. inst.*, ii, 4.

¹¹ Hom. xiii, *de bapt.*

¹² Hom. lxiii *in Act.*

¹³ Tract vi *in Joann.*

throne be placed; and on each side of him let the presbytery sit down; and let the Deacons stand near at hand, in close and small girt garments; for they are like the mariners and managers of the ship: With regard to these, let the laity sit on the other side, with all quietness and good order. And let the women sit by themselves, they also keeping silence. In the middle, let the reader stand upon some high place; let him read the Books of *Moses*, of *Joshua* the son of *Nun*, of the *Judges*, and of the *Kings* and of the *Chronicles*, and those written after the return from the captivity; and besides these, the books of *Job* and of *Solomon*, and of the sixteen prophets. But when there have been two lessons severally read, let some other person sing the hymns of David, and let the people join at the conclusions of the verses. Afterward let our *Acts* be read, and the Epistles of *Paul*, our fellow worker, which he sent to the Churches under the conduct of the Holy Spirit; and afterward let a Deacon or a Presbyter read the Gospels, both those which *Matthew* and *John* have delivered to you, and those which the fellow workers of Paul received and left to you, *Luke* and *Mark*. And while the *Gospel* is read, let all the Presbyters and Deacons, and all the people stand up in great silence; for it is written, *Be silent and hear, O Israel*. And again, *But do thou stand there and hear*. In the next place, let the Presbyters, one by one, not all together, exhort the people, and the Bishop in the last place as being the commander."¹⁴

There is here no indication whether the lessons were according to a fixed system or a free choice, but the interesting and important matter is that two Old Testament lessons were to be read, then the Psalms sung, and after that came readings from the Epistles and then the Gospel,

¹⁴ The Apostolical Constitutions ii, 57. For translation into English compare William Whiston, *Primitive Christianity Revived*, Vol. ii, section xxviii, p. 260ff. (London, 1711).

which even at that early date was to be heard by the whole congregation standing. The influence of the example of the synagogue is seen plainly in the double lesson from the Old Testament, of which it may safely be surmised that one was from the Law and the second from the Prophets. When to these there are added passages from the Epistles and Gospels there were sure signs of the formation of a system to which was applied the technical term *Pericope*. The word comes directly from the late Latin *pericopē*, meaning a section of a book, which derives from the Greek word of the same form, the origin of which is from the Greek *peri*, "around," and *kopē*, "cutting." Used in the sense of a scriptural passage, the word appears early, for Justin Martyr¹⁵ classifies under the word *pericope*, the passages Isa. 42. 5-13; Jer. 11. 19; Isa. 33. 13-19 and Mic. 4. 1-7—all these being from the Old Testament.

As the tendency toward a fixed system of lessons increased and passages more or less suited to the portions of the Church Year were chosen there grew up a custom foreshadowed in the reference to exhortations by the Presbyters and bishops in the Apostolical Constitutions. This was the reading of a homily or the preaching of a sermon based upon the lessons which had been read, and as the lesson for the day was called a *Pericope*, the method by which the sermon was based on a verse or verses from the appointed section was called a pericopic system of preaching. Luther generally, if not always, followed this plan, taking a passage, and commonly a long one, or at least of considerable length, from the lesson of the day, and usually from the Gospels or Epistles. This is still commonly the use on the Continent of Europe, and the influence of it is to be seen in the frequency with which clergymen of the Church of England and of the Episcopal Church in America take a text from the Gospel or Epistle of the

¹⁵ Dial. c. Tryph. c. 65, 72, 78, 110.

day. The system had a great disadvantage, it must be admitted, for after a preacher had discoursed for several years upon selections from the same lesson he was much disposed to seek after novelty by some ingenious twist or turn which a strict interpretation of the passage could not justify. It had, however, a great compensating advantage in that the preacher was forced to cover the whole field of biblical teaching and was so prevented from slipping into the constant iteration of fads or fancies of his own. There is, then, something to be said for pericopic preaching, and wise men might well consider whether the adoption of it, with due allowance of divergence to suit some new condition, were not a wise procedure. Indeed, in recent times unless one had some system of one's own to which general heed might be given, the various philanthropic organizations would tend to occupy one Sunday after another with multitudinous causes (Prison Day, Divorce Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Red Cross Day, Near East Relief, City Missions, Home Missions, Foreign Missions), and the whole glorious preaching of the Word in its message of God and redemption would give way to practical, legislative or eleemosynary agitation. Then the minister or the preacher will turn reformer, and religion lose the mystery and glory of God.

The earliest lectionaries of which a memory has been preserved date from the middle of the fifth century, both from France. The oldest is reported to have been made by Claudianus Mamercus, and was arranged not for the entire year but rather for the church festivals. It has perished, and we know of it only by the scant allusion made to its compiler after his death by Bishop Apollinaris Sidonius of Arverni, the modern Clermont.¹⁶ There is record of another made A. D. 458 for the church at Massilia, the

¹⁶ "Hic solemnibus annuis paravit quae quo tempore lecta convenirent" (Epist. IV, N. 11, MSL. T. 58).

modern Marseilles, by Musaeus, which was likewise made only for the festivals, and has also perished.¹⁷

The oldest lectionary still surviving was prepared in the eighth Christian century, found at Luxeuil in Burgundy and known generally as the *Lectionarium Gallicanum* which provided lessons from the prophets one or more readings for most of the church festivals preceded by headings such as "*Lectio Libri Esaye Prophetae.*" From this time onward lectionaries were numerous in all the churches, west and east, Syrian as well as Latin, Armenian as well as Greek. For this present purpose the most important lectionaries are those of the western churches. The most far-reaching of these is the lectionary of the Roman Church, whose beginnings may certainly be traced as far back as the eleventh century, from which there has come down the great lectionary called variously *Comes*, or *Liber Comitatus* or *Liber Comicus*, which began its readings with the first Sunday in Advent, placing all the way through the year the emphasis upon the Epistles and Gospels, yet substituting for the Epistle an Old Testament passage on certain days. Thus upon Epiphany Sunday Isaiah, chapter 60, was read instead of the Epistle, and in the Passion Week Hosea, Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Jonah all found mention. The passages read in this lectionary were very brief, and it is not surprising that an attempt should be made to revise its order and extend the length of the readings. This was accomplished in the lectionary made by a renowned Franciscan, Francisco da Quignonez (Francis de Quiñones), who brought out in 1535 a Breviary with a revised form of lessons. It was printed and widely used until 1558, when it was suppressed by papal authority, and ceased to be printed. It was exceedingly well done, and gave a wider and better

¹⁷ "Musaeus, Massiliensis ecclesiae presbyter hortatu S. Venerii episcopi excerptis de sanctis scripturis lectiones totius anni festivis diebus aptas, responsoria etiam psalmodum capitula temporibus et lectionibus apta." (Gennadius, *De script. eccles.* c. 79, MSL. I, 58.)

view of the Old Testament. It began with Isaiah at Advent, followed by other Prophets, and the Wisdom books came after Christmas, to be followed at Septuagesima by Genesis and again by the Prophets until Easter. Later portions of Exodus, Samuel, Kings, Daniel, Tobit, Judith, Esther, and Job all made contributions to the knowledge of hearers. It was a sore pity that after Francisco's death (died 540) the book should have come under censure and finally to suppression, but it was not possible to break off its influence. Its principle of two lessons, one from the Old and the second from the New, was destined to live on in the influence which it exerted upon the lectionaries of the Anglican Church. Cranmer had drawn up a Litany in 1544 and, influenced chiefly by the Breviary of Francisco, in the First Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England (1549) adopted the scheme of two lessons, the one from the Old and the other from the New Testament. Cranmer abandoned the Church Year system and began his lessons with January instead of with Advent, but made a great advance in the length of the Old Testament lessons by which the greater part of the canonical books and a lesser portion of the Apocrypha were read through once a year. In the Prayer Book of Elizabeth (1559) a return was made to the Ecclesiastical year and the lessons began with Advent. The variations from this scheme of Lessons were very slight until the Lectionary was revised in 1871, in which the length of many lessons was much reduced, but the general principles were retained. Criticism of this lectionary was widespread, chiefly because of certain unfortunate beginnings or endings of the New Testament lessons which were believed to break the sense in unhappy fashion. An attempt to introduce a better lectionary in 1878 failed, but a great step forward is now in process in the Church of England in a revision of the lectionary begun in 1913 and published in 1917. This is the most elaborate lectionary

ever made. It not only provides lessons for Sundays, for the great festivals and for certain outstanding Saints' days, but also for every day in the week, and besides all this gives in many cases alternatives. The principle followed by the committee upon these points is thus declared:

(i.) *First Lessons*.—Following ancient precedent, we have set down Isaiah for reading during Advent and until the second Sunday after Epiphany, and for the remaining Sundays after Epiphany certain of the minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah). Again in accordance with ancient precedent, we begin the reading of the Pentateuch on Septuagesima Sunday. The historical books follow, and extend from the first Sunday after Trinity until the fourteenth. The books of Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, are read from Evensong on the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity to Evensong on the twenty-second. Lessons from the book of Proverbs are assigned to the remaining Sundays after Trinity. Special Lessons are chosen for the great festivals, and also for the first Sunday after Easter and for the Sunday next before Advent.

Influenced by a desire (a) to meet the needs of different types of congregations, (b) to provide a certain amount of variation for successive years, (c) to make it possible for congregations to hear in church on Sunday selections from the less familiar parts of the Old Testament and from some books of the Apocrypha, we have provided alternatives to the lessons taken from the Pentateuch, from the historical books, and from the book of Proverbs. We have deliberately refrained from providing alternative Lessons on Septuagesima (when the story of creation is read), the fifth Sunday in Lent, Palm Sunday, and Easter Day. We desire to put it on record that in this part of our work we have gone on the assumption (which we earnestly hope will be fulfilled) that the choice between alternative lessons will not be made capriciously, but according to some definite principle or plan.¹⁸

This splendid lectionary has not yet passed the long range of constructive criticism and the test of time, but one may

¹⁸ Convocation of Canterbury, Report of Joint Committee. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917 [1917, No. 501]. The Committee was composed of the following:

Bishop of Ely (Dr. Chase, Chmn.).
 Bishop of Norwich (Dr. Pollock).
 Bishop of Oxford (Dr. Gore).
 Bishop of Truro (Dr. Burrows).
 Dean of Westminster (Dr. Ryle).
 Dean of Winchester (Dr. Furneaux).

Dean of Ely (Dr. Kirkpatrick).
 Chancellor Bernard.
 Canon Dalton.
 Canon Lake.
 Canon A. W. Robinson.
 Canon Southwell.

hope that wherein it falls short of the great ideal of public instruction by the reading of Scripture in the hearing of the people time and use and the advice and experience of others may bring improvement, and the way appear for other churches to imitate a good example in so far as suggestions from this may fit special conditions of their own.

Having followed somewhat the history of the making and promulgation of lectionaries or Pericopes in the Western church, and thence on into England, we should now see briefly how the Reformation in Germany met the problem. Luther criticized the Roman system with courage and a clear mind and apparently intended or at least hoped to make a new Pericope for the churches of the Reformed Faith. This failed, nor apparently did he ever begin it. His attitude to the old system finally crystallized into this, that as far as the Roman Comes was a lectionary, in the strict sense of the word, he was entirely dissatisfied with it and desired either its enlargement and improvement or, failing that, its entire supersession. As far, on the other hand, as it was a Pericope in the narrower sense of the word, a system for providing texts and an order for preaching according to the Church Year, he did not disapprove of it as a whole, but was of the opinion that large liberty of choice should come to the ministry. These declarations of the great Reformation master had influence which began at once and was long extended. One may discern this as early as 1528, when the Church Order in Brunswick (Braunschweig) made a substitute for other lessons and bade the reading of Isa. 40. 1-11, and 11. 1-10. Other minor variations which provided chiefly for longer New Testament lessons began in Brandenburg in 1533 and in Württemberg in 1536. A much greater effort was made in Pommern (Pomerania) in 1568, when ministers were bidden so to arrange the lessons for Sundays and week days that the most important and useful books of the Bible

should be publicly read in order. This was a difficult, if not, indeed, impossible, command if it were to be interpreted literally, but it displayed at least a proper recognition of the importance of the instruction of the people in the Bible itself for its own sake.

In Switzerland the Reformed Church began early to cast aside the brief portions and the sharply defined Pericopes to determine order and content of preaching. Zwingli in Zurich preached over great areas of Scripture, and with very definite purposes in each case—thus the Gospel of Matthew and then the Acts—that his church might learn how the gospel was “propagated and promulgated,” and passed thence onward into the Epistles of Paul. But his greatest move was taken in July, 1525, when he began to preach upon the book of Genesis, though before this, preaching had been altogether from the New Testament. And Bullinger, who was his successor, is said to have preached from nearly all the books of the Old and the New Testaments. For such a man as he there were no Pericopes, and it is not surprising that they vanished out of Zurich never to return in the old form. At the other side of Switzerland Calvin carried on a vigorous polemic against the same old system, though admitting advantages which it did possess, as others had pointed out.

Among the Lutherans of Germany the old system died of its own unfitness for the practical purposes of a new and living church. The critical, historical, and scientific study which Ernst Ranke¹⁹ made of the old system was enough to convince all who were capable of conviction that a newer and better lectionary was essential, yet was it impossible to secure it. The old always has a certain strength because of its possession, and as Germany was then broken up

¹⁹ *Das kirkliche Perikopensystem aus den ältesten Urkunden der Römischen Liturgie* dargelegt und erläutert. Ein Versuch von Dr. Ernst Ranke, Pfarrer zu Buchau in Oberfranken. Berlin, 1847. The book is still important, nor has its influence entirely disappeared.

into small states, each ordering its own worship in its own way, unity of effort was impossible. For about one hundred and fifty years the various Lutheran churches in the German states went as it willed, some holding in considerable measure the Roman method, while others made tentative experiments in the attempt to construct a new order that might seem to fit better into the theory which Protestantism held concerning the Holy Scriptures. Thus, for example, Hannover in 1769 ordered the introduction of quite a new system of Pericopes and commanded that at every "ordinary and public divine service" there should be read "a selected especially instructive yet not too long a passage from the canonical books of the Bible." In 1793 Baden set forth a system which recognizes the virtues of a free choice of passages to be read, yet is unwilling to give up altogether the Roman Pericopes, but supplies a new suggestive plan of readings to begin not with Advent but with January. In 1881 in the same kingdom the beginning with Advent was reestablished.

In 1896 a move was made in a conference of German evangelical churches to secure a radical revision of the old Pericopes and the adoption of a lectionary. The attempt was honorable and worthy, but various local interests and customs prevented its complete adoption. The churches in Germany still, therefore, continue in possession of systems each with values of its own, yet each, at least in some cases, strangely neglectful of the Old Testament. In this respect the Lutheran churches of America have made a substantial as well as admirable advance upon their mother church in Germany.²⁰

²⁰ The system of Scripture Lessons adopted by the United Lutheran Church in America richly deserves study, and, indeed, imitation in many respects. It is published by (a) The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of America, (b) The Trustees of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, and (c) The United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South, and is to be found in the "Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church, authorized by the United Lutheran Church in America." Phila-

In this little sketch of the rise and progress, as well also as the decay of systems of public reading of the Scriptures many attempts in other churches than those specifically mentioned have necessarily been passed over in silence, and no allusion has been made to the use of the New Testament except as the necessities of the better understanding of the Old had made it necessary. I can make no pretensions to New Testament scholarship and should be chary of expressing any opinion as to how it should be or could be more systematically read. There can be no doubt that for every Christian church the New Testament is fundamental; if it be not made known among the people, there can be no sound Christian thinking, and ignorance or fanaticism must rule the church—and they are equally dangerous. The case for the Old Testament is different, yet has it a proper place of dignity and importance. It needs often be said that the Old Testament was the Bible of the men who founded the early church. It provided the occasion and was the subject of the earliest controversies with those who came from Judaism as well as with those who did not come. The apostles held it to be inspired and so used it, but far above all these was the Lord himself, whose sword it was, and whose soul was fed upon these words of wonder and of life. It is madness and folly to talk of making any Christian life rounded and complete, fully furnished and richly adorned, without its ministry of knowledge, its magic of words, splendor of images, and store of inexhaustible power. Yet has it been sorely neglected. We who have been teaching in colleges, universities and theological seminaries have been watching whole

delphia, The Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, n. d. (issued and copyrighted in 1917). See especially pp. 298-303 which contain not only the revised table of lessons, but also tables showing the lectionaries of Thomasius, Hannover, and Eisenach. The same book contains also a "Table of Lessons for Morning and Evening throughout the year," which is arranged for week days only with a New Testament lesson in the morning and an Old Testament Lesson in the evening, pp. 304-312 (Hymn and Tune Edition).

generations of bright and happy youth, who are Christian at heart and more or less instructed in the doctrine and message of the church, yet have next to no knowledge of the origins of all this in the progressive revelation of God in the Old Testament. Worse still, most of them know little—often almost nothing—of the great names and mighty deeds and living words of the heroes of literature and history there preserved. The lecturer who lets fall an allusion to some Hebrew name, some melodious phrase, some deed of heroic struggle for the religion of Jehovah sees at once in some of the eyes before him the telltale glance of strangeness—the word was unfamiliar, it awakened no response.

The fundamental fault is with the home, but the church must bear a full share of it. How often or how widely have these youth heard the Old Testament read with any breadth or comprehensiveness in the church? Except in those churches that have possessed a lectionary prepared by authority and imposed by law, the reading of the Old Testament has been casual, capricious, or according to some fancy or familiarity of the preacher or pastor. Small wonder is it that youth wins no large familiarity, no ease of memory in these rich and glorious words and ways. The Sunday school has tried hard to fill the gap, and never harder than in recent years. Its whole scheme of study has been recast, its method revised and modernized; it has enlisted the best scholarship in the preparation of note and comment, and trained teachers in schools and conventions. From this a great and beautiful harvest may justly be hoped. Let us now crown this by restoring the Old Testament to a place of honor and dignity in the church service. Let the youth before they come to study the prophets hear Isaiah and Jeremiah read aloud in the congregation of God's people. If the man who reads has prepared himself to read by knowing that which he is reading, by putting mind and heart upon it in advance, so that his heart burns with

a translated passion, and his mind flames with a recreated message, then shall these books live again and generations of God's people feel and know them. To this end and purpose, in this hope and desire, is this little book compiled and edited. If some would now care about this matter as much as the mind, heart, and hand that made it, there would be a better day in God's house for God's ancient Scriptures.

I

First Sunday in Advent

JEREMIAH 31. 10-14, 27-34

[Alternative on p. 167.]

THE greatest of the prophets is Jeremiah, and the sufficient justification for so declaring him is in the few verses (31-34) which come at the end of this passage. Born at Anathoth, a small village three and a half miles northeast of Jerusalem, about the year 650, and called to be a prophet in B. C. 626, he survived the utter destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar in B. C. 586. He saw the storms gathering, watched with his own keenly observant eyes the madness, folly, and sin of his people, and then their fearful sufferings. He was perfectly clear in his own mind that the sufferings were the direct consequence of the divine displeasure, and that the origin of the wrath of God was to be found in the faithlessness of the people. God had sought them for himself and at Sinai had made a covenant with them. It had failed of its purpose, because they had broken it. It is the greatness of Jeremiah that he perceived that an external covenant could not save the people, and great as was the Mosaic covenant, it was nevertheless, in greater part at least, an external covenant. There was needed an internal covenant, a changed heart, and this is the covenant which is here set forth. The description of the covenant is placed as a climax, and to introduce it to the hearer's ear there are a few preliminary verses, part of which, namely, 10-14, would by some be ascribed to another prophet. The authorship of them is, however, of little importance; the main point is that there is no longer any sufficient reason for doubting Jeremiah's author-

ship of the covenant passage, which is the real point in this lesson.

12. **goodness**; here it means, bounty, in the material and physical sense.

32. **took them by the hand**. The metaphor is a father gently leading his children's tottering steps. It is the childhood of Israel as a nation.

33. **their God . . . my people**. This intimate personal relationship was intended to be secured by the older covenant (Exod. 19. 5, 6; 2 Sam. 7. 24), but it had failed, simply because the people had broken it. The new covenant would succeed because the hearts would be changed.

This doctrine of the New Covenant advances far beyond all other of the prophetic doctrines, and marks Jeremiah as the greatest of the prophets. In him the climax was reached. None other was to surpass him until He should come of whom the prophets had spoken. The Lord himself took Jeremiah's doctrine, made it his own, and pointing out all its implications and suggesting its applications advanced as far beyond Jeremiah as he had beyond all who had gone before him.

II

Second Sunday in Advent

MICAH 4. 1-7; 5. 2-4

[Alternative p. 169.]

MICAH prophesied, according to the superscription of his book, during the reigns of Jotham (739-734), Ahaz (733-721 (?)), and Hezekiah (715-689 (?)), and the first three chapters of his book reflect the situation, with a fair degree of clearness, which we know to have obtained at least in the period of Hezekiah. The rest of the book is of doubtful origin, and some of it seems clearly to be late. It is, however, timeless in application, and the passage here chosen is beautiful in itself and well fitted for public reading in the season approaching Christmas.

4. 1. In the latter days, or, rather, in the issue of the days, that is, at the dawn of the Messianic age. The passage verses 1-3 is inserted, with slight variations, also in Isa. 2. 2-4.

established . . . exalted not literally, but in repute and honor above all else.

peoples shall flow unto it. All nations shall come to bring honor to Jehovah and to learn of him.

2. instruction. R. V. translates "law," but that technical word would be unsuited to the other peoples and the Hebrew word *Torah* means literally "instruction," "teaching."

3. arbitrate for. R. V., "reprove"; margin, "decide concerning."

6-7. The sequence of thought with what precedes is not clear. The verses seem to belong to the exilic period and to refer to the return. They are, however, not unsuitable for this present reading.

5. 2. As Bethlehem was the home of David, so is it to be the birthplace of the Messianic King who is to continue the line of David.

from ancient days. The phrase is indefinite, as may be seen by a glance at its use elsewhere, for example in the passage, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old" (Amos 9. 11), and again in the prediction, "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient times" (Mal. 3. 4).

3. **give them up,** that is, Jehovah will permit his people temporarily to suffer until he raises up the Messianic King. The verse is a gloss.

4. **shall stand,** that is, stand firm, steadfast.

unto the ends of the earth. The Messiah will meet universal acknowledgment unto the ends of the earth.

III

Third Sunday in Advent

ISAIAH 40. 1-17, 27-30

[Alternative p. 171.]

THE passage is from a sermon by an unknown prophet of the Exile, now commonly called Second or Deutero-Isaiah, and was uttered or written probably between B. C. 546 and 538, and spoken as a word of comfort and exhortation to those in Babylonia who were depressed and discouraged. The first deportation from Judah had taken place in B. C. 597, when Nebuchadrezzar carried away about eight thousand inhabitants, among whom the man Ezekiel, afterward a prophet to his people, was conspicuous. The second deportation was in 586, when Nebuchadrezzar destroyed Jerusalem and took a much larger body away to Babylonia. Many of both of these companies had died before this passage was spoken, and the hope of a restoration so long deferred had made many hearts sick. To these came this thrilling message of hope, a very gospel of good news, that God had forgiven his people, and would grant them the blessings of salvation, and through them to all peoples.

2. to Jerusalem. This is a synonym for "my people."

3. the voice . . . crieth. This is an angel's voice calling to beings of the same order to prepare the road for the exile's return. The phrase has the effect of an interjection, and its tone might be given in English by "Hark!—one crying."

6. All flesh is grass. While this is true of humanity in general, the prophet is here thinking especially of Israel's enemies, whose transitory life he contrasts with the eter-

nity of God—the kingdoms of men pass quickly when God intervenes.

10. **his reward**, probably the gifts which he will bestow on his restored people.

11. Few indeed are the Old Testament verses which surpass or even equal this as a portrayal of God's care for his people, his tenderness, gentleness, and solicitude. He who is fierce against the enemies of goodness, is himself goodness itself. Who can read this verse so that the hearer shall feel it?

12. **with the span**, the distance between the thumb and the little finger of a hand when extended.

15. **the isles**, properly the Mediterranean coast lands, then a general term for habitable, or habited lands, and especially the far away.

16. **Lebanon . . . not sufficient**. God is so great that all the animals of Lebanon though burned with all her trees would be a sacrifice insufficient for him.

17. **vanity**. The Hebrew word is *tôhû*, which means "waste," and is used in Gen. 1. 2 and there applied to Chaos (A. V., "without form," R. V., "waste"). It here signifies nonentity.

27. But this great God has been doubted by his people, who have said, "My way is hid from the Lord. . . ."

31. **mount up with wings**. The sense is both beautiful and attractive, but it is grammatically doubtful. The Septuagint reads, "shall put forth pinions," which may be correct. The meaning, then, would be that if Israel but put her faith in God she shall acquire new powers, shall fly with wings like those of eagles. So have the saints verified it in many days since the prophet spoke as they have been borne upward on wings of faith and hope.

IV

Fourth Sunday in Advent

ISAIAH 10. 33—11. 9 and 12. 1-6

[Alternative p. 173.]

THE passage has been frequently doubted as of Isaiah's authorship in whole or in part, and the grounds for this dubiety may best be sought in Gray, *Isaiah*, but whatever weight these doubts may have, they do not make the instruction of the passage less or diminish its value for public reading. If Isaiah wrote all or a part of it, it must belong to the period just before the year 701, before Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. The passage 12. 1-6 belongs to a later period and is probably not by Isaiah. Its connection is, rather, with Isa. 11. 10-16 than with verses 1-9, but it is here pardonably used for reading as a hymn of praise to follow verse 9.

10. 33. *lop the boughs.* The Assyrian army has been advancing against Jerusalem and is now very close, "he shaketh his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion" (verse 32). Then his great host is compared with a moving, menacing forest, and just when the danger is greatest Jehovah moves upon it, lops its boughs, and lays it low. This is the beginning of the overthrow of the mighty world power which had dared to set itself against God and his world government. Immediately that this is accomplished there begins the setting up of a new power, even the Messianic kingdom.

11. 1. *a shoot . . . out of the stock.* The figure is that of the stump of a tree left in the ground after the tree has fallen or been felled, and from the old stump there bursts forth a little slender twig, the promise of a

new life. There seems good ground for the assumption that a contrast is intended with 10. 33, for there the Assyrian tree is stricken down to rise no more, while from the dynasty of Judah there springs a new shoot greater than ever in its assurance of power and helpfulness. This new shoot is the Messiah, who comes from the dynasty of David, though his exact relation to it is here left indefinite.

2. The Messiah is supernaturally endowed for his supreme mission, and the endowments are grouped into three of two each. The first two—wisdom and understanding—are intellectual; the second two—counsel and might—are practical; while the last two—the knowledge and fear of the Lord—are religious.

3. **sight of his eyes . . . hearing of his ears.** With the infallible guidance of his supernatural endowments he shall have no need of judging by the eyes, that is, mere appearances; or the hearing of the ears, that is, the testimony of witnesses.

4. **reprove.** So R. V.; should be “decide.”

the earth. So the ordinary text, which gives no good sense, read with the Septuagint “the violent,” “the ruthless,” a sense also suited to the unpointed Hebrew text.

8. **asp . . . viper.** The identification of the species of serpents here signified by the Hebrew words is quite doubtful, and fortunately the general sense is not affected. It matters next to nothing what particular serpents are meant. The English translations are little more than guesses.

9. **the mountain;** that is, Zion; but here the meaning is the whole extended kingdom of the Messiah.

12. 1-6. The passage consists of two little hymns of praise, verses 1, 2 and 3-6. They are postexilic in origin and liturgical in character. Both are echoes of earlier

literature, especially of the splendid hymn of triumph Exod. 15, after Israel's deliverance from the Egyptians at the Red Sea, with which are interlacings of phrase from Isa. 24-27 and from Psalm 105. For public reading they form a not unsuitable shout of praise for the deliverance which the Messiah is to bring, and the beautiful words, "therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" constitute an exhortation not unsuited to his kingdom.

V

Christmas Day

ISAIAH 7. 10-14; 9. 2-7

THESE two brief but beautiful passages have been sanctified by long use, and have gathered tenderness and power also from many associations not only in church services, but, wedded to undying strains of music in oratorio and in anthem, have come echoing down the years. It were a sore pity to read them in public, as not a few have done, in careless haste or purposeless tone. Whatever their origin or original meaning, the centuries have given them rich significance. Let us see, however, what was their place and time as the prophet uttered them, so far as these may now be determined.

The entire passage 7. 1—9. 7 forms the remains of a series of prophecies belonging to the reign of Ahaz (B. C. 736-725). It was a period of painful anxiety to king and people, and many hearts failed and not without much cause. The peace, and perhaps the very existence of Judah were at stake because of the advance of an army of Aramæans and Ephraimites about the year B. C. 735, to attack the kingdom, dethrone Ahaz, and reduce his land to dependence. It is easy from our vantage ground to speak of the king as weak, or vacillating, or incompetent, and these, indeed, were in one way or another expressions of his character; but the situation was dangerous, and places of recourse were not easy then to find. The king sought help by appealing to Tiglathpileser IV (B. C. 745-727), king of Assyria. As we now see the case, knowing what afterward was to follow at the hands of the Assyrians, this was madness as well as folly. Isaiah opposed the plan in a passion of earnestness on grounds political as well as religious.

Isaiah went out to meet the king, and standing on the same ground where thirty-four years later the representative of the Assyrian king Sennacherib demanded the surrender of the city, addressed him in solemn words, urging first the wise counsel, "Take heed and be quiet, fear not, neither let thine heart be faint," and giving assurance that the coalition against Judah should not prevail. Then he added another word of incalculable importance, saying, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." The meaning of them is plain enough. The two great words which express God's movement toward man and man's proper attitude toward God are "grace" and "faith." Everything which is comprehended in God's loving and yearning approach to man may be comprehended and expressed in the word "grace," and man's duty toward it is "faith." He must accept it all as of God and from God, must *believe* it and by that belief enter into the possession of it. In this verse we have probably the very first expression of this doctrine of faith as a religious principle. It is here made the touchstone for Ahaz of his destiny. Isaiah has given the king a great assurance that his kingdom will not be destroyed by Syria and Ephraim. This is an act of divine grace. Let Ahaz believe it, and he will be established. Then Isaiah offers the king a sign in support of the assurance just given (Isa. 7. 5-9) and Ahaz refuses to ask it, perhaps because he would rather go his own way and wished no religious interference with plans already made. The prophet then gives the sign.

7. 14. a **virgin**, or maiden. The Hebrew word means a young woman of marriageable age. It may signify virgin, but does not necessarily mean virgin.

Immanuel, "with us is God."

In the second passage 9. 2-7 the prophet bursts into a rapturous strain of poetry, celebrating the great salvation. It belongs presumably to a little later period in the prophet's

mission, but there is no conclusive reason for denying the authorship to Isaiah. It may belong to the body of teaching communicated to his pupils.

9. **4. yoke of his burden, his burdensome yoke.**

staff of his shoulder, the staff with which his enemies have beaten his shoulders.

day of Midian: the day on which the Midianites were defeated by Gideon (Judg. 6-8).

5. **all the armor of the armed man in the tumult.**

The words are difficult, but the probable meaning is that suggested by Gray, "Every shoe worn in tumult" (of battle). The general significance is that all the paraphernalia of war shall be burned up, at the ushering in of the Messiah's kingdom.

6. The child who shall be born is to be a royal and a reigning prince and his name consists of eight words in four clauses, of two each.

(a) **Wonderful Counsellor.** This is a royal prerogative and is also a divine attribute. It is specifically applied to God himself by Isaiah (28. 29) and is a king's function in Micah (4. 9).

(b) **Mighty God.** There is no sound reason for departing from this translation in favor of "God like Hero" or "Hero God." This child is to be mighty in a sense undreamt before, not a mighty man (1 Sam. 14. 52), not a mighty king (Dan. 11. 3), but a mighty God. (See the admirable comment by Gray, Isaiah, pp. 173, 174.)

(c) **Everlasting Father,** "Father for ever," the one who never ceases to be the Father of his people.

(d) **Prince of Peace.** A natural function of the Messiah is to bring peace (Micah 5. 5; Zech. 9. 10), and this glorious hope is in one form or another often in the prophetic message.

VI

First Sunday After Christmas

ISAIAH 32. 1-5; 35. 1-10

HAVING had, in the Christmas Lesson, a picture of the Messiah in person, it is fitting that we come now to his Commonwealth, to read publicly of the kind and beneficent, the just and righteous, kingdom which the ruler of such wondrous endowments was to govern. The verses 1-5 are by Isaiah and belong to his characteristic doctrine. The second passage which is here grouped with it is post-exilic, and has echoes of the second part of Isaiah.

32. 1. **a king shall reign.** What manner of king he is has been sufficiently declared in the richly beautiful Christmas Lesson. Here attention is focused upon his reign. He shall be surrounded by princes worthy in person and labor to share the exercise of dominion with him.

2. **a man**, that is, *each one* of these princes. They shall be utterly unlike the oppressive nobles under former kings, but instead a protection to the people.

shadow of a great [lit., "heavy"] rock, a cooler shelter than a tree would afford against the heat of an Oriental sun.

3. **shall not be dim**; rather, shall not be closed.

4. **the heart . . . the tongue.** The hasty are promised understanding, and they who had spoken in stammering or hesitating words are henceforth to speak plainly.

5. **vile person.** The *fool*; compare Nabal as an example (1 Sam. 25).

churl in the R. V., perhaps better "crafty," as in margin of the R. V., or "knave," as Cheyne suggests.

bountiful. This is another difficult word, only in Job 34. 19. Skinner suggests "lordly" as a translation. This would serve well, but is uncertain.

35. 1. **rose,** uncertain. It may be the narcissus of the springtime growing abundantly on the plain of Sharon, or perhaps more probably the autumn crocus.

7. **in the habitation.** From here on to the end of the verse the sense is obscure and the text probably mutilated in transmission.

VII

Second Sunday After Christmas

ISAIAH 42. 1-16

THE passage belongs to the Second Isaiah, and the first four verses form the first of the Servant passages (42. 1-4, 49. 1-6, 50. 4-9, 52. 13-53. 12). The whole passage belongs to the series of brilliant and moving addresses, directed to the exiles, and intended not only to encourage them to hope for and expect an end of their captivity, but also to point the way toward a greater destiny for the nation. In this first Servant passage the Servant seems to be Israel, but it is Israel glorified, Israel not as it was in captivity but as it was called to be in its mighty mission to the world for which God was preparing it. There are in some of the lines a wavering between the people and the person, but the person is not so clear as he is to be in a later Servant passage (see especially the Lesson for Good Friday).

42. 2. When the Servant begins his mission he shall work unobtrusively, not, for example, as did Elijah; and the words here make one think of how he came to recognize the quiet way, the "still small voice" as God's way (1 Kings 19. 12f.); and one must not forget the impressive application made of these words to the Lord himself (Matt. 12. 17ff.).

3. **smoking flax**, margin, "dimly burning wick." This means the faint, flickering light of goodness and of the knowledge of God found among the nations. The Servant will not put out that light however faint it be.

4. **his law**, his *revelation* of the truth. Here ends the Servant passage, and now Jehovah makes a promise.

6. covenant of the people, a very obscure phrase. Perhaps the people are conceived as a covenant linking God to the nations, the Servant embodying the covenant, which the nations are to accept.

9. the former things. These which have been predicted are now come to pass. Cyrus has been predicted, and is now come. The *new* things are these which form the substance of the present prophecy.

10. new song. The new things such as the appearance of the Servant and the conversion of the nations deserve a new song.

11. Kedar, the people of the villages and Sela, the people of the Rock, the mountain people, let all sing together of Jehovah's triumph.

14. I have long time holden my peace. Jehovah has kept silent while his people were in captivity; he will now cry out in agony.

16. This is the homebringing of God's people from captivity.

VIII

First Sunday After Epiphany

ISAIAH 44. 6-23

[Alternative p. 175.]

THIS forms a part of the message of the Second Isaiah to the exiles in Babylonia. It begins with the assertion of Jehovah's position as the only God, and of him is Israel a witness. The whole passage is 43. 1 to 44. 23, and in it there has been inserted by a later hand the fine didactic passage 44. 9-20, with its ringing exposure of the utter futility of idolatry. That it is not by the same hand as the rest matters nothing. It is its own complete justification and shows how the religion of Israel rose far above the neighboring polytheistic or pantheistic faiths.

44. 6. the first . . . the last. As an assertion of monotheism this surpasses the declaration in Isa. 43. 10. Remember the sonorous echoes and expansion of it in Rev. 1. 8, 17 and 22. 13.

7. The verse as a whole is extremely difficult in the Hebrew text, and the ordinary English version would scarcely be intelligible if read aloud to any congregation. I have tried to improve it somewhat by following the Septuagint in the opening clauses. There still remains the difficulty made by the temporal clause, "since I appointed the ancient people," which must mean that prophecy has been continuous since God founded Israel. That gives a fairly good sense, but it is not perfectly blended with the former clause. The difficulty is removed by a conjectural emendation first proposed by Oort, and widely accepted. According to this, instead of

reading, "since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and that shall come to pass let them declare," we should read, "Who hath announced from of old future things? and things to come let them declare." This is very tempting, but is, after all, conjectural and not based on the authority of the ancient versions, and I have not quite the courage to introduce it into the text.

12. **strength faileth.** He that makes these false gods exhausts himself at his labor.

20. **feedeth on ashes.** The sentence in Hebrew yields no satisfactory sense nor has any successful proposal been made for altering it.

IX

Second Sunday After Epiphany

ISAIAH 55. 1-13

THIS splendid evangelical passage belongs among the chief glories of Holy Scripture and is well worthy of a place with the richest and the best. It may well be compared with John 4. 10-25; 7. 37-44; Rev. 21. 6, 22. 17. It was addressed, in the first instance, to the exiles in Babylonia. They had at first resented sorely their deportation and enforced residence in a strange land (Psa. 137), but many had later accepted the advice of Jeremiah (29. 6), and some had made so complete a change as to have become to all practical purposes Babylonians, and had even lost their ancient and far superior faith (see verse 2), and from all the things which could never satisfy the soul the prophet calls them back, in words of tenderness, yet of power and eloquence.

55. 1. **wine and milk.** God will give his people material prosperity, typified by these two constituents of daily food in Israel, but symbolical also of spiritual food.

2. **not bread.** Let these exiles not give themselves over to luxuries in an alien land, but obey God's call and enjoy his bounty at home.

fatness, the highest spiritual blessings. Contrast Psa. 106. 15, "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their souls."

3. **everlasting covenant.** The early covenant was abrogated at the Exile; the new covenant will endure forever.

David. Under the old covenant it was promised that David's kingdom should never cease (2 Sam. 7.

8-16; Psa. 18. 50), and this is to be realized under the new covenant.

5. The heathen peoples are to be called, and shall come in haste, to the redeemed Jerusalem to acknowledge Jehovah as the true God.

6-13. A call to repentance and an assurance of acceptance and of blessing. In verses 8, 9 God's willingness to pardon is contrasted with man's little faith that salvation could be possible, and in 10, 11 the thought is presented that God's Spirit is ceaselessly operating upon the hearts of men, as rain upon God's vegetable world. Out of the world of exile (verse 12) Israel shall pour forth joyously, and as in the old covenant a rainbow was the token, so in this new covenant a blossoming desert shall be the name and sign that God shall be ever with his redeemed people.

8. **my thoughts . . . your thoughts.** The thoughts here meant are Jehovah's purposes of redemption which far surpass any that men would dare to hope or think. Compare, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29. 11).

10, 11. God's redemption is embodied in a word, which has an energy of its own, and its power is compared with the beneficent operations of nature.

12, 13. This is the exodus from Babylon, and as a memorial of it there is to be a wonderfully fertile growth in the wilderness through which the returning exiles pass.

X

Third Sunday After Epiphany

HOSEA 11. 1—12. 6

[Alternative p. 177.]

HOSEA began his public prophetic ministry about B. C. 746 in the northern kingdom. His married life was a cruel tragedy narrated in chapters 1-3, but he rose above it, and gave forth to his people a view of God tender, loving, gentle, yet ethically high, that affords a most valuable [addition to the attribute of justice and righteousness which formed the body of the teaching of his elder contemporary, Amos. The lesson of the day is characteristic of the book, and is fittingly described by George Adam Smith's title to the chapter, "The Fatherhood and Humanity of God."

11. 1. my son. The son is Israel the people. In the Gospel of Matthew (2. 15) it is applied to the childhood of Jesus.

2. The Hebrew text as translated in R. V., reads thus: "As they called them, so they went from them." This makes no sense, and I have boldly followed the Septuagint, as G. A. Smith and others, and have substituted "and the more I called them, the farther they went from me."

3. to walk. I have substituted "to walk," for the R. V. "to go," as that is clearly what is meant.

healed. In the childhood of the race God healed their diseases.

4. Here the figure changes to the heifer, whose kind master eases its yoke when it is used as a draught animal.

5. not return. So R. V. The negative spoils the sense,

and I have followed the Septuagint and taken it as "to him," connecting it with the preceding verse. ¹ to return, that is, to Jehovah.

6, 7. The text is certainly in disorder in verse 6 and the versions do not help. Emendations have been proposed, but I do not feel justified in introducing them. In even worse case is verse 7, and the English translations are deceiving. It seemed, therefore, wisest to omit these two verses from public reading, as they could not possibly convey any sense to the hearer, and there is no jar when one passes directly from 5 to 8.

8-11. The divine love will triumph over Israel's faithlessness and bring them back, even though they deserve to be destroyed, as were Admah and Zeboim, cities of the plain (Deut. 29. 22, 23).

9. I will not come to destroy. This is an emendation for the Hebrew "I will not enter into the city"—which makes no sense. Verses 10 and 11 are probably an addition.

12. This verse makes no satisfactory sense in either A. V. or R. V., and I have followed the margin of the latter with slight change partly suggested by the Jewish version. The context shows clearly enough that Judah also is rebuked and not approved, as the ordinary translations suggest.

12. 3-6. Two episodes from Jacob's life are here used for the spiritual edification of his descendants.

XI

Fourth Sunday After Epiphany

AMOS 8

AMOS was the first of the written prophets, and his message was delivered in Bethel, one of the chief cities of the northern kingdom, during the reign of Jeroboam II and about B. C. 760. The victorious campaigns of the king had restored to Israel's rule the valuable territory east of the Jordan which had been lost to Hazael, king of Damascus, during the reign of Jehu. This great success had produced effects of sure and dangerous tendency in the lives of the people. A modest and quiet reliance upon God had given way to a boastful assurance in their own prowess, and the spiritual religion was much obscured by a confidence in the power of sacrifices and offerings to blot out the guilt of sin, and so open the way to their repetition. To these people, thus minded, came Amos from the southern kingdom to preach God's demand for righteousness of life as the sole ground for the securing of his favor. The message was most unwelcome, and as it found little willing acceptance, the prophet thunders denunciation upon them, and predicts the destruction of the kingdom. The little book is amazingly rich in illustration, in deft turns of expression, in skillful adaptations of the message to objections which were probably directly voiced by his hearers, and in the variety of form in teaching. The lesson of to-day comes from a passage containing a series of visions by which the prophet enforces his conviction of the imminence of a destructive divine judgment. It is a brilliant example of the prophetic method of enforcing the immediate duty of a reformation.

1. **summer fruit.** The Hebrew word in sound suggests the Hebrew word for "end." The end is coming soon, just as the soft fruits of summer quickly decay.

2. **pass by them—pardon them.** It is too late for pardon or mercy. Judgment is coming.

3. **temple.** There was a temple in Bethel, but it shall no longer be a place of joyous praise, but a place of mourning for the numerous dead. It is the Assyrian invasion which the prophet has in mind, for he foresaw that it was sure to come. **with silence,** lit., "hush." There will be too many dead to secure an honorable and ceremonious burial.

4. **swallow up—destroy the poor.**

5, 6. The new moon, the first day of the month was observed religiously and as a holiday with business suspended, but the grasping merchants hated to lose the opportunity of gain on that day and on the Sabbath. They would keep up religion indeed, but were unwilling to give time for its service. They would cheat their customers by making an ephah measure smaller than it should—with a false bottom perhaps—and then again by changing the money balances by which the silver payments were weighed, for there was then no coined money; and to these two frauds there was added a third in the selling of the refuse of the wheat probably mixed with the good.

7. God is a God of ethical righteousness, and he will *never forget* these dishonest dealings.

8. The figure is that of an earthquake heaving up the land.

9. Here the figure is of an eclipse, and it may have been suggested to the prophet by the eclipse of June 15, B. C. 763, which would be visible at Jerusalem as a fairly large partial eclipse (so Driver).

10. **sackcloth . . . baldness—both signs of mourning.**

11, 12. When these dreadful events take place men will

be eager for some word of God which now is spurned and despised, but there will be no divine message.

13. **faint for thirst**, that is, when the Assyrians begin a siege and water is difficult or impossible to secure.

14. Men swear by that in which they believe. The people of Israel were bidden to swear by Jehovah (Deut. 6. 13; 10. 20). There was a "calf" at Samaria and the people who swore by that were swearing idolatrously, and showing disrespect to Jehovah. At Dan also was a calf, and the same applies there. The calf was really a bull intended to represent Deity and worshiped originally as a symbolic figure, as a visible object signifying Jehovah. The practice was dangerous, and when the prophets spoke against it they sneeringly called it a "calf."

the way of Beersheba. The expression is strange, and the sense not quite certain. The most probable explanation is that the oath was "by the road that ran to Beersheba," which was a sacred place, as Mohammedans sometimes swear by the road to Mecca.

XII

Fifth Sunday After Epiphany

EZEKIEL 33. 1-20

THE prophet Ezekiel was carried into captivity by Nebuchadrezzar in 597, and about 593 was called to be a prophet among his eight thousand fellow exiles. His book offers none of the critical problems, so trying to the investigator, and at times so vexing to the ordinary reader, which constantly arise in the book of Isaiah. The book as a whole comes from Ezekiel's own hand. It can, nevertheless, hardly be said that the book is popular among Christians generally or even widely or generally read. This is, however, a passage well known and deservedly popular. It is the chapter of individual responsibility, and no prophet before Ezekiel's day ever so clearly enunciated it. The doctrine is, indeed, implicit or latent in many prophetic utterances, and in other parts of the Old Testament. Here it rings strong and clear and well deserves a public hearing.

4. **upon his own head**, individual responsibility. If the watchman gives warning, he has done his duty. After that whatever befalls the citizen he may blame no one but himself.

7-9. As in the illustration of the watchman, so is it with the prophet. If he give warning and the warning is unheeded, his responsibility is fully absolved.

10. It is now necessary to remove from the people a false impression. They feel that the sins of themselves and their fathers had produced the terrible catastrophe of the captivity, and that as this was so great, their sins must be crushing in the eyes of God, and likely ultimately to destroy them utterly. From this sense of still further

calamity the effort is made to arouse them by the beautiful assurance from God given so tenderly in verse 11.

12. The past life does not determine the future. Righteousness will only deliver when maintained to the end, wickedness cannot ultimately destroy if the sinner turn from it. This does not mean that at the moment of judgment whatever a man is then doing is the basis upon which God judges. So to interpret the prophet's great message is to do him a grievous injustice. The sins of the past do have a continuing influence, and a sudden break with the past is difficult, yet such is the power of God's grace that it has often been achieved, and it is upon this great encouragement that the prophet's mind is focused. He would lift his people out of despondency into a great hope.

18-19. These verses summarize the whole argument. They are worthy of its eloquence and importance, and the whole passage should increase in us a reverence for the prophet and a sense of his greatness.

XIII

Sixth Sunday After Epiphany

EZEKIEL 34. 1-16, 25-31

[Alternative p. 179.]

EZEKIEL is in Babylonia among the eight thousand exiles, and his mind, traveling backward over the past history of his people, meditates upon the ill treatment which evil rulers have given them, and then moves forward toward a better day to come under good rulers. He describes his people under the allegory of a flock of sheep, and the shepherds are the rulers. The passage is very plain and needs little annotation.

34. 2. the shepherds, that is, the rulers.

the fat. The Septuagint translates "the milk."

In Hebrew the two words have the same consonants.

5. The allegory is a picture of Israel's history. Her rulers have governed so ill that the people have become a prey to other nations and are widely scattered. Because of this failure to govern and protect the people, these governors are to be removed (verse 10) and Jehovah himself will deliver the people from their captors and bring them home to their own land (verses 12-15).

25. covenant of peace, that is, a covenant which secures peace, by which everything that might destroy the peace is removed.

evil beasts is used figuratively for foes, or savage and destructive men. The wilderness and the woods signify the uncultivated and waste places where there are no dwellings of men; even in such places God's people, still under the figure of sheep, will be

safe. This peaceful situation is Messianic; not the Messiah personally, but his age of peace is before the prophet's mind.

26. showers of blessing, that is, showers that bring blessing.

29. a plantation of renown, that is, a plantation renowned for its fertility in the Messianic age.

famine. The land of Israel had often experienced famine but this will be true no more.

31. The Hebrew text has "are men" after the word pasture, which does not appear in the Septuagint and seems clearly to be superfluous.

XIV

Septuagesima Sunday

GENESIS 1. 1—2. 3

THIS lesson, in its present form, came into being during the Exile in Babylonia and probably about B. C. 500. The literary materials which underlie it are derived from Babylonia, and it is now possible to compare and contrast this passage with the Assyrian story of creation which had its origin early in Babylonia, but took final form in the reign of Ashurbanipal about B. C. 650. The immeasurable superiority of this Genesis story springs at once to eye and mind. The priestly writer whose high privilege it was to write these verses has left far behind the polytheism of the Babylonians, and the nature myths associated with it, and taking only the literary materials in selective part has used them as the vehicle for setting forth a knowledge of God revealed to him and to his fellows. The scheme of six days is found nowhere else and is probably of Hebrew origin. It has no special significance and is but a frame for the larger idea, and that idea is God. The writer is not focusing attention upon the works of creation, but upon God the Creator. The attempt to reconcile the simple elements of this creation story with the elaborate theories, hypotheses, and facts of modern science has led only to peril to faith, and the consequences have sometimes been disastrous to seriously minded persons whose faith was uprooted while still tender and delicate. It should ever be kept in mind that the value of the narrative lies in its power to reveal God, not to make nature and her works known. If we keep its purpose in mind, we shall find God. If we attempt to reconcile its artless phrases with the language of science, we shall lose God, and be ever driven to new reconciliations as geology or biology makes

progress. If we look upon the story as representative of views current in the ancient world about earth and man, and are quick to observe how the scriptural writer uses these as vehicles to carry forward a lofty view of God, we shall really come into the inner secret of Genesis.

1. 1. created. The word does not necessarily mean created out of nothing. In use it is, however, restricted to God, and it is therefore syntactically sound to translate it by the word "create," as it seems to point forward toward the deeper views of God which later and larger revelations were to bring forth.

3-5. The creation of light. Light and darkness were to the Hebrews essences, and when light first streamed forth it mingled with the darkness, and God now *divided* the two.

6-8. The creation of the firmament, which is a solid body whose purpose is to separate the waters of the abyss into two portions, the one above the firmament, and the other beneath, with a space between the two for further works of creation. From the upper body of water comes the rain, while from the lower body the ocean streams forth (Job 38. 8-11).

9-13. This is the third day, and to it are ascribed two works: first, the making of the dry land, by draining off the waters into the sea, and, second, the creation of vegetation.

14-19. The creation of the heavenly luminaries.

20-23. The creation of the animals of the water and the birds of the air.

24-31. To the sixth day two works are assigned.

2. 1-3. The works of creation are finished and God rests. So also must man at the end of every week. The origin of the Sabbath is found in the divine act of creation and not, as in Deuteronomy (5. 12-15), as an act of mercy and good will to servants.

XV

Sexagesima Sunday

GENESIS 3

THIS lesson belongs to the writings of the Judaistic narrator (J) and was probably composed about B. C. 850. It gives in a symbolic form an account of man's temptation, his fall from rectitude, the origin of sin and its insidious advances, and in this early case its triumph. But the writer goes on to teach that this which thus began was to be an age-long struggle, that to every man and woman temptation was sure to come, and that at last the victory was to lodge with man and not with temptation (3. 15).

3. 1. **the serpent.** Here only one of the animals which were introduced to man. It has in the beginning some sort of erect attitude, which it afterward loses. In this passage it is not identified with the Evil One, that idea being a later development in the Hebrew religion and appearing first in the apocryphal Book of Wisdom (2. 23f.)—In this passage the serpent represents the power of temptation, of which it is the symbol, or the expression, or the type. The serpent here puts forward in an artful manner the advantages of breaking the divine command, and even more artfully suggests that there is no real danger in doing it. As revelation proceeds the devil represents the methods and the powers which are here in the serpent's power, until at length our Lord is manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3. 8). There is no dualism. God and the devil are not equal. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4. 4).

2, 3. The woman corrects the serpent, and shows her sense of the importance and preciseness of the prohibition, which the serpent follows up (verses 4, 5), by suggesting an unworthy motive on God's part, and coupling with that a promise of great intellectual gain.

7. After both had eaten they passed suddenly out of innocence into knowledge, typifying the change in all mankind from the innocence of childhood slowly accomplished by the flight of time and not, as here, at once.

8. **voice**, rather "sound." They heard the footsteps of God. The representation is, of course, anthropomorphic, and no other was or is possible without the danger of slipping into pantheism.

cool; lit., the breeze, or wind of the day. After the day's heat in Oriental countries comes the evening breeze, and man may come out of his house.

12, 13. From the man and the woman confession is compelled, as they were moral agents, but no such demand is made of the serpent, as it was only an animal.

14. **dust**. The serpent is not to live by eating dust. It crawls upon the ground, and may therefore be supposed to swallow some dust as animals that live above the ground do not.

15. This splendid verse has long been called the *Protevangeli*um, and so it is. We must not ask too much of it, or read a whole system of Christian theology into it, but neither should we strip it of all meaning.

bruise. The meaning is doubtful, but no better translation has yet been suggested. The general sense of the verse is clear, however dubious may be the exact rendering of this word.

The verse holds out a hope of victory in the ceaseless antagonism between the moral nature of man

and the power of temptation which the serpent represents, but victory is not definitely promised, but only hinted in the very conditions of the contest.

16. Woman's sentence is labor in childbearing, and the domination, practiced, in the ancient Orient especially, by men. It is not that her physical nature was to be changed as a result of her sin. We must not force modern physiological knowledge upon this ancient writer. His interest was moral and religious, and he is using his material accordingly.

17-19. The sentence upon man is not work, but the laboriousness of his work. Man had to work before; he will now work at a great disadvantage.

20. Eve, Hebrew *Khawwāh*, "life." She is so called because all human life originates with her.

22-24. Man was created mortal. It is implied, though not quite stated, that had he remained innocent, he might have been permitted to eat of the tree of life and become immortal. This cannot be granted a sinful being, and he is therefore expelled from Paradise.

This is indeed a rich, fruitful, eloquent, and noble passage, and well deserves a public reading, year after year in the churches, and such an exposition of its significance as a lecture or prayer meeting might afford. A sound understanding of its age and its simple symbolism should enhance its value to every thoughtful man, and not strip it of any religious power and moral value.

XVI

Quinquagesima Sunday

GENESIS 6. 5-8, 13-22; 7. 23, 24; 9. 8-17

THE story of the Deluge belongs to mankind in a very peculiar way. Some narrative of a flood, local or extended, seems to be found almost everywhere. The origin of the biblical account is traceable to the Babylonian flood legends which had their origin in remote antiquity, and were founded originally upon some great cataclysm of nature in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. After many literary vicissitudes the story reached us in a recension belonging to the library of Ashurbanipal. How or when or in what stage it passed to the Hebrews has been the subject of much speculation, but without any sure result. The Hebrew Judaistic writer (J) about B. C. 850 wrote its earliest form, and the book of Genesis now preserves his narrative with portions derived from the priestly story (P) written in Babylonia probably about B. C. 500. The two strands have been separated by modern investigation, and shown to be different in many particulars. They both, however, have a religious value immeasurably superior to their Babylonian relatives. They are made the vehicle for lofty views of God never attained by the peoples of the Tigris-Euphrates valley.

6. 6. **repented . . . grieved.** These strong anthropopathic expressions are necessary for man's comprehension of God as a *person*, not as a force or as a power.
13. **is come before me,** that is, is resolved upon.
14. **ark:** *tēbāh*, an Egyptian word used only of Noah's ark and of the ark in which Moses was hidden (Exod. 2. 3, 5).

gopher. Only found here, and of uncertain signification, perhaps cypress.

pitch, that is, bitumen, still used for the same purpose in the Tigris-Euphrates valley.

15. The ark, as here described, would be about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high (so Driver).

18. my covenant. This is the covenant which followed in 9. 8-17.

9. 8. my covenant. It is not only with Noah, but with all men and all animals.

12. token of the covenant. A covenant must have some sign as a guarantee, and for this purpose God appoints the rainbow. Whenever it appears man shall know that God remembers and will keep his covenant.

XVII

First Sunday in Lent

JEREMIAH 8. 4-22; 9. 1

[Alternative p. 181.]

THE lesson is taken from a part of Jeremiah's teaching uttered early in the reign of Jehoiakim (B. C. 608-604) and is devoted to a denunciation of Judah's disobedience and sin.

8. 4. *fall . . . not rise.* When a man falls he rises again, but Judah is unnatural; she falls but does not rise; in other words, she continually persists in her evil way.

7. The instinct of the animals sets the time for their appearance in the proper season. "What instinct is for the beast, that religion is for man" (Cornill).

8. Israel now had the Law found in 621 in the reign of Josiah, but already there were falsifications of it or regulations which destroyed its value, or diminished men's reverence for it or use of it. This Law book was our book of Deuteronomy, or its kernel, chapters 12-26.

13. *grapes . . . figs.* The state of the people is presented under the figure of vines and trees which are barren, producing no fruit. For an interesting and beautiful parallel see Isa. 5. 1-7, and for a contrast compare, "For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out his roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17. 8).

and the things . . . from them. This whole clause is in Hebrew expressed by three words, and the trans-

lation of them is doubtful. Furthermore, they are entirely omitted in the Septuagint and the Syriac Hexaplar version, and these omissions give good reason to suspect the Hebrew text. The Jewish translation gives as the meaning, "And I gave them that which they transgress." This is ingenious, gives an interesting sense, but is doubtful.

14 and 15 are spoken by the people who are in distress and in flight from invaders.

water of gall. Gall is a plant, not yet identified, possessing a bitter flavor.

16. Dan is the extreme northern part of the territory of Israel, and from that quarter the enemy is heard approaching.

17. **adders.** The particular kind of serpent here meant is not known.

18. This is an expression of the prophet's grief over his people.

19. He is carried forward in thought to the time when the people shall be in exile.

20. This is quite likely a popular proverb. The harvest would be from April to June, while by "summer" is meant the later period in which the fruits are garnered. If the crops failed in harvest, there was still a hope in the fruits. If both failed, famine was certain.

9. 1. This verse really belongs to chapter 8. The division which assigns it to chapter 9 is unfortunate. It expresses the prophet's deep sorrow at the sufferings of his people.

XVIII

Second Sunday in Lent

GENESIS 22. 1-19

THE narrative comes from the Elohist or Ephraimistic writer and was set down probably about B. C. 800 and later incorporated in the Pentateuch. It has always been deeply admired by all who have had any real interest in literary or religious literature. Nothing else preserved from this writer's work equals it in simplicity, restrained emotion or the delicacy of handling a tragic situation. The appreciation of the beauty and moving pathos of the story is far more easy than its explanation. This is, however, no place for the discussion of certain modern theories which propose for it an ætiological meaning as an explanation of animal for human sacrifices. For our purpose we are quite justified in taking it in its simple religious significance. Here is a man, Abraham, surrounded by a society in which child sacrifice was usual and ordinary. How easy it was, under the taunts of neighbors, or in the secret of his own meditation, for Abraham to conclude that his God also demanded his best, his only son. On the very moment of accomplishing this awful deed his hand is stayed, and it is made clear to his intelligence that God's real demand is the surrender of his will. He has made that surrender, and God's joy in him is expressed in a glorious promise.

22. 1. God did prove. The translation is a great improvement upon the Authorized Version which translates "tempt." God does not "tempt" men (see James 1. 13). He does try men to test their faith and obedience. See, for example, 1 Cor. 10. 13; Heb. 11. 17; 1 Pet. 1. 6, 7.

- and said unto him, perhaps in a dream.
2. **Moriah.** The site has never yet been satisfactorily identified.
 3. **rose early.** He would act at once. Had he waited, courage might have failed him and disobedience triumphed.
 4. **afar off.** The site was then upon a height visible from a distance. After they had traveled two days, on the "third" it was visible. They will have covered thirty or forty miles.
 6. "The boy carries the heavier load, the father the more dangerous: knife and fire" (Gunkel).
 7. This is the pathetic climax. The boy's childish curiosity, the father's grim determination.
 8. **God will provide.** It is this which makes the possible typical application to Christ. See how the New Testament writers do it in John 1. 29, 36; 1 Pet. 1. 19; Rev. 5. 12.
 14. "In the mount of the Lord it shall be provided." The Hebrew text is difficult and yields no sense suited to the context, nor do the versions supply any reasonable substitute. If we would be perfectly honest with ourselves, we must admit this, and failing any worthy conjectural emendation must read the text as the R. V. has translated it.
 18. **be blessed;** rather, "bless themselves," the idea being that all successive generations shall look back upon Abraham as blessedness incarnate, and when they would wish a blessing upon any one would say, "May God make thee like Abraham."

XIX

Third Sunday in Lent

GENESIS 37. 3-12, 17-35

THIS lesson introduces reader and hearer to the most beloved, as well as the best known and most delightful of Old Testament biographies. The story is of Joseph and his unparalleled providential career. It is continued to the end of the book (with exceptions in chapters 38 and 49. 1-28) and so simple, yet so thrilling is the story, and so brilliantly and skillfully yet so restrainedly is it told that one might well long for the pleasure of reading the whole of it in public instead of this introductory passage only, beautiful and instructive though it is. The story of Joseph began to be written by the Judaistic writer (J) about B. C. 850, and by the Ephraimistic (E) about 800, and the two were woven into one perhaps during the reign of Hezekiah when there would appear to have been considerable literary activity. (Compare Prov. 25. 1.)

37. 3. coat of many colors; rather, a "tunic of palms and soles," by which is meant a garment reaching to the hands and feet.

4. loved him. The emphatic pronoun, loved *him*.

5. 9. The double dream is intended to indicate the certainty of fulfillment.

12. in Shechem. There was good pasturage in the plain east of Shechem, and better at Dothan, fifteen miles further north.

25. from Gilead. The regular trade route from Gilead still crosses the plain north of Dothan.

spicery, probably gum tragacanth; **balm,** a resinous gum, probably the exudation of the mastic tree, and specially associated with Gilead (Gen. 43. 11; Jer.

8. 22); **myrrh**, that is, ladanum, the fragrant gum of a species of cistus rose. These gums were highly esteemed in Egypt for medicinal, liturgical, and embalming purposes.

28. **twenty pieces of silver**. The price, about twelve to thirteen dollars, was two thirds of that of an ordinary (adult) slave (Exod. 21. 32), but may have been such as would be usual for a youth. Compare Lev. 27. 5.

30. **The child**. The Hebrew word *yeled* would properly be used for a small boy, and is frequently so used in the Bible.

33. **an evil beast**, Jacob draws at once the conclusion which they desired. They had not spoken, but acted a lie, and the old man was readily deceived.

35. **the grave**. The Hebrew is *Sheol*, the abode of the dead, which corresponds to the Greek *Hades*, Acts 20. 27. Jacob here means not only that he shall die mourning, but even enter mourning into Sheol. There the son will meet the father and behold his grief. It must be remembered that the Hebrew view of the place of the dead was gloomy at the best. The glory of heaven and its joys is a later idea, and in its fullness Christian.

XX

Fourth Sunday in Lent

EXODUS 3. 1-15

AFTER Moses had slain an Egyptian who was oppressing an Israelite, he had fled to the wilderness of Midian and lived there, according to the priestly records, forty years, which means simply a generation. When the divinely providential plans for Israel's rescue from the intolerable bondage in Egypt were mature, it was necessary to prepare Moses for his great task, and in this passage we have the story of his call to duty in behalf of God and men by an immediate revelation of God to him. In its present form it is composed of passages taken from the Judaistic writer (J) about B. C. 850, and the Ephraimistic (E) about B. C. 800, and the resulting narrative belongs to the greatest utterances of Holy Scripture. The dialogue is in the words of men, "seen," "heard," "come down," for there is no other way by which its lesson could be brought home to men, but we shall do well to conceive of this great revelation of God as having come, as others like it, to the inner eye and ear, to the mind and heart of Moses as he communed with God in lonely and silent abstraction from the ordinary affairs of life. So interpreted it loses nothing of reality; it is still actual, it describes a true contact between the soul of a great man and his God.

3. 1. **back of the wilderness**, that is, the western portion, as distinguished from the eastern or front. The site cannot be identified, but was probably somewhere in the region of Sinai. The region is called Sinai by J, and Horeb by E, and there is no sufficient reason yet brought forward for doubting that the same place is intended.

Mountain of God, that is, a sacred mountain, a mountain held to have been sacred long before the days of Moses. Sinai is derived from *Sin*, the name of the moon god in Babylonian.

2. angel of Jehovah. "The angel of Jehovah is a temporary, but full, *self-manifestation of Jehovah*, a manifestation usually, at any rate, in human form, possessing no distinct and permanent personality, as such, but speaking and spoken of, sometimes as Jehovah himself (e. g., v. 4a here, comp. with v. 2; Gen. 16. 10, 13; 31. 11, 13; Jud. 6. 12, 14; 13. 21f.), and sometimes as distinct from him (e. g., Gen. 16. 11; 19. 13, 21, 24; 21. 17; Nu. 22. 31)" (Driver).

flame of fire. This was a frequent form of divine manifestation.

6. God of thy father. It was no new God whom Moses was to introduce to Israel, but the same God who had manifested himself to Abraham.

8. honey. The word includes, with the product of the bee, also the widely used Oriental condiment now called in Arabic *dibs*, which is made by boiling grape juice into a dark brown and intensely sweet syrup.

Hittite, the name of a powerful and widely extended people now known by the recovery of hundreds of monuments, inscriptions, and inscribed tablets, and represented by one of their branches in the northern part of Canaan, and by still another in the neighborhood of Hebron.

Amorite. Here probably a general designation of the early inhabitants of the country when the Hebrews entered it, and practically synonymous with Canaanite.

Perizzite. Not certainly identified as any particular people. The word may perhaps come from *perāzī*, "country folk," and so mean not a tribe or clan, but merely "peasantry."

Jebusite, a minor tribe who held Jerusalem until expelled by David.

11, 12. Moses feels himself unfitted to so great a task, and is assured of the divine presence and support.

13-22. The second difficulty brought forward by Moses is that he does not know God's name.

14. **I am that I am**, or, *I will be that I will be*. This is intended as an interpretation of the divine name Yahweh (Jehovah) which in its usual form is the third person imperfect of a verb and means "*he will be*." It is here put into the first person, as Jehovah is the speaker. The meaning, then, is that Jehovah *will be* to Moses and his people, *what he will be*, and that signifies that his nature is too great and high then to be completely described, but it will be gradually unfolded as the people intrust themselves to him.

I am, or, better, *I will be*.

15. **this is my name**. This remaining part of the verse, including the parallel clause, has, as Driver has pointed out, almost a poetical tone, and indeed the Hebrew phrase "to all generations" occurs elsewhere only in a poetical passage. (Prov. 27. 24.)

XXI

Fifth Sunday in Lent

EXODUS 33. 7-23

THE lesson is taken from the chapters 32-34, which are given over to incidents connected with the episode of the Golden Calf—the sacred bull image intended to represent Jehovah—and this particular passage partly from the Judaistic writer about B. C. 850, and the Ephraimistic about B. C. 800. The connection between the mention of the Tent of Meeting and the rest of the narrative is not clear, but it has its own interest, and there is no sufficient reason for separating it in this lesson from the impressive and beautiful story of Moses' search for God's visible presence.

33. 7. **tent of meeting**, that is, the tent where Moses met God, and to which all who would seek God must resort.

9. **the pillar of cloud**. The symbol of Jehovah's presence.

10. **worshiped**—did obeisance; bowed themselves.

12. **whom thou wilt send**. It had been promised that an angel should be sent (32. 34, 33. 2). The question, then, would seem to mean, which angel was to be chosen.

by name, that is, individually, to know by name is to know intimately.

13. In spite of all the assurances already given him Moses still longs for a deeper knowledge of God, and further assurance that God's grace would be with him to answer future prayers.

14. **give thee rest**, namely, in the promised land of Canaan.

15. The meaning is that if God will not go with them, they prefer to remain in the neighborhood of Sinai, where was the mountain of God (Exod. 3. 1); compare the phrase "brought you unto myself" (Exod. 19. 4); that is, to Jehovah's abiding place at Sinai.

18. Moses pleads for a further revelation of God, *show me thy glory*, that is, thy majesty.

19. *goodness*, *goodliness* or *comeliness*, the outward expression of God's perfection.

the name of the Lord. We may well compare with this God's revelation of his name to Moses (Exod. 3. 14). Here the name is further expounded. Jehovah (Yahweh) is a God who knows how to be gracious to whom he will be gracious, even though men sin against him.

20. *man shall not see me and live.* This is a frequently expressed idea in the Old Testament, that no man could see God, certainly not in his full glory. See Isa. 6. 5 and compare also Gen. 32. 30, Deut. 4. 33, Judg. 6. 22ff., and 13. 22.

23. *my back.* Not the face of God does Moses see, but, as the Hebrew says literally, "my hinder parts." Let us not be hasty to make this anthropomorphic. It means really the "after glow" which Jehovah leaves behind him, as a suggestion of what the full glory must be. Gregory Naz. calls it "all the indications of himself which He has left behind him." Compare the beautiful passage Wisdom 13. 1-9, and the fine phrase in Job 26. 14.

XXII

Palm Sunday

ZECHARIAH 8. 14-23; 9. 9, 10

THE prophet Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, and his earliest work was an effort to induce the people to rebuild the Temple, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar in B. C. 586. The earliest utterance of the prophet is dated in November, B. C. 520 (Zech. 1. 1), and the latest (7. 1) on December 4, 519. The first eight chapters of the present book alone belong to this prophet, while chapters 9-14 are to be ascribed to an unknown prophet living in the Greek period and probably between B. C. 333 and 175. For this lesson a few verses are taken from Zechariah to introduce the Messianic passage from the Second Zechariah.

8. 14. **As I thought to do evil.** Zechariah is addressing the returned exiles, and reminds them that God had inflicted upon them that captivity as a punishment for the sins of the nation, but that is now past and they need fear no more if only they meet the moral conditions which God imposes (verses 16, 17).

19. The fasts here mentioned are commemorative of the terrible days of Jerusalem's sufferings at the hands of the Chaldeans. The *fourth* month, ninth day, was the day when Jerusalem's walls were breached, and the Chaldeans entered the city after Zedekiah had fled (2 Kings 25. 3-5; Jer. 52. 6-8). The *fifth* month, tenth day, brought the destruction of the city, palace and Temple by fire (Jer. 52. 12, 13). In the *seventh* month Gedaliah was murdered (2 Kings 25. 23, 25; Jer. 40. 5, 7; 41. 1, 2), and the *tenth* month, tenth day

was the anniversary of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, a year and a half earlier than the time of the breaching of the walls (2 Kings 25. 1; Jer. 52. 4). These were all anniversaries of sad events, but the sting had been taken from them by the mercies of God and the influences of time, and they were now to be cheerful feasts. The dark days are forever past and so great will be Judah's prosperity and joy that many peoples and strong nations will come to seek the favor of Jehovah, who hath wrought such marvels for his people.

21. **Let us go.** The nations are urging one another to make the pilgrimage to Judah. Compare Isa. 2. 3 and again in Mic. 4. 2.

9. 9-10. The Messianic king enters his capital triumphantly riding not as a warrior on a horse, but as a man of peace upon an ass. See the New Testament use of the passage in Matt. 21. 5; John 12. 15. The fulfillment is not temporal but *spiritual*, not a conqueror of men by the arts of war, but the king of peace.

XXIII

Good Friday

ISAIAH 52. 13—53. 12

THIS is the last and by far the greatest of the most interesting and most impressive Servant passages. The first is found in Lesson VII. In that the Servant is Israel, and as the passages advance the Servant represents an ideal Israel within the real Israel, and wavering hints of a person rather than a people (49. 1-6; 50. 4-9) until at last the whole scene changes and the Servant is before us not only as a person but as a *suffering* person, whose pitiable plight moves whole nations to do him homage, and kings to be silent in his presence. Well and truly have apostles and teachers ancient and modern fastened loving eyes upon the passage, and seen in its dear words an adumbration of future words and deeds, even the "sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." No other passage in the Old Testament offers an anticipation so wonderful. Who dares to read this in public without deep emotion?—and upon Good Friday of all days.

52. 14. *stattle*. "Sprinkle" is the ordinary translation, but it cannot be justified by the Hebrew. See the commentaries.
53. 1, 2. Here the nations begin to speak, and at first express surprise at the unbelief which has surrounded the wonderful news of the Servant. The connection of this with verse 2 is not quite clear, but one must not expect of the prophet an order of thought logical in western eyes but not so natural to Oriental thinking. In verse 2 the prophet comes at once to a vivid description of the Servant as one who has suffered so as to be marred in form and feature.

In this verse we see that the people shrank from him because they thought that the divine wrath against him personally had produced this result. They thought he was a sinner, as Job's friends thought he was, and therefore justly under the divine displeasure.

4-6. In these verses the people see the truth. The Servant has not suffered for his sins but for theirs. Here begins their own consciousness of sin.

Chastisement of our peace. Chastisement is punishment inflicted for moral ends, and here is meant to be sufficient to issue finally in peace.

8. by oppression, etc. The verse is extremely difficult and obscure. The words have become so familiar by repetition that we do not usually stop to ask what they really mean. As the meaning is so doubtful in Hebrew, I have not dared to change the translation. Numerous suggestions have been made as to the meaning, and perhaps the most probable, though far from certain, is that "From oppression and judgment he was taken away," that is, by death.

his life. This clause is also both difficult and doubtful. It is here set down according to the Revised margin because none of the numerous suggestions for either emendation or amendment seem soundly based.

9. With this verse the speaking of the nations comes to an end, and verses 10-12 are the words of the prophet in part speaking for himself, in part for Jehovah. These concluding verses are obscure. The texts of the Hebrew and of the Septuagint differ largely and the difficulty which we experience is therefore ancient. It is not likely that we shall ever extract a precise exegesis of the words as they now stand. We must content ourselves with an

apprehension of the main thought, which seems to be that the Servant will remove guilt and bring many to righteousness. As his reward he shall live long, and shall see his seed, that is, his spiritual children, and for his undeserved sufferings and his mediatorial work shall become a great potentate with the powers of a royal and victorious conqueror. Then suddenly there is a return, in the very last words to the spiritual significance of the Servant's work as vicarious suffering.

12. a portion with the great. The Servant is to be numbered with the great of earth, and in this it is implied that political dominion is to come to him.

divide the spoil. It is the prerogative of the conqueror to do this, and the Servant is therefore to be a great conqueror, but the prophet takes care to guard the spiritual character of the Servant by adding at once that he is a conqueror by reason of a religious preeminence obtained by the bearing of the sins of a whole people.

It were quite impossible to overstate the greatness or to praise overmuch the beauty and the profound religious significance of the whole passage. He is indeed a poor creature who can read it in public without deep emotion, restrained by public dignity, yet possessing him within.

XXIV

Easter Day

EXODUS 12. 1-14

[Alternative p. 184.]

THE passage comes from the hand of the priestly writer, who composed it in Babylonia probably about B. C. 500. It gives the priestly regulations for the Passover, instituted in Egypt to protect the houses of the Israelites. It was quite probably an ancient form of sacrifice among the Semites and was simply adapted to new conditions and fitted with a new significance.

12. 2. this month. It corresponds to March-April in our calendar and in the early records was named Abib, and in the later Nisan. It was the new beginning of the new year, for the old Hebrew year began in the autumn.

3. congregation. The priestly name for Israel organized as a church.

tenth day. There is no certainly known reason for the choice of the tenth day for the ceremony, but we may remind ourselves that the Day of the Atonement fell on the tenth day of the seventh month, and that the tenth day of the twelfth month in Islam is the day of the great sacrifice at Mecca, so some sanctity must have belonged to the day among Semites.

lamb. The Hebrew word means either "lamb" or "kid."

6. at even. The Hebrew means "between the two evenings," which meant the interval between sunset and darkness; that is, the first evening would be

about a half hour after sunset, at the end of which, under average conditions, the new moon would appear. The second evening would be the hour between that and the coming of complete darkness.

8. unleavened bread, R. V. The Hebrew is plural, and *cakes* would be a better rendering. The phrase means a sort of biscuit which could be baked quickly for an unexpected guest, which, if leavened, would require much longer time to wait for the raising of the dough.

9. not raw, lest blood be thus consumed, which was forbidden (Lev. 7. 26).

roast. We do not certainly know why it was forbidden to be boiled. There may be a survival of some ancient custom in the prohibition.

10. Nothing must be left over, lest the sacred flesh be profaned in some way.

13. pass over. The Hebrew word is *pāsach*, which is cognate to *pésach* and *Pésach* is the word used for this sacrifice, the Passover. It has come down to us in the New Testament form *Pascha*, from which we derive the adjective Paschal.

XXV

First Sunday After Easter

ISAIAH 52. 1-12

THE lesson belongs to the Second Isaiah and follows most beautifully and fitly upon the story of the Passover lesson of Easter. Then the people of Israel was bidden to eat the Passover "in haste" (Exod. 12. 11) or, as the word may better be translated, in *trepidation* (so Driver); but now in the exodus from Babylon they were not "to go out in haste." This is a passage of rare beauty and much beloved, for the Christian Church has taken over its beautiful words and wrought them into the music of the Messianic kingdom.

52. 1. **awake.** Zion is to come out of the sleepy lethargy of exile.

uncircumcised. This does not mean that no uncircumcised shall enter the redeemed Jerusalem, but only none as a conqueror.

3-6 are in prose, and probably inserted to take the place of some verses that had been lost.

sold for nought. Jehovah sold his people into exile for their sins. He received no money for them, and so may now take them back without payment.

4. **into Egypt.** Thither had they gone as guests (Gen. 45. 9-20).

without cause, that is, without any just case against them.

7. The herald comes over the mountains with a message of victory. Compare the use which the apostle makes of the fine phrase. Rom. 10. 15.

Thy God reigneth. Once again is there a king in Zion, and this time it is God himself.

8. the voice . . . watchmen. Lit., "Hark! Thy watchmen."

eye to eye; that is, *clearly*. It does not mean that God will be visible.

9. hath comforted . . . hath redeemed. This has not yet come, but it is so certain that the prophet uses perfect tenses.

11. thence, that is, presumably from Babylon.

vessels, the Temple vessels carried off from Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar.

12. not . . . in haste. When the people left the bondage in Egypt it was in haste (Exod. 12. 11; Deut. 16. 3.), but there is to be now no haste, but in glorious contrast the people are to march out in triumph protected before and behind with the presence of their God.

rear guard. R. V. reads the old word "rearward," which is perhaps obsolete or obsolescent. The Hebrew occurs again in Num. 10. 25 and Josh. 6. 9, 13.

XXVI

Second Sunday After Easter

EXODUS 16. 2-15

THE lesson is taken from a passage written in its present form for the greater part by a priestly writer (P) during the Exile in Babylonia, with which there have been incorporated a few verses from the Judaistic writer (J) about B. C. 850. The whole has been welded into one by the compilers of the Pentateuch. The passage is interesting in itself and not without a lesson as to the Divine Providence in giving food to men in his own way.

16. 3. by the flesh pots. Though they had suffered much at the hands of their taskmasters, the bounty of Egypt remains in remembrance. Compare Numbers 11. 5: "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt for nought; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions and the garlic."

5. prepare. Compare Numbers 11. 7, 8: "And the manna was like coriander seed, and the appearance thereof as the appearance of bdellium. The people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in mortars, and seethed it in pots, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil."

9-12. These verses have been at some time accidentally displaced. They belong after verse 5, and I have there placed them. The command given to the people in verse 6-8 should follow the command from God to deliver it.

10. the glory of Jehovah. Probably a great glow of fire above the Tent of Meeting and though brilliant in itself yet intended to shield from human eyes the

greater glory of the Lord which no human eyes could behold.

12. at even; lit., "between the two evenings"; that is, the interval between sunset and darkness. See the note on Exodus 12. 6, Lesson XXIV, p. 89.

13. the quails. A migratory bird which comes out of Arabia in March and April and often in immense numbers. They fly with the wind, and being weak of wing alight at night; sometimes they even cover the ground, and are easily captured by hand.

14. a thin flake. R. V., "small round thing," which is without sound philological basis. See for another description of manna the note on verse 5 above.

15. What is it? Hebrew *mān-hū*, intended as a popular etymology for "manna," the real origin of the word being still unknown.

XXVII

Third Sunday After Easter

DEUTERONOMY 4. 1-20

[Alternative p. 186.]

THE book of Deuteronomy was discovered in the reign of Josiah king of Judah, during some Temple restorations in the year B. C. 621. In its present form additions have been made at the beginning and the end, and as Josiah first saw it, and put its enactments into force, it probably consisted of chapters 12-26. The influence of the book was incalculable, for it not only transformed the kingdom under Josiah but its spirit, and often its very ideas, are traceable in several other books of Holy Scripture. The period of its writing is uncertain and the hand that wrote it is quite unknown, but its interpretation of God's will as set down in the form of a rereading and rewriting of the work of Moses lives forever. This lesson belongs to the second part of the first discourse of Moses, and is an exhortation to Israel to cherish her glorious advantages and privileges in the possession of a God so glorious, and a law so excellent, and not to run any risk of losing a spiritual apprehension of God by drifting back into idolatries like her neighbors.

4. 2. **Ye shall not add.** It is important that the law be not weakened by superfluous expansions, or by accommodations to the whims of the moment.

3. **Baal-peor.** The historic episode is recounted in Num. 25. 1-5.

6. Israel's observance of God's law will bring her honorable repute among the people with whom she is to live in Canaan.

7. **gods.** The Hebrew may mean either god or gods, but the latter seems preferable here. R. V. has "a god."

8. **so righteous.** Israel's laws are righteous, that is, they conform to all the requirements of ideal right and justice.

9. **thy heart.** In Hebrew psychology the "heart" is the seat of intellect, not of emotion, as with us. Here, then, memory is implied; the law must be kept in mind.

12. **ye saw no form.** There was no material shape or substance before them, and therefore there should be no temptation to them to make any material representation of Deity (see verses 15-18).

13. **ten commandments.** Lit., "ten words," that is, the Decalogue.

15-19. Israel is warned not to make any image to reverence or worship it as divine. The prohibition is sweeping, and no exception is made.

18. **water under the earth.** This means the subterranean deep of waters which was believed to be the source of all springs, and hence of all streams.

19. The worship of the heavenly bodies might presumably tempt an Israelite, especially as neighboring peoples did practice it extensively. In their case it was by a Divine Providence, for God had "*divided*," or, rather, allotted it to them. But this worship is not permitted to Israel, for God has specially chosen her for his own inheritance (verse 20).

XXVIII

Fourth Sunday After Easter

DEUTERONOMY 6. 4-25

A SIMPLE general statement about the book of Deuteronomy as a whole may be read at the beginning of the notes on Lesson XXVII. This lesson belongs to the Second Discourse, which fills chapters 5 to 11.

6. 4-9. This section, beginning with the word "hear" in the English Version, is the Creed of Judaism, filling a place in that great modern faith similar to the position of the Apostles' Creed among many Christian churches. Its initial word in Hebrew is *Shěma'* (that is, "hear") and is the first bit of Scripture taught to Jewish children along with Deut. 11. 13-21 and Num. 15. 37-41. The latter two are great and beautiful indeed, but the *Shěma'* is far above them, for it declares the Divine Unity in fullness, and the old Zohar says, "When men in prayer declare the Unity of the Holy Name in love and reverence, the walls of earth's darkness are cleft in twain, and the Face of the Heavenly King is revealed, lighting up the universe."

6. 4. **one Lord.** This denotes both the unity and the uniqueness of Jehovah. He is the only God, and he is also one Lord.

5. **love the Lord.** Enjoined only in Deuteronomy and in the books influenced by it, and in our Lord's words the first of all the commandments (Mark 12. 29f.).

6. **upon thine heart,** that is, commit them to memory.

7. **teach them diligently.** Lit., "prick in," "whet," "sharpen," that is, make incisive.

8. **bind them.** Interpreted literally by the Jews, who wrote the passage (4-9) upon tiny parchment rolls,

which were then inclosed in metal cases, and worn by them on brow and arm at morning prayer.

9. door posts. The Jews wrote the Shema also on parchment and inclosed it in a tiny wooden or metal box called Mezuzah, and affixed it to the right hand door post, and every pious Jew touches it or salutes it on entering, reciting at the same time the words, "The Lord shall keep thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and forever more" (Psa. 121. 8). There is no real reason for supposing that the book of Deuteronomy intended this other than metaphorically, as also verse 8.

10-15. When Israel enjoys material blessings in her land she must not forget Jehovah and worship other gods.

13. swear by his name. A man swears, in substantiation of his word, by that in which he believes. It was, therefore, important that Jews should make oath only by Jehovah.

16. Massah, that is, proving. See Exod. 17. 2, 7.

20-25. The children of every generation are to be taught the Law, and its meaning and its historical background. The law of God was given in human history and is not understandable save in that historical environment.

XXIX

Fifth Sunday After Easter

DEUTERONOMY 8. 2-20

FOR observations upon the book of Deuteronomy as a whole see Lesson XXVII, p. 95. This present lesson belongs to the central portion of the book, which contains the exposition of the Mosaic Law. In it Israel is bidden to remember God's providential guidance in the wilderness, and knowing from this how dependent she has been upon God's bounty be ever mindful to keep his commandments in gratitude.

8. 2. **forty years**, that is, the period of a generation according to Hebrew reckoning.

3. **manna**. Lit., "What is it?" according to a popular etymology. It was probably the exudation from the trunk and branches of the *tarfa*, a species of the tamarisk. The lesson which they were intended to learn was that they were entirely dependent upon God who could satisfy the needs of their bodies by other than the normal means. Our Lord makes a spiritual application and contrast in Matt. 4. 4.

4. **blister**. R. V., "swell."

5. **disciplineth**. R. V., "chasteneth."

7. The description of the Palestinian landscape is very attractive. It is really contrasted with Egypt, where there are no brooks or wells like Palestine but only the great Nile as a source of irrigation.

depths. The great deep which was supposed to exist under the earth, and to supply water to the springs and streams.

8. The products of the land are enumerated with wheat and barley first as the staple food of man. oil

olives are the olive trees which have been grafted and produce oil as distinct from the wild olive trees.

9. iron. Brought from the north, where the Assyrians worked it in the Lebanon region.

brass here means copper, or bronze, its alloy with tin, and not what we mean by brass, which is an alloy with zinc.

14. out of the land of Egypt. Always do the biblical writers keep in mind the providential beginning of their people's history.

16. thy latter end, rather, "thy later years" is the meaning.

18. Prosperity comes only from Jehovah. Man may work, must work, indeed—but it is God that gives the increase, and Israel must keep this fundamental fact in mind. Compare Psa. 127.

19, 20. The Lord is expelling peoples before Israel, because they had failed to meet the conditions of a continued existence. If Israel fails also by yielding to the temptations of Canaanite worship, with all its incitements to deeds of lust, then Israel also shall go to a sure doom. (Compare Deut. 4. 25f. and 6. 14f.)

XXX

Sunday After Ascension Day

DEUTERONOMY 30

FOR observations upon the book of Deuteronomy as a whole, see Lesson XXVII, p. 95. The present lesson belongs to Moses's third discourse, which fills 29. 1—30. 20. In chapter 28 God threatens to abandon his people, if his law be not kept, "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all peoples, from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth" (verse 64) and the threat is continued in verses 65—68 in a rising tide of threatening invective. From this threatened exile the beautiful chapter now before us gives the conditions of return.

30. 1. which I have set before thee, that is, offered as a choice.

3. change thy fortune. R. V., "turn thy captivity," compare, however, Amos 9. 14, Hos. 6. 11, etc. (so Driver and G. A. Smith, who translate "turn thy fortune," both following Ewald).

4. uttermost parts of heaven; that is, the remote ends of earth on which the vault of heaven was supposed to rest.

6. circumcise thy heart; that is, sharpen the spiritual perceptions. The thought is a Messianic one (so Dillmann); compare Jer. 31. 33, 32. 39f., Ezek. 11. 19 (Driver).

11—20. The commandments thus to be followed are not too hard. The verses 11—14, however, do not naturally follow upon verse 10, and are but loosely connected at the best.

12, 13. These verses were sometimes quoted by ancient Rabbis to prove the finality of the law. No

second Moses was needed to bring new laws out of Heaven, for there were no more laws there. This was the type of reasoning which caused the rejection of our Lord as a Messiah when he appeared among men. No room could be made for his teaching.

14. very nigh. Prophets and teachers and the discourses of Deuteronomy have brought it very near. There can be no excuse of ignorance concerning it.

16. The ordinary text, which is translated in R. V., makes no satisfactory sense. I have, therefore, restored clauses which the Septuagint has preserved. The imperfection of the Hebrew text is concealed from the reader by a mistranslation of one word. The restoration of the Septuagint text is supported by Dillmann, Oettli, Marti, Driver, and G. A. Smith. The whole then reads, ["If thou shalt hearken to the commandment of Jehovah thy God] which I command thee this day, to love Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his judgments, then thou shalt live and multiply, and Jehovah thy God shall bless thee." The part inserted is here placed in brackets.

19, 20. Heaven and earth are called as witnesses that Israel has been fully informed of the choice. So also in 4. 26.

XXXI

Whitsunday

JOEL 2. 21-32

[Alternative p. 188.]

NOTHING is known of the prophet Joel beyond what may be gathered from the contents of his little book. His father's name is given as Pethuel, but the time when the prophet lived was evidently not known when the brief superscription to the book was written. He quite possibly lived and worked about B. C. 500, which would make him a later contemporary of Haggai and of Zechariah, but he may well belong to a century later. The matter is interesting, but quite unimportant so far as an intelligent use of his little book is concerned. The occasion of his book is perfectly clear. There had been a frightful and destructive visit of locusts, accompanied probably by a drought, which had desolated the land and almost extinguished hope. Joel takes the occasion as a call to repentance and a new life, and having enforced this with every insistence turns then, after receiving assurance of a compliance with his admonitions, to declare God reconciled with his erring but repentant people and promises to them material succor and a glorious spiritual uplift.

2. 21. **land.** Lit., "ground," which had suffered so severely from locusts and drought.

hath done. The prophetic past. It describes what Jehovah *will* do.

22. The animals that have suffered for food need fear no more, for pasture and fruit trees shall spring forth again.

23. **former rain,** that is, the rain of October and No-

vember, the latter rain, the rain of March-April. **the rain**, that is, the winter rain.

25. The verse contains a series of words for the locust. We have no such set of synonyms, though we do know the literal meanings of the different words. Driver thus translates them: locust-swarmer, cankerworm-lapper, caterpillar-finisher, and palmerworm-shearer.

28-32. After these material blessings Jehovah will give as great a measure of spiritual gifts.

28. **my spirit**. As the spirit in man gives him life, and imparts power and activity to the "flesh," so the Spirit of God is his "conscious vital force," which, proceeding from him, gives life to all beings, man and animal also. From this gift proceed in man quickened intellectual faculties, extraordinary gifts of mind and thought, and above these every spiritual faculty.

shall prophesy. The prophetic gift comes from the bestowal of God's gift. Joel foresees in its abundant outpouring the coming of the day when the hope of Moses (Numbers 11. 29) shall be fulfilled. To prophesy does not mean merely to predict future events, but far more to instruct in religious and moral truth.

The words from verse 28 to verse 32 (delivered) are quoted by Peter (Acts 2. 17-21) as applied to the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, but they are further a prophecy of an entire dispensation of the gift of the Spirit and their meaning is not exhausted by the Pentecost of the early days of the apostles.

XXXII

Trinity Sunday

ISAIAH 6. 1-13

ISAIAH was called to be a prophet in the year that Uzziah, king of Judah, died, which was probably the year B. C. 740. This lesson describes the spiritual experience by which he was inducted into his office. The manner in which he has dated it intimates that the writing took place at least some time after the call, though there is not the slightest reason for any presumption that he may have made any addition to the content of this great event when he wrote it down. The call came to him amid throngs of worshipers in the Temple. There he passed into a sort of trance and in a vision saw sights of grandeur, splendor, and awful simplicity, while the eyes of those about him saw only the physical objects to which earthly eyes were accustomed. Though necessarily described in terms of seeing and of hearing, it was only to the inner eye and the inner ear that these sights and sounds were manifest. Yet it is an actual experience that is here recorded. It made Isaiah a new man, reconciled to God and commissioned to his service, and in his whole career he never doubted it. Henceforth he spoke with authority, and men recognized it.

6. 1. **I saw the Lord**; not, indeed, his face, but only the great presence, upon a throne which was high and lifted up, and upon the skirts of his great train the eyes of the prophet rested.

2. **seraphim**. Beings mentioned nowhere else in Scripture, and to be conceived probably as of human form.

3. **Holy**. The word thrice repeated represents an emphasis upon the supreme attribute of God. The word "holy" in the Old Testament has the root idea

of separateness, set-apartness, and as here applied to God indicates his complete separation from all the influences which tend to defile man. From what follows we see that Isaiah thought ethical righteousness to be a great part of this separateness, and in his contemplation of the Divine Presence was led at once to think of himself as a sinful man.

4. **smoke.** A symbol of the divine anger against sin.

5. **a man of unclean lips.** Neither is the prophet fit to speak for God, nor are the people fit to pronounce the divine name in praise. In the prophet's case his whole sinful nature seems expressed in these sinful lips, and the hot coal from the altar is needed to purify. As soon as he is purged, there comes at once the call to service.

9-12. Now comes the saddening word that though the prophet is fitted for his declaring of the divine message, the people are not fitted to hear it and understand it, and accept it and be healed. The prophet is sent to a task in which the outlook is not for success but for failure.

13. A most difficult verse. The last clause—"the holy seed is the stock thereof" is not in the Septuagint and is probably not genuine. If we leave that out, what remains is no less difficult, but rather more so. The meaning would then be the utter destruction of the people. But this is certainly not Isaiah's doctrine. He believed, rather, in the saving and saved remnant, as his son's name indicates, Shear-jashub (7. 3), which means, "a remnant shall turn"; that is, turn from sin to God, and hence be saved as a God-fearing people. This seems to compel us so to interpret what remains as implying that though the trees be felled, the stock remains, and from it one should hope that the life of the nation would spring again.

XXXIII

First Sunday After Trinity

JOSHUA 1. 1-17

THE book of Deuteronomy is a sermon, most beautiful, most moving, and still most instructive. The book of Joshua is a little volume of illustrations of the principles of Deuteronomy worked out in the life of the nation. Its chief hero is Joshua, first the servant or minister of Moses and then his successor as the people's leader, but the chief historical interest is in Judah, and there the book must have been written. The book was not written by one hand, but grew as time demanded and opportunity offered. The men who put it together had earlier writings before them, and we can see that they utilized narratives of Judaistic and Ephraimistic writers whose work is found in the Pentateuch to form an instructive book for religious teaching, and in the spirit of Deuteronomy. With this were later combined the records which Priestly writers had preserved and written down during the Exile. The fine passage here used as a lesson contains no priestly material, but only Judaistic and Ephraimistic material with phrases which show the hand of a writer who lived in the spirit of Deuteronomy and loved it.

1. 4. With this verse compare Deut. 11. 24 which is there the word of Moses, and here the word of Jehovah. **the land of the Hittites**, a phrase often used by the Assyrian kings as more or less synonymous with the land of the Amorites for Syria and Palestine. Among Hebrew writers the land of the Amorites, or the land of the Canaanites, is the phrase for the Promised Land. Here the land of the Hittites is practically synonymous with these.

Sea of the going down of the sun. That is, the Mediterranean Sea.

10. officers. The Hebrew word *shoterim* is used in various senses, but in this passage would appear to signify the army officers who pass down orders through the ranks.

12. Reubenites . . . Gadites . . . Manasseh. These were already settled east of Jordan, and Joshua is reminding them that it is their duty to help their brethren in conquering the territory west of the river, which proved to be a far harder task in the issue. In verse 16 we have recorded their promise to give aid.

The great and echoing words of this chapter are *Be strong and of good courage*. There are no promises made to cowards, cravens, or shirkers, nor was the future to be safe in their hands.

XXXIV

Second Sunday After Trinity

JUDGES 4. 1-16, 23

THE book of Judges, like Joshua, is a compilation of historical materials derived from the ancient writers, Judaistic and Ephraimistic, whose work is so extensively recognized in the Pentateuch. This was utilized for pragmatic or didactic purposes by an editor or editors who seem to have been influenced not so much by Deuteronomy as scholars generally have supposed, but, as Burney has argued, by an earlier disciple of E, who laid the structure of the book as early as B. C. 650. To this were later affixed the brief introduction (1. 1—2. 5), the appendices 18—21, the stories of the minor Judges, and a few other pieces. For the present purpose the main consideration should be not the origin but the present character and value of the book. It is passing strange to see how little popularity the book enjoys among ordinary Christian readers. It is most highly valued by scholars who appreciate its enormous historical value. It is crowded with romantic incidents, it has in rich measure the quality of reality, and one reads its glowing pages with a feeling of the presence of its actors, living and moving before the eye of imagination. The lesson here given should be read in public after the reader has himself read repeatedly the splendid contemporary poem in Judges 5. That will fire the blood and quicken the pulses and then one might read this far tamer prose passage as it should be read.

4. 2. **Jabin king of Canaan.** There were many kings in Canaan, but to this passage Jabin appears as king *par excellence*, as a sort of overlord.

Hazor (Josh. 19. 36). Probably the modern El-

Hadireh, south-southwest of Kadesh and on the northern side of the wady which runs into the lake of Huleh (so Burney).

Sisera, quite probably a Hittite name.

Harosheth, probably now represented by *el-Haritiyeh* on the northern bank of the Kishon.

3. **twenty years**, a general number signifying half a generation.

4. **Deborah**. The name means "bee."

Lappidoth. The name means "torches."

was judging, that is, deciding cases between man and man. But the time had now come for rousing men to give up disputing about small matters and to fight for liberation from the oppressor.

6. **Barak**. The name means "lightning."

deploy. R. V. reads "draw unto," but it is a military term and means to extend a marching column into a loose fighting line, to face an enemy.

Tabor. The fine mountain which rises conspicuously to a height of thirteen hundred and twelve feet above the plain. The line would be at the base with the mountain glens to fall back on for guerrilla fighting should defeat come on the plain.

Kishon. At Sisera's back would be the sluggish waters of this little river, with some ugly quicksands into which Barak might drive him. The Hebrew position was admirably chosen.

8. **If thou wilt go**. As prophetess she would bring not only her own courage and native wisdom but also the sense of divine companionship and help.

9. Deborah warns Barak that he need not expect glory; that is fated to fall not to Deborah indeed, but to another woman, Jael.

11. **father-in-law**. R. V. translates "brother-in-law," but without warrant.

15. Sisera fled to meet his death by assassination at the hands of Jael. Israel's writer thinks not, as we do, of the work of an assassin. The world has traveled far since that day, and we have no need to judge Israel save by the standards of her own time. Even without Jael's share, it was a glorious victory and gave Israel a breathing space in which to carry on the work of civilization, and the writer had good cause to ascribe this good result to God (verse 23).

16. The rout of Sisera's army was accomplished through a combination of circumstances, each natural in itself, and all providentially working toward this one end. It was natural that the army should endeavor to reach the stronghold of Harosheth, and the storm had so swelled the current of Kishon as to fill the narrow pass which led to their objective. The hills of Samaria were on their left, and on their right a stream now become a torrent, and behind them Barak's victorious men. See the descriptions in Thomson's *Land and Book*, p. 436, and compare Ewing in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, vol. iii, p. 5.

XXXV

Third Sunday After Trinity**1 SAMUEL I. 1-5, 9-28**

HERE begins the story of Samuel's life, and the portion here chosen belonged originally to a separate book to what we should call a biography of him. It is a continuation of the work of the Ephraimistic writer (E) about B. C. 800, to whom we owe so much in the Pentateuch. There need be no doubt of the greatness of Samuel or any question of the importance of his contribution to the life and history of his people. We may well be glad that the compilers of the books of Samuel preserved this narrative of his birth and youthful days.

1. **2. two wives.** A well-to-do citizen with two wives was not uncommon in the early days.

Hannah means "grace," and **Peninnah** perhaps "coral."

3. **Lord of hosts.** This title occurs eleven times in Samuel, and is frequent in the prophets. Its original meaning was Lord of the armies of Israel, but in times more peaceful came to signify Lord of the hosts of heaven; that is, "of the stars," and still later "of the angels."

Shiloh. The modern Seilun, almost ten miles northeast of Beitin (Bethel).

5. **one portion.** R. V. translates "a double portion," but the present Hebrew text scarcely allows it, and a dispute as to the meaning of the Hebrew word thus translated has long continued. The Septuagint has another word, and I have used it and changed the translation to accord. The general meaning would

then be that he gave several portions to Peninnah because she had children. On the other hand Hannah received only one portion, but the writer in order to guard against the possible thought that one portion only might make her seem to be less highly esteemed adds, "though he loved Hannah."

9. and stood before Jehovah. So the Septuagint—which gives a far better sense. To stand before Jehovah is to pray.

16. a wicked woman. Lit., a daughter of Belial.

20. Samuel. The name probably is etymologically "Name of God"; in this passage there is a connection suggested with the Hebrew word *shā'al*, "to ask." This is an assonance, and not an etymology. Similar instances are frequent in the Old Testament.

21. A full year has now elapsed.

23. until she had weaned him. Oriental mothers nurse a child for full two years, and even a term of five or six years is not unknown.

24. ephah, a full bushel.

XXXVI

Fourth Sunday After Trinity

1 SAMUEL 3. 1—4. 1

THIS story of the call of Samuel belongs to the same historical document as the preceding (E). It needs no praise, as one of the richest and most beautiful of the early representations of an immediate communion with God.

3. **1. the child.** The Hebrew gives no indication of Samuel's age at this time, for the word used is applied to any age from that of a baby to a man of forty years of age.

2. **Eli was laid down.** He slept in one of the chambers, while Samuel apparently was in the room with the ark itself. The whole arrangement is quite simple and very different from the priestly pictures of the elaborate order of the Tabernacle.

3. **lamp . . . not yet gone out.** The lamp evidently was provided with oil sufficient only for the dark hours of one night.

10. **The Lord came and stood.** The statement is very interesting as showing that the writer thought in terms of a revelation both audible and visible, and not as in a dream, as in Jacob's case.

12. **from the beginning even unto the end.** Lit., "beginning and ending."

20. **from Dan even to Beersheba.** As Dan was in the extreme north, by one of the sources of the Jordan, and Beersheba in the farthest south, the phrase became common as a definition of the extreme limits of the land.

XXXVII

Fifth Sunday After Trinity

I SAMUEL 17. 1-4, 8-11, 32-37, 40-54

THE most popular of all the beautiful stories of the books of Samuel is before us. It is unfortunately a portion of a narrative whose critical problems in respect not only of origin and authorship, but also of text are not only difficult but thus far to a considerable degree apparently insoluble. It is sufficient here to say that in the transmission of the text the Septuagint, oldest of the versions, omits no less than thirty verses out of the sixty-three in the entire story—17. 1—18. 5. Dogmatism were foolish in the face of this problem, but I prefer the longer text. It is true that I have here omitted portions, not found in the Septuagint, but this has been done only for practical purposes to shorten a reading which even in its present curtailed form is likely to be considered too long by most ministers. It seems, however, impossible to shorten it more without risk to its intelligibility when read in public.

17. 1. **Socoh.** The modern Shuweikeh, about thirteen miles down the narrow wady el Jindy from Bethlehem. At this point three wadies come together in a plain about one quarter of a mile broad and this was quite probably the scene of the conflict.

2. **The Vale of Elah** was probably the modern Wady es Sunt, at whose entrance from the plain of Philistia stands the modern Tell es-Safiyeh which is probably the site of Gath, about eight miles west of Socoh.

4. **six cubits and a span**, that is, about nine feet six inches (Kennedy).

8. The challenge is based on the idea that it would

be foolish for armies to fight when the issue might better be decided by single combat.

34. **when there came.** The idea is that such encounters with a lion or bear were of frequent occurrence.

40. **Scrip.** The Hebrew word is *yalkut* and is unique. It probably meant the bag in which the slinger carried his ammunition.

45. **God of the armies of Israel.** Observe how this explains the phrase "Lord of hosts," and compare note on 1 Sam. 1. 3, in Lesson XXXV.

46, 47. The verses have a ring of assurance. Jehovah has no need of such weapons or such armor as Goliath. His power and his willingness are ready to make David's weak preparations sufficient for victory. The humble and the weak may take heart; when God is with them it matters not who may be against them.

52. **Gath.** The Hebrew text reads "Gai," but the Septuagint has Gath, and this seems much more likely, especially as Gath follows later in the verse. Gath was about eight miles nearly due west, and Ekron between fourteen and fifteen miles northwest of the scene of conflict.

54. **to Jerusalem.** This is an anachronism, for at this time Jerusalem was still in the hands of the Jebusites, and was not conquered by the Hebrews until David had reigned seven years in Hebron (2 Sam. 5. 6-10).

his armor. We hear later of Goliath's sword at Nob (1 Sam. 21. 9). What a trophy that was!

XXXVIII

Sixth Sunday After Trinity

2 SAMUEL 12. 1-23

THE story of Nathan's rebuke of David, and of the king's actions in the presence of an impending grief and of the bereavement fully accomplished belong to the great simplicities and the wonderful displays of frankness in Holy Writ. No other literature of antiquity could speak in this way of a king. The narrative belongs to the oldest portion of the book, though it seems quite probable that verses 10-12 may be an addition intended more definitely to point the moral and enforce it. The whole passage 2 Sam. 9-20 is a narrative written by some one who lived in the period. The author may have been Ahimaaz, son of Zadok, or perhaps a member of the family of Abiathar. It is the greatest historical writing which has come out of the Ancient Oriental world.

12. 3. **one little ewe lamb.** Such pet lambs are still to be seen in Syrian households.
6. **fourfold.** The Septuagint reads "sevenfold," but I do not venture to change, though it does seem more probably correct.
8. **thy master's wives.** There is no hint elsewhere that David received Saul's wives, but this would accord with ancient usage. Compare 2 Sam. 16. 21f.
13. **put away thy sin.** It was not forgiven. It was "put away," so that it should not bring David down to death; but the consequences were still to work themselves out, and this was manifested in the death of the child.
14. **despised the Lord.** R. V., "hast given occasion

to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." But the Hebrew word does not mean this. It is intensely strong, "despised," "scorned," but the early editors toned it down.

17. the elders, that is, the courtiers and higher officers of the court.

20. the house of the Lord. The tent which David had pitched for the ark (2 Sam. 6. 17).

23. David takes what consolation he may out of the belief in a shadowy existence after death in Sheol, "the house of the meeting for all living" (Job 30. 23 R. V., margin), as Jacob hoped to go to Joseph (Gen. 37. 35). There was not much to hope for in the Sheol as these early writers conceived it, but to the heart of all normal human folk any continued existence is better than extinction. The saddest of all thoughts to the ancient Hebrews was that in death all connection between the dead and God was cut off. "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in Sheol who shall give thee thanks?" (Psa. 6. 5.) "For Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth" (Isa. 38. 18). So long as man was upon earth, in the land of the living, he might commune with his Maker; when death had snatched him away the fellowship was broken. See how great was the advance of New Testament teaching over this.

XXXIX

Seventh Sunday After Trinity

2 SAMUEL 18. 1-15, 24-33

HERE, again, in a vivid and interesting story we have one of the oldest portions of the book, a part of the great historical section in chapters 9-20.

18. 5. To David, Absalom is still only a boy, and David loves him more than self, and more than all his loyal soldiers, though Absalom had no filial piety in his nature.

6. forest of Ephraim. The location is unknown to us.

8. forest devoured. The meaning is not quite certain, but would seem to be that the flight took place over a rocky, jungle-clad surface, where clefts proved traps unto death for panic-stricken men.

9. Absalom on the back of a mule was caught and left suspended by the hair in a cleft of a low spreading tree, while the mule rushed on. In that state he was helpless in the face of any attack.

15. Joab's stroke must have killed Absalom at once, and the narrative in this verse seems to record unnecessary acts, and the verse has therefore been held an interpolation (so H. P. Smith). It may be said, however, that history is well supplied with instances of killing the dead after death in an excess of fury.

24. between the two gates. The gate of an Oriental city was a massive construction extending both outward and inward beyond the city walls. It was usually arched over within and had two gates, an inner and an outer, between which were the stone

benches occupied by the city magistrates. On one of these sat David anxious for news. Above was a battlemented tower on which stood the watchman.

26. upon the gate. I have followed the Lucian text of the Septuagint, to secure a better reading. See R. V. for the ordinary text.

28. drew nigh. The ordinary text reads "called," but the Lucian Septuagint has the much preferable reading, "drew nigh." The Hebrew words are much alike and would be readily confused.

who hath delivered. It is a declaration of victory, but conveys also a hint of Absalom's fate, which the king does not notice.

31. the Cushite. Anybody from the far southern world would be vaguely called a Cushite, but a Negro is quite probably here intended. He has the courage to tell the king the whole truth about Absalom's fate.

33. as he wept. R. V., "as he went." I have read "wept," following the Septuagint Lucian. It is far more probable than the ordinary text and also more expressive.

XL

Eighth Sunday After Trinity

1 CHRONICLES 29. 1-20

THE relations between God and man are too wide and too deep to be compassed in the thought of any one man. Every man who attempts to conceive the divine revelation sees it necessarily after his own ways of thinking. The prophets of the Old Testament present a view of God's ways characteristic of their own thought, and it is well that priests have done the same. In the biblical study of recent years the emphasis has been largely placed upon the prophetic books, and this was wise and just. It would, however, be very unjust never to hear a priestly word out of the great book of the priests—the books of Chronicles. So it happens that the lesson of to-day comes out of these books, which were in process of writing or compilation for a series of years, probably concluded about B. C. 250, and therefore quite the latest books, in point of date, in the Old Testament. As historical sources they stand far behind the books of Samuel and Kings, yet their heightened color and rich adornment of the earlier and simpler story have a value of their own, at least in revealing what devout men thought of their ancient heroes in their later period. Nor should we forget that they were far closer to the events than we, and that they have a message to our age as to their own.

29. 1. **the palace.** This word for the Temple occurs but twice, here and in verse 19. The most frequent name for the Temple is simply "house" (Hebrew, *Bayith*), but frequently also it is called by an ancient Semitic and Sumerian word which means literally "great house" (*Hēkal*).

2. **onyx.** Some would translate "beryl," but that is equally uncertain.
3. **mine own.** David sets the example by giving of his own private fortune.
4. **Ophir,** the Somali coast of Africa and the southwestern coast of Arabia. Others would say the eastern coast of Arabia, on the Persian Gulf. The location is doubtful.
5. **to consecrate.** Hebrew, literally, "to fill his hand," that is, to fill one's hand with an office, hence a technical term used for consecrating to the priesthood (compare Exod. 28. 41, 32. 29, Lev. 8. 33).
7. **of gold five thousand talents.** The amount is enormous, for by the heavy standard this would be about one hundred and fifty million dollars, or by the light standard half that sum.
darics. A Persian gold coin worth a little over five dollars. The amount seems so large that one wonders whether the numbers have not been raised, as we know they have in certain other cases. The transmission of numbers is both difficult and tempting.
- 10-19. **David's prayer.** Perhaps a piece of some ancient liturgy, and still reflected in some of the older forms of the modern Jewish liturgy (so Oesterley).

XLI

Ninth Sunday After Trinity

I KINGS 3. 4-15

THIS lesson, taken from the book of Kings, quite probably had its origin in the book of the Acts of Solomon, which was an account of the chief events of his reign and perhaps in annalistic form. However that may be, it preserved a sparkling gem in this story.

3. 4. Gibeon, the modern el-Jib in the territory of Benjamin and about six miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was the "great high place," for it was near the capital and was also centrally located. The word "high-place" signifies a sanctuary, usually on a hilltop, which had been used by the Canaanites, and then taken over by the Hebrews and consecrated to Jehovah.

thousand burnt offerings. Probably not to be taken literally as a thousand; it meant more probably simply a large or very large number. Compare *hecatomb* in Greek.

7. **little child.** Not to be taken literally. It means simply a child in kingly experience.

go out or come in. A proverbial expression for everyday life. Life consists of going out to work in the morning and coming in to rest in the evening.

9. **understanding heart.** Lit., a *hearing* heart. In Hebrew psychology the heart is the seat of thought, not, as with us, of emotion. The writer makes it clear that this understanding is God's gift, as is all else material or spiritual. The apostle numbers "wisdom" among the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12. 4-11), and the epistle of James teaches that it is to be sought in prayer (1. 5).

to judge. To give decision was the final duty of a king, and in time of peace practically his chief duty.

11. to discern judgment. Lit., "to hear judgment," is to hear and then understand on which side truth and justice lay.

12. wise and understanding heart. Solomon's prosperous reign justifies the prediction in the main. He was, however, far from wise all the while, and it is to be remembered that his religious policy (11. 4-8) was seriously mistaken and that he left an evil repute to his son (12. 4).

14. as thy father David did walk. David became a model for later kings in his faithfulness to Jehovah, which was manifested (a) in his care of the ark (2 Sam. 6) and in his desire to build a temple (2 Sam. 7). These were positive deeds, but he was also faithful in refraining from the worship of foreign gods. By comparison with David, Abijam, Amaziah, and Ahaz are reprov'd while Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah are approved in the book of Kings. (Compare, for example, 1 Kings 15. 3, 2 Kings 14. 3, 16. 2 and 15. 11, 18. 3, and 22. 2.)

lengthen thy days. Solomon reigned forty years.

15. peace offerings. Offerings in times of peace, thank-offerings, feasts of rejoicing.

XLII

Tenth Sunday After Trinity

1 **KINGS** 6. 1, 38; 8. 12, 13, 22, 23, 27-40, 54-58

It would seem a pity to lose from public reading the noble and beautiful prayer which some kindly hands have put together chiefly in the spirit and somewhat also after the form of the glorious book of Deuteronomy. Yet is the prayer very long, and some portions less instructive for modern ears than are others, and he who would make a lesson book with any possibility of being read must leave out much or have small hope that any will be read. The effort here made was to take an introductory word of chapter 6, by which the hearer might be told what was to come, and then certain sections from the beautiful prayer most likely to give interest and instruction to the ordinary hearer.

6. **1. four hundred and eightieth year.** This is the earliest date given in the Bible. It was reckoned on the basis of twelve generations of forty years each, and it is therefore a round number and not an exact date.
- 2, 38. Ziv and Bul.** These names of months belong to the ancient Hebrew calendar supplanted in the Exile by Babylonian names. Ziv is the month of flowers—our April-May in Palestine, and Bul is perhaps “rain,” hence October-November.
8. **12, 13.** These verses are intensely interesting, as they contain in imperfect form an ancient epigram which may well have been the identical words originally uttered by Solomon. The Septuagint preserves them thus:

“Jehovah set the sun in heaven,
 He said he would dwell in thick darkness;
 Build thou my house, a house suitable for thyself
 To dwell (forever).
 Behold, is it not written in the book of the Song ?”

Wellhausen has suggested that this should be Book of Jashar to which we owe David's eulogy on Saul (2 Sam. 1. 18).

22. **Solomon stood.** This was the ancient attitude in prayer, the hands being outstretched heavenward.

29. **My name shall be there,** that is, when man pronounces God's name in prayer, God will be there to respond to the call.

30. **forgive.** God must first hear, and then forgive, before he can answer prayer. He can, in other words, answer a sinful man only when the man has first received forgiveness.

31. **an oath.** The reference is to the ancient custom of requiring an oath when guilt was doubtful. See Exod. 22. 7-12.

32. **condemning . . . justifying.** God is besought to make the ordeal by oath a sure indication of guilt or innocence.

34. **let them remain in.** R. V., "bring them again unto," but this would imply the Exile. I have therefore boldly accepted an emendation of vowel points only, not really changing the text, which gives the translation as above (so Klostermann, Benzinger). The meaning would then be, "spare them the terrible," and frequently applied, method of captivity by a victorious enemy and then deportation.

37. **blasting.** The drying up of vegetation by the east wind from the desert.

locust . . . caterpillar. Two words for "locust" no longer to be differentiated.

any of their gates, following the Septuagint, instead of the R. V. "in the land of their cities."

plague. Lit., "blow," a calamity sent from God, and not confined to pestilence.

54. **kneeling.** Compare verse 22 where it was said

that Solomon stood. Though standing seems to have been the usual ancient posture, there are not wanting allusions to "kneeling," see, for example, 1 Kings 19. 18; Isa. 45. 23.

55. blessed. Normally the giving of a solemn blessing was reserved for the priests (see Num. 6. 22-27) but there are not wanting other instances to place with this one in which the blessing was pronounced by a layman, so, for example, by Joshua (Josh. 22. 6) and by David (2 Sam. 6. 18).

56. rest. So R. V., but rather a resting place; that is, Canaan. Compare Isa. 11. 10 R. V.

58. incline our hearts. God in the Old Testament doctrine may turn men's hearts either away from or toward himself. (See 1 Kings 18. 37, and as the translation there is rather obscure, see also Isa. 63. 7.) The difficulty about free will is not yet faced.

XLIII

Eleventh Sunday After Trinity

1 KINGS 10. 1-13

WE do not know whence this story came into the canonical book of Kings, but it may quite well have been found in the Book of the Acts of Solomon. It would be an honor to any ancient writer of biography, and has deeply interested the modern Oriental world, for the Arabs have built it up by imagination and fancy almost into a separate literature with every sort of fantastic elaboration.

10. 1. **Sheba.** A great kingdom—mainly in southern Arabia, but extending far enough northward to feel in later days than Solomon's the impact of the ruthless Assyrian conqueror.

concerning the name of the Lord. The words are difficult in themselves, and as they do not appear in 2 Chron. 9. 1 are probably an addition here.

hard questions; that is, riddles—a favorite Oriental method of appraising intellectual quickness and penetration of mind.

2. **spices, or, rather, balsams.**

very much gold and precious stones. Typical products of southwest Arabia.

5. **food.** See 1 Kings 4. 22, 23.

ministers. Here "waiters."

his burnt offerings. R. V., "ascent," but this is surely wrong. I have translated as the Hebrew seems to intend.

6. **acts.** The Hebrew word means "words" and also "acts." Either meaning would serve here.

8. **thy men.** The reading in the Lucian text and in

the Syriac was "thy wives," which seems much more probable, but I have not ventured to introduce it into the text.

9. justice and righteousness. R. V., "judgment and justice," but the former better represents the Hebrew.

11. navy of Hiram. This means the merchant ships of the Phœnicians, who traded not only in the Mediterranean, but also in the Red Sea.

Ophir. The location still remains doubtful. If it is to be identified with the land of Punt it would probably be the Somali coast and the opposite coast of Arabia.

almug, unknown. It has been identified with ebony and even with coral. It may have been red sandal wood, which is still used in India for making musical instruments.

12. pillars. An obscure word of uncertain meaning. In the parallel passage (2 Chron. 9. 11) the word is "terraces."

XLIV

Twelfth Sunday After Trinity

1 KINGS 12

[Alternative p. 190.]

THE passage is taken from the most ancient portion of the book of Kings and though we do not know who wrote it, nor yet when it was written, it seems worthy to be compared with the great passage 2 Sam. 9-20; 1 Kings 1, 2, the finest historical narrative which has come down to us out of the ancient literature of the Orient.

Solomon was dead, and his son Rehoboam wished to ascend the throne, and must first secure the people's consent. It is well to remember that this seems to have been a well-grounded ancient custom in Israel. David was first made king by the northern tribes (2 Sam. 5. 1-3) and into their territory Rehoboam now goes to seek their acceptance of himself as king over the whole land.

12. 1. **Shechem.** From the most ancient times a city of great importance in history and in religion, situated in the most beautiful valley in all Palestine, at the foot of Mount Gerizim, and now occupied by the modern Nablus.

all Israel, that is, Judah as well as Israel. We do not know how such an assembly was called.

4. **yoke grievous.** Compare 1 Sam. 8. 11-18.

8. **young men.** Lit., "boys"—a contemptuous expression. It sounds odd when one considers that Rehoboam's age is given in the Hebrew text (14. 21) as forty-one years at his accession. The parallel in the best Septuagint text (B) (12. 24), makes him only sixteen at his accession. This age would accord better with this passage.

13. roughly. This mad answer was perhaps in no small part a reflection of the ways of Solomon. But what Solomon might dare to do, it did not follow that his weak son might also venture.

15. brought about of the Lord; that is, it was providential.

16. What portion have we? A watchword, the same as used by Sheba, the Benjamite, when he led a revolt (2 Sam. 20. 1).

18. Adoram, the same as Adoniram (4. 6, 5. 14). He was the head of the levy. To have sent him to quell a revolt could only result in making the revolt a successful revolution, for the people would construe it as a threat that Rehoboam really did intend to carry out his threat and oppress them heavily.

19. unto this day. A day long remembered as a tragedy (Isa. 7. 17).

20. Judah only. So had Rehoboam's madness destroyed the kingdom which Saul had founded, David had made great, and Solomon famous.

XLV

Thirteenth Sunday After Trinity

1 KINGS 17

THE lesson is taken from the great series of passages relating to Elijah which came originally, as seems probable, into the books of Kings from a biography of Elijah. There need be no fear of magnifying overmuch the greatness of Elijah, for they who call him the greatest of the prophets have much to support their judgment. It was he who saved Israel's faith at a time when its jeopardy was greater than ever before. The court of Ahab would follow the example of the king who sustained his queen Jezebel in Baal worship, and what the royal house did was sure to find imitation by the people. To break down that fatal nexus and save the religion of Jehovah was Elijah's great mission, and he accomplished it.

17. 1. from Tishbe of Gilead. R. V., "of the sojourners of Gilead." I have followed the much preferable Septuagint text. "Elijah" means "Jehovah is God," and this was his watchword through his whole career. Tishbe is probably to be identified with *Istib*, where there is still to be seen a ruined shrine called *Mar Elyās*.

3. brook Cherith. The site is unknown, but was probably in one of the wadies east of Jordan.

6. the ravens. Many would change the vowel points and read *Arabians* as those who provided the prophet's food. The expedient is too transparent; the whole story of Elijah is singularly filled with the miraculous, and to remove this portion and leave the rest is useless.

9. Zarephath (Sarepta, Luke 4. 26). Situated about nine miles south of Sidon, the modern site being named Sarafend.

12. cake. A round, flat bread, baked on a hot stone.

13. The prophet makes a severe trial of the woman's faith. She sustains the trial and is well rewarded (verse 15).

18. What have I to do with thee? This was an invitation to depart.

to bring my sin to remembrance. This does not mean some specific sin of the mother, but the deep-seated general guilt of human nature which she thinks might have been overlooked by the Almighty had the prophet not been there. Compare Luke 5. 8.

21. stretched himself upon. See 2 Kings 4. 34f. and Acts 20. 10. The Septuagint reads "breathed into the child."

24. is truth; that is, that Jehovah's word is truly in the prophet's mouth. The woman now "knows" from this great experience of God's power, and of the prophet's power with God. She had doubted before because of her dreadful experiences, but now is reassured.

XLVI

Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity

1 KINGS 18. 1, 2, 17-39

[Alternative p. 193.]

THIS lesson from the canonical book of Kings came originally in all probability from a prophetic life of Elijah. To whomsoever it may have been due in the beginning high praise is due. The narrative has verve and movement and rises grandly toward its climax with even a flash of humor as the stern prophet from Gilead mocks the enemies of Jehovah.

18. 17. **troubler of Israel.** Ahab ascribes the famine to Elijah and calls him "troubler" in the same Hebrew word used of Achan (Josh. 7. 25).

18. **the Baals.** The plural is used to signify the number of local deities who were saluted as Baal, that is, Lord. Each of these had either a personal name, like Melkarth, Baal of Tyre, Chemosh, Baal of Moab, or they were known by the town or village which paid them honor. In the early days the title Baal was even given to Jehovah (Hos. 2. 16) but the prophets saw the danger and forbade it.

19. **Carmel.** The exact spot intended here is not known, but it is interesting to speculate that it may have been at el Muhraka (the place of burning) at the foot of which is Tell el-Kasis (the priest's mound) where tradition locates the place of the slaughter of the priests (so Skinner). El Muhraka is about four miles from the highest point of Carmel, but is itself sixteen hundred feet high.

Asherah. The name of a goddess known among the Canaanites under the name of *Ashirat*, and

corresponding to the goddess Ishtar of the Assyrians, who had many functions, even a war-goddess, but was also Mother-goddess and much revered by women in travail.

22. I, even I only. There were indeed others who were silently faithful, but there was apparently only Elijah who had the boldness to speak out loudly for Jehovah.

26. limped. The Hebrew word describes a slow dance about the altar.

27. musing. The same word is translated "meditate" in Gen. 24. 63.

gone aside. The Hebrew word occurs only here, and the meaning is, therefore, uncertain.

28. cut themselves, perhaps a remnant of an ancient blood covenant with the god, but perhaps only an attempt to excite the god's interest. I have personally seen Mohammedan fanatics so cut themselves in a religious procession.

30. he repaired. There had been a sanctuary of Jehovah on the spot before.

32. be sown with. The explanation in the Mishnah would give this as a definite area, about nine hundred square yards (Benzinger). It would seem, then, that this defines the space inclosed by the trench.

36, 37. It is a double prayer. Elijah would have his own prophetic authority vindicated, and he was quite right in this, for only so would his future labor be made useful, and, in the second place, he prays God now, in this moment, to win back his wayward people.

XLVII

Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity

1 KINGS 19

IN this lesson, as in the last, we are still following the ancient biography of Elijah, and are again deeply indebted to its unknown author for a passage of the highest interest and instruction. There are, indeed, points of obscurity in the story, but the main conceptions are clear enough, and they are true to human nature. Elijah had had a great triumph on Mount Carmel, and instead of going away in full elation as a victor, he flees to save his life. He has learned by bitter experience how little a man can accomplish, and sinks into despair at the failure of his great hopes. In the desert he lies down utterly broken in spirit. Let those mock at the sorry spectacle who have never met a supreme test of faith. There at Beersheba he perceives that his supreme need is God, and it was natural for him to seek God where he had manifested himself to Moses. In no other story is Elijah more natural, more human, and at the same time more noble or more wise.

19. 2. It was an idle and foolish threat, for she did not really dare to slay him after such a public display of his power, but merely desired to frighten him away. In the Septuagint the threat is preceded by the apt phrase, "As sure as you are Elijah, I am Jezebel."

3. The threat succeeded. "He was afraid," so the Septuagint, and surely correctly.

to Beersheba. The southern limit of cultivation where the desert meets the town, and always counted as the southern limit of the country, as Dan was the northern.

4. broom bush. R. V., "juniper tree," but the *rôtem* of the Hebrew corresponds to the *retem* of the Arabic and signifies a *Genista* or broom bush which grows abundantly in the wretched dry wadies and gives a bit of shade.

8. Horeb the mount of God, so always in the Ephraimistic writer, while the Judaistic writes "Sinai." It was the place of the first covenant between God and his people, and Elijah would fain come near to God as Moses in the beginning. The distance is only about one hundred and seventy miles, or even less. He could have covered it in ten days; that he took forty only shows that he was hiding, or was in such a perturbation of mind and spirit as to lie for days troubled and weary.

12. still small voice. Hebrew, a "sound of thin silence." Compare Job 4. 16, "silence and a voice," which is a hendiadys meaning the "silence of a voice."

15. Go; return. Elijah was not to remain at the mount in lonely contemplation of God and in meditation. He was rather to go back to his duty. So was it with the disciples on the mount of Transfiguration. First the vision and then back to duty and labor!

16. anoint Hazael. He was to have an important share in bringing the Baal worship to an end, for he represents the Aramæans who were to attack Ahab's kingdom and so weaken it that Jehu, who was a sure opponent of Baalism, could get the throne, and Elisha could begin a new prophetic mission. But the order of events was really otherwise, for Jehu's revolt precedes Hazael's attack, from which he and his people suffered sorely. This failure of a prediction to be true to the chronological order is quite the usual, or at least common, thing in Old

Testament prophecy. It is often a valuable proof of an early date, for a writer after the event would have got the correct order.

shalt thou anoint. He was told to *anoint* Elisha, but there is no known instance of a prophet being anointed. The symbolism here used is the putting of a mantle upon his shoulders. Kings were anointed, not prophets. The symbol matters little; there can be no doubt of Elisha's commission as a prophet; his career amply proved it. Elisha was said to be of Abel-meholah, which seems to have been in the Jordan valley and was located by Jerome about ten Roman miles south of Scythopolis (Beth-shan).

18. seven thousand. Elijah in his bitter discouragement thought that he alone remained as God's champion. But God knew of seven thousand others. "The kingdom of God is always stronger than it seems."

XLVIII

Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity

2 KINGS 5. 1-19

THIS passage, one of the favorite stories out of Israel's history, came into the books of Kings out of a long-lost biography of the prophet Elisha, of unknown date and origin.

5. 1. **honorable.** Lit., a man of respect.

Syria. The Hebrew is always *Aram*, and it is most unfortunate that Syria and Syrians ever came into the English versions. It should always be Aram and the Aramæans, the people and country north of Israel whose chief city was Damascus.

2. **gone out in bands.** Made raids and took slaves, though the two nations were at peace.

6. **and thou shalt.** R. V., "that thou mayest." But the tone is quite peremptory. It is a masterful Aramæan overlord dictating to a petty king of Israel.

7. **seeketh a quarrel.** Israel's king thinks that the Aramæan king intends to seek a *casus belli*, in the hope of restoring a real overlordship over Samaria.

10. **sent a messenger.** The prophet does not communicate directly, but through a servant, and Naaman took it as an insult. He had been accustomed to send servants, not receive them. Furthermore, he felt himself great enough to deserve a conspicuous healing at the hands of the God of an inferior people like the Israelites.

be thou clean. It is an imperative (compare Mark 1. 41; 7. 34; John 5. 8), a command; the prophet does not predict it; he orders it.

12. Abana, the modern *Nahr Barada*, a considerable stream flowing in many channels through Damascus. The *Pharpar*, probably the name now represented by wady Barbar; it is to-day very insignificant, but perhaps formerly was connected with a larger stream now called *Nahr el-A'waj*.

15. Now that he is clean he comes before the prophet, and *stood* in his presence, as a servant does before a superior. He is humbled, as well as full of gratitude.

17. **two mules' burden of earth.** The thought is that no God could be worshiped elsewhere than upon his own soil. There are echoes of this idea in many other ancient places.

18. **Rimmon.** This is the god named Hadad in the west, and Ramman or Adad, in the Assyrian pantheon. His name is more or less familiar to us in the biblical form Ben-hadad (son of Hadad) as the name of kings of Damascus.

pardon thy servant. Naaman desired to continue to worship his own national God Rimmon, and at the same time to honor Jehovah whose prophet had shown him the way to healing. When Elisha answered "Go in peace" he gave tacit permission. The great prophets who were later to appear in Israel would have given no such consent. But Elisha must not be expected to take the position that Jeremiah was later to take. The time was not yet.

XLIX

Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity

2 KINGS 6. 8-23

AGAIN are we indebted to the unknown writer of Elisha's biography for this most interesting story, one at least of whose phrases has come to have an almost magical sound in the ears of the spiritually minded—"Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see, . . . and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire."

6. 8. shall be my camp. The meaning is correctly hit by the Vulgate. It means "there we shall set an ambush."

10. sent to the place; that is, reconnoitered to see whether the intelligence was correct that there the Aramæans had set an ambush.

11. which one of us is for, naturally suspecting that there was a traitor in his own camp.

12. in thy bedchamber. A proverbial expression for a secret place. (Eccl. 10. 20) (Barnes).

13. Dothan, now *Tell Dôthân*, on the main caravan road from Damascus to Egypt, and about ten miles north of Samaria.

17. horses and chariots of fire. Compare 2 Kings 2. 11, where is the story of Elijah's ascension. Jehovah has armies composed of the same pure fiery element in which he dwells, and the religious imagination has conceived all these hosts as invisible to mortal sight.

21. the king of Israel. We do not know which king this was.

22. set bread and water. This is not to be understood literally. It may just as well mean an elaborate feast.

23. came no more. The kind treatment produced a good effect, and the raids ceased.

L

Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity

2 KINGS 22. 3-20

[Alternative p. 195.]

THE narrative, which describes the most important discovery of the book of Deuteronomy (or perhaps the kernel of the book 12-26), is of quite uncertain origin. It may have come into the book of Kings from the Temple archives, or quite as well from the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah.

22. 3. **eighteenth year**, that is, B. C. 621.

Shaphan, a man whose descendants were famous in later history. His son Ahikam saved Jeremiah's life (Jer. 26. 24) and another son, Gemariah, tried to save Jeremiah's roll of prophecies (Jer. 26. 12, 25), and his grandson Gedaliah became ruler in Judah after the deportation by Nebuchadrezzar (2 Kings 25. 22; Jer. 40. 5-41. 10).

4. **Hilkiah**. The name is the same as Jeremiah's father's name, but there is no reason for identifying the persons.

sum. The meaning is doubtful, but one of the recensions of the Septuagint (the Lucian) translates "pour out," and this would agree with verse 9.

8. **the book of the law**. This could not have been the whole Pentateuch, for it was read through twice in one day (2 Kings 22. 8, 10). It was the book of Deuteronomy in some form, perhaps chapters 12-26. The name Book of the Covenant peculiarly fits it, and the reforms inaugurated by Josiah are precisely those commanded in Deuteronomy.

12. **king's servant.** Certainly an ancient title of office, the meaning of which is not known to us.

13. **great is the wrath.** See Deut. 28 and 29. The part which most powerfully affected the king was quite likely chapter 28, beginning with verse 15.

14. **Huldah.** Nothing is known of her beyond what appears here and in Chronicles. The king was at his wit's end as the book was read to him, and was doubtless filled with fear lest the curses of the book should fall at once on him and his kingdom. He therefore desired prophetic counsel and sent to Huldah for it. Jeremiah had been called to be a prophet five years before this (Jer. 1. 2) and it would have been very interesting had the king consulted him. Why did he not? Perhaps, as Jeremiah shrank from the exercise of the office, he was not yet well known. (Jer. 1. 6.)

LI

Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity

JEREMIAH 5. 1-6, 15-29

THE lesson belongs in Jeremiah's acquaintance with Jerusalem, but the efforts to locate it more narrowly seem fanciful. It was only a very short distance from his birth-place, Anathoth, to Jerusalem and there is no solid basis for the supposition that he could not know Jerusalem there almost, or quite, as well as in the city itself. But Jerusalem was his city. He loved it, and he judged well its faults as well as loved its virtues. In this passage we have a fine example of his urgent emphasis on righteousness as God's demand.

1. **pardon her.** The terms are easier than those required of Sodom (Gen. 18. 32).

3. **hast stricken.** We do not know to what disaster reference is here made.

4, 5. The common people have failed the prophet, and he thinks that perhaps the men of rank may do better, but he turns in vain to them.

15. Jehovah's method of punishing his people is to bring against them a foreign foe. When the prophet first spoke these words, early in his ministry, the foe thought of would naturally be the Scythians. When he dictated the message to Baruch he would be thinking of the Babylonians as the agents of God's wrath.

18. The verse is probably a later addition. It mitigates the sentence and diminishes the force of the passage.

19. Here the allusion is to the coming Babylonian Exile, and we may surmise that the form of the utterance belongs rather to the dictation to Baruch than to the days of the original sermon.

22. **waters thereof.** The expression is not in the Hebrew text, but has probably accidentally dropped out. (Compare 46. 7, 8—so Driver.)

23. The people are like the sea ever restless, and so easily moved to rebellion.

24. **appointed weeks;** that is, the seven weeks between the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Weeks—this was the harvest time.

28. This is a very difficult verse, and the text is probably in disorder. No satisfactory emendations have yet been proposed, and I follow the R. V.

LII

Twentieth Sunday After Trinity**JEREMIAH 7. 1-15 and 26. 7-16**

IN this lesson there are present two passages, the first containing a portion of one of Jeremiah's most vivid and most intense sermons, and the second an account of the effect which it produced upon the people who heard it. The event took place (26. 1) "in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah," that is, about the year B. C. 608. It should be remembered that in Isaiah's day (B. C. 701) Jerusalem had been delivered from Sennacherib, and it would be a very natural inference that God had saved the city because his Temple was in it. If he had saved it then, would he not save it now in the days when the Babylonians were likely to threaten it?—so people might well argue. Jeremiah could believe no such doctrine as that, for it would make a fetish of the Temple. It is easy to see how his denunciation of such an idea would infuriate the people. It would be easier to rely on the Temple's protection than to amend the ways and doings of the people.

7. 1. **in the gate.** In 26. 2 the statement is the "court." The place may well have been near the gate between the inner and the outer court, the latter being crowded with people from the country round about.
- 5, 6. Only when men should really amend their lives would God save them.
9. **burn incense.** It should probably be translated "burn sacrifices."
11. **den of robbers.** These sinful people use the Temple as a place of escape from danger, just as robbers seek a cave to escape justice.

12. Shiloh. Evidently, some terrible catastrophe had at some time fallen upon Shiloh, but there is no record of it in Scripture.

15. out of my sight. Out of Jehovah's land, which is peculiarly under his oversight.

26. 7-9. When they had heard the prophet deliver the whole message, and his speaking had ceased, a rising tide of fury came on the people and they seized him, and threatened him with death.

10. princes of Judah. Members of the royal house and ruling officials. They had level heads and were ready to take the seat of justice and see that the mob committed no crime.

11. as ye have heard with your ears. This was the declaration made by the complainants. The princes had not heard these things,—the reference is to the people who had listened to the prophet.

12-15. This is Jeremiah's simple and manly defense. It is that he had spoken as God had given him to speak and as his duty was. He concedes their right lawfully to put him to death, but contends that he was innocent of wrong doing.

16. The mob would have killed Jeremiah, but these men recognized the prophet's authority to speak in God's name, and having heard his simple and dignified defense acquitted him. He had had a narrow escape, and his later ministry must be far more cautious.

LIII

Twenty-first Sunday After Trinity

DANIEL 5

[Alternative p. 198.]

THE book of Daniel belongs not in the number of prophetic books, but is an apocalypse (*disclosure, revelation*) whose New Testament parallel or related book is the book of Revelation. Daniel was probably written between B. C. 168 and 165, and perhaps in the year 166. There seems no sufficient reason to doubt that the historical portions of the book rest upon a traditional basis, and that Daniel was a historical person. The value of the book religiously needs no defense. It was a book on which the Lord himself laid friendly emphasis and to which he gave honor. What was valuable to him cannot prove useless to his followers. There is no need, and certainly no profit, in attempting to prove an early date for the book, or to show its accord with the latest historical or archæological discoveries.

5. 1. **Belshazzar.** The name in Babylonian was *Belshar-usur*, "Bel protect the king," and he was the son of Nabonidus, king of Babylon, B. C. 555-538. There is no evidence that he ever reigned as king.

2. **his father.** The father of Belshazzar was, as just noted, Nabonidus,—as he was a usurper and not of the old line of kings, Belshazzar could not have been related to Nebuchadrezzar. There is, however, no great difficulty in the idea of connecting him thus with the great king. Fanciful genealogies were invented for the Assyrian kings, and may well have been for Nabonidus and Belshazzar, though none has yet been found.

5. plaster. The Hebrew means, lit., "chalk," and the wall was therefore white.

6. countenance. Lit., brightness; that is, color. He grew pale.

7. Chaldeans. The word originally meant a people, a race. Here, as always in this book, the word means, as in the classical writers, the wise men, or learned men who knew the incantations or enchantments, and this use of the word is one of the clear evidences of the late date of the book.

rule as one of three. So R. V., margin, and probably correctly, though the Hebrew is difficult and none too plain.

10. queen. Certainly not the wife of Nabonidus, for she had died, in the ninth year of his reign. The writer must have meant the queen-mother. But the mother of Nabonidus had died eight years before, and the writer here must be thinking of the wife of Nebuchadrezzar.

25. **Mene, Mene, tekel, upharsin.** The pronunciation should be with the accent on the final syllable in each word, and *Měné* to rime with "betray," and *Těkěl* with "bewail," and *Upharsin* with "between." The words are really the Aramaic words for weights, and if interpreted literally would mean "a mina, a mina, a shekel, and half shekels." There must have been some puzzle in the method of writing, and numerous suggestions have been offered to explain it. It may have been intended to represent the words as written in cuneiform character, which if ideographic would be difficult to read, and still more to interpret, as each sign might have more than one value. The thing has thus, or in some other way, become a *riddle*, and Daniel's skill at riddles (verse 12) becomes valuable. He first reads the words, and then interprets the sig-

nification which they were intended to have in this particular case. As *Měné* may be intended to mean "numbered" as well as the name of a piece of money—a mina—it is interpreted as "numbered," and as then to be applied to Belshazzar's kingdom. *Těkéł*, that is, "shekel," "*weighed*" is similarly applied, and then *Parsin*, the plural of *pěrês*—a half shekel—reminds one of *pěrís*, which means "divided," and *pāras*, which means in Aramaic "Persians."

31. Darius the Mede. No king of this style is known as participating in the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, nor is anything known of the source of the "three score and two years old."

The historical difficulties in this case, as in verse 10 concerning the queen, are among the numerous evidences in favor of the late date of the book as a whole. It must, however, be remembered that the value of the book does not depend upon its historical consistency. Its value is not historical, but religious, and its religious value is in no wise impaired by the historical inconsistencies. It served its purpose when first written, and still does.

LIV

Twenty-second Sunday After Trinity

PROVERBS 3. 1-20

[Alternative p. 200.]

THE book of Proverbs belongs to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament, which is represented also in Ecclesiastes and Job. That it is composite in character is distinctly stated in the book itself, which is divided into a number of parts indicating smaller collections of Wisdom Literature which were joined to make the larger book. The proverbial literature is in origin ascribed to King Solomon and additions to it were made through the centuries. The book is rich in garnered practical wisdom and is far too little read in public.

3. 3. **kindness and faithfulness.** R. V., "mercy and truth." It is not, however, mercy (compassion) and truth, for which there are other expressions in Hebrew, faithfulness is steadfastness—the standing by one's word or promise.

bind . . . write. The figure seems probably to have been taken from Deut. 6. 8, which led to the making of phylacteries.

8. **body.** R. V., "navel." The change of a Hebrew letter gives the far more probable as well as desirable reading, "body."

refreshment. R. V., "marrow." The verse is to be understood quite literally. The wise man declares that a life of dependence upon Jehovah, dedicated to righteousness, is profitable in its effect upon the body. Health comes from it, freedom from ills and the ease of mind that results from bodily well being.

9. firstfruits. An allusion to the precepts of the Law (Deut. 18. 4, 26. 2).

10. barns. Compare Deut. 28. 8 and Mal. 3. 10-12. **11, 12.** Suppose one who had read 9, 10 should say, "Oh, but I know cases in which men did really fulfill all the law's demands, and yet were sufferers." To such these verses make reply. The suffering of the righteous is an important problem in the Wisdom Literature. See Job 5. 17, 18.

15. coral. R. V., "rubies." There is a pretty dispute as to which is meant, but the probabilities lie strongly on the side of coral, which was highly esteemed in the ancient world.

18. tree of life. The figure is derived from Gen. 2. 9 and appears again in Prov. 11. 30, 13. 12, 15. 4.

20. depths, that is, the subterranean masses of water from which springs were believed to issue. In the same way dew came out of the firmament, which held above it bodies of water, which issued through cannels as rain or dew. The thought in the wise man's mind is that none of these things happen by chance, but all are directed by the Creator, who made them in the first instance.

LV

Twenty-third Sunday After Trinity

PROVERBS 8. 1-21

FOR general observations upon the book of Proverbs see the previous lesson. This lesson, like that, belongs to the introduction to the Book.

8. 2. **At the head of thoroughfares.** So the Hebrew seems to mean. It is surely not, "In the top of high places," as the R. V. translates.

In the streets. R. V., "where the paths meet."

3. **At the entrance of the gates.** R. V., "the coming in of the doors," but the city gates are meant.

4. **prudence.** R. V., subtilty, but margin "prudence," which is better.

11. **coral.** R. V., "rubies," but it is much more likely that coral is meant, which was highly esteemed among the ancients.

12. **possess intelligence.** R. V., "have made subtilty my dwelling"—a very slight change in text gives a much preferable reading (so Toy, Currie).

13. This verse rather breaks the connection between 12 and 14, and it is quite doubtful whether it really belongs here. I have, however, not been able to persuade myself to omit it from the lesson.

15. **By me kings reign.** Compare 1 Kings 3. 5-12.

16. The second member of this verse has given interpreters much trouble, and there seems no way to mend it but boldly to follow the Septuagint and this I have done. All the English versions stand by the Hebrew Text.

18. **durable.** The Hebrew word is hard to translate.

The R. V. margin is "ancient," that is, "inherited from ancestors." The Septuagint makes it "abundant," and the Latin Vulgate "superb." The American Jewish version has "enduring," which lies close to the "durable" of the R. V. It is the riches which cannot be taken away, the "true riches" (Luke 16. 11), the riches inseparable from us and as immortal as our souls.

20. justice. R. V., "judgment."

21. wealth. R. V., "substance," and so also the Jewish version.

LVI

Twenty-fourth Sunday After Trinity

PROVERBS 31. 10-31

[Alternative p. 202.]

IN the book of Proverbs there is inserted a small fragment (31. 2-9) which has for its superscription the following, as it should be translated: "The words of Lemuel, king of Massa, which his mother taught him." Massa is the name of an Ishmaelite tribe (Gen. 25. 14), and as this passage is ascribed to his mother, the compiler of the book of Proverbs has added immediately thereafter a poem on a good woman. The ideal represented is that of a housewife and woman of business, and no traits either intellectual or religious are represented in it, but it has a certain beauty of its own, and deserves to be read at least as an occasional lesson. An alternative is supplied to take its place when desired.

31. 10. good, so rather than "virtuous" (R. V.). The question is not ironical. It is not intended to hint that none may be found, but only that she must be sought.

15. a portion. R. V. reads "their task," but has the correct translation in the margin. The "portion" means their share of the food of the household.

16. fruit of her hands, that is, her earnings. She is a business woman.

18. her lamp goeth not out. It is still a custom among the Arabs to have a lamp burn all night, and to sleep in darkness is considered a sign of great poverty. Compare Jer. 25. 10 and Job 18. 6.

19. distaff . . . spindle. Compare the beautiful lines of Catullus (quoted by Perowne):

“The left the distaff held, from which the right,
Plucking the wool with upturned fingers light,
Twisted the threads, which o’er the thumb they wound,
Then swiftly whirled the well-poised spindle round.”

(Tr. by Sir Theodore Martin.)

21. scarlet. The Hebrew is uncertain. Something “warm” is required by the context.

22. coverings. So A. V., which is preferable to R. V. “carpets,” margin “cushions.” There is no justification for the qualifying phrase “of tapestry.”

24. merchant. The Hebrew has “Canaanite.” In early days the business of the country was in the hands of the Canaanites, while the Hebrews were herdsmen or tillers of the soil. Hence the word “Canaanite” came to have the meaning of “merchant.”

25. laugheth; that is, has no anxiety.

26. kindly instruction; that is, she instructs servants kindly, not harshly.

30. a woman that feareth the Lord. The form in which this line appears in the Septuagint suggests that originally the line read, “A woman of intelligence, she shall be praised,” but I have not ventured to introduce it into the text.

31. Such a wife is not her husband’s slave. She deserves to share with him in the fruits of her labors, as of his, and should be publicly praised for her good works. This part of the verse is interesting as showing that among the Hebrews of that day it was not considered undignified or improper or in bad taste to refer publicly to one’s wife, as is now commonly the feeling in the East.

LVII

Twenty-fifth Sunday After Trinity

JOB 5. 6-26

THE book of Job is the consummate climax and the most beautiful flower of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. The name of the great poetic genius who wrote it has perished, nor is ever likely to be recovered. The book belongs to the postexilic period, perhaps as late as the fifth century B. C. The book was intended to meet the dread problem of pain and suffering, and by widening the idea of the Divine Providence teach that the older theology, which made human suffering have its only origin in human sin, was entirely wrong and that human suffering might well be due to a trial of righteousness. It affords no complete theodicy, but offers only a higher and deeper knowledge of God as man's best comfort in all earthly trials. The lesson here used comes from the first speech of Eliphaz, the mystic, Job's friend, who bases his argument upon a personal revelation from God. This speech is one of the masterpieces of the book. It answers Job's wild cry for death (chap. 3) and attempts to draw him into a deeper reverence for God, and absolute submission to him.

- 5. **7. man . . . born unto trouble**, that is, it is his nature through sin to bring trouble upon himself.
- 8. There is no help for this condition but to **turn to God**. He doeth wonderful things (verse 9) and is therefore capable of meeting man's trouble.
- 13. **in their own craftiness**. Quoted by Paul (1 Cor. 3. 19), and the only direct quotation from the book of Job in the New Testament. It is curious and interesting to observe that in this instance Paul did not

follow the Septuagint version and must either have made his own translation direct from the Hebrew, or made use of some Version to us unknown.

17. Job's frightful sufferings should be received with joy as an evidence of God's interest in him. This is sound biblical doctrine, taught in many passages. See, for example, Psa. 94. 12; Prov. 3. 11; Heb. 12. 5.

18. If God afflicts, it is only that he may bind up and so heal more perfectly.

19. **six . . . seven.** Round numbers, meaning many or all.

20. **In famine . . . in war.** These were the sorest and saddest afflictions of the ancient East.

21. **the scourge of the tongue,** that is, slander or calumny.

23. If Job will only come into peace with God, he will by that very fact find himself also at peace with inanimate and animate nature.

25, 26. Furthermore, Job shall have numerous offspring, and in the end come peacefully to the grave, like fully ripened grain. From this come Milton's fine lines (quoted in the Speaker's Commentary):

“So mayest thou live, till, like ripe fruits, thou drop
Into thy mother's lap; or be with ease
Gathered, not harshly plucked; for death mature.”

LVIII

Twenty-sixth Sunday After Trinity

JOB 28

FOR general notes upon the book of Job see Lesson LVII, p. 157. The present lesson comes from the address of Job, as the book is at present arranged, but it is extremely difficult to interpret in that connection, and there are many who hold that the arrangement as made by the author was quite likely different. (See the Commentaries.) But for the purpose of public reading this question is not important, and the noble and beautiful passage may yield its poetic instruction as it stands, regardless of the question to whom the author originally assigned it. The thought of this chapter is that man can never hope to reach wisdom. It belongs to God, and of him must be sought, whatever may be suitable for man to possess in its place.

28. 2. **copper.** R. V., reads "brass," but incorrectly; brass is an alloy, not a native metal.
3. **thick darkness,** that is, the darkest recesses of earth to which miners penetrate.
4. **forgotten of the foot.** Men walk above ground, not knowing that beneath their feet the miner works.
5. Upon the earth's surface the farmer grows his grain, which is ground and baked into bread, while beneath the earth is torn and broken, and blasted by the miner seeking its treasures.
6. **sapphires.** The stone meant is probably the beautiful lapis lazuli, which is frequently veined with iron pyrites looking like a sprinkling of gold dust.
7. **that path,** namely, the long, dark channel which the miner has cut. No bird enters it.

11. streams . . . trickle not. The allusion is to the water that filters through clefts in the rocks into the miners' shafts and must be stopped up.

12-14. Man has learned how to find his way to precious metals and rich jewels, but he cannot thus find the home of wisdom.

15-19. And as man cannot discover it, so also he cannot purchase it, no matter what price he might be willing to pay.

17. glass was rare and precious in ancient times.

20-22. The thought of 15-19 is continued. Wisdom cannot be found in this world, nor in the world beyond.

22. Destruction and Death. Hebrew, Abaddon, that is, Sheol and Death both personified.

23. way . . . place. These are only parts of the figure. Wisdom is really with God, and with him alone.

25. weight for the wind, that is, God weighed out the amount of the wind, determined its quantity.

27. count. R. V., "declare," margin, "recount."

28. Wisdom, then, belongs exclusively to God. For man the only obtainable gift is the fear of God, which is man's substitute for the Divine Wisdom.

LIX

Sunday Next Before Advent

ECCLESIASTES 11. 1-4, 6-10; 12. 8, 13, 14

THE book of Ecclesiastes has puzzled many commentators and has suffered much at their hands. The difficulty which has caused most of the trouble has been a widespread desire to make the book conform to modern Western standards of logical consistency. To accomplish this the book has been subjected to severe editorial curtailment, to remove inconsistencies. It is much more likely that the book represents changing moods, and that its author was never consistent with himself or his thinking. There are passages of great beauty and of undying interest in it. It was written in the name of King Solomon, a form of literary artifice well known in antiquity, and probably by a Jew in the late Persian or early Greek period.

11. 1. Cast thy bread. Interpreted in three different ways: (a) of almsgiving and generosity, (b) of a business venture, and (c) of agriculture. The first is much to be preferred.

3, 4. The thought is that one must go on with his work and not heed the operations of nature which one cannot change. This idea is again enforced in verse 6.

7, 8. It is man's wisdom to enjoy his life as it flows along, take pleasure in so simple a thing as sunlight, for he has no right to expect that he will always have the power of enjoyment, or the things to enjoy. The idea is *Carpe diem* (Horace); that is, "Reap the harvest of to-day."

9. The young man is advised to make glad use of

youth, but to remember that God requires an accounting for the use made of it.

12. 1. Remember also now thy Creator. The words are commonly held among modern commentators to be an insertion of a later hand. If they are, let us accept and use them as the advice of another wise man.

2. 7. These verses have been variously interpreted as either (a) a reference to various forms and functions of the body, or (b) a description of a great storm, itself a figure of the darkness and gloom of age. It is idle and unsympathetic as well to press them closely into any mold of western thought. We are here dealing not with western logic, but with eastern imagination, and should try to remember that mixed metaphors, or changing phases of a single metaphor, are at home in the Oriental lands of bright sunlight and deep shadows.

2. clouds return. The winter, when one storm follows quickly on the heels of another.

3. keepers of the house. Some say the keepers of the house are the hands, and the strong men are the feet, while others would make the allusion to a decaying house.

grinders. Quite likely the teeth.

look out of the windows. Probably the "eyes."

4. doors shall be shut. The figure seems to be that of a once prosperous house, but now with doors closed and offering no hospitality.

daughters of music . . . low. Sounds of music are no longer well heard in dull ears.

5. that which is high. The aged cannot climb hills.

almond tree. The almond flowers white, and the allusion may possibly be to the white hair of the aged, but it is very doubtful.

grasshopper . . . burden. (a) Even the weight of a grasshopper would be a burden, which is hyperbole, or (b) the aged walks bent and slow like the locust.

caper-berry. Used for some medicinal purpose.

6. The verse is evidently a highly poetical description of the end of life, but it does not seem wise to attempt to force an interpretation upon every single item in the figure.

8. **Vanity of vanities.** Compare

“His breath’s a bubble, and his days a span—
’Tis glorious misery to be born a man”

(Francis Quarles).

13, 14. This conclusion of the whole matter is by many, if not most, modern scholars ascribed to another hand than that of the original author. It matters not who wrote it, so far as public reading is concerned. The editors of the Hebrew text thought the last sentence harsh, and so they repeated verse 13 after verse 14 to give a conclusion more mild.

ALTERNATIVE LESSONS

ALTERNATIVE I

First Sunday in Advent

ISAIAH 1. 1-20

THE date of the passage is quite uncertain. It may be as early as B. C. 735 or as late as 701, to which later date I am the more inclined, though with no feeling of any definite assurance. For this present purpose it matters little. Here are the chief outlines of Isaiah's whole teaching, a summary of his message.

2. **the Lord hath spoken.** Isaiah has heard him speak since he was called to be a prophet (see Lesson XXXII), and he will now give forth the divine message.

4. **Holy One.** It was the divine holiness which was impressed upon the prophet in the inaugural vision (Isa. 6), and he keeps it ever before him.

6. The allusion is to the simple surgery of the day. A wound was first pressed to exclude any pus, then drawn together, bandaged and mollified with oil (see Luke 10. 34).

7. The situation here described, while not necessarily ill suited to the condition which may or did occur during the invasion of the Syro-Ephraimistic army in 735, seems much better suited to the greater devastation caused by Sennacherib in 701.

8. **daughter of Zion.** Jerusalem and her people.

a booth . . . a lodge. Frail structures set upon light poles and used by the watchers who sat in them to protect crops against thieves or wild animals.

10-17. "The false and the true way of seeking God's favor" (Dillmann).

11. **full of, sated with.** In the beginning sacrifices were conceived as the food of the gods, and here is seen to be lingering faintly even in the far higher religion of Israel.

12. **trample.** The word is strong, and implies, without quite expressing, the idea of their desecrating the holy precincts.

15. **spread forth your hands,** namely, in the attitude of prayer.

18-20. Jehovah is willing to plead his cause, for great is his condescension.

18. **let us reason together.** A very difficult phrase in the Hebrew and the translation is still subject of dispute and the exegesis still more. Perhaps we shall come nearest the heart of it if we venture to say it means to discuss together this great subject and see from the debate who is right and who is wrong. So, in general, Gray would explain it, while Skinner would give it rather a legal meaning.

Though your sins. This is imaginary. The clause has sometimes been interpreted as an interrogative, though with doubtful grammatical propriety. The main point is that though God is Israel's God he is not on that account to be thought lenient to Israel's sins (compare Amos, 3. 2). Men must meet the conditions set forth in verses 19 and 20.

scarlet . . . crimson. Not two colors, but one. The second word really means "worm" literally, and signifies the insect from which the color was obtained (*coccus ilicis*). As Gray reminds us the first word really means "scarlet clothes," so sin is represented as a red garment enwrapping the sinner. Compare the figure in Zech. 3. 3f.

ALTERNATIVE II

Second Sunday in Advent

ISAIAH 5. 1-20

THE Parable of the Vineyard and Isaiah's smashing application of its lesson to the sins of his people. The lesson falls naturally into two parts: (a) the parable, verses 1-7 and (b) the denunciation and the woes, verses 8-20. There are no historical or political allusions to help us to the period of the prophet's ministry to which it belongs. Isaiah appears among the people in the guise of a minstrel, perhaps at some festival when people from the countryside were in the city, and speaks this parable. He puts it into poetic form, with many a turn and a sort of light and attractive measure and would soon have a company very willing to hear him; and then when they have heard him gladly, he skillfully turns the parable and shows its bearing upon the nation's life in a series of six woes directed against the higher classes and the leaders of the community.

2. **built a tower.** A shelter for the watchers; not a mere temporary thing on poles, as in Isa. 1. 8, but a solid construction as an evidence of the permanent construction of the whole vineyard.

6. **thorns and thistles.** A favorite expression of Isaiah.

7. **vineyard of the Lord.** We do not know whether it was Isaiah or another who first originated this conception of a vineyard as an expression for the true religion of revelation, but it became very widely used. See, for example, Jer. 2. 21; 12. 10f.; Matt. 20. 1ff.; 21. 33ff.

Now come the six woes, which were quite probably seven, or even more as originally delivered.

8-10. Denunciation of rich landowners, who contrive to get small holdings away from the poor and so to increase their own estates.

10. **ten acres.** Lit., ten yoke; a yoke of land was as much as two oxen could plow from morning till night.

one bath. About eight gallons, which would be a small yield for so large a vineyard.

11-13. Denunciation of those who carouse from morn till night imbibing strong drink, that is, wine fortified alcoholically by the addition of dates, honey, raisins, and the like to increase fermentation. Then when stimulated they add music and with senses dulled and ears given up to sensual sound forget Jehovah and all his ways.

14-17. A threat of the destruction of Jerusalem.

17. The city has vanished into Sheol, and in its place the cattle pasture.

18, 19. The verses contain an impious and mocking challenge uttered by sinful men to Jehovah to do his worst. They do not doubt his existence. They doubt only his moral government. They are not afraid of the prophet's denunciations.

20. Woe to those who darken, or doubt or confuse the great moral distinctions.

ALTERNATIVE III

Third Sunday in Advent

ISAIAH 25. 1-9

THE passage is taken from a series of brilliant prophecies in chapters 24-27 which are, in general, apocalyptic in character. They are, therefore, to be compared with the book of Daniel in the Old Testament and with the book of Revelation in the New. They are quite unlike the preaching of Isaiah of Jerusalem or of Isaiah of Babylon, and probably should be dated in the Persian period, though it is well to remember that the historical circumstances are unknown, and it is, therefore, not fitting for us to be very dogmatic about the time when the passage was composed. The lesson falls into two parts, (a) verses 1-5, a song of thanksgiving to celebrate the deliverance which Jehovah has given his people; (b) verses 6-8, Jehovah's feast on Mount Zion to all the nations. This is, indeed, a most catholic passage. Here Jehovah is no exclusive possession of Israel, but a loving and very tender Lord over all peoples, willing and glad to husband them all as his own, and to take away even the sad misery of death. What other people ever had such an idea of God as had these Jews of Jehovah? Is not this wonderful in our eyes, if we can conceive and understand it?

2. **city an heap.** The reference is to some city which had represented hostility to Jehovah but was in the prophet's time destroyed.

4, 5. But Jehovah saved his own people Israel.

6-8. Here is the glorious passage! Jehovah is to be the crowned King of all the earth, and this is his coronation feast. He will hold the festival on Mount Zion, and it is

not for Israel only, but all nations are bidden as his guests. The nations come enveloped in mourning garments, for they do not yet know that all their troubles are gone for aye; but Jehovah strips off the habiliments of woe and sees the tears beneath; the last tears are these, for even death itself is now destroyed forever in the ushering in of the Messianic age.

9. This verse really introduces a new section concerning Moab, but it may quite appropriately be used in public reading to conclude the splendid passage (6-8) with a burst of grateful praise.

ALTERNATIVE IV

Fourth Sunday in Advent

ZECHARIAH 2

THE exiles returned from Babylonia in B. C. 536, but in numbers far fewer than was to be desired. A series of bad seasons, the difficulty of bringing the land under cultivation, troubles with their neighbors, and a general and very perilous apathy prevented the immediate rebuilding of the Temple, and the whole religious future of Judaism was imperiled, for the Temple was an essential factor in the building of an ecclesiastical state. In this juncture two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, after sixteen years of waiting for a national move, began to incite the people to their duty. Of these two men Zechariah is incomparably the more important from the point of view of literary ability. He made a new departure in the form of prophetic teaching, for he put his message into the form of a series of allegories, of which Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is a modern example. This lesson is the third vision, and was delivered February 24, 519, the whole sermon being comprised in 1. 7—6. 15. This is the vision of the man with the measuring line.

2. 2. Jerusalem is only partially rebuilt, but in the vision the man with the measuring line goes out to see how large the city should be to accommodate the great influx of people whom the prophet expects.

3. **came forth.** R. V., "went out." An angel had been talking with the prophet, and as he left him another angel came forth to join him.

4. **and he said.** R. V., "and said." The meaning is that the interpreting angel who stood by the prophet's side to explain the vision spoke to the man with the

measuring line and bade him not to define the city limits.

villages without walls. Lit., as "open country districts," as opposed to walled cities (Driver). The idea is that the city will be enormously expanded.

6. flee from the land of the north. Addressed to the people who still are in Babylonia.

I will gather you. R. V., "I have spread you abroad," etc. I have unhesitatingly followed the Septuagint, which gives a far more preferable sense.

7. Zion. The part still in Babylonia; **escape**, for a heavy judgment of God is about to fall on the heathen peoples, and God's people should not be among them.

9. shall be a spoil. Israel shall spoil them, as they had spoiled her.

10. I will dwell in the midst of thee, that is, when the Temple has been rebuilt.

11. many nations. These will join themselves to God's people to learn of him.

12. holy land. This is the only place in which this expression occurs, yet it has become very common in our speech.

13. This is God's judgment on the heathen world (compare verse 9). The people are bidden to be silent in awe, as they think of the impending wrath, for he is already bestirring himself in his holy habitation.

ALTERNATIVE VIII

First Sunday After Epiphany

ISAIAH 51. 1-16

THIS fine lesson, eloquent and earnest, was addressed to the exiles in Babylon, and was intended as a consolation and an encouragement. It divides into three sections: (a) verses 1-8, in which the prophet draws encouragement from the example of God's dealings with Abraham. If God could make a people from him who was but one, all the more is he able to restore a people to greatness from these who are now in exile. (b) verses 9-11.—It is only divine power that can accomplish this, and so in these verses the people plead with God to display again the power which he had shown of old. (c) verses 12-16.—They who really trust Jehovah need have no fear.

51. 1. **hole of the pit.** The figure is that of a quarry. The Israelites are the stones taken from it. See how wonderful a thing this is that from such a small quarry as Abraham and Sarah so many should have come. The figure of the quarry occurs nowhere else.
- 4-6. Israel's life as a people is not for herself only; she is "for a light of the peoples," and the religion thus sent forth is to be universal. It is also to be eternal, outlasting the heavens and the earth.
- 9, 10. The imagery of these verses is derived from the Assyrian and Babylonian creation story, according to which creation and the orderly Cosmos could only begin after the god Ellil or the god Marduk had destroyed the great principle of Chaos, personified under the name Tiamat. This story must have been widely spread in western Asia, and is used for literary adornment especially by the writer

of the book of Job (see, for example, 3. 8, 9. 13 and 26. 13), where Rahab, or Leviathan, takes the place of Tiamat, and Jehovah the place of Ellil, or Marduk. **10. the great deep**; that is, the primeval chaos of waters in Gen. 1. 2. The Hebrew word is *těhôm*, which is etymologically connected with Tiamat.

a way . . . to pass over. This is an allusion to the crossing of the Red Sea in the exodus from Egypt.

12-16. This is Jehovah's reply. The people need have no fear, for the Almighty Creator is on their side, and calls them his people.

ALTERNATIVE X

Third Sunday After Epiphany

HOSEA 14. 1-9

FOR a brief introduction to Hosea's ministry see X, Third Sunday after Epiphany, p. 57. The present lesson has by some interpreters been denied to Hosea, because it seems to contradict the severe judgments of chapter 13, but the reasons are quite insufficient. It is thoroughly characteristic of the prophets to denounce sin and declare judgment, and in the next breath to promise mercy and forgiveness. Verse 9 is, however, not a part of the prophetic message, but a monition by a later hand in the style of the Wisdom Literature, though a quite useful conclusion in prose style to Hosea's poetic message.

14. 2. **take with you words.** None shall appear before Jehovah empty—so ran the ancient requirement (Exod. 23. 5, 34. 20). This was interpreted to mean sacrifices, but Hosea now suggests that men should bring rather words, words of repentance spoken from the heart, and prayers for God's reception of them.

3. Israel must not look for deliverance to Assyria as Ahaz did when he appealed to Tiglathpileser for help against the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition, nor to Egypt, from which came horses for battle, but to God only.

the fatherless. Israel is compared to an orphan. "I will not leave you desolate" (Lit., "orphans"), John 14. 18.

5. **their backsliding,** that is, its consequences or damages.

as the dew. The dry summer of Palestine, when the land is practically without rain, would dry up all

vegetation but for the heavy mists which blow in from the Mediterranean and distill upon the land.

as the lily. Probably the gorgeous *Anemone coronaria*, which blooms in masses and sweeps of color even among the fields of grain.

as Lebanon. A mountain has roots (Job 28. 9) and is a fit image for stability, as the lily is for beauty, and the olive also, with its silver sheen on the under-side of its dark-green leaves.

smell as Lebanon. The balsamic odor of the cedars.

the wine of Lebanon. Famous in antiquity, that of Helbon, in the Anti-Lebanon, being especially praised.

8. green fir tree. It is at least unusual to compare God with a tree, though not impossible. The kind of tree here meant is quite unknown.

fruit found. Israel's fruit comes only by the Lord's gift.

9. This verse, as stated above, is an addition to the whole book of Hosea and in the style of the Wisdom Literature. It enjoins upon men the duty of giving glad obedience to God's moral government of the world.

ALTERNATIVE XIII

Sixth Sunday After Epiphany

MICAH 6. 1-8

MICAH's prophetic activity, according to the superscription of his book, began about 740, at the beginning of the reign of Jotham, and extended into the time of Hezekiah. He was, therefore, a contemporary of Hosea's later days and a younger contemporary of Isaiah. The first three chapters of his book are certainly his, but considerable doubt must be admitted in respect of the rest of the book. The matter of authorship in the case of this lesson is quite unimportant. It belongs in any case to the most deeply inspired of Hebrew prophecies.

6. 1, 2. In verse 1 the prophet introduces Jehovah to Israel, and then in verse 2 Jehovah speaks, and is ready to argue his case against Israel before the mountains as judges, for they have witnessed the course of Israel's history and are acquainted with her attitude toward her God. To the Scripture, all nature, as we call these works of God, shares with man in his trials and in his joys, and besides that, shares God's feeling toward man because of all the evil that man has wrought upon nature. Then nature obeys God's will and executes God's judgments upon men. Her storms of destructive rain, her droughts, her earthquakes, her raging and overwhelming seas—all these are fulfilling God's behests and punishing man. On the other hand, they can feel sympathy for man, and enter into his emotions. See how the apostle Paul teaches this doctrine (Rom. 8. 22).

3. **wherein have I wearied thee.** At the time of this utterance, which may have been in the time of Manasseh, the sacrificial system as elaborated during

the Exile and presented by Ezra in B. C. 444 was not yet in vogue. The sacrifices of earlier days were much more simple, and in some cases, at least, were not offered at all. The classic passage in support of this view is Jer. 7. 22, but with this there may well be compared also Isa. 43. 23 and Amos 5. 25.

4. Israel's history begins with a great act of redemption in her deliverance from the Egyptian bondage, and this historic fact is ever prominent in her literature.

5. The reference to Balak and Balaam is an allusion to the brilliant narrative in Num. 22-24. The prophet touches lightly upon it, presuming that all who heard him would be familiar with it.

6. **Remember from Shittim unto Gilgal.** Shittim was the last camping station of Israel before crossing the Jordan (Josh. 3. 1) and Gilgal the first after crossing the river (Josh. 4. 20). It may, therefore, be presumed that the meaning here intended is to remember what happened in God's providence between these two points.

6-8. A passage which rises by a series of rhetorical questions into a splendid climax in the statement of the character of practical religion in verse 8, which belongs among the finest passages in the Old Testament revelation; indeed, some would call it the supreme prophetic utterance. The present passage also intimates clearly enough what the preexilic prophetic message was about sacrifices. They are not primary but subordinate, but they are not disowned or repudiated. The question was not so much religious ceremonial, but the religious, or perhaps better the ethical life of righteousness before God. On the other hand, we do well to observe that God is not forgotten. Righteous living is good and necessary, but God, and man's relation to him, is still the fundamental requirement.

ALTERNATIVE XVII

First Sunday in Lent

GENESIS 18

THE lesson is taken from the part of the Pentateuch which comes from the hand of the Judaistic writer (J), who wrote probably about B. C. 850. This writer has left for us much of the most picturesque passages in the whole Pentateuch, and poor would we be had they not been providentially preserved. The loss of this chapter would be particularly serious. Nowhere else is Abraham portrayed more attractively. He is here a patriarch indeed, quick in hospitality, gentle and kindly in speech, grave and serious in manner, dignified and courteous, generous in every thought. Well indeed might Israel be proud of him.

18. 1. **oaks.** It should be "terebinth," but it would appear pedantic to change.

2. **three men.** It is at the hour of the heat and drowsiness and Abraham is suddenly aware of three men before him. The point of the beautiful story turns on the fact that he does not yet know who they are, but courteously receives them and makes instant preparation to give such hospitality as custom demanded.

3. **My lord.** This is a title of courtesy only. The margin of R. V. reads "Or, O Lord," but this is quite erroneous, for it would signify that Abraham already recognized one of the three as Jehovah.

6. **three measures.** Hebrew, *seahs*, about four and one half pecks (Kennedy)—a very large amount.

cakes, round and flat, and quickly baked upon hot stones.

7. It was a very high compliment that Abraham offered his guests in providing meat for them. Then as now the Oriental has little flesh to eat and seldom is it provided. When it is there is indeed a feast. The "calf tender and good" would be the mark of a high festival.

8. **butter.** It was curdled milk, quickly soured by being brought in from the cow, and poured into a "sour-milk skin," and then shaken for a few minutes. The ferment in the skin from previous use quickly ferments the milk and produces a slightly acid and satisfying drink, now called *leben* among the Arabs.

10. **when the season cometh round.** A year later. In verses 9-15 the promise is made of a son. It is introduced with great skill, and is deftly handled. The chief visitor who carries on the conversation reveals a more than human knowledge, and we have therefore here the first hint of the divine character.

16-22. The judgment upon Sodom is revealed to Abraham.

16. **looked toward Sodom.** Sodom would not be visible from Hebron, but would be visible from *Beni Na'im*, about three miles east of Hebron, to which spot Abraham had conducted his visitors.

18. The blessing harks back to Gen. 12. 3.

19. **known him**, that is, "entered into personal relations with."

to the end that. Abraham is to found a family, from which a people shall spring through whom the whole earth shall be blessed. But this glorious result depends upon Abraham's faithfulness in "commanding his children and household after him."

20. **cry of Sodom**, that is, cry about Sodom's sin which ascends to heaven and calls for judgment.

22. Two of Abraham's guests go on, and one re-

mains. This is Jehovah himself made manifest in a theophany.

22-33. Abraham intercedes for the city, because his sense of justice moves him to feel that it would not be just to cause the righteous to perish with the wicked. He pleads, therefore, with God to spare the wicked for the sake of the ten righteous and gains at last the great concession and the Divine assurance. Here then was established the doctrine of the justice of God. God's mercy and his loving-kindness come to beautiful expression in the revelation to Moses (Exod. 34. 6, 7). It was well to have the Justice made clear.

24. Spare the place. The Hebrew means literally "take away for the place," that is, take away its guilt, so that the thought is of forgiveness.

25. that so the righteous should be as the wicked. This was a very sore problem in the religious thought of Israel which comes to its fullest intensity in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and to its discussion the book of Job is devoted.

the Judge of all the earth. This is a great claim. It verges toward monotheism. There may indeed be other gods, that is not explicitly denied, but if there are Jehovah is supreme judge over them.

33. And the Lord went his way. How did he go? We are not told, but are left to surmise that he went as he came. He did not disappear as in the case of the divine theophany before Gideon (Judg. 6. 21).

ALTERNATIVE XXIV

Easter Day

EZEKIEL 37. 1-14

EZEKIEL, of a distinguished priestly family, and therefore a member of the aristocracy of Judah, was carried away into captivity in 597 by Nebuchadrezzar. In Babylonia he was called to be a prophet in 593 and set himself to comfort and establish his people in the faith of their fathers and to awaken a sure conviction that Jehovah would restore them to their own land. The lesson is taken from a chapter in which the first part (verses 1-14) is given to the resurrection of the people from national death and the promised return to their own land, and the second part (verses 15-28) to the promise of a reunion of Israel and Judah under the house of David. It is not here predicted that individuals are to be raised from the dead. That assurance came later (Isa. 26. 19; Dan. 12; compare Job 14. 13f.); this is only national resurrection.

37. 2. upon the face of the valley. R. V., "in the open valley." The bones are spread all over the valley and they were bleached and dry, fitting symbol of the deadness of the nation and of the hopelessness of its revival.
3. thou knowest. It is a modest answer. The prophet dare not answer positively, but must leave the decision to God. Even the apostle Paul, in the larger light which the Lord gave, must also speak modestly. (Phil. 3. 11.)
5. breath. The first step is breath, yet that really embraces the whole, for the breath is the life.
7. shaking. R. V., "an earthquake," but that gives a suggestion that is not in the context. It is not

the earth, but the bones that shake (Jewish version, "a commotion"). The same word is also rendered "rushing" (A. V., 3. 12). The word "noise" is omitted by the Septuagint.

9. unto the wind. In Hebrew the same word means "wind," "breath," and "spirit." Breath was seen to be wind; and as breath was a visible expression of life, it became quite natural to use the same word for the vital principle of life.

12. Here the figure varies. Above the bones are lying in the open valley, upon its face, but now the bodies are in their graves. It is, however, still the nation of which the prophet speaks.

13. O my people, not the individuals as such, but the nation as a whole.

14. This gift of life is from God only. It is his spirit that gives life (Psa. 104. 30).

11. the whole house of Israel, that is, both Judah and Ephraim, and it is the living representatives of what was once a nation, but is now destroyed, that speak in the next words, saying, "our hope is lost." The nation has been broken and carried away into captivity, and they who still live personally can discern no hope nationally. This is indeed a heart-breaking thought for them, and God gives the prophet authority to banish their fears, and renew their hopes.

ALTERNATIVE XXVII

Third Sunday After Easter

ISAIAH 60

THE lesson belongs to the series of postexilic prophecies (56-66) of which the background is Jerusalem and not Babylon. The people have returned from exile, but many Jews are scattered in other parts of the world, and for their ingathering the devout people of Jerusalem are longing. In this beautiful chapter the prophet, whom we may call the Third Isaiah for lack of a better name, utters an apostrophe to the glory of the new Jerusalem. The temple had been rebuilt (verses 7 and 13), but the city walls are yet to be reconstructed (verse 10) so that the passage belongs to the period before Nehemiah.

2. **darkness.** This is darkness of the heathen world, in contrast to the light which shines upon Jerusalem from her Lord.

4. **carried.** The Hebrew means literally (see margin R. V.) "nursed on the side," that is, carried on the hip, according to Oriental custom.

5. **tremble,** that is, throb with joy.

6. **dromedaries.** Lit., young camels, probably under nine years old.

Ephah, a tribe of Midian.

Sheba, a country and people in Arabia (Yemen).

7. **Kedar.** A general designation for north Arabian nomads, and Nebaioth, probably the people who later became well known as the Nabateans.

beautify my beautiful house. The temple has been rebuilt and needs only to be beautified.

8. fly as a cloud. These are the ships on the Mediterranean which will bring the Jews from the West, and also much treasure to the restored Jerusalem.

12. The verse is prosaic and violates the arrangement of the rest of the beautiful chapter, and has probably been introduced from some gloss or marginal comment and was not written by the prophet. I have, therefore, omitted it for the practical purpose of public reading.

13. the cypress, the pine, and the box tree. R. V. reads for cypress, "the fir tree," but cypress is much more likely. The pine is doubtful, and the tree meant may be the plane tree, and the Jewish version suggests "larch" for the third, but this does not seem likely. How were these trees to be used? Were they to be planted, or were they to be used as lumber for practical use or adornment? The latter seems more probable.

19. thy glory, thy beauty. It is interesting to compare Rev. 21. 23 with this beautiful verse. The prophet does not mean that the sun and moon shall cease to exist, but rather that supernatural light shall come with them, so that the city shall not be dependent upon them.

ALTERNATIVE XXXI

Whitsunday

EXODUS 34. 1-10, 29-35

THIS impressive and interesting passage is in two parts, of which the first (verses 1-10) came from an interweaving of the words of the Judaistic and Elohist writers (about B. C. 850 and 800). The second part (verses 29-35) was set down for us by the Priestly writer during the Exile (about B. C. 500).

34. 1. **Hew thee . . . I will write.** In the former instance (32. 16) the tables themselves were God's own handiwork and were broken by Moses (32. 19), in this case the tables are to be fashioned by Moses and Jehovah will write upon them.

6-8. This is the theophany promised in 33. 19-23 [see Lesson XXI] and it is the moral nature of Jehovah that here finds expression.

7. It is God's mercy, and not God's wrath, that is here especially emphasized, as it is also in Exod. 20.

5, 6. **unto thousands.** Look back at Exod. 20. 6 and the meaning will be more clear, and yet more clear if we compare the Revised Version which reads, "showing mercy unto thousands, of them that love me and keep my commandments." Note the comma after the word thousands! The meaning is in the antithesis. God's justice extends only to the "third and fourth generation," but his mercy on the other hand extends to "thousands *belonging to them* that love me and keep my commandments," that is those who are descendants of those who love God, or who belong to them in any other way as dependents or

even as servants. God's mercy, in other words, extends much further than his wrath.

10. **marvels.** The marvels or wonders here predicted are those described in Num. 11, 16, 20, 21, etc.

29. **shone.** His face shines because it reflects the divine glory. The Hebrew word here translated shone is a denominative from the Hebrew word *keren*, "horn," in the sense of ray (Hab. 3. 4). Jerome translated it literally "was horned," and hence the sculptors and painters who read the Vulgate have quite commonly represented Moses with horns on his head—so, for example, Michael Angelo.

30. **were afraid.** The shining face frightened the people, and thereafter in all ordinary intercourse Moses wore a veil.

34. **went in before the Lord.** The meaning is that Moses went into the Tent of Meeting (compare Exod. 25. 22 and Num. 7. 89). One should really take the time to see how Paul makes use of this in 2 Cor. 3. 7-18, and it would be very profitable to read Driver's admirable note upon Paul's allegorizing (The Book of Exodus, Camb. Bible, pp. 375, 376).

ALTERNATIVE XLIV

Twelfth Sunday After Trinity

HABAKKUK 2. 1-14

NOTHING is known of the prophet Habakkuk save what may be gleaned from his book; even the meaning of his name is obscure and doubtful. He lived and worked about the year B. C. 600, in the miserable days of Jehoiakim's rule over Judah, and was therefore a contemporary of Jeremiah. He was deeply moved by the sins of his people, and argued that God should punish them, and not further permit lawlessness and social disorder. The complaint of the prophet is expressed in the form of a dialogue between him and God (chap. 1) and when this is ended the prophet sets himself upon a watchtower, in imagination, to await God's reply. It is this reply which is here chosen for a lesson.

2. 1. tower. R. V., margin proposes "fortress." The actual place conceived was probably part of the fortified city wall from which one could survey the distance with the eye.

he will answer. This is the reading of the Syriac version, and seems much better than the Hebrew text, which is "what I shall answer."

2. he may run; that is, that the reader's eye may run swiftly over it. There must be no indistinctness in the writing.

3. hasteth. Lit., "panteth" or "puffeth." The vision is personified and is represented as running swiftly toward accomplishment.

4. This is the content of the vision which the prophet was to write upon a tablet, and the meaning may thus be paraphrased: "The soul of the Chaldean is

puffed up with pride, but the just shall live by his faithfulness."

faithfulness. R. V., "faith"; but there is no word for faith in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew word here used means "steadiness," "firmness," and then as a moral quality "faithfulness." This clause is quoted in the New Testament by Paul (Rom. 1. 17, Gal. 3. 11), where he renders "faith," making an extension of the meaning of the Septuagint translation, and it is used again in the same sense in Heb. 10. 37f. The New Testament has simply spiritualized the meaning and given it a significance beyond that originally meant by Habakkuk.

In this, which Habakkuk is to write upon a tablet and doubtless keep by him to refresh his memory, and prevent his ever doubting God's moral government again, we have the real kernel of Habakkuk's message.

5. With verse 5 begins a series of woes directed against the Chaldeans.

Yea, moreover, wine. This makes absolutely no sense, and the versions are helpless and hopeless, nor has any successful emendation been proposed. The context shows clearly enough that the reference must have been to the Chaldeans, and not to wine. The Chaldeans are charged with restless ambition. If in reading one dare substitute "the Chaldean" for the word "wine," he would probably come near the original word of the prophet, and at least make some sense, but I do not feel justified in so printing the text when there is no support either in the Hebrew or in any of the versions.

6. **parable, rather, a taunting song.**

pledges. The Chaldean is like a usurer who loads himself with pledges.

shake thee. R. V., "vex," which is not strong enough. The meaning is harsh. The nations shall shake the usurious pledges out of the Chaldeans.

9-11. Another woe against the Chaldeans.

9. set his nest on high, that is, make himself secure against possible enemies, like the vulture which builds its nest in rocky clefts far out of reach.

10. devised. R. V., "consulted." The meaning is that the Chaldean planned or devised good for himself, but it has resulted only in shame. The rhetorical figure is called oxymoron.

11. the stone . . . the beam. The Chaldean had stolen the stone for his building probably out of Arabia, and the wood from the Lebanon or Amanus. These are now witnesses against him.

13. labor for the fire. Men toil to build and the fire consumes their structures; so will their empires fall to pieces, and in their place will come Jehovah's glory (verse 14). This latter verse is based upon Isa. 11. 9, but with changes both in phraseology and in its application.

ALTERNATIVE XLVI

Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity

AMOS 5. 4-24

FOR notes concerning Amos and his mission see XI, p. 59. This passage follows immediately upon the first three verses of the chapter in which the prophet sings a dirge over Israel, as already fallen, because he has seen no signs of any amendment. He now follows this with a stinging statement that Israel really deserves the doom which he has just pronounced because she has relied on sacrifices at various holy places rather than upon ethical amendment.

5. **4. seek ye me.** The expression has varied significations, but here the meaning is to seek God by the practice of a righteous life.

seek not. To go to Bethel or some other place to consult an oracle or to offer sacrifices.

Bethel. The principal sanctuary of the northern Kingdom, about ten miles north of Jerusalem.

Gilgal. The first camping place west of the Jordan, and about four and one half miles from the river.

5. **Beersheba.** In the extreme south, about fifty miles below Jerusalem and at the very end of the land.

In these two verses Amos makes a very striking series of plays upon words, as he also makes use of assonance, using in the words that follow "Gilgal" Hebrew words repeating the sound of "g."

6. **break out like fire.** Fire is here a symbol for any form of punishment that Jehovah might put upon a recreant people. The punishment that actually came was an Assyrian invasion.

7. The words are bitter. Amos charges that instead of maintaining judgment they have made it bitter and have cast righteousness to earth.

8, 9. The verses are intended to emphasize the greatness of the God whom Israel insults by her evil courses. The names "Pleiades" and "Orion" may be correct, but there is no certain identification.

10. **they hate.** These evil-minded people hate even the magistrates who dispense justice in the gateway.

11. These people have despoiled the poor. They shall not live comfortably upon ill-gotten gains.

12. **a bribe;** that is, a ransom, or the price of a life (Exod. 31. 30, Num. 35. 31). It was expressly forbidden to take a ransom and allow a murderer to escape punishment.

13. As justice is in such a plight it is quite useless for anybody to inform upon a wrong-doer, and people who are prudent, that is, worldly wise, do not take the risk of doing it.

14, 15. Amos renews his **exhortation** to good works. There may yet be a chance to save a remnant if the people will but turn from their evil ways.

16, 17. Amos feels sure, however, that the people will not heed his solicitations, and he therefore renews the terrible prediction that death and destruction are impending, and that there will be more dead than can be buried with decent ceremonies.

18-20. Some men hope that the Day of the Lord will come and save them, for, according to their theology, on that day God will triumph over his enemies, whereas to Amos it is a day in which God's righteousness will be vindicated over *sin*. The illustrations used by Amos to enforce the thought that a man may escape from one evil only to fall into another are as brilliant as they are pointed.

21-23. God will not be satisfied with sacrifices of any kind. His one and only satisfying demand is judgment and righteousness (verse 24).

ALTERNATIVE L

Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity

JONAH 3. 1—4. 11

THE book of Jonah was written by an unknown man, richly endowed by nature, and yet more richly filled with the divine Spirit. He was a prophet and well deserves to rank with the greatest of them all, with Jeremiah or with the Second Isaiah, Isaiah of Babylon. There were strains of pride and stains of sin in the Judaism from which the book came. It was a hard Judaism, a stony soil, in many ways, to bear a flower so tender, so beautiful, so catholic as this dear book. It is a neglected book, little esteemed among us, well deserving more study than ever it receives, appealing as it is and winsome. Yet it has suffered much not only at the hands of those who have spoken contemptuously of it as a "fish story," but also by those who made great cause of defending it, for they often enough were so deeply concerned about one verse in it that they failed to see the real glory of the book. As the wise old divine said, "They pore over the whale and forget God." Let us absolutely neglect the great fish, and ask what the book really means. The book of Jonah is not a book containing the prophetic messages of Jonah, as are Amos, Hosea, and the others. It is, rather, a didactic book, written about the name and person of the prophet Jonah, who lived in the reign of Jeroboam II (780?–740?) and predicted the king's success in war (2 Kings 14. 25). There Jonah is a distinguished figure; in this book he is held up to rebuke, if not to contempt. The book is a symbolical allegory in which Jonah is a symbol of Israel, and the nation's history and mental attitude are allegorized in a story of extraordinary events. If we compare Jer. 51. 34, 44, we shall

see at once that Babylon has swallowed up Israel, and that Jonah is Israel, and this makes clear enough what the fish episode means.

The lessons of the book grow out of the words and acts which are told of Jonah. God would send him on a mission to Nineveh, but he will not go, but runs away from the duty, which was also a privilege. The writer of the book, in the third or fourth century before Christ, knew full well that Israel had no selfish possession in Jehovah, but that all the nations should be blessed (or "bless themselves") in Abraham (Gen. 12. 3), and in that knowledge which he and his people were to possess of God's will and ways. The story which he tells of Jonah's flight is an abhorrent thing to him. But Jonah is pictured as comfortably asleep when God's vengeance is ready to overtake him (1. 5). Marti has finely contrasted the sleep of Jesus (Mark 4. 35-41): "Jonah was tranquil since he thought he was far from God's hand, Jesus confident since he knew himself to be hidden in God's hand." Jonah's attempt to escape was a failure, and at last he goes unwillingly to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh. Here begins then the noble and beautiful passage.

3. 2. three days' journey. The city is so vast, in the writer's eyes, that it would require three days to pass through it. This is hyperbole for emphasis and impressiveness.

4-9. The effect of the prophet's preaching was magical, for the whole immense city from king to peasant laborer turns to God in repentance, and the forgiving God of Israel delivers them from the threatened punishment.

4. 1. Jonah is bitterly angry at God's mercy shown to the heathen whom he despised or hated, either or both. Jonah's desire was to see them destroyed, for they did not deserve to live. The spirit of the man

is horrible, but there have been too many examples of a similar desire among Christian theologians excommunicating heretics and burning them at the stake, and consigning enemies of the truth, real or supposed, to everlasting torment for us to cast stones at the prophet as he is here portrayed.

2. Jonah flings an insult into God's face because he is gracious and compassionate.

6 and 9. Jonah has a touch of the humane spirit, for he is angry at the sudden destruction of the gourd, partly, of course, because it gave him shelter and a bit of comfort, but he felt "pity" (verse 10) for it also, and it is something that he could feel a touch of care about a plant.

11. Now are we come to the climax. God is a God of pity and of forgiveness. He will pardon Nineveh which has repented, and he will have pity because it has more than six score thousand children, for it is they who are meant in the phrase, "that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand." The innocent children must not suffer for the sins of the elders. Then follows in a veritable climax, "and also much cattle." God pities the dumb beasts. What a God he is indeed! No man, be he never so tender of heart, can approach him in compassion. What a God he is for us in our sin and folly and ignorance and willfulness! This is, indeed, a great book, a book of missionary spirit in deepest and truest form.

ALTERNATIVE LIII

Twenty-first Sunday After Trinity**EZEKIEL 14**

FOR notes on Ezekiel and his book see Alternative XXIV, p. 184. In chapter 13 the prophet denounced the false prophets. He now turns to declare that though the false prophets have misled the people, on the other hand these false prophets owe their existence and the falsity of the message to the people among whom they live and work. They are enticed from the truth by a people corrupted with idolatry.

14. 3. **stumbling-block.** The reference is still to idolatry. It causes men to stumble and it is iniquity.

inquired of; that is, Should the real prophet Ezekiel give any answer to such people?

7. **I will answer him.** The next verse shows that the divine answer will come in the form of a divine act.

9. The idea is similar to that expressed in 1 Kings 22. 20. If the prophet enters into the spirit of the people and is enticed into speaking falsely, it is the Lord who had brought this about as a punishment for the idolatry of the people.

10. Both people and prophets are threatened with destruction. This statement would probably be met, in the people's minds, with the thought that perhaps the prophet had said too much and that God would save the people because of the righteous who were among them. To this possible argument the prophet replies in verses 12-23, and quite in the same spirit as Jer. 15.

11. Yet are all these severe judgments set for a high

moral end, for their purpose is to save and not to destroy. It is intended that they shall warn God's people and bring them back to him.

12. a land. A. V., "the land," but erroneously. The whole verse is a supposition, and applies to any land.

14. Jeremiah had said, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people" (15. 1). Now Ezekiel uses three other famous worthies, Noah, Daniel, and Job, to enforce the same principle, that only personal righteousness can deliver any individual.

22. should there be left. R. V., "therein shall be left." It is hypothetical, not declarative. The thought is that if any escape, it is only that they may point a moral and cause men to be satisfied, who are now in exile, when the great fall of Jerusalem occurs in B. C. 586.

comforted concerning the evil. This means the impending evil of Jerusalem's destruction which was to come in 586. They who had been carried away in 597 were the chief people of the kingdom, while those who were left behind were the poor, the ignorant, and very probably the idolatrous. They are even compared with bad figs that cannot be eaten (Jer. 24. 8-12, 29. 16-20). The point which Ezekiel is now making is that when the earlier and nobler exiles of 597 see these people brought into captivity, they will be so disgusted with them as to be "comforted" and reconciled to the manifestation of God's justice upon a city which had been inhabited by such people.

ALTERNATIVE LIV

Twenty-second Sunday After Trinity

NEHEMIAH 8. 1-12

THE book of Nehemiah was originally one book with Ezra, and the two were together probably originally one book with the Chronicles, and the whole not complete until B. C. 300, or even later. The chronicler was a priest, or at least wrote and compiled in the priestly spirit. The book of Nehemiah as it now exists reveals Nehemiah as a person of many engaging qualities, though harsh at times and perhaps not always as wise as he was severe. The narrative here chosen has a public value as an account of the feelings inspired in the people by Ezra's presentation of the Law Book.

8. 1. **the water gate.** Probably on the eastern side of the city.

book of the Law of Moses. This was the book which Ezra brought from Babylon where it had been compiled out of ancient sources and traditions and modified to suit the conditions then prevailing. Whether it was the whole or only a part of the Pentateuch is still a subject of learned dispute. But if the whole was not then in Ezra's hand in a completed roll, it was surely completed within a few years.

4. **pulpit.** The Hebrew means literally a "tower." The context shows it must have been a raised platform.

5. **stood up**—a sign of respect.

8. **gave the sense**—explained the meaning of laws so that the people might thoroughly understand.

9. **Tirshatha.** Probably an honorific title. Nehemiah's proper title was **pekah**, "governor."

wept. So also when the Deuteronomic Law was discovered, 2 Kings 22. 11, 19. But they were bidden not to weep as they heard the law, but to rejoice and so they did. God was their Protector and Friend, and they should rejoice to know and to understand his Law.

10. eat the fat, and drink the sweet. The fatty portions of meat are those most highly esteemed by the modern as also by the ancient Orientals, and the greatest compliment to a guest at a feast is to offer him the meat with the thickest layer of fat. By the sweet is meant the new wine in which fermentation has but just begun or at least has not progressed far enough to have broken down all the grape sugar into alcohol.

for whom nothing is prepared. This means the poor, and the Septuagint reads simply, "those who have not," which represents, perhaps, a preferable text.

ALTERNATIVE LVI

Twenty-fourth Sunday After Trinity

HAGGAI 2. 1-9

THE name of the prophet Haggai means "festal," and he may have been so named because of birth on one of the great Jewish feasts. He was a contemporary of Zechariah, who far excels him in literary ability (see Lesson XXII). Haggai's religious message is simple: it was merely an urgent call to rebuild the Temple, for he saw quite plainly that there could be no development or even continuance of Israel's religion without it. The people had returned, or at least a part of them, and that far smaller than was desirable, in the year 536 and laid the foundations and erected the altar of burnt sacrifice, but did not rebuild the Temple. So the matter rested for sixteen years, until August-September, 520, when Haggai uttered his first call for action. Then, on the 21st day of October-November, Haggai spoke again the words now before us, and Zechariah followed with his first message to the same purpose.

2. 3. **as nothing.** There were many discouragements.

The Temple had lain in ruins for sixty-six years, and the men who had survived and could remember what it had been in their youth could hardly feel other than discouraged as they thought of the attempt to rebuild. What could now be done would seem like *nothing*. From this discouragement Haggai attempts to rouse them.

5. The first clause of this verse, which reads in R. V. "*according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt,*" cannot be grammatically construed with its context. It does not appear in

the Septuagint, and I have left it out. So Wellhausen, Nowack, G. A. Smith, Marti, and Driver.

6-9. A beautiful Messianic passage. Let not the builders despair. The temple they now build may be smaller than that of Solomon, but it will be glorified by God, in the days of the ideal kingdom.

6. a little while. The future is foreshortened, as was commonly the case with the prophets.

7. desirable things; that is, gold and silver and precious gems brought to adorn the Temple by all peoples. This is to take place in the Messianic age. The old translation, "the Desire of all nations," which makes it a personal reference to the Messiah, rests upon a mistranslation of the Hebrew in the Latin Vulgate.

9. peace. The great hope of the Messianic age.

CALENDAR RUBRICS

CALENDAR RUBRICS

THE following directions and tables are for the use of those who may desire to read the Scripture passages according to the Days of the Church Year. They who would prefer to read according to any other system may follow the numbers and neglect these Calendar rubrics, as has already been suggested in the Preface. These directions for finding the day in the Church Year have been made more elaborate and abundant than many are likely to need. They are intentionally numerous and precise for the help of those to whom the Church Year is less familiar or even strange.

I

1. The *Movable Festivals* all depend upon *Easter* except *Advent*.

2. *Advent Sunday*, called also *First Sunday in Advent*, is always the nearest Sunday to the thirtieth day of November, whether before or after. The thirtieth day of November is St. Andrew's Day.

3. *Easter Day*, upon which the rest depend, is always the first *Sunday* after the full moon, which happens upon or next after the twenty-first day of March; and if the full moon happen upon a Sunday, *Easter Day* is the Sunday after. *Note.* The full moon here meant is the fourteenth day of a lunar month, reckoned according to an ancient ecclesiastical computation, and not the real or astronomical full moon.

4. To supply the dates of Easter, without need of computation, the following table is offered.

II

A TABLE OF THE DAYS ON WHICH EASTER WILL FALL FROM
1920 TO 1970

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1920 April 4 | 1937 March 28 | 1954 April 18 |
| 1921 March 27 | 1938 April 17 | 1955 April 10 |
| 1922 April 16 | 1939 April 9 | 1956 April 1 |
| 1923 April 1 | 1940 March 24 | 1957 April 21 |
| 1924 April 20 | 1941 April 13 | 1958 April 6 |
| 1925 April 12 | 1942 April 5 | 1959 March 29 |
| 1926 April 4 | 1943 April 25 | 1960 April 17 |
| 1927 April 17 | 1944 April 9 | 1961 April 2 |
| 1928 April 8 | 1945 April 1 | 1962 April 22 |
| 1929 March 31 | 1946 April 21 | 1963 April 14 |
| 1930 April 20 | 1947 April 6 | 1964 March 29 |
| 1931 April 5 | 1948 March 28 | 1965 April 18 |
| 1932 March 27 | 1949 April 17 | 1966 April 10 |
| 1933 April 16 | 1950 April 9 | 1967 March 26 |
| 1934 April 1 | 1951 March 25 | 1968 April 14 |
| 1935 April 21 | 1952 April 13 | 1969 April 6 |
| 1936 April 12 | 1953 April 5 | 1970 March 29 |

III

Septuagesima }
 Sexagesima } Sunday is {
 Quinquagesima } {
 { Nine }
 { Eight } Weeks before Easter.
 { Seven }

Ascension-day }
 Whitsunday } is {
 Trinity Sunday } {
 { Forty Days }
 { Seven Weeks } after Easter.
 { Eight Weeks }

Ash Wednesday, or the beginning of Lent, is forty-six days before Easter.

Palm Sunday, or the beginning of Holy Week, is seven days before Easter.

Holy Thursday is the Thursday before Easter.

Good Friday is the Friday before Easter.

IV

A TABLE OF THE MOVABLE FEASTS, ACCORDING TO THE SEVERAL DAYS THAT EASTER CAN POSSIBLY FALL UPON

| EASTER DAY | Sundays after Epiphany | Septuagesima Sunday | Ash Wednesday | Ascension Day | Whitsunday | Sundays after Trinity | First Sunday in Advent |
|------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Mar. 22 | 1 | Jan. 18 | Feb. 4 | Apr. 30 | May 10 | 27 | Nov. 29 |
| Mar. 23 | 1 | Jan. 19 | Feb. 5 | May 1 | May 11 | 27 | Nov. 30 |
| Mar. 24 | 1 | Jan. 20 | Feb. 6 | May 2 | May 12 | 27 | Dec. 1 |
| Mar. 25 | 2 | Jan. 21 | Feb. 7 | May 3 | May 13 | 27 | Dec. 2 |
| Mar. 26 | 2 | Jan. 22 | Feb. 8 | May 4 | May 14 | 27 | Dec. 3 |
| Mar. 27 | 2 | Jan. 23 | Feb. 9 | May 5 | May 15 | 26 | Nov. 27 |
| Mar. 28 | 2 | Jan. 24 | Feb. 10 | May 6 | May 16 | 26 | Nov. 28 |
| Mar. 29 | 2 | Jan. 25 | Feb. 11 | May 7 | May 17 | 26 | Nov. 29 |
| Mar. 30 | 2 | Jan. 26 | Feb. 12 | May 8 | May 18 | 26 | Nov. 30 |
| Mar. 31 | 2 | Jan. 27 | Feb. 13 | May 9 | May 19 | 26 | Dec. 1 |
| Apr. 1 | 3 | Jan. 28 | Feb. 14 | May 10 | May 20 | 26 | Dec. 2 |
| Apr. 2 | 3 | Jan. 29 | Feb. 15 | May 11 | May 21 | 26 | Dec. 3 |
| Apr. 3 | 3 | Jan. 30 | Feb. 16 | May 12 | May 22 | 25 | Nov. 27 |
| Apr. 4 | 3 | Jan. 31 | Feb. 17 | May 13 | May 23 | 25 | Nov. 28 |
| Apr. 5 | 3 | Feb. 1 | Feb. 18 | May 14 | May 24 | 25 | Nov. 29 |
| Apr. 6 | 3 | Feb. 2 | Feb. 19 | May 15 | May 25 | 25 | Nov. 30 |
| Apr. 7 | 3 | Feb. 3 | Feb. 20 | May 16 | May 26 | 25 | Dec. 1 |
| Apr. 8 | 4 | Feb. 4 | Feb. 21 | May 17 | May 27 | 25 | Dec. 2 |
| Apr. 9 | 4 | Feb. 5 | Feb. 22 | May 18 | May 28 | 25 | Dec. 3 |
| Apr. 10 | 4 | Feb. 6 | Feb. 23 | May 19 | May 29 | 24 | Nov. 27 |
| Apr. 11 | 4 | Feb. 7 | Feb. 24 | May 20 | May 30 | 24 | Nov. 28 |
| Apr. 12 | 4 | Feb. 8 | Feb. 25 | May 21 | May 31 | 24 | Nov. 29 |
| Apr. 13 | 4 | Feb. 9 | Feb. 26 | May 22 | June 1 | 24 | Nov. 30 |
| Apr. 14 | 4 | Feb. 10 | Feb. 27 | May 23 | June 2 | 24 | Dec. 1 |
| Apr. 15 | 5 | Feb. 11 | Feb. 28 | May 24 | June 3 | 24 | Dec. 2 |
| Apr. 16 | 5 | Feb. 12 | Mar. 1 | May 25 | June 4 | 24 | Dec. 3 |
| Apr. 17 | 5 | Feb. 13 | Mar. 2 | May 26 | June 5 | 23 | Nov. 27 |
| Apr. 18 | 5 | Feb. 14 | Mar. 3 | May 27 | June 6 | 23 | Nov. 28 |
| Apr. 19 | 5 | Feb. 15 | Mar. 4 | May 28 | June 7 | 23 | Nov. 29 |
| Apr. 20 | 5 | Feb. 16 | Mar. 5 | May 29 | June 8 | 23 | Nov. 30 |
| Apr. 21 | 5 | Feb. 17 | Mar. 6 | May 30 | June 9 | 23 | Dec. 1 |
| Apr. 22 | 6 | Feb. 18 | Mar. 7 | May 31 | June 10 | 23 | Dec. 2 |
| Apr. 23 | 6 | Feb. 19 | Mar. 8 | June 1 | June 11 | 23 | Dec. 3 |
| Apr. 24 | 6 | Feb. 20 | Mar. 9 | June 2 | June 12 | 22 | Nov. 27 |
| Apr. 25 | 6 | Feb. 21 | Mar. 10 | June 3 | June 13 | 22 | Nov. 28 |

NOTE.—In a leap year the number of Sundays after Epiphany is the same as if Easter had fallen one day later than it really does; and Septuagesima Sunday and Ash Wednesday fall one day later than that given in the Table, unless the Table gives some day in March for Ash Wednesday; for in that case the day given by the Table is the right day.

V.

To make still more easy the search for the lesson for any particular day in the Church Calendar there is here provided a complete list of lessons for every Sunday for twenty-one years. If this little Lectionary should endure so long, and find a place of usefulness, it may be hoped that another Calendar may be prepared before this is exhausted, or that any minister who has used it may by that time be so familiar with the Days of the Ecclesiastical Year as not to need a Calendar so elaborate, but be able for himself to locate the lesson for any day by means of the other Tables.

The Tables are here only for those who wish to use them. The Scripture Lesson is the end, aim, purpose. Let us read the Old Testament in the hearing of the people, by this ancient system, or by some other system, or by no system at all. The means are not important, if so be that the end be accomplished.

| | First Sunday after Epiphany | Second Sunday after Epiphany | Third Sunday after Epiphany | Fourth Sunday after Epiphany | Fifth Sunday after Epiphany | Sixth Sunday after Epiphany | Septuagesima Sunday | Sexagesima Sunday | Quinquagesima Sunday | First Sunday in Lent | Second Sunday in Lent | Third Sunday in Lent | Fourth Sunday in Lent | Fifth Sunday in Lent | Palm Sunday |
|----------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1920... | Jan. 11 | Jan. 18 | Jan. 25 | | | | Feb. 1 | Feb. 8 | Feb. 15 | Feb. 22 | Feb. 29 | Mar. 7 | Mar. 14 | Mar. 21 | Mar. 28 |
| 1921... | Jan. 9 | Jan. 16 | | | | | Jan. 23 | Jan. 30 | Feb. 6 | Feb. 13 | Feb. 20 | Feb. 27 | Mar. 6 | Mar. 13 | Mar. 20 |
| 1922.... | Jan. 8 | Jan. 15 | Jan. 22 | Jan. 29 | Feb. 5 | | Feb. 12 | Feb. 19 | Feb. 26 | Mar. 5 | Mar. 12 | Mar. 19 | Mar. 26 | April 2 | April 9 |
| 1923.... | Jan. 7 | Jan. 14 | Jan. 21 | | | | Jan. 28 | Feb. 4 | Feb. 11 | Feb. 18 | Feb. 25 | Mar. 4 | Mar. 11 | Mar. 18 | Mar. 25 |
| 1924.... | Jan. 13 | Jan. 20 | Jan. 27 | Feb. 3 | Feb. 10 | | Feb. 17 | Feb. 24 | Mar. 2 | Mar. 9 | Mar. 16 | Mar. 23 | Mar. 30 | April 6 | April 13 |
| 1925.... | Jan. 11 | Jan. 18 | Jan. 25 | Feb. 1 | | | Feb. 8 | Feb. 15 | Feb. 22 | Mar. 1 | Mar. 8 | Mar. 15 | Mar. 22 | Mar. 29 | April 5 |
| 1926.... | Jan. 10 | Jan. 17 | Jan. 24 | | | | Jan. 31 | Feb. 7 | Feb. 14 | Feb. 21 | Feb. 28 | Mar. 7 | Mar. 14 | Mar. 21 | Mar. 28 |
| 1927.... | Jan. 9 | Jan. 16 | Jan. 23 | Jan. 30 | Feb. 6 | | Feb. 13 | Feb. 20 | Feb. 27 | Mar. 6 | Mar. 13 | Mar. 20 | Mar. 27 | April 3 | April 10 |
| 1928.... | Jan. 8 | Jan. 15 | Jan. 22 | Jan. 29 | | | Feb. 5 | Feb. 12 | Feb. 19 | Feb. 26 | Mar. 4 | Mar. 11 | Mar. 18 | Mar. 25 | April 1 |
| 1929.... | Jan. 13 | Jan. 20 | | | | | Jan. 27 | Feb. 3 | Feb. 10 | Feb. 17 | Feb. 24 | Mar. 3 | Mar. 10 | Mar. 17 | Mar. 24 |
| 1930.... | Jan. 12 | Jan. 19 | Jan. 26 | Feb. 2 | Feb. 9 | | Feb. 16 | Feb. 23 | Mar. 2 | Mar. 9 | Mar. 16 | Mar. 23 | Mar. 30 | April 6 | April 13 |
| 1931.... | Jan. 11 | Jan. 18 | Jan. 25 | | | | Feb. 1 | Feb. 8 | Feb. 15 | Feb. 22 | Mar. 1 | Mar. 8 | Mar. 15 | Mar. 22 | Mar. 29 |
| 1932.... | Jan. 10 | Jan. 17 | | | | | Jan. 24 | Jan. 31 | Feb. 7 | Feb. 14 | Feb. 21 | Feb. 28 | Mar. 6 | Mar. 13 | Mar. 20 |
| 1933.... | Jan. 8 | Jan. 15 | Jan. 22 | Jan. 29 | Feb. 5 | | Feb. 12 | Feb. 19 | Feb. 26 | Mar. 5 | Mar. 12 | Mar. 19 | Mar. 26 | April 2 | April 9 |
| 1934.... | Jan. 7 | Jan. 14 | Jan. 21 | | | | Jan. 28 | Feb. 4 | Feb. 11 | Feb. 18 | Feb. 25 | Mar. 4 | Mar. 11 | Mar. 18 | Mar. 25 |
| 1935.... | Jan. 13 | Jan. 20 | Jan. 27 | Feb. 3 | Feb. 10 | | Feb. 17 | Feb. 24 | Mar. 3 | Mar. 10 | Mar. 17 | Mar. 24 | Mar. 31 | April 7 | April 14 |
| 1936.... | Jan. 12 | Jan. 19 | Jan. 26 | Feb. 2 | | | Feb. 9 | Feb. 16 | Feb. 23 | Mar. 1 | Mar. 8 | Mar. 15 | Mar. 22 | Mar. 29 | April 5 |
| 1937.... | Jan. 10 | Jan. 17 | | | | | Jan. 24 | Jan. 31 | Feb. 7 | Feb. 14 | Feb. 21 | Feb. 28 | Mar. 7 | Mar. 14 | Mar. 21 |
| 1938.... | Jan. 9 | Jan. 16 | Jan. 23 | Jan. 30 | Feb. 6 | | Feb. 13 | Feb. 20 | Feb. 27 | Mar. 6 | Mar. 13 | Mar. 20 | Mar. 27 | April 3 | April 10 |
| 1939.... | Jan. 8 | Jan. 15 | Jan. 22 | Jan. 29 | | | Feb. 5 | Feb. 12 | Feb. 19 | Feb. 26 | Mar. 5 | Mar. 12 | Mar. 19 | Mar. 26 | April 2 |
| 1940.... | Jan. 7 | Jan. 13 | | | | | Jan. 20 | Jan. 27 | Feb. 4 | Feb. 11 | Feb. 18 | Feb. 25 | Mar. 3 | Mar. 10 | Mar. 17 |

| | Good Friday | Easter Day | First Sunday after Easter | Second Sunday after Easter | Third Sunday after Easter | Fourth Sunday after Easter | Fifth Sunday after Easter | Sunday after Ascension Day | Whitsunday | Trinity Sunday | First Sunday after Trinity | Second Sunday after Trinity | Third Sunday after Trinity | Fourth Sunday after Trinity | Fifth Sunday after Trinity |
|----------|-------------|------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1920.... | April 2 | April 4 | April 11 | April 18 | April 25 | May 2 | May 9 | May 16 | May 23 | May 30 | June 6 | June 13 | June 20 | June 27 | July 4 |
| 1921.... | Mar. 25 | Mar. 27 | April 3 | April 10 | April 17 | April 24 | May 1 | May 8 | May 15 | May 22 | May 29 | June 5 | June 12 | June 19 | June 26 |
| 1922.... | April 14 | April 16 | April 23 | April 30 | May 7 | May 14 | May 21 | May 28 | June 4 | June 11 | June 18 | June 25 | July 2 | July 9 | July 16 |
| 1923.... | Mar. 30 | April 1 | April 8 | April 15 | April 22 | April 29 | May 6 | May 13 | May 20 | May 27 | June 3 | June 10 | June 17 | June 24 | July 1 |
| 1924.... | April 18 | April 20 | April 27 | May 4 | May 11 | May 18 | May 25 | June 1 | June 8 | June 15 | June 22 | June 29 | July 6 | July 13 | July 20 |
| 1925.... | April 10 | April 12 | April 19 | April 26 | May 3 | May 10 | May 17 | May 24 | May 31 | June 7 | June 14 | June 21 | June 28 | July 5 | July 12 |
| 1926.... | April 2 | April 4 | April 11 | April 18 | April 25 | May 2 | May 9 | May 16 | May 23 | May 30 | June 6 | June 13 | June 20 | June 27 | July 4 |
| 1927.... | April 15 | April 17 | April 24 | May 1 | May 8 | May 15 | May 22 | May 29 | June 5 | June 12 | June 19 | June 26 | July 3 | July 10 | July 17 |
| 1928.... | April 6 | April 8 | April 15 | April 22 | April 29 | May 6 | May 13 | May 20 | May 27 | June 3 | June 10 | June 17 | June 24 | July 1 | July 8 |
| 1929.... | Mar. 29 | Mar. 31 | April 7 | April 14 | April 21 | April 28 | May 5 | May 12 | May 19 | May 26 | June 2 | June 9 | June 16 | June 23 | June 30 |
| 1930.... | April 18 | April 20 | April 27 | May 4 | May 11 | May 18 | May 25 | June 1 | June 8 | June 15 | June 22 | June 29 | July 6 | July 13 | July 20 |
| 1931.... | April 3 | April 5 | April 12 | April 19 | April 26 | May 3 | May 10 | May 17 | May 24 | May 31 | June 7 | June 14 | June 21 | June 28 | July 5 |
| 1932.... | Mar. 25 | Mar. 27 | April 3 | April 10 | April 17 | April 24 | May 1 | May 8 | May 15 | May 22 | May 29 | June 5 | June 12 | June 19 | June 26 |
| 1933.... | April 14 | April 16 | April 23 | April 30 | May 7 | May 14 | May 21 | May 28 | June 4 | June 11 | June 18 | June 25 | July 2 | July 9 | July 16 |
| 1934.... | Mar. 30 | April 1 | April 8 | April 15 | April 22 | April 29 | May 6 | May 13 | May 20 | May 27 | June 3 | June 10 | June 17 | June 24 | July 1 |
| 1935.... | April 19 | April 21 | April 28 | May 5 | May 12 | May 19 | May 26 | June 2 | June 9 | June 16 | June 23 | June 30 | July 7 | July 14 | July 21 |
| 1936.... | April 10 | April 12 | April 19 | April 26 | May 3 | May 10 | May 17 | May 24 | May 31 | June 7 | June 14 | June 21 | June 28 | July 5 | July 12 |
| 1937.... | Mar. 26 | Mar. 28 | April 4 | April 11 | April 18 | April 25 | May 2 | May 9 | May 16 | May 23 | May 30 | June 6 | June 13 | June 20 | June 27 |
| 1938.... | April 15 | April 17 | April 24 | May 1 | May 8 | May 15 | May 22 | May 29 | June 5 | June 12 | June 19 | June 26 | July 3 | July 10 | July 17 |
| 1939.... | April 7 | April 9 | April 16 | April 23 | April 30 | May 7 | May 14 | May 21 | May 28 | June 4 | June 11 | June 18 | June 25 | July 2 | July 9 |
| 1940.... | Mar. 22 | Mar. 24 | May 31 | April 7 | April 14 | April 21 | April 28 | May 5 | May 12 | May 19 | May 26 | June 2 | June 9 | June 16 | June 23 |

| | Sixth Sunday after Trinity | Seventh Sunday after Trinity | Eighth Sunday after Trinity | Ninth Sunday after Trinity | Tenth Sunday after Trinity | Eleventh Sunday after Trinity | Twelfth Sunday after Trinity | Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity | Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity | Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity | Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity | Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity | Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity | Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity | Twentieth Sunday after Trinity |
|----------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1920.... | July 11 | July 18 | July 25 | Aug. 1 | Aug. 8 | Aug. 15 | Aug. 22 | Aug. 29 | Sept. 5 | Sept. 12 | Sept. 19 | Sept. 26 | Oct. 3 | Oct. 10 | Oct. 17 |
| 1921.... | July 3 | July 10 | July 17 | July 24 | July 31 | Aug. 7 | Aug. 14 | Aug. 21 | Aug. 28 | Sept. 4 | Sept. 11 | Sept. 18 | Sept. 25 | Oct. 2 | Oct. 9 |
| 1922.... | July 23 | July 30 | Aug. 6 | Aug. 13 | Aug. 20 | Aug. 27 | Sept. 3 | Sept. 10 | Sept. 17 | Sept. 24 | Oct. 1 | Oct. 8 | Oct. 15 | Oct. 22 | Oct. 29 |
| 1923.... | July 8 | July 15 | July 22 | July 29 | Aug. 5 | Aug. 12 | Aug. 19 | Aug. 26 | Sept. 2 | Sept. 9 | Sept. 16 | Sept. 23 | Sept. 30 | Oct. 7 | Oct. 14 |
| 1924.... | July 27 | Aug. 3 | Aug. 10 | Aug. 17 | Aug. 24 | Aug. 31 | Sept. 7 | Sept. 14 | Sept. 21 | Sept. 28 | Oct. 5 | Oct. 12 | Oct. 19 | Oct. 26 | Nov. 2 |
| 1925.... | July 19 | July 26 | Aug. 2 | Aug. 9 | Aug. 16 | Aug. 23 | Aug. 30 | Sept. 6 | Sept. 13 | Sept. 20 | Sept. 27 | Oct. 4 | Oct. 11 | Oct. 18 | Oct. 25 |
| 1926.... | July 11 | July 18 | July 25 | Aug. 1 | Aug. 8 | Aug. 15 | Aug. 22 | Aug. 29 | Sept. 5 | Sept. 12 | Sept. 19 | Sept. 26 | Oct. 3 | Oct. 10 | Oct. 17 |
| 1927.... | July 24 | July 31 | Aug. 7 | Aug. 14 | Aug. 21 | Aug. 28 | Sept. 4 | Sept. 11 | Sept. 18 | Sept. 25 | Oct. 2 | Oct. 9 | Oct. 16 | Oct. 23 | Oct. 30 |
| 1928.... | July 15 | July 22 | July 29 | Aug. 5 | Aug. 12 | Aug. 19 | Aug. 26 | Sept. 2 | Sept. 9 | Sept. 16 | Sept. 23 | Sept. 30 | Oct. 7 | Oct. 14 | Oct. 21 |
| 1929.... | July 7 | July 14 | July 21 | July 28 | Aug. 4 | Aug. 11 | Aug. 18 | Aug. 25 | Sept. 1 | Sept. 8 | Sept. 15 | Sept. 22 | Sept. 29 | Oct. 6 | Oct. 13 |
| 1930.... | July 27 | Aug. 3 | Aug. 10 | Aug. 17 | Aug. 24 | Aug. 31 | Sept. 7 | Sept. 14 | Sept. 21 | Sept. 28 | Oct. 5 | Oct. 12 | Oct. 19 | Oct. 26 | Nov. 2 |
| 1931.... | July 12 | July 19 | July 26 | Aug. 2 | Aug. 9 | Aug. 16 | Aug. 23 | Aug. 30 | Sept. 6 | Sept. 13 | Sept. 20 | Sept. 27 | Oct. 4 | Oct. 11 | Oct. 18 |
| 1932.... | July 3 | July 10 | July 17 | July 24 | July 31 | Aug. 7 | Aug. 14 | Aug. 21 | Aug. 28 | Sept. 4 | Sept. 11 | Sept. 18 | Sept. 25 | Oct. 2 | Oct. 9 |
| 1933.... | July 23 | July 30 | Aug. 6 | Aug. 13 | Aug. 20 | Aug. 27 | Sept. 3 | Sept. 10 | Sept. 17 | Sept. 24 | Oct. 1 | Oct. 8 | Oct. 15 | Oct. 22 | Oct. 29 |
| 1934.... | July 8 | July 15 | July 22 | July 29 | Aug. 5 | Aug. 12 | Aug. 19 | Aug. 26 | Sept. 2 | Sept. 9 | Sept. 16 | Sept. 23 | Sept. 30 | Oct. 7 | Oct. 14 |
| 1935.... | July 28 | Aug. 4 | Aug. 11 | Aug. 18 | Aug. 25 | Sept. 1 | Sept. 8 | Sept. 15 | Sept. 22 | Sept. 29 | Oct. 6 | Oct. 13 | Oct. 20 | Oct. 27 | Nov. 3 |
| 1936.... | July 19 | July 26 | Aug. 2 | Aug. 9 | Aug. 16 | Aug. 23 | Aug. 30 | Sept. 6 | Sept. 13 | Sept. 20 | Sept. 27 | Oct. 4 | Oct. 11 | Oct. 18 | Oct. 25 |
| 1937.... | July 4 | July 11 | July 18 | July 25 | Aug. 1 | Aug. 8 | Aug. 15 | Aug. 22 | Aug. 29 | Sept. 5 | Sept. 12 | Sept. 19 | Sept. 26 | Oct. 3 | Oct. 10 |
| 1938.... | July 24 | July 31 | Aug. 7 | Aug. 14 | Aug. 21 | Aug. 28 | Sept. 4 | Sept. 11 | Sept. 18 | Sept. 25 | Oct. 2 | Oct. 9 | Oct. 16 | Oct. 23 | Oct. 30 |
| 1939.... | July 16 | July 23 | July 30 | Aug. 6 | Aug. 13 | Aug. 20 | Aug. 27 | Sept. 3 | Sept. 10 | Sept. 17 | Sept. 24 | Oct. 1 | Oct. 8 | Oct. 15 | Oct. 22 |
| 1940.... | June 30 | July 7 | July 14 | July 21 | July 28 | Aug. 4 | Aug. 11 | Aug. 18 | Aug. 25 | Sept. 1 | Sept. 8 | Sept. 15 | Sept. 22 | Sept. 29 | Oct. 6 |

| | Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity | Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity | Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity | Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity | Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity | Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity | Sunday next before Advent | First Sunday in Advent | Second Sunday in Advent | Third Sunday in Advent | Fourth Sunday in Advent | Christmas Day | First Sunday after Christmas | Second Sunday after Christmas |
|------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1920 . . . | Oct. 24 | Oct. 31 | Nov. 7 | Nov. 14 | | | Nov. 21 | Nov. 28 | Dec. 5 | Dec. 12 | Dec. 19 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 26 | Jan. 2, 1921 |
| 1921 . . . | Oct. 16 | Oct. 23 | Oct. 30 | Nov. 6 | Nov. 13 | | Nov. 20 | Nov. 27 | Dec. 4 | Dec. 11 | Dec. 18 | Dec. 25 | Jan. 1, 1922 | |
| 1922 . . . | Nov. 5 | Nov. 12 | Nov. 19 | | | | Nov. 26 | Dec. 3 | Dec. 10 | Dec. 17 | Dec. 24 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 31 | |
| 1923 . . . | Oct. 21 | Oct. 28 | Nov. 4 | Nov. 11 | Nov. 18 | | Nov. 25 | Dec. 2 | Dec. 9 | Dec. 16 | Dec. 23 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 30 | Jan. 6, 1924 |
| 1924 . . . | Nov. 9 | Nov. 16 | | | | | Nov. 23 | Nov. 30 | Dec. 7 | Dec. 14 | Dec. 21 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 28 | Jan. 4, 1925 |
| 1925 . . . | Nov. 1 | Nov. 8 | Nov. 15 | | | | Nov. 22 | Nov. 29 | Dec. 6 | Dec. 13 | Dec. 20 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 27 | Jan. 3, 1926 |
| 1926 . . . | Oct. 24 | Oct. 31 | Nov. 7 | Nov. 14 | | | Nov. 21 | Nov. 28 | Dec. 5 | Dec. 12 | Dec. 19 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 26 | Jan. 2, 1927 |
| 1927 . . . | Nov. 6 | Nov. 13 | | | | | Nov. 20 | Nov. 27 | Dec. 4 | Dec. 11 | Dec. 18 | Dec. 25 | Jan. 1, 1928 | |
| 1928 . . . | Oct. 28 | Nov. 4 | Nov. 11 | Nov. 18 | | | Nov. 25 | Dec. 2 | Dec. 9 | Dec. 16 | Dec. 23 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 30 | Jan. 6, 1929 |
| 1929 . . . | Oct. 20 | Oct. 27 | Nov. 3 | Nov. 10 | Nov. 17 | | Nov. 24 | Dec. 1 | Dec. 8 | Dec. 15 | Dec. 22 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 29 | Jan. 5, 1930 |
| 1930 . . . | Nov. 9 | Nov. 16 | | | | | Nov. 23 | Nov. 30 | Dec. 7 | Dec. 14 | Dec. 21 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 28 | Jan. 4, 1931 |
| 1931 . . . | Oct. 25 | Nov. 1 | Nov. 8 | Nov. 15 | | | Nov. 22 | Nov. 29 | Dec. 6 | Dec. 13 | Dec. 20 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 27 | Jan. 3, 1932 |
| 1932 . . . | Oct. 16 | Oct. 23 | Oct. 30 | Nov. 6 | Nov. 13 | | Nov. 20 | Nov. 27 | Dec. 4 | Dec. 11 | Dec. 18 | Dec. 25 | Jan. 1, 1933 | |
| 1933 . . . | Nov. 5 | Nov. 12 | Nov. 19 | | | | Nov. 26 | Dec. 3 | Dec. 10 | Dec. 17 | Dec. 24 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 31 | |
| 1934 . . . | Oct. 21 | Oct. 28 | Nov. 4 | Nov. 11 | Nov. 18 | | Nov. 25 | Dec. 2 | Dec. 9 | Dec. 16 | Dec. 23 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 30 | Jan. 6, 1935 |
| 1935 . . . | Nov. 10 | Nov. 17 | | | | | Nov. 24 | Dec. 1 | Dec. 8 | Dec. 15 | Dec. 22 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 29 | Jan. 5, 1936 |
| 1936 . . . | Nov. 1 | Nov. 8 | Nov. 15 | | | | Nov. 22 | Nov. 29 | Dec. 6 | Dec. 13 | Dec. 20 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 27 | Jan. 3, 1937 |
| 1937 . . . | Oct. 17 | Oct. 24 | Oct. 31 | Nov. 7 | Nov. 14 | | Nov. 21 | Nov. 28 | Dec. 5 | Dec. 12 | Dec. 19 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 26 | Jan. 2, 1938 |
| 1938 . . . | Nov. 6 | Nov. 13 | | | | | Nov. 20 | Nov. 27 | Dec. 4 | Dec. 11 | Dec. 18 | Dec. 25 | Jan. 1, 1939 | |
| 1939 . . . | Oct. 29 | Nov. 5 | Nov. 12 | Nov. 19 | | | Nov. 26 | Dec. 3 | Dec. 10 | Dec. 17 | Dec. 24 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 31 | |
| 1940 . . . | Oct. 13 | Oct. 20 | Oct. 27 | Nov. 3 | Nov. 10 | Nov. 17 | Nov. 24 | Dec. 1 | Dec. 8 | Dec. 15 | Dec. 22 | Dec. 25 | Dec. 29 | Jan. 5, 1941 |

INDEX OF SCRIPTURES

| | PAGE | | PAGE |
|--|------|--|------|
| Genesis 1. 1—2. 3 | 66 | Proverbs 8. 1—21 | 153 |
| 3. | 68 | 31. 10—31 | 155 |
| 6. 5—8, 13—22; 7. 23, 24; 9. 8—17 | 71 | Ecclesiastes 11. 1—4, 6—10; 12. 8, 13, 14 | 161 |
| 18. | 181 | Isaiah 1. 1—20 | 167 |
| 22. 1—19 | 75 | 5. 1—20 | 169 |
| 37. 3—12, 17—35 | 77 | 6. 1—13 | 105 |
| Exodus 3. 1—15 | 79 | 7. 10—14; 9. 2—7 | 46 |
| 12. 1—14 | 89 | 10. 33—11. 9 and 12. 1—6 | 43 |
| 16. 2—15 | 93 | 25. 1—9 | 171 |
| 33. 7—23 | 82 | 32. 1—5; 35. 1—10 | 49 |
| 34. 1—10, 29—35 | 188 | 40. 1—17, 27—30 | 41 |
| Deuteronomy 4. 1—20 | 95 | 42. 1—16 | 51 |
| 6. 4—25 | 97 | 44. 6—23 | 53 |
| 8. 2—20 | 99 | 51. 1—16 | 175 |
| 30 | 101 | 52. 1—12 | 91 |
| Joshua 1. 1—17 | 107 | 52. 13—53. 12 | 86 |
| Judges 4. 1—16, 23 | 109 | 55. 1—13 | 55 |
| 1 Samuel 1. 1—5, 9—28 | 112 | 60 | 186 |
| 3. 1—4. 1 | 114 | Jeremiah 5. 1—6, 15—29 | 144 |
| 17. 1—4, 8—11, 32—37, 40—54 | 115 | 7. 1—15 and 26. 7—16 | 146 |
| 2 Samuel 12. 1—23 | 117 | 8. 4—22; 9. 1 | 73 |
| 18. 1—15, 24—33 | 119 | 31. 10—14, 27—34 | 37 |
| 1 Kings 3. 4—15 | 123 | Ezekiel 14 | 198 |
| 6. 1, 38; 8. 12, 13, 22, 23, 27—40, 54—58 | 125 | 33. 1—20 | 62 |
| 10. 1—13 | 128 | 34. 1—16, 25—31 | 64 |
| 12 | 130 | 37. 1—14 | 184 |
| 17 | 132 | Daniel 5 | 148 |
| 18. 1, 2, 17—39 | 134 | Hosea 11. 1—12. 6 | 57 |
| 19 | 136 | 14. 1—9 | 177 |
| 2 Kings 5. 1—19 | 139 | Joel 2. 21—32 | 103 |
| 6. 8—23 | 141 | Amos 5. 4—24 | 193 |
| 22. 3—20 | 142 | 8 | 59 |
| 1 Chronicles 29. 1—20 | 121 | Jonah 3. 1—4. 11 | 195 |
| Nehemiah 8. 1—12 | 200 | Micah 4. 1—7; 5. 2—4 | 39 |
| Job 5. 6—26 | 157 | 6. 1—8 | 179 |
| 28 | 159 | Habakkuk 2. 1—14 | 190 |
| Proverbs 3. 1—20 | 151 | Haggai 2. 1—9 | 202 |
| | | Zechariah 2 | 173 |
| | | 8. 14—23; 9. 9, 10 | 84 |

Date Due

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