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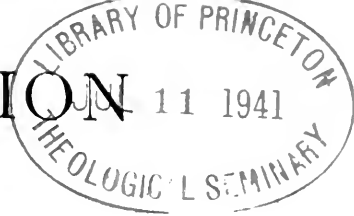
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A COMPANION
TO
THE LECTINARY.



A COMPANION



TO THE

LECTIONARY

BEING

*A COMMENTARY ON THE PROPER LESSONS
FOR THE SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS.*

BY THE

REV. W. BENHAM, B.D.

VICAR OF MARGATE.

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I DEDICATE THIS WORK
TO
The revered Memory
OF
ARCHBISHOP LONGLEY,
AND OF ALL
THE HALLOWED INFLUENCES WHICH SURROUNDED
MY LIFE AT ADDINGTON.

On Easter Monday of this year, while on my way to an early celebration of the Holy Communion, I was composing in my mind the acknowledgment which I have just made. The words which I have here written were framed then. In common with so many others, I had been made very anxious by the accounts of Maurice's health, but the news of the previous day had brought better hope. Yet, I know not why, I thought of him continually during the Holy Service which followed, and throughout the day. The next morning I learned that even whilst I was on my way to those holy mysteries, pledges of Life Everlasting, my dear friend had passed through the gate.

Praying that, with him, I may at the last be partaker of our Father's heavenly kingdom, I also beseech the blessing of God upon those friends through whom I came to know Maurice so fully, Samuel Clark, Derwent Coleridge, Edward Plumptre.

The reader, I am sure, will pardon an expression of personal gratitude which I have long sought to utter. Having done so, I take leave of a work which has interested me deeply, and commend it to the judgment of my readers, in the assurance that it will prove useful to them or not, according as it shall lead them to love the Word of God and to seek therein for deeper and fuller knowledge of Christ.

ADDINGTON,

Dec. 21, 1872.

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COMPANION
TO
THE LECTONARY.

NOTE ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

THE name *Isaiah* means "Salvation of the LORD." Scripture gives but scanty records of the great prophet's life. His father Amoz is stated by a Rabbinical tradition to have been a brother of King Amaziah. This is very doubtful, but everything that we gather from his history indicates that his social position was high. He had free access to the king, his exhortations are mostly addressed to the rich and educated, his discourses exhibit, among all the prophets, the highest degree of literary cultivation. His work extended over a long period, for he prophesied in the reigns of Uzziah (who died B. C. 758), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. If we accept a Jewish tradition which has much probability, he was martyred by Manasseh, by being sawn asunder. (Cf. 2 Kings xxi. 16, Heb. xi. 37.) Manasseh became king B. C. 698. This would make Isaiah's work last for 60 years.

He was sent on a mission to his countrymen in the year that King Uzziah died, ch. vi. 1, and there is nothing against the natural inference which we should gather from the account in that chapter that this was the beginning of his work, and consequently that the preceding chapters were written later. If this was so, the Vision in the Temple must have preceded Uzziah's death. Uzziah was one of the better kings, though he did not

Introduc-
tion.

2

Introduction to the
Lessons
from
Isaiah.

come up to the standard of David. His reign was prosperous, he was victorious over the Edomites, Philistines, and Ammonites, fortified his chief towns, and thoroughly reorganized his army. Yet clouds gathered over the close of the reign. The king's character changed for the worse, and he was smitten with leprosy for intruding into the priestly office. From that time he dwelt apart, his son Jotham being regent, and after his death succeeding him as king. The people also were deteriorated by prosperity. Wealth brought luxury and extravagance, and these again led to oppression of the poor. The message which was committed to the prophet in the temple spoke of this dulness of heart and deafness of ear. It was the first clear note that the fall of the monarchy was coming. The outward prosperity and the inward canker went on through the reign of Jotham, and we may probably take chapters ii.—v. as the prophet's warnings in that reign. It is selfishness, avarice, luxury, which he speaks of most, idolatry as yet does not take a prominent part. There is no allusion that we can discover to any particular event in the reign of Jotham. The next reign, that of Ahaz, is full of important events which we must briefly notice.

The kingdom of Israel, though still existing, was shattered and ready to fall. The kingdom of Syria also was in a falling condition. The great empire of Assyria was rising to its zenith. Egypt was its powerful rival, but destined before long to succumb to it. The kingdom of Judah lay between these two great powers. In the far distance, hardly noticeable except to the prophetic eye, was the newly-founded kingdom of Babylon, a revolted member of the great Assyrian Empire. It rose with wonderful rapidity, and Isaiah was led to foresee that before many years had passed by it would swallow up the kingdom from which it had sprung. Towards the end of his life, God shewed him yet further, and taught him that a day would come when even the Babylonian monarchy too should fall before a power not yet risen up, that of the Persians. The reign of Ahaz was much connected with several of these nations. It was a reign both wicked and disastrous. The king followed the evil ways of the kings of Israel and became a besotted idolater, 2 Chron. xxviii. 1—4; 2 Kings xvi. 1—4. A confederacy was formed against him by Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of

Syria, and they inflicted much injury upon him. Rezin took from him Elath on the Red Sea (2 Kings xvi. 6), and Pekah invaded Judah and routed its army with terrible slaughter (2 Chron. xxviii. 6). They then besieged Jerusalem with the view of establishing a new king, subject to themselves, one Ben-Tabaal. But this proceeding failed, and the prophet Isaiah was sent to the terrified Ahaz with a message of encouragement. Let him trust in the Lord, and he would be protected. (Isaiah vii.) But this was what Ahaz would not do. He preferred to trust in an arm of flesh, and he sent for help to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. (2 Kings xvi. 7.) The first results of this appeal seemed to prove its wisdom, for Tiglath-pileser came against the confederates, slew Rezin, and carried his people captive (2 Kings xvi. 9), and apparently also broke the power of Pekah. But having done so he made Ahaz his vassal, and exacted large donations from him. The miserable king plunged deeper yet into idolatry, and was overrun by fresh invaders, the Philistines and the Edomites. Still Isaiah did not lose heart, and the burden of his exhortation was "trust in the LORD God of Israel."

With Hezekiah there was a change of policy. He was one of the best of the kings, the only one who came up to the model of David. The King of Assyria destroyed the kingdom of Israel in the fourth year of Hezekiah's reign, but Hezekiah, "trusting in the LORD God of Israel," had the courage to break away from the tyranny of Assyria, and recovered his supremacy over the Philistines. To punish him the King of Assyria invaded his land, and we have an account of this invasion full of interest in the Lessons for the 15th Sunday after Trinity. They will be considered at length in their place, meanwhile we need only remind the reader that this invasion was destroyed by an awful visitation. The angel of the Lord went forth in the night into the camp of the Assyrians, and slew a hundred fourscore and five thousand. This great event, and also the recovery of Hezekiah from grievous sickness, are recorded in the same words both in the Book of Kings and in the Book of Isaiah. And here the public life of Isaiah ends. There is no event recorded afterwards in which he is mentioned as taking part¹.

¹ Many readers will know that some eminent Biblical Commentators hold chapters xl.—lxvi. to be the work of another hand, written during the Captivity in Babylon.

Introduction to the Lessons from Isaiah.

Introduction to the
Lessons
from
Isaiah.

The events over which we have thus glanced form the outward visible materials of the great prophet's writings. He was sent to his countrymen of the kingdom of Judah, to exhort and warn them. He was sent also to declare the will of the Most High concerning the nations around. He declared how the Lord of Hosts, putting down one and setting up another, was working according to His own plan, and carrying out His sovereign will. He testified to all these nations, each believing in its own deities, that there is but one God, and He the Lord of the whole earth, who rules the world in righteousness, and who is the same now and for ever. And the prophet declares that because He is even such, the mighty monarchies shall fall; they are *unrighteous*, and cruel, and, being thus opposed to the holy and just will of God, they cannot stand.

Along with this the Prophet has another work in view. He sees God not merely triumphant over these enemies, but overruling all their acts with a final purpose and object, namely, the manifestation of His love and mercy to all nations. Even the overthrow of the ungodly nations shall be to them a means of good, and bring them life out of death. (See ch. xviii. 7; xix. 23; xxiii. 17, 18.) Every brave and holy man who is raised up by God among the Jewish people, every good king and every inspired prophet, is therefore "the servant of the Lord." He is doing his part to carry out God's final purpose. But the Prophet sees that each deliverer and saviour thus raised up falls short of his duty through imperfection of character. Moreover his work is only temporary, and often, as in Hezekiah's case, is undone by his successors. Consequently the Prophet's eyes find no resting-place in the present because all is imperfect and incomplete. The pious worshipper who felt in his own soul that the plague of his sins needed a better sacrifice than that of bulls

I have, however, avoided the discussion of this opinion, because such a discussion would be out of place in a volume like the present. Let it suffice to say that if the opinion should prove to be correct, it would no more militate against the belief in the inspiration of the chapters in question than does the belief in that of Psalm cxxxvii, which all believe to have been written during the Captivity and yet which is reckoned among "the Psalms of David." *No one* accuses the writer of the second part of Isaiah of fraud, the hypothesis being merely that some Editor after the Captivity put the two works together without distinguishing the two writers. (See the *Book of Isaiah chronologically arranged*, by Rev. T. K. Cheyne, p. xxiv.) I have, however, written the Commentary on these chapters in the belief that they are the work of Isaiah; recognising the weight of the arguments on the other side, but believing them to be mistaken.

and goats, was not more irresistibly drawn to The Sacrifice which should fulfil all his needs, than was the Prophet who looked upon the doings and sufferings of the world around him, to the King who should gather up in Himself all the excellency, and the power, and the victory, all the gentleness, kindness, self-sacrifice, which good kings before him had manifested imperfectly. It was therefore a necessity laid upon each prophet who predicted the final victory of God, the fulfilment of His purposes of mercy and judgment,—to prophesy of CHRIST.

It is necessary to take all this into account in order to a right understanding of the great Prophet. The present and the future are one in his view in this respect, that both alike are part of the one purpose of GOD, and all things are preparing to be gathered up and completed in His Eternal Son. Isaiah views everything in this Divine Light. We shall therefore find him full of allusions to his own times, for he has to interpret current events, otherwise his words would have no interest for his people. He would be shadowy and unsubstantial. We shall also find him full of words concerning the future Deliverer, for otherwise there would be no interpretation of the present possible. The world would be to him a puzzle without any solution. Therefore we find in the same breath words concerning the fall of the Assyrian king and words concerning the last judgment. The first *was*, because the last *shall be*. They are so blended oftentimes that they can be no more separated than the soul can be separated from the living body. The Prophet is declaring the will of Him to whom a thousand years are as a day, and the victory of Hezekiah over Sennacherib is a part of that Divine system which shall at the last subdue all things to itself.

All this will explain why the Book before us is appointed to be read during Advent. We read therein of kings overthrowing ungodly enemies, protecting their subjects and ruling righteously, and we see how the Prophet saw in such kings a promise of HIM who should dwell among men, holy, meek, health-giving, suffering shame and rebuke, dying that they might live, bringing victory out of that death, gathering believers to Himself. We read of the sins which defiled the kingdom of Judah and called forth the Prophet's burning indignation. And we see

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herein the sins which torment ourselves, which hinder GOD'S work among us, which prevent the fulfilment of our daily prayer, "Thy kingdom come." We read how the Prophet was not discouraged by these sins, but looked forward in firm faith and trust to the promised Victory of GOD, and we learn thereby not to falter nor fear, knowing that of a surety the Lord our GOD shall come, seated on His throne of judgment, giving unto every man according to his work.

No more divine Advent message could there be in these troubled days than the Visions of the Prophet from his watch-tower in Jerusalem, looking down upon the world around him, tossed with storms. Kingdoms are falling to pieces; yea, the great Earth itself seems shaken to its foundations (ii. 10—23); but GOD is strong and can afford to wait, and His people are safe under the shadow of His wings. Kings float away into the past and become pale phantoms, and owls and bats are the sole habitants of their cities; but there is one Throne which cannot be shaken, one City which hath everlasting foundations, and the King thereof is Christ. Even the Church and Temple of Jerusalem, which GOD made His dwelling-place, shall fall; but the Prophet looks upward, and behold! the heavenly City standeth sure. And if to-day the outward fabric of Christ's Church be attacked by enemies, even if decay and ruin shall appear to overwhelm it, the words of Isaiah will echo again and again into every faithful heart, until the Advent hope be fulfilled, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for Jah Jehovah is the Rock of Ages." "He will destroy in Mount Zion the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations."

Note. There is one question which we have not discussed in this short introduction. It is the following:—if ch. vi. describes the call of Isaiah to be a prophet, how do we account for its position? The exhaustive disquisitions of Delitzsch seem to me to solve the difficulty. He shews how chapters ii.—v. form one section, which he calls *the discourse of hardening* (see notes on Is. vi. S. John's Day), and vii.—xii. another, which he calls *the discourse of Immanuel*. Ch. vi. is the band which unites them together. And ch. i. is "the portal which introduces us

to them." It was in all probability written as a preface to these eleven chapters when the Prophet first collected them together. Evidently the arrangement is his own, and if the reader will examine carefully the chapters as they stand in the Bible, I believe he will come to the conclusion that this view represents the truth.

Notes on the arrangement of the rest of the Book will be found in the notes on the several chapters as they occur.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Mattins.

ON the opening words see the preceding *Introduction*. The first chapter of this Book forms a division by itself. It may be called the *Preface*, for it is a rapid summary of the Prophet's whole message to Judah and Jerusalem, a lofty and stirring description of the state of the country as the Prophet beheld it by the light of God's Spirit. His vision of God in the Temple (ch. vi.) had taught him the sad truth that the nation's heart was hardening, and he had warned and exhorted them to repentance. His position in this prefatory chapter is that of one looking upon them at a time when God's methods of recall had all been tried, when there remained only judgment to be executed upon them. The nation was to be tried by fire, because it was the sole means now of purification. The chapter probably belongs to the reign of Ahaz. See verses 7—9.

Isaiah I.

He begins by shewing how the dulness and selfishness of the people, leading to deep-seated moral corruption (vv. 2—6) have brought sore calamities upon them (7—9), and have made all their worship unacceptable to God (10—15). They are exhorted to repentance and reformation lest yet sorer evils fall upon them (16—23). The men in high places are denounced as the chief causes of the evil, as thieves, oppressors, takers of bribes, perverters of justice (21—23). Therefore upon them God shall execute judgment, purifying all that is not utterly worthless, and burning up *that* with unquenchable fire (24—31).

The Prophet quotes from Deut. xxxii. 1. In that passage Moses is telling the people what the results of apostasy will be (see xxxi. 28, 29), and Isaiah, therefore, re-echoes his words.

The ass, &c. i. e. it knows that it is its master who feeds and tends it. The contrast is very strikingly expressed, **But Israel,** he who wrestled with God and received His blessing (Gen. xxxii. 28)—**my** people.

The words of Jehovah have ended with the preceding verse, with "the piercing wail of a deeply-injured Father." The Prophet now takes up his speech. It is impossible to convey the force of the original of the epithets here, each conveyed in a few syllables, forcible as lightning-flashes. Notice too the

- Isaiah I. climax; and the completeness of the ruin, indicated in the sevenfold epithets.
- 5 Then he goes on to represent the nation as one miserably diseased body, that no one has laboured to cure.
- The **Holy One of Israel** is an expression almost peculiar to Isaiah, expressive of the perfect excellence and purity of God, and withal His condescension and love to His people.
- 7—9 This may be either prophetic of the future state of the country or an actual description of the country as it was. In the latter case this picture of desolation will be a description of the state of the land at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitish war. See Introduction, p. 2.
- The first comparison in verse 8 is to the temporary sheds which were erected in vineyards and melon grounds at the fruit seasons, to shelter the watchers, and which when the fruits were gathered and the land lay waste, were deserted and lonely. So was it with Jerusalem, when the surrounding country was laid waste by foreign invaders.
- 10 Here we have again a change of subject. The prophet seems to be answering an imaginary remonstrance of self-justification, "We do not deserve these hard words. We have been scrupulously religious."
- 12 **Tread**, rather "trample upon," treat with the irreverence which lies in outward worship with estranged heart.
- 13 **Vain oblations**, lit. "lying meat-offering."
Comp. I Sam. xv. 22; Ps. li. 16; Prov. xv. 8; xxi. 27; Amos v. 21.
- As the italics show, the words **it is** are not in the original,—the sentence is much more forcible and terrific without them. **Your appointed feasts I cannot away with,—iniquity, even the solemn meeting!**
- 15 The most fearful judgment of this self-righteousness is expressed here: their very prayers, their chief means of communicating with God, and true spiritual sacrifice, even these were become abomination through their unholiness and hypocrisy.
- 16 But having uttered this awful warning, the love which is evermore hidden behind the wrath begins to appear. He admonishes them to put away evil; and to practise good, because GOD is not a GOD of mere power and wrath, nor even of unbending law, but a living LORD of righteousness and love. See ver. 18.
- Wash you.** It is the blood of Christ which washes away sin. But this truth was not yet revealed, and we must take these words as an exhortation to purer life, to reformation. See Ezek. xviii. 31.
- 17 It is characteristic of Isaiah that he speaks in detail. No prophet seems to have so keen an eye for special evils and abuses in the state. Each admonition here has a special and limited bearing.
- 18 The love which has appeared in the preceding verses now breaks through in irresistible power.

The Hebrew word rendered **devoured** is the same as that which in the preceding verse is rendered **eaten**. This will show the force of the antithesis,—“If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall *eat* the good of the land: but if the contrary, ye shall *be eaten* by the sword.”

The Prophet seems to pause again, as asking himself, “Will my warnings take effect?” and then to return answer, “Ah, no! Jerusalem is too deeply corrupted.”

A harlot, faithless to her lord, foul and corrupt. The daughter of Zion, the bride of the Holy One of Israel, has broken the bond of her covenant with Him, and, as a consequence, has fallen to the worship of other gods. Cf. Deut. xxxi. 16; Ex. xxxiv. 15, 16.

The better times to which he refers were especially those of David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat.

Probably these metaphors have distinct significations, **silver** the great men, **wine** the priests, guardians of religion.

Ah! A cry as of one in pain—the LORD represents himself as suffering inward oppression until He had executed His revenge upon His adversaries.

Then He tells what this revenge shall be, even their cleansing from sin, punishment bringing salvation.

As at the first. See on ver. 21.

Together. The time of deliverance of the godly shall be that of destruction to the wicked.

Oaks. Idolatrous groves.

They—ye. A sudden change of person, not uncommon in the Hebrew language.

The maker of it. Rather, “his work,” *i.e.* the strong man’s. He shall be destroyed by his own evil works, as tow is set in a blaze by a spark.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The discourse which begins this chapter continues unbroken to the end of the ivth chapter. It describes the glory of the Church in the last days, and withal the judgments which shall pass over it to prepare it for that glory. Therefore, though the greater part of this chapter consists of prophecies of sorrow, we never lose sight of the loving purpose of God.

Verses 2—4 are, so to speak, a text on which the Prophet proceeds to enlarge. It is not improbable that these words were an ancient prophecy of the Kingdom of Christ, current among the people and much cherished by them; for the same words are found in the Book of Micah (iv. 1—3). The Prophet adopts them, as glorious words which the people are right in cherishing. He declares that they are God’s truth, but he goes on to show that in being used as an occasion of vain glory their power and beauty have been lost sight of, because they are really an incite-

Isaiah I.

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Isaiah II.

Isaiah II.

ment to holiness and the fear of God. These are the means by which they shall be realized; until these means are used, the fulfilment of the promise shall not come. The kingdom of the Deliverer shall be a kingdom of righteousness, therefore it cannot be sought after in unrighteousness.

2 **The last days**, the times of the Messiah, the last dispensation. Comp. Acts ii. 17; Ezek. xl. 2; Zech. xiv. 10.

The mountain, &c., Moriah. The victory of the Gospel was naturally to a Jew the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham, the triumph of true Judaism. Mount Zion shall be established over all mountains; the faith of the seed of Abraham shall triumph over all other faiths.

All nations, &c. As all pious *Jews* had flocked to the Temple to worship at the great festivals, so should all *nations* come to worship the Lord in the spiritual Zion which was to grow out of the earthly.

4 Inasmuch as all nations shall alike come to Zion, there shall be unity, and unity will bring peace. And let us not, reader unknown, look upon these words as visionary. As often as thou and I shall say "Thy Kingdom come," let us long for that goal of Christian history, that promised day of GOD, and believe that what He hath promised He will perform.

5 The Prophet calls on his countrymen to walk, to shape their whole course, in the light of the Lord, in the knowledge of His gracious final purpose. None of us can walk without a goal in view. That preacher has no message to deliver to his people, who shuts his eyes to the light of the Lord, the promise of the remission of sins, and of the eternal kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness.

6 **Therefore**, rather "for." It refers to the preceding words,—“I exhort them, Lord, for thou hast forsaken;” and then immediately he begins a remonstrance against their superstition, their luxury and money-love, their pride and idolatry. **Replenished**, &c., filled with oriental luxuries and superstitions. The conquests of Uzziah in the East probably led to this evil. Instead of being filled with the Spirit of God, they sought to be filled with lying prophecies. They had thus a dreadful caricature of the glory referred to in verses 2—4. Silver and gold instead of righteousness, eastern soothsayers instead of nations coming to worship, chariots and horses instead of peace, idols instead of the Lord.

9 **Therefore forgive**, &c., rather, “therefore thou dost not forgive them,” a repetition of verse 6, and a statement of the reason why the glory of God is hidden from them, and great and small alike fall under the same heavy stroke.

10, 11

The coming judgment, represented under the similitude of a whirlwind, which shall drive them to shelter in the clefts of the rocks, or to hide their faces in the dust, as travellers do from the terrible simoom. And thus Judah, which looked to be glorified, shall creep away to hide when the glory of the Lord comes.

This description of the coming judgment is probably to a large extent figurative. The judgment shall strike down the whole glory of the nation and everything on which it prides itself. But a great part of it, at all events, was also literally fulfilled; for example, Sennacherib cut down the cedars of Lebanon. The **high towers** and **fenced walls** were a special feature among the acts of Uzziah and Jotham. (2 Chron. xxvi.; 2 Kings xv.)

Ships of Tarshish is a general expression in Holy Scripture for all large ships. This also points to the days of Jotham, for he had much trade from Elath on the Red Sea. **Pleasant pictures**, articles of curiosity, such as these ships would be sure to bring. (1 Kings x. 22.)

To the moles, &c. He will think them of so little worth in that day of judgment that he will throw them from him as things utterly worthless and loathsome.

The rugged rocks, i. e. the high cliffs.

Give up not only images, but men, as idols. Trust not in an arm of flesh. Even the strongest men can be of no avail against the Lord. This idea forms the one subject of the next chapter; the passage, indeed, ends with Ch. iv. 1. The powerlessness of man is the theme of the whole passage, after which the Prophet returns to the victory and glory of the Lord, in the day when all idols are shown to be worthless. This victory, thus far, is the subject of the discourse which forms our next lesson.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

See last note to preceding lesson.

In that day, in the day of the Lord's judgment upon Jerusalem; which leads, as ever, to the thought of the establishment of the Church of Christ and of the glory which shall follow.

The branch is plainly the Messiah, so called as springing out of the holy nation, as the Son of David. He also is **the fruit of the earth**, the perfection and bloom of all earthly history.

Those that are **left** are they that have endured the judgment, and are found worthy to be called the people of the Lord.

Filth, moral defilement; referring to the frivolity and sin described in the preceding chapter (ver. 17—24).

Blood. The oppression of the poor and innocent by the rich.

The spirit of burning. Comp. Mal. iii. 2, 3; Matt. iii. 12, 13. The spirit of judgment and of burning is the Spirit of love, which, while it destroys all that is vile, purifies all that is worthy of preservation.

A promise of glory and of defence to Zion, the image being drawn from the cloudy pillar which had guided and saved the people in their redemption from Egypt. Exod. xiv. 19, 20.

Isaiah II.

13—17

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Isaiah IV.

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Isaiah IV. Christ shall be the pillar of light and strength to His people, a Tabernacle of defence and shelter.

The passage is one of beautiful fitness for the Evening reading on Advent Sunday.

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Mattins.

Isaiah V. This chapter comprises a prophecy complete in itself; a picture of the past, present, and future, of Israel. He puts it in the form of a parable; Israel is the vineyard of the Lord, which in spite of the most loving and faithful care has produced bad fruit and shall be given up to destruction. The bad fruit itself is described in a sixfold woe, and then the chapter ends in thick gloom, apparently without one ray of light.

1 **My well-beloved**, i. e. the Lord. Isaiah calls his prophecy thus begun a song to God. All prophecies, all holy words whether of joy or sadness, have to do with God's dealings, and therefore shew forth His praise. The words "a song of my beloved" declare that the words are an inspiration from God. The music of the Hebrew of this verse is most exquisite.

He begins by comparing the Jewish nation to a vineyard. Our Lord adopts the parable, and applies it to the days of His own ministry. S. Matt. xxi. 33—44.

2 The Hebrew nation was planted on a **fruitful hill**, a prosperous land, flowing with milk and honey; it was **fenced round**, protected by natural situation and by brave men against enemies; **the stones were gathered out**, heathen nations and their false gods; it was **planted with the choicest vine**, with the stock of faithful Abraham, trained with especial care; Jerusalem was its **tower**, for protection and safe-ruling; and the law and sacrifices its **winepress**. (Vitranga.) And after all this the fruit which it produces is utterly worthless, works of the flesh instead of fruit of the Spirit and of grace.

5 The words shew that it is still the Lord of Hosts who is speaking by the mouth of His prophet.

7 There is a play upon words in the original in the last clause of the verse, which cannot be given in a translation. "He looked for *mishpat*, but behold *mishpach*; for *ts'dakah*, but behold *ts'akah*."

8 Having uttered this emphatic general denunciation the Prophet enters into details of the sin of Judah. First came avarice and oppression of the poor (vv. 8—10), then sensuality and ungodly revelry (11—12). The adding house to house and field to field was illegal both in spirit and in letter, for the law of Moses took special care for the equal distribution of the soil, and at the Jubilee all landed property returned to the original holders.

They is in the original *ye*, and would be better so translated,

for it is like our Lord's direct denunciations of woe. **Earth**, rather "land." **Isaiah V.**

A bath was $\frac{1}{10}$ th of a homer, $7\frac{1}{2}$ gallons. This was to be fruit of 10 days' labour. An ephah was the same as a bath. The yield was therefore to be only $\frac{1}{10}$ th of what was sown. 10

Great attempts at joy and festivity, but they were only godless mirth. Such laughter is forced and hollow. It is shameless, for the excess is carried on early in the morning, and lasts till night. Let us not forget what a warning this verse conveys against the ungodly sin and excess which too frequently prevail at the holy Christmas season. 12

Are gone, some of them had already been carried away, especially from Israel, before the great Captivity came. *This* captivity was of course in the future as yet. 13

Hell here signifies death. It is symbolized as a ravenous and insatiable monster. What other aspect can it wear to those who fear not God? 14

The selfish "great ones" shall descend into their graves, their rich estates shall be laid desolate and become pasturage for wandering shepherds. See 2 Chron. xxix. 3—10, which shew how much of this prophecy had been fulfilled even in the days of Hezekiah. 17

The denunciation of those who not merely sin, but labour at it perseveringly and earnestly, "working all uncleanness with greediness." **Vanity**, false and sophistical reasoning. 18

The judgment of the freethinkers, **That say**, &c. i.e. tauntingly and defiantly, because to their eyes everything looked prosperous and happy in Jerusalem. The Prophet declares in verse 26 that they will be heard to their sorrow. Cf. Ezek. xii. 22—25; Jer. v. 12—14. 19

The woe of those who corrupt others by confounding good and evil in their language, moving them on to sin so as to have partners in their wickedness. 20

Wise in their own sight, shrewd men of the world, intellectual sceptics, exalting their own understanding and setting themselves up as judges of the ways of God and the faith of their brethren. They are distinguished from those in ver. 19, by being intellectually proud, the others were scoffers and materialists. 21

Men who by sensual enjoyments and excesses have hardened their consciences to pervert the law. They are **mighty**,—**men of strength**, not however to avenge wrong, or to protect the innocent, but to mix strong drink. 22, 23

"When all heart and morality are gone from a nation, its roots below ground are rotten; and its flourishing appearance is ready to turn to dust, like the apples which the traveller still gathers on the shore of the Sea of Sodom. There is no substance in such a people, nothing which can stand calamity of any kind." (*Hebrew Politics*, by Sir E. Strachey.) 24

Isaiah V.

25

26

The hills did tremble. There was an awful earthquake in the reign of Uzziah. Probably this is a reference to it.

In the preceding verse he has spoken of the warning voice of Nature, now he comes to punishment by the hand of man. **Hiss.** This was the Eastern method of hiving bees. The expression is derived from this. (See vii. 18.)

The judgment depicted in these terrible colours (there is hardly so awful a description of judgment elsewhere in the Bible) came in the reign of Ahaz. It came yet again in the Babylonish captivity. It came more fearfully than all, when the wicked husbandmen slew the Son of the Lord of the vineyard, and filled up the measure of their iniquities.

But it will come to us, even to us, to our people and nation, if we forget that we, as truly as the Jews were, are ruled invisibly by a Divine King, a constitutional not a despotic Lord, not leaving us as the creatures of a blind Power, but guiding us every day. Oh! if we would all pray, not with voice only but with heart and spirit, that the Good Lord would hear us when we pray for Queen and Ministers, and Parliament, and Priests, and People, what a different nation we should be!

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Isaiah XI.

The preceding chapter is a prophecy of the great Assyrian invasion, its apparently overwhelming strength, and its collapse under the smiting of God. This overthrow is represented under the image of a great cedar-grove, which the Lord shall "lop down with terror" and bring to utter destruction. In the present chapter we have the contrast to this. The kingdom of David shall also be to all appearance cut down and destroyed, but this shall be the beginning of a new life such as the world has never seen before. The empire of impiety and ungodliness shall fall for ever, and the kingdom of holiness and righteousness shall spring up.

1 **Rod**, i.e. sucker. **Stem**, Heb. "hewn stump," i.e. the ancient royal family now apparently cut down to insignificance.

Branch, a fresh green shoot, showing itself out of the earth. It is remarkable that the Hebrew word is *Netzer*, reminding us of its fulfilment in the despised *Nazarene*.

2 **Rest.** The Holy Spirit shall not merely act by occasional and transient impulses, as on the prophets, but dwell continually with Him.

Wisdom and understanding, perfect insight into the principles and laws of God's government; **Counsel**, discernment how to apply those principles to actual circumstances, to the care and guiding of men; **Might**, ability to carry out that discernment in acts; **Knowledge and fear of the Lord**, that personal knowledge of God which is the living source of love and reverence for Him; **Quick understanding**; his own fear and love

of God will enable Him to discern the same in others, and carry Him to a right judgment in all things; and not only so but will give Him authority to execute with prompt justice the sentence which His judgment has pronounced.

All this, in its full meaning, was fulfilled only in Christ. He was the scion of Jesse's root (Rev. v. 5, xxii. 16); the Spirit rested upon Him without measure (John iii. 34); He has authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. (John v. 27.) But, as we have said in the Introduction, there was a foreshadowing of Him in every righteous king. As far as David, or Solomon, or Hezekiah governed his people in wisdom and the fear of the Lord, promoting civilization, establishing piety throughout the land, so far the good things to come were being shadowed forth, the promise to Abraham was being repeated, until the idea of the Righteous King was realized. And the words which follow in this chapter (verses 6—9) even they were receiving a partial, though slight fulfilment also, inasmuch as a humanizing influence was being exercised over the surrounding nations. But in their fulness, the glorious words can only be said of the kingdom of Christ; no golden age can ever be, save of His bringing in; and though "we see not yet all things put under His feet," yet we can see the principles on which His kingdom shall rest, principles of meekness and gentleness and tender love. Every eye which is guided by the Spirit of God may discern signs everywhere of a heavenly world hid beneath this earthly, a life hid with Christ in God, capable of being developed, waiting to be revealed in a glorious form. And when we see this we are able to say, not only with voice but in brave and hopeful action, "Thy kingdom come."

"The fruit of Righteousness is Peace." The details of this description we suppose to be poetical and figurative. The words of our Lord sanction such a view. He describes the Apostles going forth as "lambs among wolves," as taking up serpents unhurt. (Luke x. 3; Mark xvi. 17, 18.) But we must not lose sight of such passages as Rom. viii. 22, 23, where S. Paul declares that universal peace between every creature of God shall be one of the marks of perfected Redemption.

The cockatrice, the hooded snake, the cobra di capello.

The word translated **den** occurs nowhere else, and most Hebraists suppose it rather to mean *eyes*, alluding to their fascinating power in serpents, which shall now be exchanged for guilelessness and unhurtfulness.

The earth, more correctly, the land. This is a description especially of the "holy mountain" of the Lord, the Church. The verse goes on to describe the blessed effect upon the world at large. The living waters go out from Jerusalem to gladden the whole spiritual earth. (See Zech. xiv. 8, 9.) A better rendering of this verse is given by Bp. Wordsworth.—*And in that day the root of Jesse shall be that which will stand as a banner.*

6—9

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9

Isaiah XI. To this the nations will flock as to the standard of their king. (John xii. 32.)

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Isai. XXIV. Chapters xxiv.—xxvii. form one continuous discourse. We have already spoken of the opening portions of this Book, chapters i.—xii. (See note at end of Introduction, p. 6.) A few words must be introduced here on the next division, viz. chapters xiii.—xxiii. They are a collection of prophecies concerning different nations, the Chaldæans, Philistines, Moabites, Egyptians, Edomites, Tyrians. There is one chapter concerning Jerusalem, a portion of which we shall have as the lesson for S. Matthias' Day. The prophecies are not bound together, but each nation is passed under review, and its judgment is announced. The xxivth chapter is the summing up of the whole. "The particular judgments against the nations all flow into the last judgment like a sea; and all the salvation which formed the shining edge of the oracles against the nations, is here concentrated in the glory of a midday sun." (Delitzsch, i. 423.) He describes in a few rapid sentences the terror which shall fall upon the land when the judgment shall begin. His language, of course, refers first to Judah, but he does not confine himself; his eye looks into the most distant future, and of course the lessons which we Christians are to learn from the chapter are as fitted for the Christian Advent as the Prophet's preaching was to what was going on before his eyes. He saw in these facts a manifestation of the Eternal Will, a token of God's watchful love toward His own in all national visitations.

1 **The earth.** The same Hebrew word is rendered the *land* several times further on. We may remember, in fact, throughout that the two words represent but one Hebrew one. Perhaps it is better thus, for the Prophet's vision, so to speak, expands and contracts, sometimes he sees Judah, sometimes the whole earth in his prophetic vision, and does not care to distinguish between them.

5 This probably refers to the abominations of Ahaz, who had shut up the Temple, abolished the national religion, and established idolatry instead of it. (2 Kings xvi.)

Confusion, lit. "emptiness." The city that is devoted to desolation.

13 God leaves not Himself without witness. The Prophet's view widens till he sees the opening of the Gospel. Simultaneously with the fall of apostate Jerusalem is heard the first sound of the evangelization of the Gentiles. First a hardly audible sound like the shaking of the olive tree, a hardly noticeable body of converts; then a joyous chorus will "cry aloud from the sea," from the isles of the west.

15 **Fires**, lit. lights. Some (e.g. Gesenius, Wordsworth) inter-

pret this "glorify ye the Lord *in the East*, glorify His name also in the isles of the West." Others take it to mean "Glorify the Lord *for the Lights*, for the spiritual Urim, the illumination which He hath given you."

Glory to the righteous, lit. "the Righteous One," i. e. to God. This is the burden of the new song—Hallelujah. 16

But I said, &c. The mournful contrast presented by his own land (cf. Rom. ix. 2—5). Spiritual atrophy, treachery, and falsehood destroy her moral life, external terrors also are threatening her. And any troubles which afflict his nation he himself must share.

Fear. By this is probably meant some object used to drive animals into pitfalls. 17

The literal translation is: "*The earth doth reel, doth reel, like a drunken man, and swayeth to and fro like a hammock.*" 20

The prophet sees in the victory of the Lord over His earthly foes a witness of a victory over spiritual foes. The exact parallel is found in the cry of our Saviour when His disciples came, saying, "Master, the very devils are subject to us through Thy name," and He replied, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." We cannot separate the two battles. Whenever anywhere evil is struck down, it becomes a blow struck at the kingdom of darkness. The earth shall be rid of iniquity at the last, because "there was war in heaven," and Michael smote the dragon. 21

And after many days, &c., i. e. in spite of long delay punishment shall fall upon them. The original word rendered **visited** has no other meaning than this. Cf. 2 Pet. iii. 9. 22

His ancients, i. e. elders, his heavenly saints. Rev. iv. 4—6. Cf. Joel ii. 31. 23

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Mattins.

A song of praise for the victory foretold in the preceding chapter. We have shewn that that chapter speaks both of the warfare and victory which were passing in the Prophet's day, and also of the final victory which that foretokened. The same double meaning may be traced in the chapter before us, the greater one, as before, predominating. 24

Sennacherib boasted that *he* would do this. See 2 Kings xix. 25, where the same words are found in the original. The prophet declares that vengeance has fallen upon the boaster, that his own fenced cities are thus fallen. In all probability these words are prophetic, written before the fall of Sennacherib. 25

The terrible nations, the Assyrians. Their downfall shall be for their ultimate good, teaching them to fear God. Rev. xv. 4. 26

Isai. XXIV.

Isai. XXV.

Isai. XXV.

4 The church has been through danger, but has been preserved. This is expressed in several metaphors.

A storm against the wall, unable to wash it down, because the Lord had builded it.

5 **A dry place**, a desert on which the heat strikes with fearful force. The Lord will quell the fierceness of the enemy and protect His people from it, as He quenches the heat upon the desert by throwing the shadow of the clouds over it.

The branch, rather *the triumphal song*, of the Assyrians.

6 **This mountain**—Zion. Here again the primary idea seems to fall into the background, and the Prophet's eyes are upon the accomplished victory of the Church of Christ. He symbolizes the love of God towards His saints under the image of a feast—as S. John writes of "the Marriage-supper of the Lamb." We notice here the contrast with the famine and thirst which shall prove the lot of the ungodly. See xxiv. 7—9.

Wines on the lees, therefore strong and rich—yet at the same time **well-refined**.

7 Primary allusion to the ruin of Sennacherib, but only as the type of the overthrow of all enmity and cruelty. This double reference appears more clearly in the original. The word translated **destroy** is literally "swallow up," the same word that is used in ver. 8. The image of swallowing up is probably derived from the destruction at the Red Sea. Thus the sense is, "He will swallow up in Jerusalem the oppressor of the nations. And He will do more at last, for He will swallow up death itself in victory."

And not death only, but every kind of suffering shall be swept away. He shall remove the *cause* of it, even sin, and make the earth a holy dwelling-place, the new Jerusalem His throne, the whole world His kingdom. Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 28; Rev. xxi. xxii.

10 **Moab** was the nation which lay on the S. E. border of Israel, and was bitterly hostile to it. Chs. xv. xvi.; Jer. xlvi. It signifies here, every oppressor and enemy of the Church. Probably there is significance in the fact that it lay on the other side of the deep Jordan valley. The Jordan was as a "great gulf" which separated them. Upon the one mount, Zion, the Lord descends in mercy, upon the highlands of Moab rests His wrath.

11 His victory will be as easy as that of a practised swimmer over the water. He moves through it with perfect ease, overcoming all resistance with the mere motion of his hands, and riding safely on to victory.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Isai. XXVI.

The Prophet contrasts Jerusalem with the city of the ungodly nations; that has fallen with hideous ruin, but the city of

Judah remains strong because God has appointed salvation for its walls and bulwarks. Isai. XXVI.

The holy city is built (ver. 1); but like Paradise it is still empty. Now comes the cry from the Creator to the angels, "Open wide the gates that the holy nation may enter in." See Ps. xxiv. 6, 7, 9; cxviii. 19. 2

Another contrast with the ungodly, tossed with anxieties and worn out with oppression because of their wickedness; the nation which preserves its faith and trust in the Lord remains in perfect peace, and unshaken by any storms. The cry in ver. 4 is again from heaven, exhorting the redeemed to steadfastness. The words "everlasting strength" are in the original "Rock of Ages," an expression familiar to us all from the beautiful hymn which has been founded upon it. 3, 4

The poor had been dragged along in the path of tyrants, now in their turn they shall tread the tyrants down. 6

Their patient waiting shall have its reward, they will find that God has been leading them, and weighing (or rather making level) their way. 7, 8

When the tyranny shall be at an end, and the morning shall dawn, they will shew themselves eager to practise the lessons which they have learned in the night of affliction. 9

On the other hand there are those whom neither affliction nor mercy will teach, they will remain reprobate, despising God's word and commandments. 10, 11

Fire of thine enemies, rather "zeal against the enemies." Cf. 2 Kings xix. 31. There is probably a primary reference to the destruction of Sennacherib's army, which was apparently destroyed by a hot pestilential wind.

Corresponds with our versicles "Give peace in our time, O Lord, because," &c. 12

Other lords, heathen kings, to whom Ahaz and others had slavishly submitted. 2 Kings xvi. 6—9. The confession of the people on their repentance. 13

They, the ungodly kings and their armies. **Therefore**, rather "so." 14

Contrast with them. Whilst they have perished the holy nation has increased, and extended itself far and wide. 15

Hadst, rather "hast."

It seems plain that this refers to Hezekiah's sickness and trials. Cf. 2 Kings xx. 1—6, and xix. 3, 14—20. 16, 17

In these verses the prophet's glance returns to that night of affliction which has preceded the redemption.

Fallen, literally "failed in the birth." Whilst the chosen nation had appeared to fail and come to nought, the ungodly (so the people were complaining) were in prosperity. Cf. Job xxi. 10, 11; Ps. xvii. 14. 18

God's answer to this complaint. Judah's dead shall not be like the Assyrian's dead; a dew like that which makes the grass 19

Is. XXVI. to grow shall fall upon them and cause them to awake and sing.

It is not possible to regard this as other than a prophecy of the Resurrection and the Life in Christ.

But whilst it shall be thus with the faithful, the wicked dead shall be cast forth. The Hebrew word translated "dead" (last word in the verse) implies this, it is the same as that used in ver. 14.

20 The heavy storm of God's judgments is fast gathering in the horizon, and His people are bidden to shut themselves up in the secret chambers of prayer and meditation and repentance, until the fury of the hurricane shall be past. **Enter into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee**, is the special message of the Advent season. It is the same exhortation as our Lord's, "Take ye heed, watch and pray."

Disclose her blood. Cf. S. Matt. xxiii. 35; Rev. vi. 10.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Is. XXVIII. Chapters xxviii.—xxxiii. relate to the alliance of Judah with Egypt against Assyria. They are probably the opening prophecies of the reign of Hezekiah.

In the lesson before us the Prophet depicts the glory of the coming kingdom of God (vv. 5, 6), and then goes on to shew what it is which hinders that kingdom, namely, the sins of priests and people.

5 The Lord shall be the **crown of glory** to His people (cf. Rev. vii. 13); He will clothe them with **righteousness**; He will also give them **strength** in the warfare against sin.

6 **To the gate**, rather "at the gate." When the enemy shall approach so far, they shall drive him back by the strength which is given them.

7 **Through wine**, the same sin which had been the ruin of the kingdom of Israel. See vv. 1—4 of this chapter.

9 The priests and prophets having failed, Isaiah asks, "What then shall be the materials of the future Church?" And he answers: "It shall be the ignorant and the poor," representing these under the figure of children. God will hide his truth from the wise and prudent, and will reveal it to babes (S. Matt. xi. 25).

10 This is apparently a reference by the Prophet to the scoffing of the self-righteous Jews. They despised the exhortations of God's ministers. It was tiresome and same to them, "precept upon precept, line upon line." Therefore they shall be taught by a yet deeper humbling of their pride. It is a prophecy of the "foolishness" of Gospel preaching. 1 Cor. 1—23—end; ii. 1—7.

11 **Stammering lips.** The preaching of the unlettered Apostles. A stumblingblock to the proud and worldly, salvation to those who seek after God.

15, 16 Discipline and mercy still go hand in hand. The people

have made lies their refuge, therefore shall they be filled with misery; nevertheless God will not leave them hopeless. He will establish a sure foundation when all hopes seem broken up. And that foundation is Christ. However sad may be the condition of the nation at one time, or prosperous at another, there is only one foundation which nothing can shake, only one king whose kingdom shall have no end.

A tried stone, rather "a stone of trial." The Gospel is such a trial for the dispositions of men. They that rest upon it shall never be moved. They that are offended by it and reject it shall be destroyed by it. See Matt. xxi. 42, 44; Rom. ix. 33; 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

Make haste, as flying to escape danger.

Our Lesson then ends with declaring the *completeness* of the judgment of Christ, its righteousness, its terrible results to those who have made lies and hypocrisy their refuge.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Mattins.

The proneness of Israel to rest upon Egypt in the day of trial is a type of the spirit which prompts us to trust in man and worldcraft instead of God.

Cover with a covering, lit. "weave a covering," *i. e.*, a protection. This is probably a reference to the covering of the Tabernacle. The people had forsaken the Tabernacle of God, and made a protection of their own, even idolatrous Egypt.

Zoan, called Tanis by the Greeks, was the royal city of Lower Egypt. **Hanes**, called by Herodotus Anysis, was also a royal city. It seems probable from history that there were two kings in Egypt at this time, Tirhakah and Sethos, and that these towns were their capitals.

This verse is a poetical exclamation. Its meaning may be paraphrased thus: "I see a vision, a caravan of asses and camels struggling southwards through the sandy and terrible desert, the same desert through which our fathers were safely led; a caravan bearing a heavy burden of rich treasure for presents, and all to a people who have no help in them."

Their strength, rather "their boasting." The Hebrew word is *Rahab*, which signifies "insolent boasting," and the sense therefore is "their boasting and brag will all end in sitting still and doing nothing."

Write it, *i. e.* God gives the Prophet this command in order that the event may confirm his words and prove his truthfulness. The words are to be written as a sign also that this unholy alliance is not a matter of mere temporary interest; great principles are at stake, and the result is a message for all time.

Turn aside, &c., *i. e.* change your course and say no more to us about Jehovah.

Is. XXVIII.

Isai. XXX

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- Isai. XXX. It seems to them that they have made themselves secure
 13 by their lying pretences, entrenched themselves behind a strong wall. But this very entrenchment shall be their ruin. It shall suddenly bulge out and fall upon them. Not a shred of it shall be left for protection.
- 14 **He shall not spare**, rather "broken unsparingly."
- 15 GOD'S exhortation to them had been to **return and rest**, i.e., return to His commandments and quietly confide in His promises.
- 16 Egypt was famous for its horses. 2 Chron. i. 16. The people are represented as saying that they are so impatient for spoil that they must have horses to carry them; and if they are beaten, flight upon horses shall ensure their safety.
- 17 The reverse of the promise in Lev. xxvi. 8.
- 18 **Therefore**, i.e. because He trusts in the good effect of His chastisement.
- Wait for Him.** Submit their wills and affections to Him, and possess their souls in patience in difficult and dark times.
- 20 **Yet shall not.** Probably this refers to the persecution and suppression of the faithful priests in the reign of Ahaz, when the Temple was shut up.
- 22 **The covering**, i.e. the veils with which the idols were hid away in secret shrines, for the Prophet is evidently speaking of secret and household gods—the **ornament**, the ephod. See Judges viii. 27; xvii. 5.
- Defile**, regard as utterly abominable. See 2 Kings xxiii. 8, 10, 13.
- 23 Contrast with the prison fare, the token of GOD'S anger. See ver. 20.
- Rain of**, i.e. *needful for thy seed.*
- 24 **Clean provender.** "The threshing-floor had been seen in all the villages we had passed on our day's journey. The process is simple, and nearly such as it was in patriarchal times. The children either drive horses round and round over the heaps, or standing upon a sledge stuck full of sharp flints on the under part, are drawn by oxen over the scattered sheaves. Such were the 'threshing instruments having teeth' mentioned by Isaiah (xli. 15). In no instance are the animals muzzled, but they linger from time to time to pick up a scanty mouthful. The grain is winnowed by the men and women, who throw the corn and straw together into the air with a wooden shovel, leaving the wind to carry away the chaff whilst the seed falls to the ground. The wheat is left on the threshing-floor until the tithes-gatherer has taken his portion. The straw is stored for the winter as provender for the cattle. Isaiah alludes to these processes in addressing the Jews." (Layard's *Nineveh*.)
- 25 The prophecy swells out into a glorious and unbroken vision of the Pentecost, the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ, the final victory of the Son of GOD. Rev. xxi. 4, 23; xxii. 5.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The Prophet has been denouncing in the preceding chapter the worldly policy of the nation, in this one we have the *righteousness* of the true King. The kingdoms of Darkness and Light are thus brought into contrast, and Christ comes distinctly into view as the Man who by the perfection of His Manhood is King of men. For this reason the present chapter is chosen for the Sunday before Christmas.

The wind, the deadly Simoom. Comparisons to represent what our Blessed Lord shall be to our fallen race. This is the first blessing which is promised, Protection.

The *second* blessing of Christ's kingdom, an opened understanding to those whose hearts have been hardened. **That see**, not being blinded by pride.

A *third* blessing: things and persons will be called by their right names, not as they pass among men, not what the conventionalities of the world have chosen to make them, but as God sees them. The selfish and worldly shall be known for what they are, and the cunning means they have devised for self-aggrandizement will all be destroyed.

Having threatened the selfishness and greed of the *men* in the coming judgment, the Prophet turns to the *women*, the leaders in the ordinary current of life, and the sinful luxury of the nation. They were at ease; the calamities of invasion which were all around at the time had not touched them; they still pursued their frivolities and enjoyments in the midst of the crowded city. Let who would suffer, they recked not. A terrible picture of what has so often been witnessed since, must we not say, of the luxuries and frivolities of our own "fashionable life." The Prophet warns them that the coming calamities shall soon fall fearfully upon them also.

They shall lament, &c. More probably, "They shall smite upon their breasts," i. e. in lamentation. Cf. S. Luke xxiii. 27—30.

The forts, Heb. *Ophel*, the name of a particular fort on the S.E. of the Temple. In this place, the centre of gaiety, wild asses and flocks should wander, so complete would be the ruin.

Again mercy prevails against judgment, and the promise rises above the threatening. The whole land shall be fruitful with righteousness, and righteousness shall bring peace. Ps. lxxii. 6. The words **the fruitful field shall be counted for a forest**, refer to the rejection of the Jews at our Lord's first coming, and the words that follow to their reception again (Rom. xi. 26). **Judgment shall remain in the wilderness**, with the heathen, and **righteousness in the fruitful field**, in Israel.

Some expositors refer this to the fall of Babylon, a foretoken

Is. XXXII.

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Is. XXXII.

of God's final victory. But it is more probable that it refers to the end of Jerusalem. Though the city shall fall, and the nation be carried away, God's promise will be none the less fulfilled. He will give peace to His people, when all things around are dark and without visible hope.

20

Sow beside all waters, as knowing that in spite of appearances God will give His blessing in due season. (See Eccl. xi. 1. 27th Sunday after Trinity.) It is a promise, therefore, which can never lose its application. Blessed are those who keep their souls steadfast upon God, sowing the good seed of the word, doing Christ's work in spite of discouragements, of opposition and persecution; who labour as knowing that it is God's work and not their own, and are content to go forth weeping and bearing good seed, because God will bring them into His kingdom with joy, and give them their reward.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Is. XXXIII.

This chapter appropriately concludes the Advent Lessons. It depicts the enemy of the Lord as having now reached the very climax of his power, and fulfilled the measure of his iniquities. All is now ready for his overthrow.

Without doubt the whole chapter bears primary reference to Sennacherib's invasion. It is the 14th year of Hezekiah, and the Assyrians are again in the land, drawing near to Jerusalem. The Prophet takes up the word both of prophecy and prayer against them.

2

An echo of Hezekiah's prayer (2 Kings xix. 15), of the prayer of all faithful men. **Their**, the Jewish people's.

Every morning, because each day seems to bring some fresh danger.

3

Tumult, or **blast**; that by which the destruction was wrought, and at which Sennacherib should turn and flee. See 2 Kings xix. 7.

4

Your, i.e. the Assyrian.

6

The correct translation appears to be, "And He shall be the stability of thy times, thy strength of salvation, wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is his treasure."

The last words are intended as a contrast between the Assyrian and the Jewish king. The treasure of the one was silver and gold, of the other the fear of God.

7

The Prophet now returns to describe the dismay which had fallen upon Judah at the enemy's approach. The omission of the word **shall** gives the truer sense of the original. **The ambassadors, &c.** See 2 Kings xviii. 37.

8

Cf. Judges v. 6. **Broken the covenant.** Sennacherib had done so by receiving Hezekiah's treasures and then returning to invade. 2 Kings xviii. 14—16. **Despised the cities.** See

ch. x. 28—32, in which there is a most vivid description of his cruelties to the cities.

Is. XXXIII.

Lebanon, &c. The Assyrian kings cut down the cedars for the ornamentation of their own cities. See 2 Kings xix. 23; Is. xiv. 8.

9

Sharon... Bashan. The richest districts are now desolate, both in the West and in the East, from one end of the land to the other.

The Lord suddenly arises to vengeance, "awakes as one out of sleep."

10

"Ye thought to burn my people, but yourselves are ready to be burned; your own breath, your proud and angry spirit shall set you on fire."

11

A majestic call to all the nations to behold what God hath done to His enemies.

13

So terrific has it all been, that the sinners within Jerusalem were terrorstricken at the sight of the heaps of corpses lying beneath their walls, and asked themselves the question, "Who among us," &c.

14

There seems every reason to believe that the ungodly army was cut off by a hot pestilential wind (see vv. 11, 12; xxx. 30—33; xxxi. 8, 9), and this suggests the yet more terrible burnings ordained against the ungodly, and explains their question.

The righteous will be able to dwell with the devouring fire, for to him it is the fire of love, not of wrath.

15

Blood, Heb. *bloods*, i. e., plots of bloodshed.

The latter part of the verse was probably suggested by Hezekiah's wise precautions for the supply of water to the beleaguered city. 2 Chron. xxxii. 30. But there is a deeper meaning; the promise of the spiritual life and protection which redeemed men should find in Christ. (John iv. 14; vi. 51—58; Rev. xxii. 1.)

16

Again a primary reference to Hezekiah, who would gladden the people by his recovery from sickness, and to the far-off land which they had been excluded from seeing by being closely shut up within Jerusalem. That it has a higher reference, even to the King of kings, and to the land where He dwelleth in glory, needs not to be added.

17

The people shall look back upon the terror they have escaped, and shall ask themselves with thankfulness, **Where is the scribe** (the Assyrian officer who wrote down in his ledger the tribute which Hezekiah was to pay), **the receiver** of the tribute: **he that counted**, &c., the engineer of the invading army? All vanished and gone. Thou shalt see them no more, ver. 19. Even so shall the redeemed in glory look back upon the trials and fears they have gone through, and shall rejoice for them all.

18

Again the Prophet passes in a moment from the past to the future victory, to the Church triumphant in Heaven. The city

20

Is. XXXIII. of Zion melts as in a dissolving view into the heavenly Jerusalem. No invading army shall shake it, and though it shall be watered with broad rivers and streams no ship of war shall sail towards nor approach it.

The end of the chapter (though this is not included in today's lesson) has one more prophecy of the blessed Gospel, even of Him who saith, not once but for ever, to all the sick who come to Him, *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*

CHRISTMAS DAY.

Mattins.

Isaiah IX.

The preceding chapter has described the captivity of the northern kingdom. The people shall be carried away in "trouble and darkness and dimness of anguish." In the chapter before us light dawns upon the stricken people. Multitudes, full of joy and gladness, throng the cities and the fields which but now were deserted; we hear the shouts of the harvest-home while they present the firstfruits to the Lord; we see the triumphal procession going up to the temple [Strachey, 107]. It is therefore chosen to be read on Christmas Day, the day when the Light was made manifest, when the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings. Two or three passages are without question obscured by wrong translation. The first verse, for example, should run thus: *Nevertheless her dimness and anguish shall not be for ever. As at the time He brought low the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, so in the latter time He shall bring her to honour, the land on the sea, along Jordan, Galilee of the nations.* The last words, "the land on the sea," &c., are in apposition with Zebulun and Naphtali.

The prophecy was in part fulfilled when Hezekiah invited the desolate people to his Passover at Jerusalem; it was literally fulfilled also when Christ made Galilee the special scene of His preaching, but we must not confine it to this. Rather it is in Christ fulfilled to the whole earth, which in its sin-laden condition is typified by Galilee as Isaiah saw it lying in darkness and anguish.

3 *And not increased the joy,* should be rendered, "and increased the joy to it."

4 **Yoke of his burden,** the yoke which continually burdened him—**staff of his shoulder,** i.e. the staff with which his shoulder was repeatedly smitten. Christ has delivered men from oppression and given them the freedom of children, Rom. viii. 21.

5 **As in the day of Midian**—of Gideon's victory. Judges vii. The true translation is: "*For every equipment of the warrior that clings in the battle, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning and fuel of fire.*" This will be the fate of

every enemy of the Gospel. Cf. Ps. xlvi. 9; Josh. vi. 24. We have to realize how debased the nation had become under Ahaz, before we can attempt to appreciate the power that this message must have had to the Prophet's countrymen. It should not have less power over us who sorrow for the iniquities that defile the earth, when we hear it read on the birthday of the Deliverer.

Had this verse any application to the Prophet's own times? One might well hesitate to answer, Yes, on looking at the titles which are given to the new-born son. Yet it can hardly be otherwise. A consideration of the whole character of prophetic inspiration leads to the belief that Isaiah is referring to Hezekiah. The Prophet sees victory in the future,—he sees a pledge of it already in the child who is born. Hezekiah was now a boy of nine or ten years old. He had probably shewn a promise of the piety which afterwards distinguished him, and this led the Prophet to anticipate joyfully that "the Name of the Lord would be in him¹," *wonderful* in counsel, *mighty* in work, the *father* and upholder of his nation through endless generations, the founder of a lasting *peace*. Some commentators prefer the translation "Mighty Hero," the Heb. word *El* having sometimes that signification. But there is no reason for displacing the word "God." See Ps. lxxxii. 6; John x. 34. (**Upon his shoulder**, where the badge of office was worn.)

Then does this obscure our belief that we have here a prophecy of the mighty event of Christmas Day? Far from it, it deepens and confirms the belief altogether. So far as Hezekiah fulfilled the Prophet's hopes, so far he was a witness to the nation that the Lord, the Invisible King, was among them, notwithstanding their iniquities. And so far as he or his children fell short of that, the prophecy remained as a witness that the name of the Lord was not yet fully glorified, that there was a greater Deliverer yet to come, that the child was not yet born who fulfilled to the uttermost the promise which the mouth of the Lord had spoken. What the sacrifices were in act, the prophecies were in word, all figures of the True, shadows of things in the heavens. He to whom was given the name of God Himself was a witness to the ages which followed of the birth of the very God in the flesh, of the King whose kingdom should have no end. As the sacraments of life and power which Christ has left us have no meaning apart from Him, so the prophecies and types of the Old Testament would have lost their power and become jargon, if He had not come to fulfil all things and set His seal upon the visions of Moses and the prophets. If therefore any man, reflecting in prayer and humility upon the world as it is, will remember what it was in the days of Isaiah and what the Prophet was commissioned to say concerning it, his heart will

¹ The name Hezekiah means "The Lord the strengthener."

Isaiah IX. leap up within him, as he sees in the event which we meet to adore this day, the fulfilment of all hopes, the death of all fears, the pledge of the eternal rest, for which we look unflinching, according to His promise.

7 **The zeal, &c.** Another assurance which the sins of the nation made necessary. Though the eternal kingdom lay around them and they heeded it not, though one king after another failed to fulfil the prophetic hope, yet God's word should not fail, it was His Zeal, His mighty power, and not the work of men, which should fulfil His purpose, and establish the kingdom of righteousness.

Evensong.

Isaiah VII.
10—16. Ahaz was at this time threatened by a coalition between Pekah, king of Israel and Rezin, king of Syria. He and his people fell into a panic (see preceding part of the chapter), which Isaiah was sent to allay. He began by calling on Ahaz to ask the Lord for a sign of deliverance.

11 **In the depth...height,** in the earth or in heaven.

12 Ahaz had no faith in God. He had cast off his allegiance. Assyria was *his* protector, and he had applied, or was about to apply, for help to its king. 2 Kings xvi. 7. So he gave a hypocritical answer, quoting the words of Moses (Deut. vi. 16).

13 The Prophet turns from him, and appeals to the people. "You may weary out the patience of men," he says; "you may drive them to despair of you. But you cannot weary out the patience of God by your rebellion." The change from "thy God" (ver. 11) to "my God" seems to warn Ahaz that he is casting God away from him.

14 What has been said above on the Morning lesson will apply here also. It is evident that some present event was before the Prophet when he uttered this prophecy. It is equally evident from the New Testament as well as from the fact that God was not made flesh until the time was come, that it was not until the first Christmas Day that the prophecy found its fulfilment. What the present event was cannot be said with certainty, but it is most probably the birth of Maher-shalal-hash-baz, born of one who was a virgin at the time of the Prophet's speaking (see Bp. Wordsworth's exhaustive note on this verse).

15 "Butter and honey," the sign of poverty and hard life (see ver. 22). There shall be no corn, wine, oil, because the land is desolate. And this hard life shall be his training for his work among his fellows, by weaning his soul from luxury.

As meeting its complete fulfilment in Christ, we take this verse as signifying that His hard lot should make Him in all things like unto His brethren, touched with the feeling of their infirmities, bearing their infirmities and sicknesses.

This evidently has reference to the primary meaning of the verse. It was fulfilled when "the abhorred land," the land which sent forth the invaders, was rid of its kings by the assassination of Pekah (2 Kings xv. 30) and the destruction of Rezin by the king of Assyria (2 Kings xvi. 9).

Isaiah VII.
16

S. STEPHEN.

Mattins.

We have in this chapter the beginning of the propagation of the human race, and in the first two children we see types of the twofold nature of man. There is that nature which delights in the law of God, and surrenders to Him, and there is that which wars against God.

Gen. IV.

Cain, i. e. *gotten*, or *acquired*. His mother so named him, one may be certain, in the belief that she had now gotten the promised seed who was to bruise the serpent's head. That this was her idea appears from her words, "I have gotten a man *from the Lord*."

1

But soon she discovered the vanity of earthly hopes,—how we know not. It may have been the bodily weakness of her second son, or a revelation from God, which led her to call him **Abel**, i. e. vanity. A type of the Church, which appears so weak against the world, but God's strength is made perfect thereby. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

2

The occupations of the two sons must have been occupations of their father. Agriculture was directly given to him by the Creator, and apparently also the tending of cattle (iii. 21). And the one can hardly be carried on without the other. We are not to imagine therefore that in this respect Cain is morally beneath Abel.

Here we have the first direct mention of sacrifices, though, as we have said elsewhere, they are probably implied in ch. iii. 21 (see *Sexagesima Sunday*). There is no command of them there, like the command concerning the tree of life; but it is evident that the need of them was revealed to the heart of man.

3

In process of time; literally, "at the end of the days," perhaps some solemn anniversary.

In what respect Abel's sacrifice was "more excellent" than that of Cain (Heb. xi. 4) we are not told. We have no right to assume in the silence of this history that the difference lay in the materials of the offering. Each, as far as we should gather from the simple narrative, brought the gift which most suited his occupation; though probably the words "Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock, yea of the fat thereof," implies that he was the more cheerful giver. But the difference lay deeper than outward things, for it is said "the Lord had respect *to Abel* and to his offering, but *to Cain* and to his offering He had not respect."

4

Gen. IV.

Nor does the difference lie in God's arbitrary will, or, if the phrase be preferred, in His simple sovereignty. Strange it is that such a view should be taken in the teeth of the words to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" which would be only mockery if Cain were predestined to wrath by mere Omnipotent Will. The distinction lay in the character of the persons.

How the mind of God was manifested we are not told, and it is useless to guess. The effect was clear. **Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.** The one was happier for his sacrifice, fuller of trust in God and of peace within; the other was discontented and wrathful. We want no comment to explain all this to us. Most of us have experienced the difference before now. There are times when the worship of God has been a joy and refreshing of soul to us, and times when we have come away unblessed, discontented with ourselves, knowing that we are separate from God. "We have made sacrifices, and wondered that we got no reward for them. Perhaps we have been angry that, being so good, we have not been more favoured by fortune and circumstances. Perhaps we have been angry that, trying so hard to make ourselves good, we have succeeded so little. Perhaps we have had a general notion that God could not be persuaded to be gracious to us and to forgive us, in spite of all the sacrifices we have offered, and that we must try others which are more costly. In all cases the *countenance has fallen*; in all cases we have gone forth with thoughts that were anything but gracious and brotherly to our fellowmen." (Maurice, *Doctrine of Sacrifice*, p. 14.)

6, 7

God displays Himself as the Righteous Being, treats Cain as one made for right, and capable of it. And what he did to Cain He does to us all if we will try our hearts, and listen to His voice.

Sin lieth at the door. Sin is personified as a wild beast crouching and ready to spring upon him. **Unto thee shall be its desire.** "Thou, even thou art the object that it seeks to devour, the adversary is always on the watch for thee, as if thou alone wert the sole victim that it seeks." **And (rather *But*) thou shalt rule over it.** This is God's command to him: "Conquer the enemy. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

8

And Cain talked, &c. Lit. "*And Cain said to Abel.*" There is a gap, we are not told what he said. The LXX, Vulgate, and other ancient versions supply it with the words, "Let us go into the field."

The words **Abel his brother** are repeated again and again, so as to bring out the horror of the sin. The sin of Adam had led to fratricide, and the first fulfilment of the judgment of death upon Adam and his posterity was in the form of murder. How much of the evil doing which is prevalent in the world, and how much of the unbelief, may be traced to the failure of

men to appreciate the deadly nature of sin. They do not see the full misery and enormity of acts which they regard as light, and are led into crimes of which they once thought themselves incapable, because they have not set a watch upon their hearts, nor checked the first emotions of sin. Cf. 1 John iii. 12.

Here again we note the growth of the power of sin. Adam and Eve confessed their evil deed, Cain boldly denies it, and adds lying to his sins.

Am I my brother's keeper? He asks the question in scorn, as though it were absurd to suppose that he was so. And yet he was, and we all are. It is the bounden duty of us all to be keepers and helpers of our brethren. See Gal. vi. 2; 1 Cor. x. 24; Phil. ii. 4. But such an idea was and had been mere madness to Cain, wrapped up in selfishness.

Crieth, for vengeance on the murderer. God hereby shews (1) that He knows all the actions of men and cannot be deceived, (2) that human life is so dear to Him that blood cannot be lightly shed, (3) that He cares for those who love Him in their life and after their death. (*Calvin.*)

Abel was the first of the saints, whose blood is precious in God's sight (Ps. cxvi. 15), and therefore being dead he yet speaketh (Heb. xi. 4).

He is the first of the Bible martyrs, and there was to the Jews a wonderful evidence in his case of the doctrine of the Resurrection. He was accepted by God, who had respect to his offering. Yet it was he who died prematurely.

The reason for selecting this passage to be read on S. Stephen's Day will be obvious. Our Lord declared to the Jews that all the innocent blood which was shed, from that of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, would be avenged upon them. For they by putting Him to death were identifying themselves with Cain, shewing themselves, even as Cain had done, children of the devil; slaying the Lord because His works were righteous and theirs were evil. Their murder of S. Stephen was the carrying out of their wicked plan. The first Christian martyr, like him of the Old Covenant, had hope in his death, seeing the face of Christ; but they who slew him, like Cain, were forthwith "driven forth from the presence of the Lord," and their nation and Temple passed away.

Evensong.

Jehoram, king of Judah, the son of the pious Jehoshaphat, married Athaliah, the daughter of wicked Ahab, and thereby became the instrument of bringing the hateful worship of Baal into his kingdom. Their son Ahaziah, too, faithfully followed their evil example (2 Kings viii. 25—27), and perished, along with his uncle Jehoram, by the sword of Jehu. (2 Kings ix. 27.) There-

Gen. IV.

9

10

2 Chron.
XXIV.

2 Chron.
XXIV.

upon Athaliah his mother arose and destroyed all the seed royal, except Joash, the infant son of Ahaziah. He was saved by his aunt Jehosheba with the assistance of her husband, the high priest Jehoiada, and was concealed for six years in the Temple, the "she-wolf of Judah" meanwhile ruling over the land. At the end of that time Jehoiada, having laid his plans carefully, brought forth the child and proclaimed him king, and Athaliah was righteously slain. Then the images of Baal were thrown down, as they had been by Jehu in Israel, and the worship of the LORD was restored. (2 Kings xi. 17—19.) All went well during the reign of pious Jehoiada. But after his death there came a grievous change, which forms the subject of our present lesson.

15 **Jehoiada** was the husband of Jehosheba (2 Chron. xxii. 11), and therefore uncle to the king whom he so faithfully preserved. Careful examination of dates has shewn that there is some numerical error here as to the age of Jehoiada. (See Lord A. C. Hervey's art. "Jehoiada," in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, where it is shewn that the Hebrew text may have been originally 83.)

16 The honour thus paid to him is unique. There is no other record of any but kings being buried in the royal sepulchre. But he stands "among the very foremost well-doers in Israel."

17 **Made obeisance**, as requesting that he would suffer them to worship idols. And they gained this request with the weak and fickle king. (See an admirable sermon on this narrative by Professor Plumptre, *King's Coll. Sermons*.)

18 Cf. ch. xxix. 3—8.

19 Cf. Neh. ix. 26—29. Of these prophets Zechariah is the only one who is named.

20 Zechariah probably succeeded his father Jehoiada as high priest.

Above the people. Probably this means the inner court of the Temple, which was elevated above the outer court where the place of the people was.

21 This frightful act of ingratitude and impiety took place "between the porch and the altar." (Matt. xxiii. 35, where he is called son of Barachias, in all probability through the error of some copyist, who confused him with Zechariah the prophet.) The great altar stood opposite the porch, both being within the raised court. (See Mr Clark's *Bible Atlas*, Map xii.) The people, urged on by the king, rushed upon this specially holy spot from the lower position where they stood, and there consummated their wickedness.

22 The righteous indignation of the dying prophet found vent in his dying words, and the very same year the reign which had hitherto been so peaceful was disturbed by invasion, and ere long the king was hurled into his unhonoured grave.

This was the last martyrdom recorded in Scripture, as Abel's was the first. This Book of Chronicles, in which the death of Zechariah is recorded, is the last book of the Canon in the

Hebrew arrangement. Our Lord, in speaking of it, declared that the Jews were but following the evil example of the children of sin, as told in their own Scriptures. And for that reason the judgment of all such deeds would fall on them. And yet, even while He spake, there was love beneath His solemn words. The blood of Abel, the dying voice of Zechariah, cried for vengeance. But the blood of Christ spake, and ever speaketh, better things. (Heb. xii. 24.) His dying prayer was, "Father, forgive them." And His first martyr kneeled down and said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And when he had said this he fell asleep.

2 Chron.
XXIV.

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

Mattins.

The children of Israel had committed the sin of worshipping the golden calf. For this God had declared to them, "I will not go up with thee" (ver. 3). For a while they were excommunicate and outcast from God's presence, put on a level with other nations. A tabernacle (not *the* tabernacle, for that was not yet builded, but some temporary structure) was set up, "afar off from the camp," as betokening that the people had forfeited their privileges, and into this only Moses and his servant Joshua might enter. This is the **tabernacle** spoken of in the verse before us.

Exodus
XXXIII.

9

He has been told that though the Lord will not go with the people He will send an angel, and he asks who this angel is to be. And he reminds God of His lovingkindnesses to himself in past time.

12

He feels, in the earnestness of his devotion and love towards God, that it were better to dwell in the waste howling wilderness if only God is there, than to go into the land of milk and honey, aliens from God.

15, 16

The reward of his faith and trust. God accepts his mediation.

17

His devotion is deepened and strengthened by the reward of his faith. To him that hath devotion and love more is given, and now he longs more earnestly than ever for communion with his Maker.

18

What he sought for could not be given except in part (1 Tim. vi. 16; John i. 18). "The eye of sinful man His glory may not see." But it was possible to make a fuller revelation, such a one as would comfort the soul of Moses and supply his heart's longings. God would reveal Himself as the Forgiver.

19

When we come to trace the lessons which this chapter brings to us for St John's Day, let us remember first *why* the vision was granted to Moses. It was in reward for his love to God, and also to the sinful people. It was because he loved so truly that

**Exodus
XXXIII.**

he saw the vision of love. We turn to the second lesson for this morning, and there we see an analogy in the Christian prophet and apostle lying on Jesus' breast, listening to His words with all the eagerness of holy devotion. There Jesus declares that His glory is now being manifested as it never was before (ver. 31), and will be manifested after He has ascended, in the self-devotion and love of His disciples. "Whither I go ye cannot come," is a very striking parallel to the words of the Lord to Moses, "Thou canst not see my face." Both the Jewish and the Christian prophet, while remaining in the flesh, were precluded from the full vision of blessedness which awaits us all in the land where "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John iii. 2.)

Evensong.

**Isaiah VI.
I**

See Introduction, p. 1. We have seen there that this vision of Isaiah must have taken place *before* Uzziah's death. The stricken king had long lived apart from his subjects, and doubtless was well-nigh forgotten. All the kingly functions were performed by his son Jotham. It was a time of prosperity and wealth, a time also of luxury, and carelessness, and hard-heartedness.

The Prophet doubtless had gone to the Temple to worship; there was no falling off in its ceremonies and ritual. Yet religious earnestness seemed to have perished. Now, therefore, he received a Vision which showed him that there was a King who changed not, and whose glory faded not away. Though love had grown cold, and religious life was ebbing away from the nation, the Lord of the nation still ruled in righteousness, and His eyes beheld the children of men. They who came there as to a weary duty, or in obedience to social requirement, never thought of Him, they came and departed without blessing, yet He was there waiting to be gracious, and suddenly revealed Himself to His servant. Does not the fact teach us to remember that God is in His holy Temple when we go to worship there, that when we enter He knows what we say, and takes note of our heart, and if we take no heed to His unseen presence it is because our hearts are far from Him, and our worship worthless in His sight? He is *always* on His throne, high and lifted up—but only faithful Isaiahs see Him.

The Vision of Isaiah is clear in detail. It is the form of a man seated on a lofty throne, His train (the borders of His robe) filling the Temple. The Gospel of S. John explains this part of the Vision—it was the Vision of *God Incarnate*—of Jesus. See S. John xii. 41. There is a glory which cannot be seen by mortal eye, there is a veil which covers it from all created beings. But we may say that what Isaiah saw was this veil. It was Jesus the Mediator, who though He is God of God, Light of

Light, yet was manifested in the flesh, so that His creatures saw His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father. And the Vision of Isaiah was an anticipation of this manifestation on earth. His robe filled the Temple, His glory and love fill it still. The heavenly and the earthly Church,—His robe fills them all, and gives them life and light.

Stood, were stationed. They were hovering without motion over the Throne in the attitude of worship, sustained by two extended wings, covering their faces in their awe at the Divine glory, covering their feet in deep humility at their own sinfulness¹. Cf. Ezek. i. 11.

This is the only place in Scripture where the seraphim are mentioned. The name means "burning ones," plainly because fire is the emblem of purity. That there are gradations in the hierarchy of heaven appears to be clear from Scripture, but to attempt to classify them until we have passed the veil would be only rash intrusion.

The seraphim are heard proclaiming in antiphonal chorus the *Holiness* of the Lord. "From the specimens we have had of other oriental writings, we might expect here some gorgeous accumulation of superhuman glories. But the vision reaches its highest point in the cry, Holy, Holy, Holy. It is the holiness of God which the seraphim proclaim, that which cannot be represented to the eye, that of which descriptions and symbols offer no image." (*Maurice*.) The design of God is that His holiness should become universally manifest. It is to this consummation that all things in heaven and earth are tending, to the vision of the glory, that is, the holiness of God. To see that holiness for ourselves is to become holy. "In thy light shall we see light." "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The heavenly chorus guided the Prophet's thoughts from that time forward. "The Holy One of Israel" is his favourite phrase.

The Prophet was outside the door. He must have been, because the priests only were allowed to enter the building. He and the congregation were in front of the great folding doors, now standing open according to custom, where all could see what was going on below, but where *he* only could see the Vision which gave the ceremonies all their meaning. The doorposts at his side vibrated at the voice which proclaimed that the Holy One was there. The house was filled with smoke from the altar of incense, a token that the fire of God's love kindled the sacrifice, that adoration of His holiness is the best worship that can be paid to Him.

The Prophet was filled with fear at the Vision. Many a time he had worshipped there before. But he had never before

¹ Delitzsch quotes the Targum, "covering their eyes lest they should see, their feet lest they should be seen."

Isaiah VI. realised as he did now the holiness of the Lord. It was this which made him tremble, the being brought face to face with the All-holy.

The confession of personal evil comes first. He does not stay to enquire whether he is better or worse than other men. Such questioning is impossible when he has learnt, as he has never learnt before, the depth of his own sinfulness, his uncleanness before the Most Holy, the awful distance between His Maker and himself.

But soon comes another thought. He is in the midst of a people who are unholy too. The vision of purity in the Temple where the seraphim are all united in worship, all obedient to the Lord, is an awful contrast to the sights of earth, where men were living in worldliness and self-seeking, and in separation from the Holy. The expression of **unclean lips** expresses their contrast with those of the heavenly creatures, whose lips were chanting God's praise. The Prophet stood in the consciousness of his deep uncleanness, ready to die by reason of the anguish of his self-condemnation.

Similar to this cry was that of Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job xlii. 5, 6.) "The deepest thing that is in man's heart under the law is the sense of separation that is between him and God. 'Let not God speak with us, lest we die;' this was the voice of the people to Moses, as they 'removed and stood afar off;' (Ex. xx. 18, 19.) 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God.' (Judges xiii. 22; cf. vi. 22, 23; Dan. x. 17.) Below this is the utterly profane state in which there is no contrast, no contradiction felt between the holy and the unholy, between God and the sinner. Above it is the state of grace; in which all the contradiction is felt, the deep gulf perceived which divides between sinful man and a holy God; yet is it felt at the same time that this gulf is bridged over, that it is possible for the two to meet, that in One who is sharer with both they have been already brought together. For His presence, though indeed the presence of God, is yet of God with His glory veiled and hidden; and thus even sinful men might endure to be near it, and dwelling in that nearness might step by step be prepared for the glorious consummation, the seeing of God as He is; which, though it must be death to the mere sinner, yet is highest blessedness to him who had been trained and fitted for it by beholding for awhile His mitigated splendour in the person of the Incarnate Word, and in this beholding had been more and more transformed into the likeness of Him before whom he should one day appear." (Archbp. Trench, *Miracles*, p. 133.)

The thought with which the above quotation concludes, leads us to digress for a moment only from the vision of Isaiah to that of S. John, which forms the second lesson at Evensong

to-day. The Christian seer too was overwhelmed by the glory of His Lord, and *fell at His feet as one dead* (Rev. i. 17). He wanted, however, no outward symbol of cleansing, such as Isaiah received. Christ had washed him from his sins in His own blood. Therefore now it sufficed for the Lord to take him by the right hand with the assurance of safety. '*Fear not; I am He that liveth and was dead.*' He whom thou sawest in the flesh, and on the cross. I live evermore, and my love towards thee is unchanged.

The Prophet received an outward evidence of the forgiveness of his sinfulness. The coal upon the altar is a substance dead in itself, but being kindled is able to give warmth and life. The Prophet knew himself cold and estranged, as well as unclean. The fire changed him. Love and zeal consumed him.

The effect of the change immediately appeared. He who before was bowed down with shame at his own sinfulness, was now filled with the holy self-consciousness of one whose sin was done away. The fire which had entered into his heart taught him that a necessity was laid upon him. The forgiveness of his sins prompted him to be a messenger of God. It is evident, to me at least, that this moment and no other is the moment of his call to the prophetic office.

Then he received his commission, a more awful one could not have been. He was commanded to go and pronounce upon the nation the judgment of hardening of heart. Because they were seeing all the tokens of an invisible King, were offering praise and sacrifice in His name, and yet cared not to see *Him* by reason of their self-worship, and love of money, therefore all Divine ordinances were making their ears deaf, their affections cold. They heard His words, yet heard not Him as the speaker, and the invisible world was becoming to them like a dream. Better for them, yea, necessary for them, to wander for awhile in misery and darkness, than to go on deceiving themselves with belief that they were safe. Better, because after total darkness there is hope of dawn.

The seer heard with fear, yet with obedience. But he asked, **Lord, how long?** He felt that there was a motive of mercy underlying even this terrible judgment, and he would fain enquire when this mercy would be seen. He received an assurance, yet it was sad enough. We have, let it be noted, in this verse the first distinct prediction of the downfall of the kingdom. We have already seen that the reign of Uzziah, though it was prosperous in its continuance, was clouded and troubled at its close. And from that time the decadence was continuous, except that it received some temporary check in the reign of Hezekiah. The Prophet, then, is told, "Now the fall begins. It will go on until the desolation is apparently complete."

The original of the first clause is obscure, but probably the sense is this: **And is there yet a tenth in it? This also**

Isaiah VI.

6, 7

8

9

11

13

Isaiah VI.

shall be given up to destruction, as a teil (terebinth), &c. This therefore is a warning of a further judgment after the desolation of the land. So complete shall the visitation be that the nation shall undergo a further sifting even after the Chaldæans have laid it low. We may say that this prophecy was visibly fulfilled in the fact that the nation on its return from the Captivity passed through many fiery ordeals, and at last was taken by the Romans. So plain is it that no temporal change can fulfil God's will; all things in this world are left incomplete.

But God's will is not thwarted. He knoweth His own. The terebinth and the oak, when their leaves are stripped off, look withered and dead. But we know that they are not. They have their **substance** (rather root) left, and **the holy seed** (those who love and fear God and are known to Him always) **shall be that root**, and bear a holy nation to God. In the midst of the deep curse lies a hidden blessing. The false glory shall be stripped away, only that the true glory may be realized.

This is the vision of Christ, as S. John expresses it, which Isaiah saw in the temple. John xii. 41. To the apostle himself a yet brighter vision was manifested, the vision of Him who lived, and died, and yet lived evermore. (Rev. i. Second Lesson for this day's Evensong.) That vision also was vouchsafed with a purpose not unlike the vision of Isaiah. It was given to prepare the apostle for the things which were coming not on Judæa only, but on the whole Church and world. The sight of the Holy One on His great white throne ruling in righteousness was the means of explaining to the seer the plagues that were at hand, the opening of the vials of wrath. Terror would follow terror, and death and destruction would seem to be lords. But the vision had been once seen and was for ever, of a God of holiness and love whom no storm could reach, and nothing could shake from His place. His judgments were loving in purpose; when they had wrought the purpose of the Lord, then would be seen the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven, having the glory of God. The vision of Isaiah prepared for the fall and rising again of Zion, that of S. John waits for its complete fulfilment, the destruction of all that is evil, the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth, where shall be no more death and no more sin.

INNOCENTS' DAY.

Mattins.

Jer. XXXI.

This chapter was written to console the Jews when the captivity was come upon them. The prophet has warned them that from this captivity there is no escape. The providence of God has decreed it. But Jeremiah bids them take this comfort to their souls, that God does not forget them or cease to care for

them because His face seems hidden from them. When the separation shall have done its sanctifying work, when they shall know the Lord for their God, and shall have learned the worthlessness of idols, then they shall return in joy. His promise is expressed, according to the form of God's education of Israel, in temporal terms. Not even to the Prophet himself was the fulness of the truth revealed. He knew, for God had told him, that the promise remained sure; he knew that a mighty deliverance would come, yet his eye had not seen, nor his heart conceived how mighty that deliverance would be. We to whom God hath revealed it by His Spirit (1 Cor. ii. 10), whilst we endeavour to read this chapter in the light of the Prophet's time, and to understand the allusions of it as the people would understand them, shall miss God's own intention if we neglect the only light which can make it at all clear, and forget that Christ was the end of the prophecies of Salvation and Deliverance. The opening words, for example, **at that time**, have a meaning to us which swallow up all lesser meanings. No doubt the return under Zerubbabel and the victories of the Maccabees were thankfully acknowledged by every pious Jew as God's deliverance of them, but what were they to the day when the Child was born in Bethlehem to give Eternal Redemption both to the living and the dead?

The LORD reminds them of past mercies, to encourage them. 2
As they found favour in the howling desert, and were conducted to their rest, even so it shall be again. Cf. Hos. xiii. 5.

Saying is not in the original, and the verse has more force 3
without it. Israel listens from afar to His voice, and is heard exclaiming, **Yea, I have loved thee**. Then the Father runs towards his penitent child while yet a great way off. (Luke xv. 20.) **Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee**; rather, as in margin, "*therefore have I extended (or drawn out) lovingkindness to thee.*" God's is not only an ancient love, it is everlasting, and can never fail, though the comforts of it may for a time be suspended. Therefore it is drawn out and extended to Israel now, even as to its ancestors.

The combination of the active and passive, **I will build 4
thee, and thou shalt be built**, expresses the certainty of the event. The Temple was now in ruins—but God would rebuild it. **Virgin of Israel**, descriptive of the state of purity of the new nation, entirely separate from idols. And she shall again adorn herself, as for her bridal. (Cf. Is. lli. 1.) The people shall resume their tabrets (or *harps*) which they had hung on the willows. (Ps. cxxxvii. 2.)

The mountains of Samaria, equivalent to "the land of 5
Israel." There shall be a restored unity to the nation, resulting in the increase of communion of benefit and joy. The mountains of Central Palestine were formerly covered with vines to the summit.

Jer. XXXI.

The planters shall plant and eat, shall not be liable to violence and rapine, as in the days of repeated invasions. The words **as common things** refer to Lev. xix. 23—25, which enacted that the fruit of the vineyards was not to be eaten till the fifth year after the vines had been planted. The planters, the Prophet says, shall have no hindrance in keeping the law of God, they can afford to wait His time, because He is with them. There will be no haste or irreverence, all will be calm, peaceful, holy. When Zerubbabel returned from Babylon he did thus plant vines in the mountains of Israel, probably with this prophecy in his mind. But there was a better fulfilment than that when Christ Himself (John iv.) and His Apostles (Acts viii. ix.) went to the outcast and despised Samaritans and planted the Gospel there.

6 In that day of peace and rest there shall be no hindrance in keeping the ancient feasts. These had fallen into disuse in the days of the image-worship at Dan and Beersheba, but now the watchmen as of old shall summon all to the true worship. The summons to worship among Orientals was not by ringing of bells, but by watchmen stationed on the towers for the purpose.

There is a special significance in the words **watchers in Mount Ephraim**. There was a time when the watchman of Ephraim had been a treacherous hater of Judah, and had lain snares for her. Hos. ix. 8; v. 1. (Cf. Is. xi. 13.) God will make those who hate and persecute religion its most zealous leaders.

7 The LORD declares that to Him shall be the glory of this great conversion. Our translators in translating **shout among the chief of the nations**, shew that they understand by this that the chief of the other (heathen) nations shall rise up to do honour to Jerusalem. But the translation should rather be "*upon*," or "*over* the chief of the nations," namely, Jacob. Israel had been lowered to the depths, now she shall be exalted.

8 **The north country**, Babylon. The road to it from Palestine lay direct north, through Syria. **The coasts**, or *recesses*. There is no place so remote but that God shall find them out, and none are so infirm but that He will give them strength. When God calls there is no inability, for He that calls will help, and His strength is sufficient for us every one.

9 "Though their return will be matter of joy to them, yet prayers and supplications shall be their stores and their artillery; they shall come weeping for sin, supplicating for pardon; for the goodness of God shall lead them to repentance, and they shall weep with more bitterness and more tenderness for sin, when they are delivered out of their captivity, than ever they did when they were groaning under it. Weeping and praying do well together; tears put life into prayers and express the liveliness of them, and prayers help to wipe away tears."—*(M. Henry.)*

The LORD will bring them back through a land where they shall not *thirst*, nor *lose their way*, nor *stumble*. So it is ever with those who follow the leadings of God's providence.

Ephraim might be called the **firstborn**, as the son of Joseph who succeeded to Reuben's forfeited rights. He had wandered from God into idolatry, yet God was ready to receive him back as a prodigal and repentant son, and to own him as a firstborn. *All* are firstborn who are God's, all honoured and blessed as such. (Heb. xii. 23.)

The nations are called to witness the restoration of Israel by the hand of Him who scattered them, and a beautiful cluster of promises follows, expressing the joy of the redeemed in witnessing the glory of the Church. Cf. Zech. viii. 5, 19; Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6.

Ramah, the burial place of Rachel, was on the great northern road, about two hours' journey from Jerusalem. It belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. By an exquisitely beautiful figure the Prophet (himself a Benjamite) represents Rachel as disturbed in her grave, bitterly weeping, even there, for her children Ephraim and Benjamin, who are carried away into exile along the road beside which she lies. She refuses to be comforted, for they are not; they are carried away by the enemy, and will be seen no more. The Prophet bids her dry her bitter tears, for she shall be comforted. They shall come again, there is hope in her end (or *her futurity*), saith the Lord, who cannot deceive.

Now let us consider this passage in connexion with the slaughter of the innocents. S. Matthew tells us that this prophecy was *then* fulfilled (Matt. ii. 18). Let what has already been said be borne in mind, that it was in Christ, and only in Christ, that any prophecy of the chapter could be exhausted—then how entirely is the verse before us explained by the Evangelist. The return from the captivity was a fulfilment, inasmuch as it was the assurance of God's love and care. But it was not the full manifestation of that love. The returned captives died and passed away, but the love of God is everlasting. Therefore there was a further, an exhaustive, and complete manifestation to be still looked for.

And when the mothers of Israel looked upon their slaughtered little ones, upon the destruction of the bright hopes which they had formed, and the seeming extinction in death of golden possibilities, the Evangelist tells them that the ancient promise of the Prophet yet stands sure. They are not lost; those who die in infancy pass into the hands of Him whose love is everlasting; in God's time, as of old, they shall come again as from captivity, and sorrow shall be turned into joy. The words have been fulfilled to the mothers of Bethlehem, they and their little ones have been united again in the "land beyond the sea." They are fulfilled in the case of every mother who has gazed upon her boy in his coffin, and knows that though he shall not

Jer. XXXI.

10

15

Jer. XXXI. return to her, she shall go to him, and the angels shall restore him to her arms again.

Evensong.

Baruch IV.
(Introductory Note.)

The opening words of this book would lead us to believe that its author was the son of Neriah, the friend and pupil of Jeremiah. Cf. Baruch i. 1, 2, with Jer. xxxvi. 4. But there are other parts of the book which must belong to a later period, and there is no Hebrew original of it, for which reason it is not reckoned as canonical by the Jews. Canon Westcott has carefully analysed it, and has come to the conclusion that the early portion *may* have been substantially written by Baruch. There are expressions in the Greek which indicate that they are a translation from the Hebrew. He therefore supposes that the writer may have come into the possession of this fragment, and moulded it afresh in his own style, adding new matter of his own. Mr Westcott takes the date of the book in its present form to be about B. C. 160, i. e. at or shortly before the time of the Maccabean war.

The Book, after an introduction of 14 verses, consists (1) of a confession and prayer by the captives of Babylon (i. 15—iii. 8); (2) an address to the Israelites pointing out the grievousness of their sin (iii. 9—iv. 8); (3) the lament of Jerusalem over her lost children (iv. 9—20); (4) the message of consolation, bidding her be of good cheer because they shall return again (iv. 21—30); (5) the prediction of the fall of her oppressors, and her triumphant joy at last (iv. 31—end). To this is added a so-called Epistle of Jeremiah on idolatry, in all probability written in Egypt.

21 The lesson before us comprises what we have marked as division 4, and it is therefore exactly parallel to our morning lesson. The chief point of difference is that being written at a later date it shews us what the people had come by that time to hope and believe concerning God and His dealings with them. The Canon of Scripture was closed. Their duty was to meditate upon it faithfully; thus would God now lead them until the dayspring should visit them in the person of Christ. The light which came from the prophecy of Jeremiah appears in this passage bearing happy fruit. Jerusalem calls upon her sons to **be of good cheer** and to **cry unto the Lord**, who will deliver them (verse 21).

22 The title **the Everlasting** is characteristic of this book. It is an Alexandrian rendering of the name JEHOVAH.

23 Sion exults even over the loss of her children, for their restoration shall not be into a world of care and sin; God will give them to her **for ever**.

25 And she exhorts them to suffer patiently for the joy that is set before them.

We must look upon this beautiful lesson therefore as a pious

Commentary written before Christ's coming, upon the lesson of the morning. And in doing so we must bear in mind that the Christian Commentary upon it has a yet fuller confidence. The Epistle of to-day bids us look not only upon the little ones of *Bethlehem* slain for their Redeemer's sake, but upon *every* little child which God takes to Himself, as without fault before the throne of God, redeemed from among men, firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Baruch IV.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

Mattins.

A magnificent picture of the earth redeemed from sin by Christ. The prophet sees not only war and strife at an end, but represents the earth itself as human, breaking forth into shouts of joy, the forests and fields welcoming their Divine King. We have the same figure in Ps. xcvi. 11, 12, &c.

Is. XXXV.

Them, the servants of God. See end of preceding chapter.

1

The Glory of Lebanon, which consisted of cedars and other forest trees, may represent faithful princes and pastors; and **the excellency of Carmel and Sharon**, the fruits and flocks, the people of the Church and nation.

2

The prospect of this glory and beauty may well give strength to the hands that are now falling from the attitude of brave action, to the knees which are shrinking from prayer for lack of firm faith and hope. The faint hearts may now take courage, for God Himself is here to save.

3, 4

The miracles of Christ Himself are only a foretaste of the day of the redeemed, the day when there shall be no more sorrow nor pain, and they are a continual sign of the spiritual blessings which rest upon the Church of God, the gift of spiritual sight and hearing and speech to those who had been blind, and deaf, and dumb.

5

Parched ground. This means strictly the *mirage*, that illusion familiar to all readers of Eastern travel, in which the distant sandy desert assumes the appearance of a sheet of water, in which mountains and trees are reflected, and which mocks travellers by holding out vain hopes of quenching their thirst. Even so it had been until the Gospel was preached, the nations were constantly deceived by unreal visions, were promised rest and refreshment by sorcerers and dreamy philosophers. But the Gospel of Christ brought no vain hopes, it gave pure fountains of living water, and led those who walked by it from strength to strength until they appeared before the God of gods in Zion.

7

By **Dragons** here are probably meant jackals, which frequented desolate places and ruins.

The desert is naturally pathless as well as barren. But now the faint track on the sands shall be replaced by a solid causeway raised above the mire and dirt of sin. By it is signified the

8

Is. XXXV. rules of faith and practice, the sacraments and creeds, and all methods whatsoever which God has given to bring mankind to Himself. The words **and a way** probably imply that it shall be well trodden by pilgrims.

10 Reference to the processions in which bodies of men went up to the Temple at the great feasts, and after harvest or a victory. **Joy upon their heads**, alluding to their custom of decking themselves with chaplets. The redeemed of Christ are anointed with the Holy Spirit as they enter into communion with Him in worship, and sorrow flees away as He gives them that peace which passeth all understanding.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

**Isaiah
XXXVIII.**

2 Hezekiah had as yet no son. This appears from the fact that Manasseh was only twelve years old at his accession, fifteen years afterwards (2 Kings xxi. 1, compared with xx. 6). Even in our own land disputed successions under like circumstances have been the causes of frightful disorders (such as the Wars of the Roses), and in Eastern countries, where government is despotic, horrors far more bloody have often been caused by default of issue. The fall of the kingdom of Israel was at least hastened by such a cause (2 Kings xv. 10—30). This will explain the earnestness of Hezekiah's prayer and the bitterness of his grief at receiving Isaiah's message, and it shews folly and a low morality in ourselves if we superciliously pronounce him weak and cowardly. There may have been anxiety and fear, for in whom are they *not* in the time of extreme agony? Let us not be high-minded but fear.

Turned his face, &c., to be undisturbed in his devotions.

3 **A perfect heart**, in his desires as regards his public conduct. He had laboured for fourteen years surrounded by the greatest difficulties, and now all his labour was to be broken off prematurely.

4—6 The promise of Isaiah recognizes the king's righteous zeal. He tells him that his days will be prolonged for his country's sake. It is the highest commendation, surely, which he could receive. The promise concerning the Assyrians seems to imply that they had not yet entirely left the country.

7 Sundials were invented by the Babylonians, and from them Ahaz had probably obtained his. The description of the phenomenon is obscure, but it is evident, as Keil writes, that "the narrative does not require us to assume a reversion of the rotation of the earth, but only a miraculous recession of the shadow, probably a refraction of the sun's rays effected by God at the entreaty of the Prophet. Faint analogies occur in the usual course of nature, as for example the famous phenomenon observed in 1703, at Metz, when the shadow of the sundial went back an hour-and-a-half."

The song of Hezekiah consists of two parts; verses 10—14 express what he said in his sickness; 15—20 his joy on his recovery. There ought to be a pause after "*I said*," for it is not connected with "in the cutting off," &c. Those words qualify "I shall go to the grave."

In the cutting off of my days, in the prime of life.

This world was very pleasant and happy to him, gladdened as it was with human fellowships, and yet more with the presence of the Lord in nature, in the temple-worship, and in his own soul. The light in the grave had not come yet, by the passing of the Saviour through its dark portals.

Mine age, literally "generation." He means his contemporaries, the men that he knew and loved, and in poetical figure declares that they are passing from him. **As a shepherd's tent**, which never remains long in one place, but has its pins hastily pulled up and is carried away, leaving the lately busy scene a silent desert.

Like a weaver, cutting off his life from the threads which join the web to the loom.

From day even till night. All day long he expected death at nightfall, and then at night he "reckoned till morning," lay sleepless, and expected death at dawn. The dull monotonous suffering is most touchingly expressed in the repetition of these words in the next verse.

Fever raged in his limbs as though a lion were gnawing them.

"*That*" is not in the original, and would be better omitted.

Sometimes violent pain made him scream ("chatter"), at other times his weakness was such that he could only moan softly, and his eyes grew dim, and he could do nothing but leave himself to God, for he was no longer able even to think.

What shall I say? The contrast of this with the "I said" of verse 10 expresses his delighted surprise and deep thankfulness at the suddenness of his recovery. "I can say *nothing*," he implies, "I can only say that God promised and God hath performed."

I shall go, &c., i.e. "I shall walk softly and religiously all my life in the memory of this bitterness which has now passed. It will always remain in my memory." The Hebrew word translated "go" only occurs once besides, in Ps. xlii. 4 ("went"). **By these things**, by Thy word, Thy dealings, Thy merciful chastisements; not by mere course of nature, but by Thee.

Make me to live more bravely, faithfully, zealously than ever.

For, i.e. *in order to* **peace**,—to bring it to me,—**I had great bitterness**. The bitter medicine has brought the health of peace.

Then he acknowledges that the approach of death had shewn him fearfully the greatness of his sins, as his recovery now is a token to him of God's forgiveness. The literal translation of

Isaiah
XXXVIII.

10

11

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Isaiah
XXXVIII.

18, 19

the Hebrew is very beautiful: "Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of destruction."

A renewed expression of his past terror and agony, followed by a swelling cry of joy and triumph, for his recovery and for his hope of children.

20

The literal translation of the first words is "The Lord to save me," a shout of triumph. Some commentators suppose that Ps. cxvi. was written by Hezekiah at this time.

The son who was given to Hezekiah proved to be one of the wickedest of the kings. But may we not believe that the memory of his father's piety came back to him in after years, and that it was this memory which moved him, though late, to penitential tears and prayers?

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Isaiah XL.

This chapter begins the 2nd division of the prophet Isaiah. It belongs probably to the latter part of the reign of Hezekiah, possibly to that of Manasseh, and is written to comfort Israel in the dark days that have settled on the land, and the darker days that are coming. Sennacherib has disappeared from the scene. Assyria's day is over. Babylon becomes the prominent nation, and is about to lead Judah into captivity. The sorrow that is coming on the land is met by an increase of spiritual brightness; the kingdom of Christ is drawing nearer. If the reader opens the second part of this book at a venture, he is almost certain to light on some passage of consolation.

1

The xxxixth chapter has closed with the prediction of the Babylonish captivity. Isaiah sees in a vision the last days of the nation and of the Temple, and thereupon comes the prophetic burst, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." The Prophet is so rapt into the future, that passing by for a while the whole of the captivity, he commences his prophetic song with the march of the returning exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem, and sees therein the clear vision of the march of the King of kings to claim His own. What He has been hitherto, that He shall be to the end, the Saviour and Comforter of His people. The Septuagint adds, "O priests." The words are no doubt addressed to the ministers of religion.

Warfare, rather "hard servitude."

Double, &c., twice as much good as she deserved evil. Rom. v. 20.

3

He has commanded a cry of deliverance to go forth (ver. 1), here is the response to it. Lit. it is, "the voice of one crying," i. e. of a herald. It means, of course, first, the edict of Cyrus (2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23); secondly, that of John the Baptist.

The wilderness, the vast desert which lay between Euphrates and Palestine. Eastern monarchs before making expeditions sent pioneers in front of them, who sometimes levelled preci-

pices and filled up hollows. An ancient historian describes the great Queen, Semiramis, as doing so.

It. The LXX. reads "the salvation of God," and it is so quoted in the New Testament. Luke iii. 6. 5

The Prophet hears another, a heavenly voice, bidding him **Cry.** And on asking what he is to cry, he is told to proclaim the vanity of all earthly things, and the everlasting power of God. The king who had prevailed against Sennacherib and received special marks of Divine favour had been guilty of a piece of folly which would bring ruin on his kingdom (xxxix. 2). And moreover his son would become an apostate. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth." But the Word of God could not fail on that account. It depended not on people or king, but came forth from Him who changeth not. And as the victory over Sennacherib had already proved not to be the final victory of God's people, so neither now would the return of the exiles. Nothing would be perfect till Christ had fulfilled the loving purpose. In Him should be manifested perfectly the Divine Love, and the Covenant should be sealed to man. Consequently the prophecy rises to a yet higher key of triumph. 6

The beautiful melody which Handel has set to these words has consecrated the translation which he followed, which is different to ours, and according to Bp. Lowth and others more correct. The Bishop renders it, *Get thee up upon a high mountain, O daughter that bringest glad tidings to Zion; exalt thy voice with strength, O daughter that bringest glad tidings to Jerusalem.* The difference lies in the one translation making Zion the bringer, the other the receiver of the glad tidings. The feminine participle translated "daughter that bringest" is understood by remembering that the announcing of such tidings belonged peculiarly to women. (Ex. xv. 20, 21; Judges xi. 34; 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7; Ps. lxxviii. 11, where the literal version is, "Great was the company of women proclaiming, kings with their armies," &c.) 9

So here the Lord has given the word, "Comfort ye," and the prophet bids the women go up to the heights and there cry aloud the joyful tidings.

Behold your God. This is the special message to Zion, not of a God,—such proclamation is dreary enough to us all,—but *your* God, the God who has a personal care of Zion, who claims her for His own. It is Christ who has made this revelation to us perfectly. "Believe in Me. He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

He comes on triumphantly to His chosen place, **His arm rules for Him** [or, as Bp. Lowth, "prevails over the strong"]. He receives His **reward**, even the souls which He has redeemed (cf. ch. liii. 11), and executes judgment. **Work**, literally, retribution. 10

Yet is He full of tenderness and love. The following pas- 11

Isaiah XL.

Isaiah XL. sage from Chardin's travels will illustrate the latter part of the verse :

"Their flocks feed down the places of their encampments so quick, by the great numbers that they have, that they are obliged to remove them too often; which is very destructive to their flocks, on account of the young ones who have not strength enough to follow."

The verses we have now considered form the exordium of the whole of the prophecies which follow. Overleaping all intervals and all details the Prophet sees the return of the exiles, and, in that, the type of the coming of Christ the King. He now takes up his word, and demonstrates the folly of idolatry, with special reference, we may believe, to the idols which the people would meet with in Babylon. Victory over Jerusalem would make the worshippers of the false gods fancy their deities supreme. Therefore Isaiah places himself in imagination among their deities, and challenges their devotees to compare them with the LORD.

20 **Shall not be moved**, shall not shake on its pedestal.

24 Another translation, and a more correct one, renders this, "Scarcely were they planted, scarcely were they sown...when He blew upon them and they withered," &c.

26 **Their host**, the stars. Cf. Ps. cxlvii. 4.

27 The Prophet addresses himself to the failing faith which he foresees in the exiles. They will complain that God has forsaken them, that their way is hid from Him, that He deals them not fair judgment, that they are outcasts from His presence.

28 His encouraging remonstrance against this faithlessness, and assurance that God's love and pity are not wearied out.

31 **Shall renew**, &c.; though they be led far away, and seem altogether dead to hope, yet they shall rise thereby to greater vigour of life.

CIRCUMCISION.

Mattins.

Gen. XVII.
9 to end.

Until God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, the ancient Church had been like a spring of water which moves steadily underground. But with the call of Abram it becomes visible, and the stream of revelation thenceforward flows onwards before the world even unto the end. The promise was given to the patriarch in Ur of the Chaldees, it was renewed when he came into Canaan, and was there confirmed by a solemn sacrifice, in the midst of which appeared a vision of God. And now God gives him a sign of the righteousness which he has by faith, and commands him to be circumcised with his family.

The submission to this command was a confession that he needed to be reconciled to God, for until it was done there was an obstacle to his joining in God's worship which needed removal. The peculiar nature of the rite also was a confession

of the guilt and shame which attach to our fallen nature. The act which represented the removal of this guilt was therefore an act of consecration to God's service, a "crucifying of the flesh with its affections and lusts." And this is the act which was the birthday of the Jewish Church.

Up to this time he has been called "*Abram*," i.e. "exalted father." Now he becomes "*Abraham*," "father of a multitude," a token that the Church is no longer to be confined to a few, but to spread itself far and wide, under the guidance of God. The direction in ver. 12 to circumcise even those of other blood who are brought into the household, is a foretoking of the admission of the Gentiles into the household of God. But there is no command to extend the rite to any *without* the family; those foreigners whom we read of from time to time, who were led to worship the God of Abraham, were not called upon to submit to it. And these were not allowed to eat of the passover, nor to enter the temple.

Sarai, i.e. "my princess," has her name changed to **Sarah**, i.e. "princess," as showing apparently that she is no longer the princess of one race, but of the whole family of believers in God.

Laughed, i.e. apparently with joy, not with unbelief. Some suppose our Lord to be referring to this in S. John viii. 56.

A prayer that now that a son is promised to his wife, the boy Ishmael may not be entirely cast off and disinherited.

Isaac, i.e. "laughter."

Evensong.

Moses, in the preceding part of the chapter, has shewn Israel that it is not for their own works or deservings that they have been chosen to be the Lord's people, but of God's free grace. He now appeals to this fact as a ground for their willing obedience, and shows that the ordinances to which the law bound them are to be obeyed for love's sake. God, it is true, requires external obedience. Pains and penalties guard the commandments round. But no penalties can enforce love and willing submission. This therefore is what makes an Israelite indeed, one acceptable to the Lord. See further in notes for 5th Sunday after Easter, Evensong.

With this truth in mind he urges them to go to the root of all their ordinances, to see the spiritual import of their initial rite. Obduracy and hardness of heart had been the source of all their sins and shortcomings—let them lay aside these, it would be a spiritual circumcision, for then the spiritual life would be given. See Lev. xxvi. 41, and Ezek. xliv. 9, where the prophet, declaring that in the spiritual temple inward and outward obedience shall be freely given, uses this same figure.

We ought not to lose sight of the exhortation which this

Gen. XVII.

9

15

17

18

19

Deut. X.

12—15

16

21, 22

Deut. X. lesson offers us of thankfulness to God for all that He has done for us. It should have a special force for us on the first day of the year.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

Mattins.

Isai. XLII.

My servant. This has been interpreted by some of Abraham, considered as the father of the Jewish people, by some of Cyrus, by some of Christ. We need not exclude entirely any of these meanings; but that it means Christ we know from the authoritative statement of the Gospel itself (S. Matt. xii. 17—21). The Eternal Creator here asserts that He has raised up one in the midst of chaos and vanity, to restore order and to bring righteousness and peace to the world. For this He had raised up the Jewish race. And for this He afterwards raised up Cyrus. The influence of this great prince in the religious history of the world is apparent to all readers of history. When Israel was purified from idol-worship by their exile in Babylon, it was his decree which sent them back and reestablished them. And for this Isaiah calls him "the servant of the Lord," and "the Shepherd of the Lord." But the Prophet, who always taught lessons concerning God by the works of God upon the earth, saw in this a pledge of the perfect deliverance to come, of the *Divine* Redeemer, who should really accomplish the work for which age after age proved that no mere man was adequate. And therefore we may call this a clearer Messianic prophecy than the preceding ones. It shows that inasmuch as all works of good men like Hezekiah and Isaiah had been temporary only in result, a Saviour different in *kind* was needed, one able to raise human nature above itself, a *Divine* Saviour. The details of the prophecy which follow are drawn, as we shall see, from holy acts of men, preludings of the incarnation; but when they are taken together it is no less clear that only in the ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST was the whole fulfilled.

The chief aspect under which our Lord is here regarded is that of the prophet. In the earlier chapters we have had Him shewn forth as the king.

2 **Cry**, "raise a tumult" (See S. Matt. xii. 17). His victory shall be one of peace. The Prophet had learned in his own life and experience the power of meekness, how that God's work was to be done, not by crowds in the streets admiring his eloquence, but by humility, patience, and meekness.

3 When the Prophet's ministry had produced some weak result he had learned even to be thankful for that, such as it was, and now he declares that Our Blessed Lord will be so tender and gentle that He will not cast out any that make an endeavour to

come to Him. He will give them strength, will fan the faintest faith, and not reject as worthless the most shattered spiritual life, so long as any life at all is left.

Isai. XLII.

He shall bring forth judgment unto truth, i.e. into a firm and stable condition. Therefore S. Matthew's phrase "unto victory" is intended to interpret the original.

Be Discouraged, lit. be broken.

4

He shall not suffer his own spirit to fail or be broken because of discouragements.

Shall wait for His law, &c. Shall trust in Him (as their king and ruler). So the LXX., and S. Matt.

6—9

Here there is evidently a primary reference to Cyrus, a declaration to him that he has received his commission from the Most High to do His work in the world, and especially to bring the prisoners out of their exile, and in the same breath the prophet declares that nobler work lies in the future, of which "the former things that are come to pass" are a pledge.

A vision of the future evangelization of Europe.

10

Kedar, Arabia. **The rock**, Petra, the city of Edom.

11

It is Christ Himself who now speaks, describing His long waiting and patience, and now His eager longing which cannot rest until His blessed seed be born.

14

Destroy, devour, rather "I will breathe forth, I will pant," as in eager longing.

He calls upon the people to see their want of deserving, and in consequence, His own free grace to them. **Perfect**, i.e. endowed with spiritual privileges and entrusted with a heavenly mission.

18—22

He reminds them once more that it was their own sinfulness which had overcome them. Babylon had not prevailed against the Lord and His people, but the Lord had made Babylon His instrument for punishing His people's sins.

23

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The preceding chapter has ended with a description of the hardheartedness of the people, and their consequent suffering. But the Prophet now returns to the lovingkindness of God, bringing good out of evil. In spite of the destroyed city and Temple He will be with them comforting them.

Isai. XLIII.

Thy name, i.e. Israel, which signifies "Prince with God."

God drew off the king of Assyria from Jerusalem to Egypt and Ethiopia (2 Kings xix. 9; Is. xx. 3). and thereby gave Hezekiah time to remember his true strength, and call upon Him.

3

Seba, upper Egypt.

As he had done with Egypt and Ethiopia, so would He do with Babylon. He would deliver it into the hand of the Medes, for the deliverance of His people, and would then restore the exiled nation, vv. 5—7.

4

Isai. XLIII.

8, 9 The call of the Gentiles foretold.
 9 **Ye**, the chosen people, to whom were committed the Oracles
 10 of God.

12 **When there was**, &c., and therefore when there could be no
 pretence of any other teacher than Jehovah.

14 **Cry**, lit. "exultation." The Babylonians were very proud of
 the Euphrates, and made great use of it.

22 See on xlii. 18.

Thou hast been weary, Mal. i. 13; ii. 17.

24 **Sweet cane** was one of the ingredients of the holy anointing
 oil (Ex. xxx. 23 "calamus"). Cf. Jer. vi. 20.

Serve, that is, to be a slave.

26 A most beautiful and touching appeal, when we remember
 who speaks it, namely, God Himself. He entreats His people
 to put Him in remembrance of His love, and of what He has
 done for them, to call forth again from His heart the love which
 He has shewn. He loves to be reminded of His goodness, to
 have it taken from Him by violence of prayer. We are carrying
 out His command when, in the Lord's Supper, we plead the
 sacrifice of His death; and again when, in the Litany, we invoke
 Him to deliver us by His agony and bloody sweat and all the
 other acts of His passion.

27 **Thy first father**. Some suppose this to mean Urijah the
 high-priest (see 2 Kings xvi. 10), but it is more probably figura-
 tive, and signifies, "Thou hast departed from faithful Abraham,
 and disinherited thyself." Cf. Ezek. xvi. 3; S. John viii. 44.

28 **Profaned**, declared them vile and ungodly.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Isai. XLIV.

1 Our first note on the preceding chapter entirely applies here
 also.

2 **Jesurun** means "righteous one." It is a name applied by
 Moses to Israel, as signifying its vocation, just as "Holy" is
 applied to the Catholic Church. Deut. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 5, 26.

3 The living water of the Holy Spirit of God.

5 The various names are not as distinguishing one from the
 other, but they are all alike children of God, as all being
 members of the true Israel. Men everywhere shall spring up,
 baptized in the living fountain, servants of God, members of
 the universal and spiritual Zion.

Subscribe with his hand, declare himself the servant. It
 was common for soldiers to mark themselves with the names of
 their generals.

6 Rev. i. 8; xxii. 13.

7 **Ancient people**, the earliest Church of God, of which Seth
 and Noah were members. There was always a visible Church,
 existing first in single Patriarchs, then in the family of Abraham.

8 **There is no God**, lit. "no Rock." Cf. Ps. xviii. 2, 31.

Contrast with the believers in God as their rock,—the makers of idols are all of them vanity. They are **their own witnesses** of their folly, whereas true believers are witnesses to Jehovah. See preceding verse.

His fellows, or “its,” the worshippers of the idol.

An indignant and scornful description of the manufacture of an idol.

He feedeth on ashes. By cooking his food with the material of his idol, he signifies that he looks for life and support from that which is worthless; and therefore he is smitten with judicial blindness, his conscience becomes blunted and incapable of a right judgment. See S. Paul’s terrible comment on this in Rom. i. 21—23.

The proof of God’s Deity in His forgiveness of sins.

The liars, the false prophets. **Diviners**, magicians like those of Chaldæa.

His servant...Messengers, Isaiah, and all true prophets.

Cyrus literally dried up the Euphrates, by turning its bed, in order that he might march up into the heart of the city. But probably the present verse means only to express God’s power over the sea, as in xliii. 16.

It would seem, from our English version, that Isaiah is here predicting not only the work, but the name of the king who, 140 years after this, sent Israel back. But this is very doubtful. We doubt not, of course, the power of Almighty God to reveal the name to His servant, but it must be admitted to be entirely unusual in God’s revelation to His prophets. Our Blessed Lord Himself never exercised such a power. “*Cyrus*” (i. e. “upright one”) was in all probability a general title of the kings of Persia, as Pharaoh of the Egyptians. And it is probable that we must give a general meaning here, “the Persian king.”

EPIPHANY.

Mattins.

The Prophet in the preceding chapter has depicted the darkened state of Judah, separated from God by reason of sin. A striking psalm of confession, a penitential hymn occupies the early part of that chapter (lix. 9—14). Then follows the announcement that penitence shall bring relief, and he describes the Lord preparing Himself to come to deliver.

The chapter before us opens with a sudden burst of joy. The Deliverance has come. The night has been long and mournful, a night of 70 years, only the Prophet’s voice in the darkness has spoken a word of comfort. But now day has broken, and darkness flies away. **Arise**, for Zion has been lying in the dust, smitten by the judgment of God,—**Shine** (the marginal reading is better, “*be enlightened*”), **for thy light cometh**. Be enlightened, because the power is given to thee. Thou hast no

Isai. XLIV.

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12—19

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21—23

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Isaiah IX.

1

Isaiah LX. light in thyself, but **the glory of the Lord [arisseth] upon thee.**

2 A description of the heathen world lying in darkness. But hope is born. The dawn is coming in the East. The sun is rising over Zion. She is to be the source of light to them all, **His glory is seen upon her.**

3 Zion being transformed into the likeness of God's glory, all nations in like manner are transformed into *her* likeness.

Thus God spake unto Zion in the day of her calamity, and the promise was fulfilled when out of her sprang the Christian Church, shining with the glory of Christ her Lord, become Light in Him, that she might illumine all the nations. The Epiphany of Christ, the shining forth of His glory, whether to the shepherds or to the Wise Men, whether in mighty words, or works of love, was the birth of the Church, the glory which was seen upon Zion.

The first manifestation of the Incarnate Saviour to the Gentiles was that which we specially commemorate to-day, the visit of the Wise Men. They were therefore the symbol of the might and majesty of earth entering into the light of the divine glory, an earnest of the final gathering when the nations of the saved shall walk in the light of the heavenly city (Rev. xxi. 24).

4 **Thy sons and thy daughters.** The dispersed and scattered Jews would be gathered to her through the ingathering of the heathen. **At thy side** should be "*at the side,*" i.e. of the Gentiles. The conversion of these would therefore be a gain to the scattered sons of Abraham.

5 **Flow together.** This should be "*and shalt shine.*" Cf. Ps. xxxiv. 5. **Fear,** rather "*tremble,*" i.e. with excess of delight. So overpowering shall be the effect, yet so blessed, that her heart shall expand and heave, yearning for the completion of the conversion.

6 **Midian and Ephah.** See Gen. xxv. 2, 4. **All they from Sheba shall come,** rather "*they* (i. e. Midian and Ephah) *shall all come from Sheba* (Arabia Felix). **Kedar** (see xxi. 17) **and Nebaioth,** Ishmaelites (Gen. xxv. 13).

There can be no difficulty in interpreting these beautiful images. The reverence and self-devotion of the nations are represented under the form of countless caravans and flocks of cattle brought from far and near to Jerusalem. The spiritual revolution of Christianity is depicted under material form, according to the universal plan of the Old Testament. The offering of the Wise Men therefore, while it was a literal fulfilment of the prophecy, was the type of the more perfect offering foretold here, namely, of the "riches of the Gentiles," as S. Paul calls it. Rom. xi. 12.

8 The Prophet has described the coming of the Gentiles from the East. Now he turns his eyes to the sea. He sees in the far distance a vast multitude; first they are indistinct, **like a**

cloud driven up by the wind, then they appear like **doves flying to their cots**, escaping out of the storms of the world into their shelter and home.

The answer to the preceding question. "They are hurrying so fast, because **the isles wait for me**, i.e. rest upon Me, have faith in Me. **The ships of Tarshish**, i.e. of Spain and the extreme West; these come at the head of the nations which are sailing Zionwards and bringing her children with them.

The glory of the Church through the service of the nations. Cf. lvi. 6, 7. We may take these words primarily as a prophecy of the favours shewn to Jerusalem by the Eastern kings, Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes, through whose favour the walls of Zion were raised up from their ruins. But as ever, this was only a type of the acceptance of the Gospel by kings and nations.

Thy gates, &c. There shall be no more fear of a hostile attack, and therefore no need of shutting the gates. Cf. Rev. xxi. 25, 26.

Their kings may be brought, brought as prisoners of Christ, captured by His love, yielding themselves willingly to His good pleasure. Cf. Ps. cx. 3.

Those who will not accept Him shall be self-condemned, the condition of all nations shall depend upon this one test, are they or are they not subjected to Christ. Cf. Mal. iii. 18; Zech. xiv. 16—19.

The Prophet passes from men to the world of nature. Nature shall confess her Lord, and offer her welcome. A poetical and devout form of speech intimating that the ruined Temple should be rebuilt with choicest materials, because the beauties of Nature are all the work of God's hands. It is a verse not to be forgotten when we decorate our churches in God's honour, and express our joy by offering to Him of His goodness. **The place of My feet**, the Mercy Seat. 1 Chron. xxviii. 2; Ps. xcix. 5; cxxxii. 7.

The prophet returns to the world of man, and describes in glowing words the honour which shall be paid to Zion in the day of her Lord's power.

Of many generations, i.e. until the end of this world. Matt. xxviii. 20.

The bold use of metaphors in this verse is very striking and very full of meaning. The nations and the kings shall give their life and power to nourish and increase the Church, as the mother gives the milk of her breasts to her child. And the expression, "**suck the breasts of kings**," proves itself to be figurative, and implies that God would have nations protect the Church, not despotically, but caring for it as tenderly as a mother nursing her offspring.

The beauty of the new Jerusalem figuratively set forth. **Brass** (copper) shall be changed for gold, &c. There are no wood and stone in the Christian Temple as here described, all shall be not only massive, but indestructible, whether by the

Isaiah LX.

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Isaiah LX.

elements or by assaults of foes. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." **Peace** shall be its **overseer**, and **Righteousness** its **exactor** [bailiff].

18

Under such magistracy and such rule the strong shall no longer oppress the weak. **Violence** (injustice), **Wasting** (conquest), **Destruction** shall be heard of no more within her. The **Salvation** of the Lord shall be her defence, and because of the **Praise** (the original *Hallel* means "the ringing song") which she offers to Him men shall crowd into her.

The heavenly picture here drawn has not yet been realized, but this makes it not unreal. This, and nothing less, is the spirit of the Head of the Church, and these are the principles upon which He founded it. As we call the Church "Holy" even now, so we may speak of its walls as Salvation, its gates Praise, its government and deeds Righteousness and Peace. As far as its members act up to its teaching, so far the ideal is realized, and where they fall short the ideal still hangs before them in the heavens, bidding them strive once more until all be accomplished. It *shall* be realized at last, when all things shall be subdued unto HIM.

19

The Prophet now returns to the figure with which the chapter opens, the glory of the Church through the light of Christ shining upon it, and works out the thought in words of surpassing majesty. As is usually the case when the Prophet enters the highest region of Inspiration, the two ideas flow together and become one, of the glory of the Church Militant, and the glory of the Church Triumphant. The light of Jehovah shall rest upon it unceasingly, unchangeable, peaceful, gentle. "The sun shall not light on them nor any heat" (Rev. vii. 16).

21

This verse shews how entire, in the Prophet's mind, was the connexion between darkness and sin. The eternal light of God shall shine upon the new Jerusalem because it consists of none but righteous ones, who have been cleansed from sin, and henceforth are pure for ever, to the glory of God and His Christ.

22

And the life thus newly born in the regeneration shall, through grace, ever expand, and the circles grow wider. Love and joy shall grow and increase even in heaven, and the saints in light shall desire more and more of the fulness of God.

And let us not pass by the concluding words carelessly. It is not for us to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power (Acts i. 7). But he knoweth them. And at the appointed moment the predicted glory will burst forth suddenly upon the eyes of all who believe in Him. "We wait for Thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of Thy Temple."

Evensong.

Is. XLIX.

This chapter, though occurring earlier in the book of Isaiah than our Lesson of this morning, will to us who have heard that

read seem like an echo of it. One may say that the lxth chapter is the xlixth expanded and intensified by the longer experience of the Prophet.

His afflicted ones, the usual Old Testament name for the Church militant. The change of tense is not without meaning. God **hath comforted** once for all, and **He will have mercy**,—His mercy shall endure for ever.

The Prophet calls on heaven and earth to rejoice in the comfort to Zion, for the blessing of the Church is the blessing of the world.

The calamity of Zion forces from her this mournful plaint. God does not immediately remove it. But He declares that His love has not grown cold towards her, it is deeper than that of a mother.

I have graven thee, &c. refers to a widely-spread custom in the East of burning figures as mementoes on the hand, or arm, or of pricking them and rubbing the punctures with indigo. "Thou," says the Lord to Zion, "art close to Me always." I have made thee part of Me. **Thy walls are continually before Me**. I have them graven here where I can always see them, and though for a while they are broken down before men, I see them in a perfection which as yet thou canst not imagine. When the time is come, the ideal walls shall be realized in a glorious form.

Thy children shall make haste, i. e. to rebuild thee and restore thy beauty.

Lift up thine eyes, the idea being that hitherto they have been fixed upon the ground in dejection. On all sides those whom she thought lost are coming in dense crowds (cf. lx. 4), to beautify her as a bride is beautified by her wedding robe.

The land of thy destruction, i. e. thy land lying in ruin. The Gospel shall first take root in Zion, and where it is received shall bring joy and peace and life. And at once the children of Zion shall begin to spread themselves out, the land can no longer hold them; through them Zion begins her conquest,—the conquest of men's souls. She hears her children's voices crying, **Give place where we may dwell**, and she is filled with astonishment. Were not her sons taken from her? Was she not made desolate and captive? Most fully did the history of Zion fulfil this vision. She was cast down and made captive by Roman power, and her glory seemed to have departed from her. No condition could be more helpless than that of Judæa when Christ was born. Well, therefore, does the Prophet represent her as saying, "How can glory come to me? What conquests can my children effect?"

Then comes the answer. The manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles shall be the restoration of the glory of Zion. Therein shall God's eternal purpose concerning her be fulfilled, in her shall the nations of the earth be blessed.

Is. XLIX.

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Isai. XLIX.

The star of the Wise Men was a beautiful symbol of the spiritual **standard** which the Lord here declares He will set up, that standard of the glorious Gospel which even now hangs high in the heavens and lights up all the universe. And in so many words the Gentile Magi expressed their reverence for Zion, when they came asking, "Where is the new-born *King of the Jews?* for we are come to worship Him."

But the fulfilment of the prophecy is not completed yet, for until the end of the world those whom the Church brings to God will bring her sons and daughters with them, treating those who love Him with affection and kindness for His sake. They who can do nought else will bless and pray for them, longing for the day when all who sow and reap shall at last rejoice together.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Mattins.

Isaiah LI.

1, 2

In the preceding chapter God by His Prophet has been addressing Himself to the unbelievers. He now speaks to those who follow after righteousness. His special purpose is to lead them to right thoughts of the captivity. And first He bids them imitate the faith of Abraham, because they are descended from Isaac, Sarah's son by promise.

Called him alone, i. e. when he was only one, and of no might in the world. Cf. Heb. xi. 12.

3, 4

Encouragement to them against their coming desolation. The promise was fulfilled first in Cyrus, then in Christ. He will restore to Zion her outward happiness, and also His covenant and righteous law.

Make my judgment to rest, i. e. *to be fixed*, like a beacon light, where every one can behold it from afar.

5

Cf. xlii. 10.

6

Cf. S. Matt. xxiv. 35; 2 Pet. iii. 13.

7

Ye that know righteousness, that have learned to believe and trust in the righteousness and faithfulness of God. The exhortation to courage is based upon the previous promise of the final victory of God.

9

Some expositors take this to be the response of believing Israel to the preceding promise. But it seems more probably to be the cry of the prophet, who is invoking God to arise and help His people, "putting Him in remembrance" of what He has wrought aforetime. See on xliii. 26. There is a three-fold trumpet-call, as the reader may notice. First the prophet invokes the *arm of the Lord* in vv. 9, 10. Then he calls on *Jerusalem* to awake from her misery, ver. 17. Then on Jerusalem again, as the holy city, to put on her strength and her beautiful garments (lii. 1). **Cut**, "hewed in pieces" (Gesenius). **Rahab**, Egypt. On the name, see note on ch. xxx. 7 (p. 21). **Dragon**

The Heb. word used here means the Crocodile, the savage and cruel beast being regarded as a symbol of the country to which it belongs.

Therefore, because the former deliverance of the Red Sea gives earnest of it. Cf. ch. xxxv. 10.

He exhorts them not to lose heart because of the fierceness of their enemies. There was a furious oppressor before, in ancient days, and where is his fury now? Gone down into the depths of the Red Sea, seen no more for ever. So shall it be with Babylon; therefore let Israel trust in God.

The captive exile, &c., rather "the prisoner who is bowed down hasteneth to be loosed, and he shall not die in the pit, and his bread shall not fail." It is a promise of the far-reaching power and the fulness of God's salvation, which shall relieve the extremest and most hopeless suffering.

But, rather *For*. What God has done is a guarantee that He will perform the promise which we have just read.

The greatness of the promise has been gradually increasing in the preceding verses, until we are brought at length here to the Messiah. The deliverances shall all be wrought through Him. The word of the Lord fills His mouth, and God delights in Him, in order that He may plant the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, and establish on high the heavenly Jerusalem. 2 Pet. iii. 13; Rev. xxi. 2.

The second trumpet-cry. The prophet calls on Jerusalem to awake in the name of God. See above, on ver. 9.

Cup of trembling, lit., "of reeling." Jerusalem is represented as having been drunken with the fury of God over her sin.

There is, rather, "there was," referring to the priests and princes who had failed in their duty and so brought her to destruction. And she had no sympathy from her children, none were *sorry* for her (v. 19), none *helped* her (v. 20).

The **two things** were desolation by the famine, destruction by the sword. But now mercy has begun to move, and deliverance is at hand.

Bow down, alluding to the practice of treading on the necks of captives. Josh. x. 24.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The reader of this commentary will, it is hoped, have learned already how faith in the coming Messiah was the keystone of the arch of Jewish prophecy and of Jewish history. That faith gave a divine life and meaning to all which holy men had said and done from the beginning, and made clear what else must have remained unintelligible. Nowhere is this truth more apparent than in the passage at which we are now arrived, a passage of which an early Christian writer (S. Jerome, quoted

Isaiah LI.

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Isaiah LII.
13—LIII.

Isaiah LII.
13—LIII.

by Wordsworth) declares that "Isaiah here speaks so plainly of Christ that he seems to perform the part of an Evangelist rather than of a prophet." It has also been shown in these pages that the vision of the future Saviour and King was made more and more clear to the Prophet's eyes by the things which were passing around him, interpreted to him by the Spirit of God. And we cannot doubt that this truth holds good here. When we read of the "servant" who deals prudently, or of the "man of sorrow," we may well believe that many such were in the prophet's mind when he wrote, that when he speaks of one who has borne the griefs and carried the sorrows of the nation, he is thinking first of those noble men who loved their country better than their own lives, men whom he had seen endure, though innocent, for the word of the Lord's sake. And when the Prophet witnessed such things it must have taught him something, even though as in a glass darkly, of the central truth of the Kingdom of God, that through such endurance the guilty are freed from the guilt and punishment of their misdeeds.

But when we recognise and confess so much it becomes equally clear that there was no man whom the Prophet saw who fulfilled all the description that his words convey. What he saw of good men taught him the truth we have described, but none of them fulfilled the ideal. Each was only a shadow, a transient image of some great Original. And therefore the words *can* have no other fulfilment, and not the Jews themselves have been able to give them another, than in the Incarnation and Passion of OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Let it not be thought therefore that in speaking thus, and finding other references in the Prophet's words, we are weakening the force and meaning of the prophecy. God forbid. But if we believe that our Lord is verily the King of Saints, and that every good and self-sacrificing deed which has ever been done in the world is done by His grace and in imitation of Him; that every suffering in the cause of good is "filling up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ" (Col. i. 24); then every word which speaks of the self-sacrifice of the good and holy is worship offered to Him from whom it comes. The holy, the sad, the loving experiences of the Prophet's life, quickened into inspiration by the fire of the Holy Ghost,—even these brought him to the most deep and wondrous prophecy to be found in Holy Scripture, of the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction of Christ for the sins of the whole world.

13 **My servant.** Cf. ch. xlii. 1; Acts iv. 27. The *obedience* of Christ to His Father's will was the great principle of His life on earth.

Shall deal prudently, or, more correctly, prosperously. Cf. ch. liii. 10; Jer. xxiii. 5. **Exalted, &c.**, Phil. ii. 7—11.

15 **Sprinkle.** The idea here is taken from the ceremonies used upon the leper. His visage shall be marred and disfigured as

the leper's, so as to cause astonishment and revulsion. Yet He who seemed to need the sprinkling which the leper received (Lev. xiv. 7), should Himself become the sprinkler, and by His own blood should heal the leprosy of many nations.

Shut their mouths, in admiration.

The Prophet has foretold the final exaltation of our Lord, when the kings shall stand in speechless adoration before Him. But this leads him to mourn for the unbelief of his countrymen. In spite of this exaltation "they will reject Him," he says, "because of the suffering and humiliation which I have now to describe."

Report, preaching, or doctrine. **Arm**, strength. Christ is the Arm or strength of the Lord, inasmuch as He both made the world and delivered it from bondage.

As a tender plant, as a weakly shoot from a decayed trunk, giving no indication of what the greatness of the tree shall be. Cf. ch. xi. 1; Ezek. xvii. 22, 23.

Despised. The word is repeated, as for emphasis, at the end of the verse—"despised, though he is the Servant, the Arm of the Lord." Our Lord seems to be referring to the prediction in S. Mark ix. 12. Cf. S. John vii. 48, 49.

A man of sorrows, therefore able to pity and sympathize with the sorrowful. Heb. iv. 15; v. 2.

He. This word in the original is very emphatic. "He whom we so despised; He, and no one else."

Borne...carried. Lit. "taken up" and "carried away." See on S. Matt. viii. 17, and 1 Pet. ii. 24.

Stricken. The original word signifies "stricken as with leprosy." He appeared altogether repulsive and hideous to us. See above, on lii. 15.

Chastisement of our peace, i.e. by which our peace was procured. Cf. Col. iii. 15; Eph. ii. 14-17; 1 Thess. v. 9.

And the Lord, &c. Cf. 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13; Heb. ix. 28; 1 Pet. ii. 24.

See Acts viii. 27-35; S. John i. 29.

Taken from prison and from judgment, rather as Bishop Lowth renders it, "Taken away by an oppressive judgment."

Who shall declare, &c., i.e. "who shall tell the wickedness of the age in which He lives, of His contemporaries?"

He made, &c. Rather "*His grave was made, or appointed*, &c." The Jewish rulers intended that he should lie among the malefactors, cast out and unhonoured, but their purpose was frustrated, for He was with the rich in His death. We can easily believe that Joseph of Arimathea, with this prediction before his eyes, may have been induced by it to beg our Saviour's body and lay it in his tomb.

When thou (rather, **When He**) **shall make of His soul a sin-offering**. When this is done, when the Propitiation is accepted, then the victory shall begin. When He has been lifted

Isaiah LII.

liii. 1

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Isaiah LIII.

up, then He shall draw all men unto Him; **the pleasure of the Lord**, even His acceptable sacrifice and the salvation of men thereby, **shall prosper**, the ministry of it being committed to **His hand**.

11

He shall see (the fruit) **of the travail of His soul**. Churches rising up all over the world, and men, from the rising up of the sun unto its going down, worshipping the Lord.

By His knowledge, i.e. by the knowledge of Him. This knowledge will lead to faith, and living faith shall justify, for He shall bear their iniquities, and thus give their souls the assurance of pardon and acceptance.

12

The expression of the Father's acceptance of His Beloved Son. The second clause would be better rendered, "*He shall divide the strong for a spoil*," (i.e. Satan's kingdom). See S. Matt. xii. 29; 1 John iii. 8. The Saviour gained His victory by His death, thus destroying him that had the power of death, and delivering them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

The chapter ends with the mention of the present work of Christ, His ceaseless intercession at the right hand of God.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. O Saviour of the World, who by Thy cross and precious blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech the, O Lord.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Isaiah LIV.

We may fairly call this chapter the expansion of the words of the preceding, "*He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied*," for it is a triumphant hymn of praise over her who was dead but now lives, the renewed and restored earth. And when we see how it follows and is connected with the prophecy of the death of Christ, we may call it the rejoicing of the Church in her justification through His Resurrection. See S. John xii. 24, 32.

1

O barren, addressed, no doubt, primarily to the earthly, then secondly to the spiritual Jerusalem (see Gal. iv. 24—29).

2, 3

A beautiful description of the extension of the Church from the large upper room, thence to the Temple, to Jerusalem, to Samaria, to the uttermost part of the earth. Compare the three Collects for Good Friday, which, beginning with the death of Our Saviour, found upon it a prayer for the Church and then for the conversion of the whole world.

4

Addressed once more to Jerusalem.

The shame of thy youth, the idolatry and sinfulness of her early years. **Widowhood**, exile in Babylon, and therefore temporary exile from God's presence.

5

Compare Hosea ii. 19, 20; Jer. xxxi. 32; Eph. v. 25—32.

6

Comparison of Judah to a wife who for unfaithfulness has been put away, but is now restored to her former place of honour.

A little wrath, rather "in a sudden outburst of wrath." Reference to the Babylonish Captivity.

Isaiah LIV.

8

The reconciliation wrought by Christ was wrought once and for ever, and He will be with His Church until the end of the world. The ministry of the Word and the Sacraments shall never cease, the Holy Ghost the Comforter shall never depart, the covenant of God's peace, of that which He gives to every faithful heart, shall never be moved.

9

With fair colours. This refers to the cement which binds stones together. The people are living stones, they are cemented together by the blood of Christ, by the love of the saints, by all good works which are written in Church records.

11

Sapphire is a stone of a lovely blue colour, and was supposed to have the power of giving peace of mind to one who gazed upon it. We may therefore suppose it to signify here the love of God in Christ, the foundation of all His dealings, the sure trust of all who rest upon it. **Agate** is a variety of quartz, partially transparent, and apparently produced by fire. We shall therefore hardly err if we interpret this of the light and heavenly knowledge caused by trials and afflictions. These seem not for the present joyous but grievous, but out of them spring living faith and the knowledge of God. (See Hugh Macmillan's beautiful Sermon on this verse in *Bible Teachings from Nature*.) **Carbuncle.** The Hebrew word signifies *something aflame* (Gesenius). Like the flaming sword which guarded Paradise, God shall place a flame at the gate of His Church as a protection against all enemies. He will be her defender, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. **Pleasant stones.** The Hebrew word means "attractive, causing delight" (being derived from a word meaning "to bend towards"). All the surroundings of the Church shall be such as shall win the love of men's hearts. Civilization shall follow in her track.

Our Lord applies this to His own teaching. S. John vi. 45.

13

Enemies, it is true, will gather against the Church, as against Jerusalem of old, but it will be in the hope of defeating God's purposes, not carrying them out. He will confound them all. Cf. Rev. xx. 9.

15

The smith works according to his own plans, but God made the smith and gave him his wisdom. Therefore it follows that the smith can only do what God suffers him to do. And in like manner no man can act, and no waster can destroy, but by Divine permission. This is the security of the Church. She cannot be overthrown by the schemes or assaults of men, because God will not allow them to prosper.

16

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Mattins.

Isaiah LV.

In the preceding chapter we have had the Church of Christ regarded as a spiritual building. We have here the offer of Divine Grace which it brings, represented as living waters, as wine and milk, offered without money and without price. See S. John iv. 14; vii. 37—39.

That which is not bread, earthly things, perishing pleasures. **Sure mercies**, those guaranteed by God's promise. See 2 Sam. vii. 8—17; Ps. lxxxix.; 2 Chron. vi. 42.

Him, first David, then David's son, the restorer of His kingdom, Christ. See Amos ix. 11. **A witness**, John xviii. 37; Rev. i. 5. **A leader**, Dan. ix. 25; Heb. ii. 10.

When the mercies sworn to David are fulfilled in Christ, the Gentiles shall become a part of the Lord's nation. Jerusalem shall be the mother of the Church.

Man's duty, resting upon God's sure promise. The wicked may return, because God stands ready with the offer of mercy and life. **While He may be found**, i. e. in all ordinances and means whatsoever they may be, whereby God conveys grace and blessing. In these He is especially **near**.

The narrow thoughts of the Jews had led them to distrust God. They doubted of His love, His fatherly care, His goodness. And their notions of the kingdom of David did not pass beyond the hope of earthly show, which should be the inheritance of themselves alone. But God's thoughts were not theirs. He was from everlasting full of compassion and love, always willing to receive penitents, always purposing to bring all nations under His rule.

As His rain falls upon the parched ground and gives it new life and fruitfulness, so should His mercy and grace fall upon heathendom and ignorance, His Word should be sown upon them, the dew of His Spirit should water it, until the barren became fruitful, and the wilderness a paradise.

Ye, the preachers of the kingdom of God.

The brier, most likely the Heb. word means the *nettle*.

It shall be, &c., the fruitfulness and beauty shall be the evidence of God's goodness, and shall proclaim His marvellous lovingkindness.

Evensong.

Isai. LVII.

The portion of Isaiah's writings to which this chapter belongs is marked by a tone of extreme severity. See ch. lvi. 9—12. It probably belongs to the early part of the reign of Manasseh.

Some suppose that this is a prophecy of the death of Josiah, but it is more likely that it is intended as a general statement.

The ungodly eat, drink, and are merry, and look forward to yet fuller enjoyments of sinful pleasure, no forebodings of calamity crossing their minds (see last verse of preceding chapter). When a good man dies, they scarcely bestow a contemptuous thought upon him; if they do, it is that his hopes of pleasure are ended. Not a notion crosses their minds of the truth that a day is hastening on when those who are in their graves will be envied because the surrounding calamity is so awful, crushing, and complete.

Not only shall the righteous be out of the way of evil, but their rest and joy will have begun. We have a distinct intimation here that the immortality of the soul was revealed to the prophet. **Rest in their beds**, in peace under God's care. **Walking**, i. e. "who walks." This rest shall be the reward of all who walk uprightly.

Summons to the ungodly to hear God's accusations against them. **Ye sons**, &c. Cf. Matt. iii. 7; xvi. 4; xxiii. 32, 33.

Make a wide mouth. Ps. xxii. 7; xxxv. 21.

Slaying the children, offering them to Moloch and Baal. Lev. xx. 2; 2 Kings xvii. 17; Jer. xix. 5.

Smooth stones of the stream were used as objects of worship by heathens. An early Christian writer, Arnobius, says that before his conversion to the faith he never saw an oiled stone without offering worship to it. The object of worship at Mecca which moved the wrath of Mohammed was a black stone. **Thy lot**, the portion or lot which the idolatrous Israelites chose instead of God. See Ps. lxxiii. 26; cxix. 57; cxlii. 5; Deut. xxxii. 9; Jer. x. 16; Lam. iii. 24.

Should I receive comfort in these? or perhaps, "Shall I be satisfied in taking vengeance for these?"

Thy bed, as a spiritual harlot. Cf. Ezek. xxiii. 17. The shamelessness of Judah in her sins and idolatries is expressed in this image of setting up her adulterous bed on a lofty and high mountain.

Not only did she indulge in open and shameless sin, but in secret also; placing unholy objects in secret places. **Remembrance**, memorial, idol. The Jews were bidden to place memorials of *their God* constantly before them, but they had set up memorials of idols instead.

The latter part of the verse is better in the marginal reading, "Thou didst love their bed, thou didst provide room," i. e. for unhallowed rites.

The comparison is still preserved by which Judah is likened to an immodest woman using her shameful blandishments towards her partners in sin. **The king**, the Assyrian monarch to whom the Jews trusted rather than to God. Ch. xxx. 2; 2 Kings xvi. 7. **Ointment...perfumes.** See Prov. vii. 17, and compare 2 Kings xx. 13. **To hell**, to the lowest depth of debasement.

The idolatrous worship had proved wearying and unsatis-

Isai. LVII.

fyng, and yet they refused to admit its unreality and worthlessness; they would not confess, "There is no hope in it." They had found **the life of their hand**, the strength they were looking for, in their ally, the Assyrian king, and they were satisfied, not considering that such alliance was very ruin to them. So it proved, for the Assyrians, having destroyed Syria and Israel, turned against *them*.

11 **Thou hast lied**, i. e. by professing to be the people of the Lord, while they remembered Him not, but were "afraid of and feared" false deities. **Have not I**, &c. Cf. xlii. 14.

12 I will lay bare your professed righteousness, and shew of how little avail it is.

13 **Thy companies**, the troops of idols, opposed in thought to the One True God.

14 **And shall say**, rather, "And one shall say." Every obstacle to the kingdom of God shall be removed. Cf. xl. 3, 4.

15 **That inhabiteth eternity**. This is said in contrast to the idols which shall be carried away and scattered. He is enthroned on high above the cherubim, yet has His shrine in every lowly and humble heart.

16 The infinite pity of God is shewn in His forbearance to the frail and sinful. He hates nothing that He has made, and keepeth not His anger for ever.

17 **Covetousness**, one of the prevailing sins of Israel, as is shewn by the frequency with which it is denounced.

18 **His ways**, his repentance and contrition. See ver. 15.

19 **The fruit of the lips**, thanksgiving. Heb. xiii. 15; Hos. xiv. 2. God gives this virtue, and He gives the causes for it, even peace and healing.

20 The wicked cannot rest, being torn by their own passions, by the accusations of conscience, by the fear of judgment.

21 Cf. ch. xlvi. 22. A solemn warning, that while God is merciful, He is also holy, and His wrath burns evermore against sin.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Isai. LXI.

Christ, being filled with the Holy Ghost, proclaims Himself as the Healer, Redeemer, Deliverer, Consoler, of mankind; first in His own Person, then through His Church. When He opened His public ministry upon earth He began with quoting this prophecy, and adding "To-day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." S. Luke iv. 16—22.

1 **Anointed me**, as Priest (see Ex. xxx. 30; Lev. viii. 12, 30), King (1 Sam. xvi. 13; 1 Kings i. 39), Prophet (1 Kings xix. 16).

2 **Acceptable year**, i. e. the jubilee year. See Lev. xxv. 8. In this year all bondmen were allowed to go free. It was therefore eminently typical of the day of Christ, who releases us from the bondage of Satan. **Vengeance**, because the soul that refuses

Christ's deliverance, and chooses to remain unregenerate, will thereby bring on itself condemnation.

Appoint, fix in permanence, by His immutable promise.

Beauty for ashes. There is a very beautiful play upon words in the original, produced by a mere transposition of letters, "to give them *peer for eper*.*" The first of these words signifies a bridal wreath. The Lord will give them this in place of the ashes of penitence with which they have covered themselves.

Oil of joy. Ps. xlv. 6, 7; civ. 15.

Trees of righteousness, i.e. trees bearing righteousness as their fruit. See ch. lx. 21; Gal. v. 22, 23; Heb. xii. 11; Matt. xv. 13; John xv. 2. In this last reference our Lord seems to be alluding to this prophecy, for He says, "*Herein is my Father glorified*, that ye bear much fruit."

They, i.e. the converted, and meek, and humble. By their sanctity many shall be converted to righteousness, and the things which are ready to die will be renewed unto life.

Gentiles shall be admitted to become members of the chosen Nation, and all Israel shall become to this holy Nation what the sons of Aaron had been to itself.

The first founders and fathers of the Church, the twelve Apostles chosen by Christ Himself when in the flesh, were all Jews. It was by them that the Gentiles were first called, before the work of the Gospel was committed to other hands.

For your shame, &c. See note on xl. 2.

Christ declares Himself the Righteous Judge. In doing so observe how He proclaims Himself as none other than the LORD. **Robbery for burnt offering**, religious hypocrisy cloaking avarice. Cf. Matt. xv. 5; xxiii. 14; Mark xii. 40; Malachi i. 13.

Their, the true and faithful pastors'.

The joy of the Son of God in fulfilling the good pleasure of His Father. Cf. Ps. xxii. 22—31; Is. liii. 10, 11.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Mattins.

It is still Christ who is speaking. He speaks in this chapter of His ceaseless work on behalf of the spiritual Zion. Now we know that He is always interceding for us at the right hand of God. And in that sense we may say of Him that for Zion's sake He doth not hold His peace. But this is by no means a full description of the present work of Christ, nor is it that work which is prominently before us in this chapter. We must take these words as a description of the work of Christ in the world from His ascension until the judgment. We are told in the end of S. Mark's Gospel that He went up into heaven, and the

Isai. LXI.

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Isai. LXII.

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Isai. LXII. apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, *the Lord working with them.*" And so in the opening of the Acts S. Luke says that his Gospel gives an account of what Jesus *began* to do and to teach. The Acts tells what He *continued* to do and to teach, by the instrumentality of His servants. This first verse, then, is a description of the Work of Christ hastening on to its completion, the victory of the Church of God.

2 **A new name, Christian.**

3 **Diadem**, lit. *tiara*. Zion, that is the Church, is to be a crown, not on the head of her King, but in His hand. He needs no glory from her, for His glory is already perfect. But she has a wonderful glory which He has given her, the righteousness of Saints, the courage of Martyrs, the eloquence of faithful preachers, the sweetness of holy poets, all these are jewels which He has set in her. And He holds this beautiful diadem in His hand, keeping her safe, so that none shall pluck her out of it. John x. 28.

4 **Forsaken—Desolate.** The Hebrew words answering to these were probably familiar proper names. *Azubah* (which is the word translated "Forsaken") was the name of Jehoshaphat's mother, and *Hephzibah* of the mother of Manasseh. **Hephzibah** signifies "My delight is in her," and **Beulah**, "possessed" as a wife. The best commentary on all this beautiful imagery is to be found in S. Paul's words concerning the love of Christ for the Church (Eph. v. 25—27), and in S. John's Vision of the New Jerusalem coming down from Heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. Rev. xxi. 2—10.

5 The mingling of metaphors "**thy sons shall marry thee,**" &c. add to the beauty and power of the passage, for while the deep love of Christ is plainly shewn by the words, they are freed from all earthly and worldly meaning.

6 **Watchmen**, Ministers of the Word and Sacraments. In the first verse of the chapter our Lord has said that He will never hold His peace. Now He declares that He has set watchers, i. e. ministers, who shall never hold theirs. The course of worship, and prayer, and exhortation shall continue in the spiritual Zion until the end of the world. Their work is twofold. First they are on the walls holding not their peace, they are *warning* and *exhorting men*. But they have a duty also towards God. They **make mention of the Lord**, literally, "remind the Lord," they "put Him in remembrance" of what He has done and what He has promised. See ch. xliii. 26 and note upon it. They **give Him no rest**, continually pleading with Him for His love's sake, especially in the Holy Eucharist, commemorating His death and passion. God loves to be besieged and beset with prayers, to have goodness and mercy wrested from Him. Luke xviii. 3. He loves to be reminded and entreated, even to do His own work. Matt. ix. 38. It will be noticed that we have the idea thrice repeated of "taking no rest." Christ (ver.

1), the watchmen (ver. 6), and the Lord (ver. 7), shall have no rest until the Kingdom of Righteousness be established. All creation is groaning and travailing, and God Himself is waiting in expectancy, until all things are put under His feet.

The rescinding of the judgment pronounced by the prophet Hosea (ii. 9).

A promise of the joy and gladness to be found in Christian ordinances, especially it would seem of the Holy Eucharist, wherein we eat and drink in the courts of God's holiness of the goodness wherewith He has blessed us.

Go through, &c. Probably refers primarily to the return from Babylon. See on xl. 3.

His work before Him. See on xl. 10.

Sought out, i.e. by Christ, who calls His Church out of the world to be His kingdom and people.

Not forsaken. See ver. 4.

Isai. LXII.

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Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The portion preceding, ch. lxiii. 15—lxiv. 12, consists of a prayer from the desolate Jews. They cry out that God has forsaken them, that He has forgotten His former goodness and mercy, and cast them off. The present chapter is God's answer to their prayer, telling them the reason of His separation from them, and the means by which they may be reconciled to Him again.

Isai. LXV.

He begins with telling them that they have no right to claim His exclusive favour (see lxiii. 16—19), that Gentiles to whom no privileges were offered have come to seek after Him. Cf. Rom. x. 20, where these words are explained of the Gentiles. Perhaps this may refer to some movement from Chaldæa following the embassy to Hezekiah. It is very probable that that embassy led many Babylonians to seek after the knowledge of God.

1

In contrast to those truthseeking Gentiles the rebellious Jews received God's entreaties in vain.

2

Sacrificeth in gardens, i.e. idolatrously, among the groves. See i. 29. **Altars of brick.** This was forbidden by the law, Ex. xx. 24, 25. The Hebrew word also means "tiles," and it may refer to the idolatrous worship on the roofs of houses. 2 Kings xxiii. 12; Jer. xix. 13; Zeph. i. 5.

3

Which remain, &c., practising necromancy, invoking the spirits of the dead. Deut. xviii. 11.

4

Swine's flesh, most strictly forbidden by the law. Lev. xi. 7; 2 Mac. vi. 18. **Broth, &c.,** of meats which the law forbade as unclean, especially those used in idolatrous worship. Ezek. iv. 14.

In the face of all the abominations into which they had fallen, they yet claimed the exclusive right of being God's chosen

5

Isai. LXV.

people, and looked with contempt upon the heathens whose evil ways they had nevertheless followed. It was this gross self-deceit which made them abominable in the eyes of God.

6 **Written before me** as a royal decree, preserved among the public records; the judgment therefore is to be regarded as certain and plain before all men.

8 Whilst the destruction of the corrupt mass is swift and complete, the eye of God shall discern whatever has good in it and it shall be preserved as the seed of the new nation. The Judge of all the earth shall not destroy the innocent with the wicked. A very striking illustration of this is to be found in the history of the widow's mite. Our Lord discerned her, and spoke of her holy deed immediately after proclaiming that the Temple was to be left desolate, and to be thrown down from its very foundations.

10 **Sharon** was the beautiful rich plain on the Mediterranean coast, **Achor** was in the valley of the Jordan. Perhaps the mention of the two, one west the other east, is intended to signify *the whole land*. It is possible also that in mentioning Achor the Prophet intends to indicate that the curse which rested upon it (Josh. vii. 24) shall now be removed on behalf of those who have sought the Lord.

11 But as a nation Israel is become apostate.

That troop—that number. Heb. "Gad—Meni." These names mean "Fortune and Destiny," and must have been two deities worshipped by the idolaters.

13 **My servants,** the faithful remnant.

15 **For a curse,** i. e. for a byword of cursing, because the curse which had fallen upon them had been so awful. **Another name,** "Christian."

16 **God of truth,** literally, "God of Amen," i. e. of faithfulness. Cf. Rev. iii. 14.

17—25 Clearly a prophecy of the Kingdom of Christ, both in earth and in heaven. The present and the future are blended together, sometimes one, sometimes the other predominating. **New heavens and earth.** 2 Pet. iii. 13; Rom. viii. 19—23; Rev. xxi. 1.

20 **No more thence an infant of days.** Moultrie's beautiful poem, "The Three Sons," will be remembered by many as an exquisite commentary on these words. Speaking of the child who died in infancy he says:

His age I cannot tell,
For they reckon not by years and months where he is gone to dwell.

In the Kingdom of Heaven there is no *age*, for all alike, both old and young, shall have put on immortality.

Hath not filled his days, has not done his appointed work. All that remains of old age will be the wisdom and piety which it brings (Wisd. iv. 8, 9). **But the sinner,** &c. Old age was regarded by the Jews as a proof of God's favour (Ex. xx. 12;

Ps. xci. 16; Prov. iii. 2). But the Prophet says that under the new and perfect dispensation it shall no longer be so; though a sinner live a hundred years it shall be no proof of God's approval, he shall depart hence accursed.

As the days of a tree, &c. Referring to the great age to which trees live. Some of the trees of Palestine, the olive and terebinth, attain the age of 1000 years.

See on ch. xi. 6—9. **Dust shall be the serpent's meat.** He shall be trodden underfoot by the faithful. Cf. Rom. xvi. 20.

Isai. LXV.

22

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Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

He anticipates the wail of the Jews over the fall of their Temple, and shows that this fall cannot alter God's faithfulness, nor abolish the knowledge of Him. For He was before the visible Temple, heaven and earth themselves are the work of His hands. One temple only is His permanent dwelling-place, the holy, pure, humble heart (ch. lvii. 15; 1 Cor. vi. 19).

Without the fear of God and desire to serve Him, all worship, all prayer, though most scrupulously performed in the outward letter, becomes loathsome and abominable, because it is hypocrisy. The sin especially denounced here is wilfulness. **They have chosen their own ways,** followed their own impure and proud imaginations, all the while calling it religion.

The punishment of this wilfulness—they have chosen their own ways, God will choose their woes for them. (The word translated **delusions** does not occur elsewhere, but "woes" or "adversities" is the true translation, according to Gesenius.)

Comfort to the faithful. Cf. Luke vi. 22. The unbelievers said "Let the Lord be glorified" in derision. Cf. ch. v. 19; Matt. xvi. 1; xxvii. 42.

A prophetic vision of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. A *shout of war* was heard in the city, yea in the very Temple itself.

Before she travailed, &c. Before the terrible pangs and throes of Jerusalem came on which destroyed her, she had brought forth the new generation; Christianity was born in her before the Temple was burnt.

"Shall I leave my work unfinished?"

With Jerusalem, i.e. with the spiritual Jerusalem begotten out of the fleshly. Cf. Gal. iv. 26, 27. **All that mourn for her,** i.e. for the earthly city, are exhorted to joy, because spiritual life has begun when the earthly life is at an end.

That ye may suck, may draw truth and consolation from her. Cf. 1 Pet. ii. 2.

Like a herb, or "like fresh grass."

In the gardens, i.e. by idolatrous rites. (See on lxxv. 3.) **Behind one tree in the midst.** The word "tree" is not in the

Isai. LXVI.

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- Isai. LXVI. original, and the insertion of it mars the sense. The "one" clearly signifies not a tree but a man. The allusion is to some idolatrous procession after a leader through a grove. **Abomination**, creeping things and reptiles. The **mouse** was the emblem of pestilence, the expression here therefore signifies feeding on what is loathsome and horrible.
- 19 **I will set a sign**, &c., to preserve them. Cf. Rev. vii. 3, 4. **Those that escape**, the chosen remnant. They shall be sent as missionaries to far countries. **Tarshish**, Spain. **Pul** does not occur elsewhere as the name of a place. The best authorities suppose it to be a copyist's error for *Put*, which was a name for Nubia, or Upper Egypt. **Lud**, the region of the Delta, or Lower Egypt. **Tubal**, the coast of the Black Sea. **Javan**, Greece.
- 20 **For an offering**. Christians are themselves the offering which is acceptable to God. Rom. xii. 1; xv. 16. So in the Communion Service we say "And here we offer and present ourselves a living sacrifice," &c. **Upon horses**, &c., a figurative mode of expressing the alacrity and earnestness with which men should hasten into the Kingdom of God, and the variety of the means employed by God's providence.
- 21, 22 An unmistakeable prophecy of the broad foundations of the Christian Church, the priesthood of which was not confined to the house of Levi, but extended to every race and family upon earth.
- 23 And as with priests, so with people; **all flesh shall come to worship the Lord**.
- 24 And these, the faithful everywhere, shall look down upon Tophet, upon the horrible corruptions and burning of the wicked. Probably the idea here is derived from the awful spectacle which met the eyes of Hezekiah and his people when they rose in the morning and saw the carcasses of the hundred fourscore and five thousand lying in ghastly heaps round the city, scorched with the burning wind which had destroyed them. The Prophet takes up his word, as the atrocities and abominations of Manasseh met his sight, and awfully forewarns him and his counsellors that the appalling destruction of Sennacherib shall be as nothing compared with the destruction which shall fall upon the wicked in the final great and terrible day of the Lord.

NOTE ON THE BOOK OF JOB.

Introduc-
tion to the
Lessons
from Job.

Many and widely different opinions have been expressed concerning the date of this Book. Writers of the last century supposed that it was written by Moses in the land of Midian,

or that its substance came into his hands there, and was "edited" by him. (Introduction in D'Oyly and Mant.)

But this view is now almost universally abandoned. Others (e.g. Renan) believe it to belong to the age of Jeremiah and the Captivity. But close investigation has pronounced this opinion more untenable than the other. (See the exhaustive examination of it in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, Art. "Job.") Professor Plumptre (*Biblical Studies*, p. 173) seems to me to establish the following conclusions :

i. The Book, though in no degree Israelite, for it has no allusion to Abraham or his family, or to the Law, or the priesthood, is yet entirely Semitic. It is purely monotheistic, calling God by the name by which He revealed Himself to Abraham. Job offers burnt offerings for his children, as Abraham had done, and his friends, like Balaam, offer seven bullocks and seven rams.

ii. The names are apparently Edomite (Job ii. 11; Gen. xxxvi. 10, 11; Jer. xlix. 7; Gen. xxv. 2), and there are many allusions to manners and connexions of Edom. The natural descriptions are of objects not of Palestine, but of the desert and the Nile—the horse, the ostrich, the wild ass, the rhinoceros (unicorn), the crocodile (leviathan), the hippopotamus (behemoth). The people are not those of Canaan, but of inferior race and more cruel habits, dwelling in caves (xxiv. 1—12).

iii. The Israelites had little or no knowledge of the desert races before the time of Solomon. The conquests of David and Solomon carried them to the whole length of the Red Sea, and the commerce they opened brought the Jews into acquaintance with wondrous novelties, spices, gems, precious woods, apes, peacocks. The Queen of Sheba visited Jerusalem, and tried Solomon with hard questions.

iv. From this time onward, references to the Book of Job begin, and are frequent in Hebrew literature, especially in the Proverbs, in Ecclesiastes, and in the Solomonian Psalms.

v. Resting on the above considerations, of which we have only given the substance, not the many references, Mr Plumptre supposes that this foreign Book came into Hebrew literature in the days of Solomon, whether brought by the Queen of Sheba or one of her train; or written in Palestine by one of them who

Introduction to the Lessons from Job.

**Introduction to the
Lessons
from Job.**

settled there as a proselyte, "bringing forth out of his treasure things new and old, the old thoughts and hard questions of life, and the new faith;" or lastly, "by a poet of Israel coming in contact with these strangers and their literature, and capable of incorporating what he thus heard into his own mind, and fusing them by the fire of genius into a crystalline whole."

The Book of Job is written in a dramatic form. The following analysis will, it is hoped, help to the intelligent reading of it.

PROLOGUE. Chapters i.—iv.

Account of Job, his circumstances and character. Satan accuses him of hypocrisy, of serving God from selfish motives. Thereupon Satan is allowed to take his possessions from him. Bearing this heavy trial faithfully, he is tried yet more. Satan accuses him of cowardice, and is suffered to afflict him with grievous disease. But he still retains his integrity. Three friends appear to mourn with him and to comfort him, whereupon his fortitude breaks down; he curses the day of his birth and longs for death.

THE FIRST DIVISION. iv.—xiv.

Speech of Eliphaz, iv., v.

Job's answer, vi., vii.

Speech of Bildad, viii.

Job's answer, ix., x.

Speech of Zophar, xi.

Job's answer, xii.—xiv.

The friends declare that all affliction is a proof of sinfulness, because sin and punishment are exactly proportioned by the laws of God. This affliction is therefore a proof that Job has been guilty of some secret sin, the confession of which will be followed by renewed prosperity. Job knows that this is false, that their theory is not in accordance with facts, and he vehemently repudiates it. But he knows that God is just, and that there must be some wise purpose underlying His present dealings. He entreats God to give him a fair trial. Despairing of light in this world, he even sees hope that there is a world to come where it will appear, and all be made right.

THE SECOND DIVISION. xv.—xxi.

Speech of Eliphaz, xv.

Job's answer, xvi., xvii.

Speech of Bildad, xviii.

Job's answer, xix.

Speech of Zophar, xx.

Job's answer, xxi.¹

Introduc-
tion to the
Lessons
from Job.

In this portion the language grows more bitter; the three friends strenuously endeavour to make good their point; Job, they declare, has added blasphemy to his other sins, and has treated their wisdom and experience with contempt; and he deserves any thing which can possibly happen to him. The position they take is, of course, a true one, namely, that sin deserves punishment, but their application of the principle goes on the assumption that there is no world but this. Retribution here is complete; the sinner who has enjoyed himself has in due course proportionate agony, and losses in proportion to his former prosperity.

Job rejects their charges with disdain. He is not a blasphemer, he says, for he reverences God. He is not ungodly, for he ceases not to pray. His horror at their theory of retribution leads him to clearer views of the truth that he has before seen darkly, and he expresses his conviction that his Redeemer liveth, and that in his flesh he shall see God. It is true that his language is often vehement and unmeasured, and because his earnest appeals awaken no pity in his friends, but rather fresh slanders², and no light still appears in his soul, he breaks out into passionate reproaches against God. He is maddened because he can find no answer to the riddle, and yet knows that there is a complete answer.

THE THIRD DIVISION. xxii.—xxx.

Speech of Eliphaz, xxii.

Job's answer, xxiii., xxiv.

Speech of Bildad, xxv.

Job's answer xxvi.—xxx.

The friends have nothing new to offer in this portion. Eliphaz amplifies his false doctrine, and endeavours to make it

¹ "If we might regard the Book as the history of a *Trial*, Zophar might be taken for a junior counsel, who leaves the pleadings, after having spoken speciously in the eleventh chapter, and bitterly in the twentieth, in the hands of the other two."

Dr A. B. Evans.

² For example, see how the touching appeal in xix. 20—24 is followed by the cruel insults of Zophar in ch. xx.

Introduction to the
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good by entering into details. Job must have robbed the poor or he would not have been robbed himself; has broken the arms of the fatherless, and therefore is left childless. Job meets them now by reiterating the *truths* which they had uttered; he knows all this, he says, but they have misapplied truth to establish falsehood. He denounces the sin of the hypocrite as earnestly as they have done, and ends with a triumphant vindication of himself from their false charges.

THE FOURTH DIVISION. xxxii.—xxxvii.

The three friends are silenced. But a new character appears upon the scene, Eliluu. He is indignant with them because they have been silenced without convincing him. Job has uttered reproaches against God, has desired to know truth, and they have not shewn it to him. Consequently he sharply reproves both sides.

THE FIFTH DIVISION.

The Lord Himself speaks out of the whirlwind, and gives judgment upon the controversy. He does not notice the false accusations of the three friends, but addresses Himself to the problem which Job had been torn asunder in trying to solve. And in doing so He explains nothing to Job. He simply points to His mighty works in earth, and sea, and sky, and demands of Job how he can arraign the wisdom of Him who made all these. Humbled and abashed Job replies, "Behold I am vile, I will lay my hand upon my mouth." Again the voice of God arraigns him from the whirlwind, pointing to the inequalities observable every day in His outward dealings with men. Let him smooth these and put them right. "Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee."

His right hand save him! What power has he against even the brute creation? What is his might even against the might of the crocodile? And with a mighty description of the sea monster, the speech abruptly closes. But it is enough. Job has mastered the secret now. He has been measuring his wisdom against that of the Almighty Creator, comparing himself with Him, not remembering the mighty distance between them. Penitent and self-aborrent, he repents in dust and ashes. And

then God accepts him, and declares His anger against the false doctrines of his friends.

THE EPILOGUE. xlii. 10—17.

Notice of his subsequent prosperity and honourable death.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Mattins.

The Lessons for to-day are taken from what we have called the *Third Division* of the Book, "the transition to the unravelment," as it is elsewhere called (Delitzsch). They comprise the greater part of Job's final speech to his friends. Apparently the close of ch. xxvi. marks a pause in his discourse, but finding his friends silent, he resumes in the chapter before us.

Job XXVII.

His parable. The Heb. word implies speech of unusual solemnity and dignity.

1

He begins with solemnly swearing to his own sincerity, because of their continued accusation of secret sin. He swears by God, who as far as he can see is treating him unjustly, yet whom his faith still clings to as the God of truth.

2

These verses may be thus paraphrased, "I will not confess a sin which I have not committed. Far be it from me to declare that you are right, and that I am the wretch which you assert me to be. I am innocent of your charges, and will uphold myself to be so."

4, 5, 6

The last words of verse 6 should probably be translated, "My heart (i.e. conscience) does not reproach even one of my days."

A paraphrase seems again the best mode of exposition: "Ye have called me wicked, God forbid that your judgment should be received; let your branding me as an evildoer prove that *you* are such; may that be the accepted judgment of God and man. Your reckless judgment of the innocent will draw down a judgment upon you."

7

His friends have called him a hypocrite for concealing his sin. He replies, What motive can he have? Is he not at death's door? God is taking away his soul (life), and even if he had played the hypocrite for gain, what would his gain avail him now? Could he dare to pray with any hope of being heard? And yet have they not already seen that calling upon God is the only refuge and comfort that he has?

8, 9

The realization to himself, as one might say, of the comfort which he finds in fellowship with God, seems to strike him more forcibly than it has done before, and it produces a marked effect upon him. He changes his position and stands boldly forth as the teacher of those who would have taught him.

11

- Job XXVII.** **By the hand**, or "the mode of dealing." **That which is with the Almighty**, i.e. the principles on which He acts.
- 12 "Ye," he says, "have yourselves seen, for you have told me, the lot of the evildoer. Your principle was right. And this makes your false application of it the more glaring. What signs have you seen in me of an utterly false and wicked life? How can you have missed seeing the contrary signs, even of my aspirations after God? Then why are you blinded with your vain delusions? I will tell you myself the lot of a wicked man. Judge from that whether I should dare in the face of it to assert my integrity if I were what you try to make me out."
- 14, 15 The wicked are punished with the sword, the famine, the pestilence. The word translated **death** means pestilence, and the sense is, they are buried as hastily as possible, without the usual solemnities, and the horror stifles feeling, and the widows do not weep.
- 16 **Dust...clay**, emblems of such abundance as to depreciate their value. Cf. Zech. ix. 3.
- 18 **House**, palace. But though fine it is as brittle and perishable as the fine spinning of a moth, as fragile as the hut which the keeper of a vineyard makes during the grape season. (See on Is. i. 8.)
- 19 The Hebrew of the first part of the verse is difficult to translate; but probably the right rendering is "He lieth down rich, and *doeth it not again*," i.e. it is the last time of his doing so. **He openeth his eyes** for the last time, he looks on the world for a moment, **and is no more**. His eyes are closed for ever in death.
- 20 **Terrors**. A peculiar construction in the original makes the sense "the terrors of death seize him like a flood by day, the whirlwind carries him away in the night." There is no peace or security for him, by night or by day. Cf. the converse picture in Ps. xci. 5, 6.
- 21 **The east wind**, the simoom.
- 22 **Cast**, i.e. shoot. Cf. Ps. lxiv. 7. **He would fain**, lit. "he strives eagerly." Cf. Ps. cxxxix. 7—9.
- 23 His ruin shall be utter and complete. All who knew him shall rejoice in his downfall, and hiss in scorn, as he is hurled down from his place.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Job
XXVIII.

What is the connexion between the preceding chapter and the present? Job has two subjects before him. The one is the judgment of the ungodly, the other is his earnest endeavour to cling to God, and trust in Him. In the preceding chapter he has portrayed the covetous rich man carried away by sudden death from all his treasures, perishing in his misery. And with

this thought in his mind he continues, Silver and other precious metals come out of the earth, but there is an abiding stay and comfort for men which must have a better source than this. Whence is this derived? whence comes that wisdom which can satisfy the soul when all things besides fade and decay? This question he propounds and answers in the chapter before us.

There are abandoned mines in Mount Sinai, and also in the Hauran, the district east of the Jordan. Job must, in all probability, have seen mining operations in one or both of these districts. The mode of obtaining pure gold was to crush the ore, lay it on a slightly inclined plane, and pour water over it, repeating the process over and over. When the earthy part was thus washed away, the gold was put into a crucible, cemented up with clay, and placed for five days and nights in the furnace (*Diodorus apud Delitzsch*).

Brass here and everywhere in the Bible means copper.

He (i. e. man) **setteth an end to darkness** by opening up the interior of the earth to the light, **and searcheth out all perfection**, or “explores *to remote depths*.” **Stones of darkness**, i. e. those hid in darkness, **and the shadow of death**, in the deepest recesses of the earth.

A minute description of the dangers which beset the miner, introduced to show how eager man is in the pursuit, and what perils he will brave in it. The first clause is very obscure, but the following is probably the strict meaning: **The flood breaketh forth by the side of the stranger**. “The stranger” is the miner who finds himself in a strange and unknown region down in the darkness. A sudden stream bursts forth and threatens his life.

In the next clause our translators have inserted some words wrongly. Literally the translation is, **Lo there! forgotten by the foot**. A figurative expression, signifying “their foot fails them, they no longer rest upon it, as they go down into the shaft.” And the third clause completes the picture. It ought to run, **they hang and swing to and fro, far from men**. A vivid description which requires no further elucidation.

The same idea is uppermost in his mind, the intense eagerness of man after treasure. **As for the earth, out of it cometh bread**, it nourishes man so graciously, and yet **it is turned up by him and ruthlessly searched out as if by fire**, as completely and destructively. (Umbreit quotes an exactly similar sentiment from Pliny.)

Render this, **The place of the sapphire is its rock**. This, like the gold, is to be found in the earth, **and it** (the sapphire) **hath dust of gold**. One species of sapphire (*lapis lazuli*) was sometimes called by a name which means “overlaid with gold” (*χρυσόπαστος*) because of the appearance of gold dust which covered it.

Omit “There is,” which has been inserted by the translators.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Job
XXVIII.

The way (i. e. of the sapphire) **which no fowl** (rather "eagle") **knoweth**, &c. The eagle and the vulture are named as having the sharpest eyes. These and the fierce beasts of prey alike pass the mineral treasures by, unseen and uncared for, but man searches and finds them out. See next verse.

9 **He overturneth**, &c. This refers to blasting operations, which were sometimes done with fire and vinegar, as well as by huge mechanical contrivances. There is a vivid description of the process and of the dangers run by the miners in Pliny's *Nat. Hist.*

10 **He cutteth**, &c. That is, he makes openings in rocks, and so drains off the waters which hinder his mining. Having done this, **his eye seeth**, &c.

11 **Overflowing**, i. e. leaking. The miner stops the water-courses from leaking into the place of his work, so that he is not hindered in bringing the treasures to light.

12 Thus far we have had a circumstantial and minute account of the labour which man will bestow to gain earthly treasures. Job now turns to the question, How shall man find *the* treasure which will satisfy, which will stay and abide when the hypocrite and his riches have perished?

13 He begins by declaring that it is a gift from above, beyond the finding of man by his own efforts. **Man**, the original expresses, "Mortal man."

17 Having by the preceding comparisons expressed the inaccessibility of wisdom to man's unaided efforts, he goes on to draw out its transcendent excellence in itself, and again asks, "Where shall such treasure be found?" (ver. 20.)

21 No created being can give an answer, even **the fowls** that fly aloft, with farseeing eyes, can give no information. There may be an allusion to the Eastern belief in the divining power of birds.

22 And lastly, as the realms of the living cannot tell us, so neither can Hades and death. They are represented poetically as saying, "The report of the existence of a wisdom has reached our ears, but the very sound is dim and confused, and we can tell nothing."

23 And now begins the solution of the question. **God understandeth the way to it, and He—He knoweth its place.**

24 Before stating what *is* the way of wisdom, Job pauses for a moment to prove his assertion that God knows it. He must know it, for He sees the very ends of the earth, and whatever is under heaven; His knowledge embraces everything (ver. 23). He must know it, for wisdom is verily the ideal according to which He created the universe. Cf. Prov. viii. 27—31.

28 Having thus created all things according to His own Divine ideal, He gave man a law corresponding to that ideal. To fear the Creator, and therefore to imitate His goodness and beneficence, that must be wisdom; to renounce evil, as being contrary

to the Divine purpose and plan, that is understanding, practical sense. This is the true philosophy, for it rests upon the Will of the Eternal Creator and Lord.

The personality of the Wisdom and Counsel of God can hardly be said to appear in this chapter. It seems to be more distinct in the passage in Proverbs, and still more so in the Book of Wisdom, chs. vii.—xi. But what was dimly revealed to the fathers by the prophets was fully manifested at last, when the Christian prophet declared "The Word was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." The Epiphany-season through which we are passing gives substance to the abstract truth which God shewed unto Job, for He is manifested in the flesh who hath brought life and immortality to light.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Again, as it appears, Job made a pause. In his faith in God's truth and faithfulness he had uttered the sublimest and noblest truth, and this had silenced his accusers. It was impossible after his eager outburst to repeat their false accusation. Yet they would not allow themselves to be vanquished. So they were sullenly silent. He therefore speaks once more. There is only one sharp word in the preceding address (xxvii. 12). There is none at all in what follows. He knows he has beaten them, but he makes no boast, nor deals them the hard measure he has received from them. He speaks earnestly, but lovingly. And his view has grown so much clearer during the progress of the address which he has been making, that although he has not found out the clue to the riddle, and therefore is mournful and sad, he has become humble and tranquillized, and no longer utters reproaches against his Creator. He resigns himself to the recollection of his former happiness and the days when he was honoured and loved.

My youth, rather "my vintage," i.e. the time of his richest prosperity. +

The secret, the familiarity and unreserved intercourse. Cf. Prov. iii. 32; Ps. xxv. 14.

Butter is a wrong translation. The word means "*Cream*," and the image is intended to imply the fullest prosperity and plenty of a shepherd's life. **Oil**, i.e. things went so prosperously with me that the mountain streams seemed to yield me oil instead of water. A rich blessing, passing all comprehension, seemed to surround me (cf. Deut. xxxii. 13). 6

While it was thus in the country, corresponding happiness was his lot in the city. The first clause should be translated "When I went through the gate to the city." **The street**, rather "the market," which in Eastern cities was at the gate. 7

Hid themselves, stepped back modestly into retirement, as

Job XXIX. 8 fearing to be too presuming. **Arose and stood up**, literally, "stood up and remained standing," i.e. till Job had seated himself.

9 **Princes**, the great men of the city. **Laid their hand**, &c., desisted from speaking until he had spoken. Cf. ch. xxi. 5.

11 The reason why he was thus respected. His character was so well known that whoever heard of him agreed in sounding his praise, and whoso saw him at once joined in the chorus. For along with the signs of his prosperity was also the knowledge of his wide benevolence.

12 **The poor**, better "the sufferer."

14 This verse gives the *motive* of all his actions, namely the holding fast to the will of God. The Hebrew word translated **righteousness**, signifies "firmness," "straightness." The first part of the verse runs thus, literally, "*I put on righteousness and it put me on.*" The word for "put on," is used of the close fitting robe with which an Eastern clothed his naked body, and the sense therefore is expressive of intimate union (cf. Ps. cxxxii. 9; Is. xi. 5; lix. 17). And he says that as a reward the righteousness which he thus put on so made him its own that his whole appearance was the representation of itself. So the Spirit of the Lord is said elsewhere to put a man on, to make him the organ of Its own manifestation. Judges vi. 34.

The **robe** in the second clause is the outer garment, the woven coat, and the word rendered **diadem** is the turban, always an article of cost and pride to an Arab. His visible integrity was his protection and rich ornament.

15-17 A complete refutation of the slanders of the three friends (see xxii. 5-7), but spoken without reference to them.

16 The second clause should run "*And I examined the case of the unknown,*" that is, the fact of a suitor being a stranger made no difference to him. If a tale of distress came before him, no matter whose, Job immediately investigated it.

17 Not only so, but he did his best to make the wrong-doers incapable of further harm, and tore from them what they had wrongfully gotten.

18 Because of his conscious integrity he had thought, he says, that unbroken prosperity and extended life would be his lot. A curious question however arises in the details of this verse. The Hebrew is somewhat obscure, and our translators have given a version which is warranted by the original. The sense as the verse stands here is plain. Job compares his stay here to the dwelling of an eagle in its nest (cf. Obad. 4), and he says he had thought that he would continue for years upon years undisturbed in the place to which habit had long attached him; he and his nest should disappear together at the last, and there would be no pain of separation.

But the Jewish rabbins give a very different meaning as regards the second clause. Though the general sense is not

altered, they say that the word translated "sand," means the Phœnix. The Arabian fable recorded with other curious and not uninteresting legends, that this miraculous bird lived a thousand years, at the end of which time it built its nest with trees of rich spices. The nest caught fire and burnt it, leaving ashes which became the fresh bird, and so its death began a new life. No wonder that the early Christian fathers used this legend as a symbol of the Resurrection of man. If then the rabbins are right, Job is using a comparison drawn from a familiar legend of his country, "*Then I thought, I shall expire with my nest, and have a long life with the Phœnix.*" The Vulgate translates it "*like a palm tree.*" Phœnix is Greek for "palm tree," as well as for the name of the bird, and it is not unlikely that the Latin translation is a mistake arising from the confusion of the two meanings. (See Delitzsch, II. 129).

The past tenses here should have been translated in the future. He is still expressing what his hopes had been.

The *If* is an interpolation which mars the sense. **I laughed** (or *smiled*) **on them when they believed not**, shewed myself cheerful and happy in the time of calamity, **and the light of my countenance they cast not down**, their despair could never destroy my confidence and courage.

He made their way plain out of their misery, he was as a warlike king when danger threatened; and withal a comforter and sympathizer in personal sorrow.

Thus then we have had before us the picture of a saint of old, drawn by himself not in self-righteousness, but because he has to refute false charges, and to defend the cause of righteousness. It is true that until he is brought face to face with God he does not realize the depth of his own sinfulness, but as regards his outward life, and his knowledge of what is good and right, he only spoke truth in this description of himself. Just in the same spirit S. Paul, having to defend himself against Judaizing slanderers, asserts his own good faith and purity of motives in the same fearless manner, and when he sees his children in the faith living in the midst of an ungodly world, does not scruple to bid them to be followers of him, and mark those who walk after his example (Phil. iii. 17). The ideal which Job aimed at is manifested unto us in Christ. We have seen in one lesson to-day how to look upon Him as the Incarnate Wisdom and Word of God. And now, with the Gospel in our hands, we read this Old World description of goodness and benevolence, and know that it is no longer an ideal past realization, since He who is our Head is the Deliverer of the poor, the Saviour of him that is ready to perish, the Father of the fatherless, the Giver of sight to the blind. For ever and ever He shall "choose out the way of His people, and dwell as a King in the army," with raiment dipped in blood, and shall "comfort all the mourners."

19, 20

24

25

NOTE ON THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

Introduction to the
Lessons
from
Proverbs.

The Books of Moses contain the foundation of the Theology of the Old Testament, the Psalms form its Book of Devotion, the Prophets its Christology. Of course none of these subjects are *confined* to the Books we have named—there is Christology in them all, and Prayer in them all. The Book of Proverbs stands by itself. It does not for the most part deal with comprehensive doctrines, nor with the foundations of morality. But it gives us practical rules for daily and common life. It is the Book of practical sense. “What the law reveals as a universal rule for the national life of the covenant people in a religious and a political aspect, the Proverbs apply to the relations and obligations of the private life of each individual of that people. The principle of consecration through fellowship with Jehovah, the God of the covenant, which was revealed through Moses, and established in general in his legislation, is individualized and developed in detail by Solomon with reference to the special domestic and social relations of his countrymen.” (Zöckler.) Luther called this “the Book of good works,” and declared that “every man aiming at godliness ought to make it his daily hand-book, and often read it and compare his life with it.” And Coleridge calls it “the best statesman’s manual that was ever written.”

We have called it advisedly the Book of practical sense. We recognize the truth of Dean Stanley’s remark that the Book “has in it something of a worldly, prudential look.” But the prudence rests on one foundation only. There is nothing which a gainsayer could dare to call mean or sordid in its maxims. And the reason is that it rests all its wisdom, all its prudence and discretion and intelligence, upon the fear of God. Such a maxim as this, “He that hateth suretyship is sure,” is a maxim which many a man would not only be the happier but the better for acting upon. If there is any selfishness in such a maxim, that disappears, and is not, when you take along with it the maxims which speak of the blessings of the liberal and the kind in heart. The Book of Proverbs, therefore, though dealing with

worldly things, is grounded upon the only sure foundation. It exhorts not to outward prudence only, but to the government of the heart, out of which are the issues of life. It is the Old Testament counterpart of the Apostle's command, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord." (See Wordsworth's Introduction, p. x.)

The reign of Solomon was a period of long peace, and, as a consequence, of material prosperity. This led to a sudden development of intellectual culture. The Books of Kings and Chronicles have references to "Wise men" of this period (1 Kings iv. 30, 31), apparently "a school of philosophy" alongside with the "School of the Prophets," though probably not so perfectly organized and united. At the head of these philosophers was Solomon himself. 1 Kings iii. 5—12; iv. 29. He was a natural historian, a poet, a metaphysician. He wrote, we are told, 1005 songs. Two Psalms only have his name attached to them, but probably others are his. And of the 3000 sayings which he spake, there are only 746 verses in the Book of Proverbs which can be his. The rest God's providence has not preserved to us. That he spoke much more than he wrote, after the manner of Eastern moralists, is shewn by the words, "There came of all people to hear his wisdom."

The Divisions of the Book are as follows :

- i. INTRODUCTION. The use and value of the Book. i. 1—6.
- ii. Wisdom as the foundation of all morality. Addressed specially to the young. i. 7.—ix. 18. The subdivisions of this will be best seen when we consider the chapters in detail.
- iii. Original nucleus of the collection. The Proverbs of Solomon. x.—xxii. 16. Appendix, "The words of the wise." xxii. 17—xxiv.
- iv. Additions by the men of Hezekiah of traditionary Proverbs of Solomon. xxv.—xxix.
- v. Appendices. Words of Agur and Lemuel. xxx., xxxi.

Most critics are agreed that the Book is a compilation, and that even the part which is specially called "the Proverbs of Solomon" has been edited and brought into its present shape by a later hand than his. To give all the reasons of this opinion would be out of place here, especially as there is so little use made of this Book in our Sunday Lessons. The compilers of

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the present Lectionary judged that from the necessarily disconnected character of its maxims, the Book is rather one to be read and pondered over at home, than to be read through before the congregation. Consequently there are but six chapters taken from it, and those are appointed for days that are often omitted in the yearly calendar. The chapters selected are those which are most suited for congregational use.

Five of the six are taken from the portion which we have noted as *Division II*. It is a division specially addressed to *youth*, and probably is less ancient than the 3rd, or at least portions of it, for it is almost certainly a collection. It consists altogether of couplets, mostly synonymous parallelisms. The couplets in the third division are mostly antithetic. The words, "My son," are very frequent in *Division II*., but never occur in *III*. *Division II*. again consists to a great extent of long sentences, e.g. i. 29—33; viii. 22—31; ix. 13—18. Ch. ii. is one long sentence. There is a unity of purpose running through the whole, and yet variety of style. There is no mention of idolatry, which points to an ancient authorship. Nor must we omit to notice that many portions of it fall into groups of ten verses: i. 10—19; iii. 1—10, 11—20; viii. 12—21, 22—31. The description of Wisdom (ch. viii.) is one of the most highly-wrought passages in Holy Scripture.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Mattins.

Prov. I.

1

This title has been commented on in the Introduction. It is a general title, covering not only the words of Solomon, but the whole book.

Proverbs. The Heb. word means "similitudes," and is therefore elsewhere often rendered "Parable," e.g. Ezek. xvii. 2. It is commonly applied to the parallelisms of Hebrew poetry, because they abound in similitudes.

2

The object of the book. **To know**, that is "from which men may know."

Justice, &c. Only those are wise who are conscientious. A lesson which we shall all do well to lay to heart.

4

Subtilty, i.e. sagacity. **The simple**, those who are easily deceived and led astray. **Discretion.** The Heb. is derived from a word meaning "to tie together." Thus it means the power of planning and arrangement.

A wise man will hear, rather "*let the wise man listen, and he will increase,*" &c. Not only the simple but the wise shall profit by meditation and reflection on these proverbs. **Wise counsels,** lit. "ropes," i.e. for pilotage through difficult channels.

The interpretation. Derived from a word meaning "to knot." Our expression "knotty saying" therefore exactly conveys the meaning.

The words of the wise. Probably this has special reference to ch. xxii. 17. See p. 85.

The close of the introduction. Having shewn what is the design of his book the writer emphatically declares what must be the temper of any man who desires wisdom. Cf. John vii. 17.

My Son. This expression occurs very frequently in Division II. of the Proverbs (i. 8, 10; ii. 1; iii. 1, 11; iv. 10, 20; v. 1; vi. 1, 20; vii. 1), nowhere in Division III., and very rarely in other parts of the Book. It is the usual address of a teacher to a learner in the East. After the fear of God comes honour to parents. Pythagoras begins his golden verses with *Primum deos immortales cole, parentesque honora.*

Thy moral beauty will become so conspicuous as to be like a graceful ornament to the person. **Ornament,** wreath.

An earnest dissuasive from associating with those who seek for gain in robbery and murder. Brigandage was very common, and still is so, in Arabia, as it is in Italy and Greece. The spirit of wild adventure was very attractive to the young, and those engaged in it spared no pains to induce the young and strong to join them. We need hardly dwell on the force of this solemn appeal to those who are attracted by the miserable literature of robbery and violence which seems to be so eagerly devoured by the young. But the warning does not exhaust itself thus. The police and social arrangements of our own country make such brigandage almost impossible here, and the evil spirit which prompts it is therefore driven to take other forms. That evil spirit is the desire after swift riches. And it takes the form with us of the gambling ring, and the advertisements of the sporting newspaper. None but the utterly reckless venture to break into houses and shed blood; but how many hundreds, led by evil examples, are willing to take advantage of the unwary, and to win large sums of money, no matter who is ruined. And the words apply to such, hardly less than they did to the robbers here described—**Their feet run to evil, and make haste to destroy life...But they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk for their own lives.** What a comment upon these words could be made out of the history of the scaffold, of the prison, of inquests upon suicides. **Such are the ways of every one greedy of plunder; it taketh away its owner's life.** Even if he gains it, it is very death to him.

There are only two or three words which need explanation in this paragraph. **Innocent without cause**—rather "innocent in

Prov. I.

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6

7

8

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10—19

Prov. I.

vain," i.e. his innocence is of no avail in protecting him from the robber. **Walk not thou in the way**, avoid the beginning of temptation. Many a one never intends to follow evil example, yet throws himself in the way of temptation and is drawn in. **Surely in vain**, &c. The temptation looks as pleasant as the bait does to the bird. It is only when he is caught, that he discovers the misery of his situation.

20—23

The preceding paragraph describes the invitations and allurements of sinners, and the fatal consequences of listening to them. Here we have an invitation of the opposite character, the call of *heavenly wisdom*. We must take this as a personification after the Eastern style, but as ages went on it seems to have been partially revealed to men that there was verily One who was the Wisdom of God, until at length He came in the flesh. We, knowing that Christ is that Incarnate Wisdom, are bound to read this as addressed to us by Him. He calls us aloud, in the broad streets where the churches give note of His presence, and where the gross and ignorant call us to their help, because they are made in His image. It is His voice which rebukes us when we **love simplicity** (folly and frivolity) and **delight in scorning**, in turning everything whether serious or not into an idle joke, and scoffing at religion and religious people, and **hate knowledge**, goodness, self-restraint, piety.

Turn at (or *towards*) **my reproof**, and then **I will pour**, &c. In these words is expressed the willingness of the Divine Wisdom to teach. **My spirit**, which will animate, sanctify, and instruct. Cf. John vii. 37.

24

Then comes the judgment of those who will *not* turn, who persist in scorning and evil practices. The glowing fire of these verses reminds us of the vehement exhortations of Isaiah. See Isaiah i. 15—20.

26

I also, &c. A bold expression finding a parallel in Ps. ii. 5. As ye laughed at me, so will I do unto you in the day of your calamity. And then he goes on to describe the fearful doom of the obstinate and the scornful.

32

"Because they are fools they turn God's mercies to their own destruction, and because they prosper they are confirmed in their folly." Baxter.

33

From fear of evil, even in troublous times he who fears God shall possess his soul in peace. Cf. Is. xxvi. 3; Ps. xii. 4—7.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Prov. III.

This chapter has three divisions (1—10, 11—20, 21—35), each introduced with the words "My son," and each divided into five couplets. In each the first couplet calls for attention and obedience, and the next promises good as a consequence.

1, 2

Obedience shall be followed by long life and peace of mind.

Cf. Ex. xx. 12; 1 Kings iii. 14; Deut. iv. 40; v. 29; vi. 2; xi. 9; Ps. xv. 1; xxiii. 6; 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Mercy and truth, kindness and faithfulness.

Good understanding, or, as in Margin, "Good success."

Ps. xxi. 10; 2 Chron. xxx. 20.

Trust implicitly in the LORD. It is a sign of the importance of the fear of God in the writer's eyes that in the present chapter the sacred name occurs nine times.

Direct, rather "make straight," or "make smooth."

Thy navel, put for the whole body as being the centre point of the body.

Be not content with lip-service, but show gratitude for His blessings by offering Him of what He hath given thee. Cf. Ex. xxiii. 19; Lev. ii. 12; xix. 23; Deut. xviii. 4.

Presses, wine-fats.

Take heed to the chastisements of Providence, they are sent to teach thee wisdom. This exhortation is taken from Job v. 17, and applied in the Hebrews to the suffering Jewish church. xii. 5, 6.

Despise not. Do not expect that all will be prosperity with thee. Adversity will come, God's fatherly hand will smite, but it will be in love.

Getteth, lit. "draweth forth," i. e. from God. Cf. ch. viii. 35. The beautiful description of Wisdom which follows has a most full and happy force to us Christians; it brings that treasure in heaven which neither moth nor rust can corrupt nor thieves steal.

See on verses 1, 2.

A tree of life, an evident reference to the tree in Paradise, Gen. ii. 9; iii. 22, removed from man by sin, yet within his recovery by the means which God appointed. Those who find Wisdom lay hold of it, they shall eat of it at the last when they enter into the Paradise of God. See Rev. ii. 7; xxii. 2.

Retaineth, holdeth in his grasp.

The excellence of wisdom shewn; she is the very counsellor of the Most High, how invaluable therefore to erring men.

The depths, the receptacles for the waters of the earth. Gen. i. 6, 7.

After the sublime eulogy of wisdom, the writer returns to exhortation of his pupil, that he will continue in the pursuit of wisdom.

Them, the exhortations which have been given. **Sound wisdom and discretion**, thoughtfulness and circumspection.

They shall keep in safety and security by night and day.

The next verses have this peculiarity, they are prohibitions.

The first is, do not forego opportunities of good. And this is illustrated in the next by an example. The wages of a labourer are his rightful due, so is the provision for the poor whom God has committed to the care of the rich. James v. 4. "It is the

Prov. III.

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- Prov. III. hungry man's bread which we hoard up in our barns. It is his meat on which we glut, and his drink which we guzzle; it is the naked man's apparel which we shut up in our presses. We are in thus holding not only covetous, but wrongful havers of more than our own." (*Barrow*, II. 160, quoted by Bp. Wordsworth.)
- 29 Take not advantage of a man's unsuspectingness.
- 30 Be peaceable and placable, and not always ready to pick a quarrel, or to make one of imaginary slights.
- 31 Do not anxiously covet the riches which a man has gotten by wrong means, nor follow his bad example in hope of like acquisition. Ch. xxiii. 17.
- 32 The reason of the above commands; the Lord hates the perverse, and blesses the righteous. Each verse to the end of the chapter is antithetic.
- His secret.** See on Job xxix. 4, p. 81.
- 34 **Giveth grace to the lowly.** Lowliness is itself beautiful. "Humility is both a grace and a vessel to receive grace." (Trapp.)
- 35 **The wise shall inherit glory.** Cf. Dan. xii. 2, 3. The last words are, of course, sarcastic. "Shame is the nobility which shall be conferred upon fools."

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

- Prov. VIII. The sublime chapter which we have here, the address of Wisdom to mankind, is in contrast with the address of the strange woman in the preceding chapter. Bp. Wordsworth points out the resemblance of this to the appearance of *Virtue* and *Pleasure* to the youthful Hercules, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.
- 1—3 Wisdom cries aloud in public places, in contrast with the Harlot who creeps out "in the black and dark night," and speaks under her breath lest she should be heard by any but her victim. Sin is cowardly and slinking, Virtue is brave.
- 2 The comma ought to be removed after the first "place," to after "way." "*She standeth on the summit of the high places by the way, in the midst of the paths.*"
- The glowing imagery that follows is borrowed and amplified from Job xxviii.
- 12 **Prudence**, right judgment in special cases. This and the highest wisdom go together, and are entirely connected. **Witty inventions**, or "skilful plans."
- 14 This is prefatory to what follows—the qualities here described are those which are required for ruling well. **I have strength**, the same sentiment, though different in words, as Eccl. ix. 16, "Wisdom is better than strength."
- 15 **By me**, by my aid.
- 17 "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." John xiv. 21.

This verse has been made a battle-ground for controversy. The word translated **possessed** is translated in the LXX "Created." The Arians of old, expounding this of Christ, declared that it asserted that Christ is a created Being, and therefore not very God. To guard against this the Vulg. and other ancient Versions render it "possessed." But there are scarcely any other cases where the word has this meaning. The proper meaning of the Hebrew word is "to set up," "to make steadfast;" and if we conclude to interpret this verse of Christ there is nothing in this original meaning which can give countenance to false teaching. It is an epithet which Our Saviour gives Himself in the Revelation, "the Beginning of the Creation of God." No one supposes that to Solomon was known the eternal generation of Christ, and if we substitute "Begot" for "set up," a distinction which would have been inappreciable to him, we shall have the exact statement of the Nicene Creed.

Prov. VIII.

22

Set up, lit. "Anointed," consecrated to God's eternal purposes. **From the beginning**. Cf. John i. 1; Ps. xc. 2.

23

Highest part, or mass.

26

The heavens, the welkin, filled with the stars.

27

A compass, the circle of the horizon.

Rejoicing, lit. "laughing" like an innocent, joyous child. "The work of Creation is described here by a bold comparison, as a holiday pastime of the Creator, and Wisdom as his play-mate; so great was His joy when it was first produced." (Bp. Wordsworth.)

30

My delights, &c. "When the inhabited earth appeared, Wisdom descended upon it, mingling with men, and taking delight in counselling and guiding them. Truly an exquisite thought and a very attractive term of the discourse. If Wisdom has acted thus, with what gratitude and readiness ought men to listen to her! This prepares the way for the closing exhortations. After this sublime description of the excellence and dignity of Wisdom, with great effect does the writer return to his persuasive exhortations." (Stuart.)

31

Wisdom is here imagined as dwelling in a Temple (cf. ix. 1), and the anxious inquirer for her, as watching and waiting for the opening of her gates.

34

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Mattins.

The subject of the present Chapter is two-fold. We may call it *The Banquet of Wisdom* (ver. 1—12), and *The Banquet of Folly* (13—18).

Prov. IX.

We have had the image of the Temple of Wisdom before (viii. 24); the same image is repeated here, and the *completeness* of her Temple is represented by the **seven pillars**. Probably

1

Prov. IX.

the imagery is suggested from the newly-built Temple of Solomon.

2 Here, as before, we are bound in duty to put a meaning into the words which was unknown to Solomon. Christ, the Wisdom and the Power of God, has builded a Temple, His Church, and furnished it with choicest food, even with Himself.

3 **Her maidens.** Maidens were the usual heralds of good tidings among the Jews. (See on Is. xl. 9, p. 47.)

6 The connexion between the verses that follow and the preceding is not at first easy to see, but it is this: Wisdom sends out her messengers and cries from the high places, and invites the simple to come into the banquet, and then goes on to tell them the danger of remaining in evil company.

7 Even though they would fain improve the evil, they are still unwise, they will only be scorned and shamed. There is, of course, a sense to which these words may be perverted, which would justify sloth and neglect. But it *is* a perversion. For the generality of men, especially young men, it is certainly true that they can do no good to themselves or to others by keeping the company of the profane. They are not likely to influence them for good. There are duties which may *oblige* men to go into the company of such, but they go at a risk to themselves, and have need of all the grace of God to keep them from evil. A doctor may be obliged to go into scenes of pestilence, but ordinary men will take care to avoid them. So ought it to be with moral evil.

11 Cf. iii. 2; iv. 10.

12 Wisdom will bring its own reward, and so will folly.

13 **A foolish woman**, equivalent to "the strange woman," the adulteress.

14 She mimicks true Wisdom, but to what end?

15 To call out of their way those who are going straightforward, on their regular business, unwary and unsuspecting.

16 She even imitates the *words* of Wisdom (see ver. 4), but immediately gives them an abominable meaning, an exhortation to sin and deeds of darkness.

17 **Bread eaten in secret**, i.e. in the retired haunts of sinful pleasure.

18 **He**, her foolish victim. **The dead** (lit. "the shades"), the children of death who are hastening downwards into the pit, and even now, while the body still lives, are tasting the horrors of death. "Many eat on earth what they digest in hell" (Trapp). But those who are filled with God turn aside with shuddering from the banquet of the strange woman.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

It is impossible to summarize this chapter as we have done those preceding, for scarcely any two verses are connected together, and never more than two. Nearly every verse is complete in itself; and in most cases the second clause is in contrast with the first. All is most regularly arranged, and the Hebrew shows considerable skill and art, there being usually the same number of words in each clause. Brevity, energy and vivacity, characterize the whole (Stuart). The chapter deals entirely with social duties, and the doings of daily life.

Lit. "Doth pride come, then shame will come." Cf. xvi. 18; xviii. 12.

Wrath, Divine indignation. Ezek. vii. 19. Zeph. i. 18. Job xxi. 30.

Direct, lit. "make even."

Naughtiness, rather "greedy desire," that is lust.

Cometh, i.e. into the trouble which the righteous has escaped.

The second clause should probably be, "*but by the knowledge (counsel) of the just shall he (the neighbour) be delivered.*" It is the contrast between the false and the upright tongue.

Two rejoicings,—over the rise of the just, and the fall of the wicked.

Despiset, "speaketh contemptuously of." The man of understanding is silent where others reproach.

Secrets, things revealed in confidence. He will tell these to gratify his love of prating. **The matter**, the confidential communication. See Lev. xix. 16; Prov. xx. 19. There is a further contrast in the Hebrew. The word rendered **Talebearer** signifies literally "a walker about of slander," and **he that is faithful of spirit**, "the man who stands still." The force is obvious. (See Dr Vaughan's *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, Sermon I.)

Counsel, lit. steering. See on i. 5.

A gracious (a beautiful) **woman retaineth her honour**, i.e. purity, as firmly, earnestly, powerfully, **as strong men hold fast their riches**. This is the meaning of the verse. A beautiful verse. O that God may impress it evermore upon the daughters of England.

Worketh, &c., rather "acquireth delusive gain," which makes the contrast of the next clause more forcible.

The contrast with "the gracious woman" in ver. 16. **Without discretion**, i.e. who has lost moral feeling, the higher appreciation of beauty and sense of propriety,—in other words, purity of heart. Beauty in such will, according to the comparison, only call more attention to her folly.

The desire of the righteous will end in good, the wicked too have desires, but they will end in God's wrath.

Prov. XI.

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Prov. XI.

24—26

Three proverbs against avarice and parsimony.
 Cf. Ps. cxii. 9; 2 Cor. ix. 9. These verses hold good even in this world. The liberal man, not he who is reckless and extravagant (for that is only selfishness), nor he who is ostentatious in his "charities," but he who does acts of self-denial and kindness for the love of Christ, is generally the most prosperous. Bounty is the quickest way to plenty. And as regards the ministry of spiritual things, "To be a vessel conveying refreshment from the fountain-head of grace to a fainting soul in the wilderness is the surest way of keeping your own spirit fresh, and your experience ever new." (Arnot.)

26

Refers to those who, in a time of famine, keep back their corn to sell at a high price, and thus take advantage of the hungry.

28—31

Cf. Ps. i.

29

The man who worries and irritates those about him intends to increase his own comfort and peace of mind thereby, but is still deceived in his expectation, and will become a slave to the wiser and better disposed.

30

The righteous man is a centre of life and prosperity to all around him, and to be *this* is to be truly wise.

31

Recompensed, i.e. chastised for their sins. This gives terrible force to the second clause. The LXX rendering is quoted by S. Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 18.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Prov. XV.

1

Nothing excites anger so often as bitter words. Good intentions without gentleness are almost as useless as friendly manner without earnestness. "Truth alone may be hated, and love alone may be despised; but when truth puts on love, and love leans on truth, in that hallowed partnership lies the maximum of moral power" (Arnot).

2

Useth knowledge aright, better "maketh knowledge beautiful." When the wise speak, they speak so as to make instruction attractive. **Poureth out**, vainly, confusedly, repulsively.

3

2 Chron. xvi. 9; Ps. cxxxix. 1; Matt. x. 30; Heb. iv. 13.

4

Giving food and leaves for healing. Rev. xxii. 2.

Perverseness, not apparently falsehood, but irritating, contentious language.

A breach, or "a crushing of spirit."

6

Treasure, i.e. its righteousness is its treasure.

7

A very brief, but suggestive verse, on the mighty difference between the moral influences of the two men.

8

Isaiah i. 11—17; lviii. 5—8; Micah vi. 7, 8.

11

Hell and Destruction mean here simply "Death and dissolution." God sees even these and their dark mysteries, how much more the living.

| | |
|--|------------------|
| As a hedge of thorns , with all manner of obstructions in it. | Prov. XV. |
| Made plain , lit. "raised up." | 19 |
| The wise listen to parental advice, and give <i>gladness</i> , the foolish despise it and give <i>sorrow</i> . | 20 |
| That is, a man has joy in being able to give a straightforward answer. | 23 |
| Is above , towards heaven, leading him, therefore, away from disaster, up to the source of life. | 24 |
| Pleasant , that is, to God. They are as acceptable to Him, as those of the wicked are abominable. The idea is taken from sacrifice. | 26 |
| Gifts , bribes. | 27 |
| Studieth , because he is anxious to give a right and true answer, whereas the wicked bursts out, only anxious to utter malignity and do harm. | 28 |
| The happy effect of the friendly look and the kind word. | 30 |
| Reproof of life , i.e. the reproof which leads to life and health. | 31 |
| Despiseth because he treats it as worthless, and makes no provision for its safety and welfare. | 32 |
| That is, without the fear of the Lord wisdom cannot be learned, and humility towards Him is the natural attitude of those who seek Him faithfully. "Humility preserves the true and noble freedom of the mind of man" (Bates). | 33 |
| | . |

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Mattins.

To-day we begin the reading of the Old Testament, and the lessons are henceforward taken, with two or three exceptions on the great festivals, from the Books in regular order. There is this peculiarity in the lessons for Septuagesima, which belongs to no other Sunday in the year, they describe the earth as it was when all was very good, before sin entered into it. And the special second lessons continue and complete the idea, for they describe what shall be when sin is at last cast out in the day of "the restitution of all things," when God shall bring in "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This is the mode then in which, so far as the lessons are concerned, the Church gives the first warning note of *Lent*. We are shown what it is from which the world has fallen, and what it is that we hope to attain to by watching, and fasting, and prayer.

The subject of the whole Bible is the relation of God to man, as his Creator, Lord, Father, Deliverer from the guilt and power of sin. The Bible is not a book of science, nor of history, except so far as these things bear upon the revelation of God to the soul of man. Some of the history contained in the Bible is

Gen. I.

Gen. I.

older than any other history, and some is very full and minute. But when such history is recorded, it is recorded with the one object of shewing how God revealed Himself in old time "in divers manners" until at last He spake to us by His Son.

The subject of to day is the *Creation*. It is not a scientific narrative, but it is a record of the creation of the earth viewed as the abode of sinful and redeemed man. Questions of astronomy or geology do not enter into it, the narrative moves in a different sphere. How far the details can be made to harmonize with scientific discovery, and how far we are to regard them as popular and adapted to the knowledge of men as it existed then, are questions of deep interest indeed, but they do not belong to the present Commentary. We accept the narrative before us as fully true as far as the objects were concerned on which the Holy Ghost inspired Moses to write. What these objects were we have said, and shall see further in detail as we proceed through the chapter.

- 1 Here we have a general statement of vast importance, for without the truth it conveys the rest of the Bible would have no coherence. It declares that this world did not come by chance, but was the work of a living and personal God. The simple faith of our childhood contained in it, is a faith sorely needed in days of questionings and scientific activity; we all need, in the midst of our enquiries and doubtings, to fall back and rest upon the truth thus revealed for our comfort and guidance, that we and our dwelling-place are the work of God's hands, and that all His work was made very good.

The first verse must be taken as a distinct statement unconnected with the second. It contains no record of the *manner* of the Creation, or of time in relation to other works; the inspired writer merely assures us with emphasis that there is nothing in heaven or in earth, nothing in the whole universe, which is not the work of God. Having done so he begins in the second verse to narrate the Creation of our own earth and its system.

In the beginning, in the remotest antiquity, when time and all created things began. Not "when God Himself began," for He is eternal. This is asserted in S. Joann i. 1, 2, where we are told that all things were *created* by the Word, but He already *was*. See Ps. xc. 2; Prov. viii. 25, 26.

- 2 **Without form, and void**. Desert and empty. This may refer either to the state of the earth before any life and motion were given to it, or subsequent to some great change which had laid it waste, after a period of life and order. Many students suppose that there was a long period of former life antecedent to the six days of Creation, a period therefore occurring between verses 1 and 2, after which came on the state which is described as being desolate and void. **The deep**, the dead mass of the desolated earth. **The Spirit of God**, the Holy Ghost who is the Giver of life. **Moved**, brooded as a dove upon her nest, giving

life to the inert mass. These last words therefore describe the beginning of the present Creation.

Gen. I.

We cannot doubt that light existed from the beginning of the Creation; we must take this as the throwing of light upon the desolated and dark earth. Whether this light was created before the sun, or whether the sun and heavenly bodies were now created, and only *revealed* on the fourth day, does not appear. The late Dr McCaul took it that the light encircled the earth in a nebulous form, and on the fourth day was concentrated in the sun, which was prepared for the purpose. But this is a question which we may leave to the further investigation of science.

Firmament, rather "expanse." This was the atmosphere which surrounds the earth and bears up the clouds, "the waters which are above the firmament." 6

Heaven. This word has various meanings in our common speech, as in the Bible. (1) We speak of "the birds of heaven," meaning, as here, the atmosphere; (2) of the stars of heaven; (3) of the unseen dwelling-place of God and His saints. 8

The beginning of life upon the globe—grass, herbs and corn, trees. All grow and yield seed "after their kinds," according to the law which God has appointed for their perpetuation for the use of man. 11

Lights, rather "light-holders." It is not the same word as in verse 3. As has been already said, we cannot tell whether these were now first created, or whether they now first appeared on the clearing away of the clouds and mist which had hitherto shrouded the earth. 14

The beginning of animal life. Fishes were created. **Bring forth abundantly**, literally "swarm." **Fowl that may fly** should be translated "let fowl fly." 20

Whales, large monsters of every kind, saurians, crocodiles, huge reptiles. Some have thought that the repetition of the word "created" here may be intended as a warning against the idolatrous worship of these creatures that was going on in Egypt when Moses wrote. 21

The creation of cattle, insects, beasts of all kinds. 24

Then, apparently after a pause, comes the creation of man, the narrative being introduced with peculiar emphasis and solemnity. 26

God does not command as heretofore, but takes counsel with Himself before making man. The Christian Church, almost with one voice, has taken the words "Let us" here as an indication of the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead.

In His own image. God gave to man when He created him a portion of His own life and being. The freedom of our will, under whatever limitations, the gift of memory, of anticipation, and of foresight, are all gifts which we derive from His fulness. And all virtues, purity, love, truth, faithfulness, are divine in their source. They were proved so when He appeared 27

- Gen. I. on earth who exhibited them all in their perfection, and of whom it is written that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." When Adam fell this image of God was marred, but not destroyed, whatsoever was left that was good was still a portion of it. And when man shall be again restored to his rightful place, through the Head of the race, we are told "*we shall be like Him,*" the image of God will be renewed unto perfection.
- 28 Another emphatic protest against the idolatrous worship of these creatures which prevailed so widely in Egypt.
- Gen. II. 1 When God had created man in His own image, the Divine idea was complete, "the heavens and the earth were finished." The light, and the firmament, the productive and teeming earth, all found their meaning and interpretation in the creation of man to rule over them, and now man finds his interpretation in God, who rests after creating him, and sees all that He has made that it is very good.
- 3 God **sanctified** the Sabbath, set it apart for a religious use for man (Mark ii. 27). There is no distinct mention of the observance of the Sabbath until the Israelites came into the desert, but the division of weeks is indicated in several passages. See Gen. viii. 10, 12; xxix. 27, 28; Ex. xvi. 23. The Mosaic law therefore, in commanding the observance of the Sabbath, probably hallowed a previously existing observance, basing the duty first upon the Divine rest recorded in the verse before us (Ex. xx. 11), and secondly upon the hard Egyptian labour from which the Israelites had been freed, and the sympathy which that labour ought to have taught them (Deut. v. 15). It is clear, therefore, that as the original institution rested not upon artificial or temporary considerations, but upon the Divine example, and men's moral and physical needs, we cannot regard it as abrogated with the ceremonies of the law. It never ceased in the Christian Church, it was only changed from the seventh to the first day of the week in memory of the Lord's resurrection. Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10.
- Rev. XXI. The second Lesson for this morning is the fitting supplement to the first. The opening of the Bible, as we have seen, describes the earth as it was before sin entered it. The Holy Volume ends with the vision of the earth as it shall be hereafter, when all things that defile shall be cast out. There shall be **no Sea** there (ver. 1), no waste rolling waters, emblem of restlessness, of uncertainty, of separation. The *beauty* of the sea indeed shall remain, but it shall be "a sea of glass," crystallized into eternal peace (iv. 6). Into this redeemed earth God Himself shall descend, and enter into yet closer relations with men than He did with Adam and Eve. And in place of the four rivers which watered the first Paradise, shall flow forth from the midst of His throne the river of **the water of life**.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Gen. II. 4.

The record contained in the Morning Lesson is the oldest record of Creation. How it was communicated to Moses we know not. "It may (says Bp. Harold Browne) have been communicated to the first man in his innocence. It very probably was the great Semitic tradition handed down from Noah to Shem, from Shem to Abraham, and from Abraham through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, to the Israelites who dwelt in Egypt¹." The passage before us is the continuation of the narrative by Moses, who has in view the design of shewing how the Creation was marred by the Fall. In the first chapter the Creator is called "*God*," the Heb. word meaning "the Mighty One," and it therefore expresses the idea which all men had concerning Him, His supreme creating power. But in the passage before us we have the Creator called **The Lord God** throughout. **Lord** is in Heb. "*Jehovah*," and, as we know, it was the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses at the bush. We may therefore conclude that when Moses is using the primeval record in the first chapter he uses the name which he received, "*God*," but when he takes up the narrative in his own way, he uses the name which his countrymen rejoiced to hear, "*The Lord*," joining the two names together at first to intimate that *Jehovah*, the Lord of Israel, was one and the same with God, the Creator of all things.

The best Heb. authorities render this "And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up." This may be taken either as a repetition of the description of the state of the earth in its desolation (i. 2, 6, 7), or else it is an account of the beginning of *agricultural cultivation*, the words **plant**, **herb** meaning "cultivated herbs," and **field** a cultivated place. In fact it must be borne in mind here that the narrator has left the general subject, and is now occupied solely with the local habitation of the first man.

Here again we may take this **mist** either as a description of the state of the atmosphere before the waters were divided from the waters, or else as only applying to the district in which the garden of Eden was placed, a district in which little rain fell.

In this verse are described the littleness and the greatness of man. He is made of the dust, yet takes his life from the breath of God. Cf. Eccl. xii. 7. Let the soul breathe after Him since it is from Him, and is the noblest part of man. We can with confidence commit it to Him for He is its Father. And as we remember this and sigh for the state in which sin has left it, let the blessed message of the Gospel be our comfort, "The first Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was a life-giving

¹ *Speaker's Commentary*, p. 27.

Gen. II.

spirit" (1 Cor. xv. 45), not only having life in Himself, but able to give life to the dead.

8 **Eden** signifies "delights," but the word must be, as our version takes it, a proper name. **Garden** is rendered "*Paradise*" in the old translations, which is a Persian word signifying "park" or "pleasure-ground."

Eastward, i.e. from the place where the account is written, Egypt or the Desert.

9 The two trees. **The Tree of Life** was placed in Paradise as a visible sign and sacrament of immortality and of the blessedness which is the portion of those who love and obey God. The Tree of Knowledge in like manner represented the expansion of human thought and intellect by the assertion of its own liberty, freed from the check of the fear of God.

10 It is quite impossible to identify these four rivers; none which are known at present answer to them entirely. **Hiddekel** (that is the *Tigris*) and **Euphrates** assure us of the *reality* of Paradise. Some have supposed that the bounds of the four rivers were swept away by the Flood.

It was a favourite fancy of the early Christian fathers, that as a river went out of Eden and became four heads, so from the Church at its beginning went forth the four Gospels to water the whole spiritual earth.

12 **Bdellium** probably here means *pearls*. Compare with the riches of Paradise here enumerated the description of the heavenly Paradise, whither at last we hope to come. Rev. xxi. 18—21.

17 **Surely die.** From the act of transgression came death. Death began at once to work in man, as all sin within us to this hour is continually working death. God is life, separation from Him is death. We are all dead through sin (Col. iii. 3), with soul poisoned and leprous, and body subject to decay. A remedy indeed was found in the New Adam, whereby we may pass *through* the grave and gate of death to newness of life. (*Collect for Easter Sunday.*)

19 The gift of speech and knowledge to man. In seeing what Adam would call the creation, the Lord God recognized and accepted the intelligence in Adam which He Himself had imparted.

20 **Help meet for him**, literally "one in front of," or "opposite to him." That is, one who shall be a reflection of his mind, and a partaker of his thoughts and hopes.

21 The mystery here recorded has unquestionably a deep spiritual significance. It teaches the close relationship of the sexes, so that one should reverence the other. It teaches the headship of Man, and at the same time the nearness of Woman to him, taken from near his heart. See 1 Cor. xi. 7—9, and 1 Tim. ii. 13. But moreover we are taught by S. Paul that the marriage union derives its sacredness and holiness from being a

symbol and sacrament of Christ's love to His church (Eph. v. 22—33), and therefore we ought to expect from the beginning to find in marriage a type of that Divine love. And in accordance with this we see the type of the Church, the spiritual Eve, taking her origin out of the body of the spiritual Adam. As Adam slept and Eve was taken from him, so Christ slept the deep sleep of death, and awoke to find His church born out of His wounded side. Hooker expresses this very beautifully, "The Church is in Christ, as Eve was in Adam. Yea, by grace we are every of us in Christ and in His Church, as by nature we are in our first parents. God made Eve of the rib of Adam. And His Church He frameth out of the very flesh, the very wounded and bleeding side, of the Son of Man. His body crucified and His blood shed for the life of the world, are the true elements of that heavenly being, which maketh us such as Himself is of whom we came." (*Eccl. Polity*, Book V., lvi. 7.)

Woman—Man. Heb. *Isha—Ish*.

These words are apparently the commentary of the historian on the event which he has been recording.

Were not ashamed, because they knew no sin. Shame can only come from the consciousness of sin.

Gen. II.

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Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

We have spoken already of the plan and general teaching of the Book of Job. See p. 72. The chapter before us is the beginning of the answer of the Lord to Job's questionings and complainings. The patriarch has cried "O that the Almighty would hear me." He has declared that God is true and faithful (chs. xxvii., xxviii.), but he has also demanded almost with defiance that God will appear and justify Himself and make His ways plain. He has not realized his own weakness, or the great gulf that there is between himself and his Maker. He has been honest and upright, but ignorant and daring. Now therefore the answer of God comes in all its majesty, to illumine what is dark, to raise and support what is low. For to show Job what is wrong and sinful in his character is to ensure his repentance, inasmuch as he does not wilfully cherish any known sin.

A storm arose apparently whilst Elihu was speaking, and out of the midst of it came the voice of God.

Counsel, the fixed plan of God. All that happens is made and established by Him, for, as we are told by our Lord, not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. It is this which Job darkens, or distorts, by placing it in a false light and distorting its features from inability to comprehend them all.

Job had asked for a dialogue in which he and God might discuss the questions which perplexed him, and which perplex men still. But from the midst of the storm God Himself be-

Job
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Job
XXXVIII.

comes the questioner. Who is Job, or who is any mortal man, that he should arraign his Creator at his little bar of judgment?

6 Delitzsch maintains that the word translated "fastened" implies suspending in space, and is therefore scientifically accurate. Cf. ch. xxvi. 7.

7 There were no human creatures to celebrate the birth of the newborn world, therefore the angels sang it (cf. Zech. iv. 7; Ezra iii. 10, 12, 13). That **the sons of God** are angels is evident, and with them **the morning stars** are associated. The angels are mysteriously connected with the stars in many places of Scripture¹. Probably the word "morning" is intended to express the idea of dazzling light (cf. Is. xiv. 12), or it may refer to the dawn of the new created world. The general idea evidently is that of the joy and light (they are almost synonymous terms in Scripture) which attended the Creation, when the Maker pronounced all things very good.

There is no more mention of the angels' songs until the birth of the Sinless One. We may suppose that the defilement which sin brought into the creation made the holy ones mute. It was only when He was born who was Christ the Lord that their heavenly song was once more heard (Luke ii. 13). Then it died away among the stars to be heard no more apparently until it shall welcome the redeemed to the restored Creation, wherein dwelleth righteousness (Rev. xiv. 2).

8 This evidently refers to the gathering of the waters together out of the chaotic earth, and leaving the land dry. Gen. i. 9.

10 **Brake up for it.** The original word also means "restrained," and this seems the sense here; so Umbreit translates "When I strictly measured its boundary, and assigned to it doors and bars."

12, 13 A highly poetical and striking description of the morning. He represents it as taking hold of the ends of the earth like a carpet and shaking the evildoers off from it, i.e. bringing their nightly crimes to an end, and driving them into concealment.

14 **It** (the earth) **is turned as clay to the seal**, that is, is changed as the shapeless mass of clay is changed by the impression of the seal upon it. The things which were chaotic and undistinguishable in the night, take shape and form when the morning dawns upon them; **and they** (all visible things) **stand as [in] a garment**; they are clothed with light, with beautiful diversity.

15 But the same morning is only darkness to those whose deeds are evil, it takes away their light, for light is to them as darkness, and good is their evil. They "will not come to the light

¹ Gesenius, s.v. **צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם** (Host of heaven), shews by the great number of his references that the expression is used almost indiscriminately for the angels which surround God's throne, and for the stars of the firmament.

lest their deeds should be reprov'd." And **the high** (lit. outstretched) **arm is broken**, their power of doing evil is taken from them.

Observe the heightening of the thought in the two clauses of the verse:—"Have the gates of death been opened to thee? Hast thou even *seen* them?" The mystery of death is complete to us all. The wisest physicians can tell us nothing about it. What cord is broken, what is the tie which binds body and spirit, we know not. Life is a mystery, and so is death. But the cord once snapped is not to be restored. We are as water spilled upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. The dust returns to the earth, the spirit departs to God who gave it.

This is not a question, it is an ironical assertion:—"Thou knowest it, because thou wast born long ago, the number of thy days is great."

Treasures. This is not intended as a scientific statement, as if the snow were kept in a treasure-house. It must be remembered throughout that the Lord is using the language of ethics, and the sense is, as heretofore, "Knowest thou *the final causes* of the snow and hail?"

In the winter-storms God seems to be carrying on a war with the earth. Such an idea would hardly seem strange even to us, in some storms that we have seen. But in the east it would be much less so. In February, 1860, a fall of snow in the Haurân (Job's country) destroyed innumerable herds of sheep, goats, and camels. Delitzsch, II. 319. Scripture history gives several instances of destruction by the hail. Ex. ix. 25; Josh. x. 11; Judges v. 20. And cf. Is. xxx. 30 and Ezek. xiii. 13.

The questions here are not concerning the final causes of the light and the wind, but concerning the way that they penetrate and disperse themselves over the earth. They are still questions which no man can answer. We can talk of the laws of polarization or gravitation; but we do not know what either *is*—we know their results and effects, nothing more.

Overflowing of waters, i. e. waterspouts.

These verses are a momentary digression, the Divine Speaker leaving the question of final causes, to speak of His goodness and beneficence in pouring rain upon the thirsty ground and making the desert fruitful. His care extends over the whole universe, even over those parts where no man dwells.

The questions mean, "Have these things any origin visible to mortal eye?" The modern man of science may talk of *Radiation*, whereupon one must ask "What is *that*, and who has created the laws of it?" And the objector is silent.

The translation of clause 1, which our Version gives, is possibly right (Eichhorn's interpretation is the same), but it is more likely that the meaning is "*Canst thou bind the wreath of*

Job
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the Pleiades?" The Persians compared this constellation to a bouquet of jewels, and in all probability the question refers to this. But see a beautiful sermon on this clause, as our Bible translates it, in Macmillan's *Bible Teachings in Nature*.

The magnificent constellation of **Orion** is visible all over the world. Many of us are familiar with the legend of the great giant Orion being chained in the heavens, and the well-known three stars are called his belt, or, as here, his bond or chain. We take the two clauses therefore as asking, "Art thou able to regulate these great constellations, didst thou place them where they are?"

32 **Mazzaroth** (pl. noun) are the twelve signs of the Zodiac, the imaginary lodging-places of the Sun during the year. The question therefore signifies, "Canst thou bring about the revolving seasons, and thus regulate the seasons of the year?"

Arcturus is the constellation called "the Bear." Popular fancy in England has compared this constellation to a waggoner and his team; the Eastern comparison is more poetical, and makes of the four quadrangular stars a bier, and the other three the children of the dead man following it as mourners. This is evidently the idea intended in the present verse.

33 Summary of the preceding verses. **The dominion of heaven in the earth** will mean the alternation of the seasons and of day and night.

34 The question here is not what the prayer of faith is able to do; that forms no part of the present subject. It is, "Hast thou any control over the winds and the rain?"

36 **Inward parts**, lit. "the reins," supposed to be the seat of divining power. The question therefore has a strict and confined meaning, connecting it with the preceding portion, "Who has given man the power of judging the signs of the weather?" and then the question is extended, Who has given him the faculty of meditating upon the past and the future?

37, 38 The question signifies, "Who determines and regulates the due measure of clouds and rain for the earth, which cakes the dust and clods together?"

39 He comes now to the powers and instincts of animals, and continues that subject through the next chapter. In the present we have a contrast, the noble lion and the croaking raven; the great and the small, God provides for them alike. Cf. Ps. cxlvii. 9.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Mattins.

Gen. III.

The Archbishop of Dublin says of this chapter (*Westminster Abbey Sermons*, p. 48), "Assuredly this is the most important chapter in the whole Bible. It is the only chapter which, if we could conceive it as being withdrawn, would leave all the rest

of Scripture unintelligible. Take this away, this record of the Fall, and of the penal consequences of the Fall and of the provision which God so graciously made to repair these consequences, to build up the breach which Adam had made; take this away, and you take away the key of knowledge to all the rest of the Bible. Nor is it the Bible alone which would thus become unintelligible; but the whole condition of the world around us, of man and of nature, of our own selves above all, would present itself to us as an inexplicable riddle. What a riddle, indeed, does it evermore continue to all those who refuse to accept the solution of it here offered. There are indeed in this chapter almost as many mysteries as there are words." These wise sentences should be carefully weighed by one who is commenting on this solemn chapter. Sin is the most awful of all the mysteries with which we are brought into contact, and it is only to be expected that the history of its origin should contain deep mysteries. Our words ought to be wary and few in dealing with it, lest we be giving our own fancies instead of God's revealed truth. The *moral* bearing of the whole narrative is entirely plain, telling us all that we require to know for our guidance, but the details must be handled with hesitation, because they are not entirely within our reach.

The Serpent. We have no right to take this in any other than its plain and common meaning. And it will not escape the notice of any careful reader that the devil is not named nor even hinted at in this chapter. Scripture elsewhere is clear enough upon the point, but not here. (See S. John viii. 44; Rev. xii. 9; 1 John iii. 8; Rev. xx. 2.) It is obvious that there was a dreadful mystery about the appearance of evil, and that ages passed before the agency was revealed of a personal spiritual power of evil, of which the serpent was the instrument, a power hating God, and desirous of destroying His works. Some have thought that the desolation described in ch. i. 2 was the work of evil spirits. Certainly this spirit of evil was a *creature* of God, and therefore must have been originally holy, but had fallen by an abuse of its personal freedom. None of this, as far as we know, had been revealed to Moses, probably the world was not yet in a condition to receive it, but the later Scriptures shew that a struggle of tremendous issues had taken place before the creation of man.

The tempter succeeds by implanting sinful lust in the soul, a breath from beneath. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." S. James i. 15.

It happened to them as the seducer had promised, though in an evil sense. Their eyes *were* opened (ver. 5), but only to shew them their own nakedness and to fill them with shame. They knew good and evil, but only to know that they had lost the one and been mastered by the other. "Whoso committeth

Gen. III.

sin is the servant of sin." Man became as God (vv. 5 and 22), i. e. he was no longer God's representative over creation, but assumed independence of action, and thereby became, not happy, but infinitely wretched and poor. And in him fell all the race. The root was poisoned, and the poison therefore penetrated every branch.

Fig leaves. The sinner tries to hide his shame with covering of his own devising. Our own righteousness, the absence of gross vice, the good word of others, these things are no better than fig leaves; let God once call to us, and in shewing us His own glory shew us thereby our own shame, and we find immediately that our own devices are of no avail, we stand before Him shivering, naked, and ashamed (Trench).

8 The Lord God appears as judge and avenger against the serpent, the woman, the man, and nature. It seemed as if the tempter's design had succeeded. Therefore to the tempter God first addresses Himself, and tells him that he has brought deeper ruin upon himself.

14 There may have been an actual change in the physical form of the serpent, or the Lord God may have intended to declare that his creeping habit was a true representation of his future position in God's economy. His curse is bitter and awful, for whereas man, who had not of his own accord produced sin, still retained within him the capacity and even desire of new life, the serpent is pronounced utterly accursed. The curse, as far as the words go, is uttered solely against the animal. For this curse was pronounced for the sake of man, and was therefore adapted to his understanding. Though sin has entered so deeply into man's being, yet there is left within him that which protests against it and hates it. (Rom. vii. 15, 16.) There is a yearning after the lost inheritance, a desire after righteousness. Man is still the offspring of God (Gen. ix. 6; James iii. 9; Acts xvii. 28). And therefore the Lord declares at once that man and his seducer shall not be as one, the seed of the woman shall be delivered from the seducer's influence, there shall be continual enmity between them, ending in the tempter's complete defeat. Here then we have the first promise of salvation. As we have said, its terms apply to the *serpent*, for Adam regarded the serpent as the author of his ruin, but in proportion as man advanced in spiritual knowledge, so far he would see that he had a spiritual enemy to overcome. He learns now that by an act of Divine justice the betrayer shall be overcome by the betrayed.

16 The judgment upon the woman is combined punishment and salvation, the latter springing out of the former. Marriage had been the cause of the Fall, it now becomes the instrument of deliverance. The woman is to bring forth children, though in sorrow, and by her childbearing salvation shall come (1 Tim. ii. 15). The propagation of the race was to continue, and

because all men are sinners every man must be conceived and born in sin. And yet each birth should be a fresh pledge of the future redemption, until the fulness of the time should come wherein the angel should make the announcement to a daughter of Eve, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke i. 35.) In that hour the new Adam should be conceived in holiness, and the regeneration of the race should begin.

In like manner the punishment of Adam shall be the means of restoration. Labour in the sweat of his brow to deliver the earth from its curse, this shall be his appointed discipline, nature's palliative and antidote against evil desires, and death at the last shall deliver him from the misery of his present state of existence.

That Adam accepted this lot as his rightful portion, and discerned in it the ultimate loving purpose of God, is strikingly shewn in this verse. **Eve** means "life." God had said to him "To dust shalt thou return," and Adam, as in reply, called his wife's name "Life," as seeing life springing out of death, through God's promise.

Adam and Eve had made for themselves a covering of fig-leaves; yet as soon as they heard the voice of the Lord God, conscience drove them to hide themselves among the trees of the garden. But now God Himself makes them a covering which **clothes them**. But it can only be made at the cost of a life. "Is not the whole mystery of justification wrapped up in these most precious details? Have we not here a clear prophecy of the Lamb slain, to the end that the righteousness which was His might become ours?" (Archbp. Trench.) Here then we have the first institution of sacrifice, the innocent dies to cover the guilt of the sinner, and already there is a type before us of the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head.

Behold, &c. A sentence spoken in pity. "See what Satan has brought upon man by his evil promise. He has come to know evil, but at the cost of all his happiness. Now, therefore, let us not expose him to the misery of immortality in his present evil state. There would be no mercy or love in that. Immortality with sin would be the most terrible curse of all."

Therefore the Tree of Life was placed beyond man's reach. The cherubim with the flaming sword, the powers and works of Nature, were placed between man and God, and the slow and painful discipline of human life began. The tree of life disappeared from the earth. It is spoken of ever and again as existing, as being given spiritually to men in holy ordinances, and in heavenly wisdom (Ezek. xlvi. 2—12; Prov. iii. 18). It is seen by the Christian prophet in the Vision of final victory, growing beside the waters of life, bearing fruit of everlasting

Gen. III.

17—19

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Gen. III.

variety and freshness and leaves for the healing of the nations (Rev. xxii. 6, 7).

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Gen. VI.

From the beginning we notice in mankind two classes—there is the child of sin and the child of salvation. The distinction appears in Cain and Abel, and afterwards in the posterity of Cain and Seth. In the one we trace a believing surrender to God, in the other an ever-increasing alienation from Him. These therefore we may regard as the *Church* and the *World*. Adam, we are told, begat other sons and daughters, but doubtless each, according to their tendencies, would join the one party or the other. The Scripture gives a sad account of the declension of the family of Cain into tyranny, cruelty, and murder. In consequence of the long duration of life, the race rapidly increased, but alienation from God increased with equal rapidity. There had been those of the family of Seth who had “called themselves by the name of the Lord,” in protest apparently against idolatry, but these must have gone with the evil world at the period at which we arrive in this chapter. It is an awful commentary on this morning’s Lesson, as shewing how rapidly and fatally sin is developed when it is once conceived.

2 **The sons of God.** Some have supposed that by these are meant angels, and that here we have a record of some supernatural wickedness which was suffered to prevail in the world. Others think that the sons of Seth are meant, marrying the daughters of Cain. Both views have had powerful supporters both in ancient and modern times. But the second seems to be the most probable. The few who retained the knowledge and fear of God were now led by the lust of the eye to take them wives as they chose without advice of parents or regard to religion.

3 **My spirit, &c.** We must not take this as implying that God had given up the sinful earth or ceased to strive for its return to Him. But He declares that the striving of His Spirit has been resisted by the evil fleshly nature of men to their destruction. Therefore He will proceed to other means. They who have made themselves slaves of Nature shall be punished by the laws of Nature, and so shall the earth which they have defiled be purified. That they were not shut out from the hope of salvation needs not to be said. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” “The act of judgment is at the same time an act of salvation, the Flood is also a flood of grace” (Delitzsch). This seems the natural way of interpreting 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.

For that he also is flesh. Though he was created in the Divine image he has become merely sensual and carnal.

Yet his days, &c. This probably refers, not to the shorten-

ing of human life, but to the respite of 120 years which shall be given to him before the Flood shall overtake him.

Giants. Heb., "*the giants*," as being well-known. They were evidently men of warlike character, probably also of great size, and presumed on this to become tyrants and godless oppressors. See ver. 13.

Every imagination, &c. Not only were men tempted to wickedness and led to commit it, but they deliberately planned it for wickedness' sake.

God is unchangeable (James i. 17). Yet we ought not to explain away the verse before us, or call it "adaptation." God's will is unchangeably good and loving. And for that reason He always grieves at the sight of wrong, of the headstrong wilfulness, and pride, and malice of men. That grief which every father feels for the sin of his children is a holy feeling, derived from the Eternal Archetype. And therefore such language is no adaptation to our weakness, but eternal truth and reality.

Perfect in his generations, i.e. among the evil generations with which he lived. **Walked with God,** and preached righteousness. Ezek. xiv. 14; 2 Pet. ii. 5.

The Ark was not intended for nautical purposes. It had no mast, sail, or rudder, but was adapted for carrying freight, rectangular in form. **Gopher,** probably cypress. **Rooms,** literally "nests," compartments suited for men and animals. **Pitch,** bitumen, intended to make it watertight.

A cubit was 22 inches. This will give 3,600,000 cubic feet, room for 7000 distinct species of animals.

A window, probably rather "a course of windows," running for a cubit long under the top or deck of the ark. The material may have been transparent, for it is not improbable that such material was known to the antediluvians. It may be noticed here that since the Ark is a type of the Church of Christ (see 1 Pet. iii. 21, and the Baptismal Service), the body of our material churches is called *The Nave*, i.e. "Ship," and the *Clerestory* windows which light the Nave in many churches are in memory of this window course in the Ark.

With lower, &c. "The number three runs through the types of the Church. Three stories in the Ark; three stories in the Temple; three courts in the Temple; Body, Soul, and Spirit in the Temple of man's frame (1 Thess. v. 23). The Church is the dwelling of the Ever-blessed Trinity, in whose Name we are baptized by the instrumentality of a *Threefold Ministry*" (Bp. Wordsworth).

The character of the present volume precludes the discussion of the question whether the Flood prevailed over the whole globe or not. That portions at least of the awful event were miraculous cannot be doubted, and this once admitted, the *degree* of miracle is a profitless question. The faith of our childhood, that "nothing is impossible with God," may seem a commonplace in certain

Gen. VI.

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Gen. VI.

phases of a man's mind, but as we grow older and watch the phenomena of the living world around us and attempt to solve its problems, that faith regains its power within us, and commends itself as the perfection of common sense. Let us note here, however, that the Flood was a judgment of God upon *man*. The history of it tells us nothing about "natural convulsions," "change of earth's fabric," or the like. But it does tell us that all mankind, except eight souls, perished. It will be well for us not to force interpretations into the words of Scripture which they may not have been intended to bear. Man defiled the earth and therefore perished; and thus one stage in the religious history of the world was passed.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Gen. VIII.

Noah had now been 150 days in the Ark. God had shut him in (vii. 16) as in a prison, and for the first week he remained hidden from the world, and the Flood did not come (vii. 10). The ungodly may have scoffed, but he was in peace. Even so Christ lay in the grave, "in a place of darkness and in the deep" (Ps. lxxxviii. 4—7. *Proper Ps. for Good Friday*). Then the storms of the wrath of God fell upon the power of sin, in the Type and the Antitype, the ungodly world and the powers of hell; while within the Ark, and within the Tomb, lay the World's Life, hidden but not quenched. At the appointed time "God remembered Noah," and at the appointed time He "looked upon the face of his Anointed," and the world came forth again in newness of life.

1 **Were assuaged.** In the LXX. Version "and assuaged the waters," the same word that is used in Matt. xiv. 32, the sense being "gave tranquillity to."

4 **Upon the mountains of Ararat,** in one of the mountains of the region, Ararat being a mountain system between the R. Araxes and Lake Van, not far from the S.E. coast of the Black Sea.

6 **Window,** not the same word as in vi. 16. That, as we have seen, meant a window-course for light, this is apparently a small casement for the purpose of opening.

7 The raven perhaps lighted on dead carcasses, finding in them both resting-place and food, and therefore not re-entering the ark, though sometimes revisiting it.

8 The raven thus furnishing no sufficient information he sent a dove, which eats grain, and rests only in the dry.

11 Olive is a very hardy plant, and will live for a very long time under water. See an interesting note on this verse in the *Speaker's Commentary*. The olive leaf thus brought was a symbol of perpetual freshness and vigour. And the common consent of Christians has always seen in this incident a token of the Holy Spirit bringing peace, life, love, to the soul after trial.

Returned not any more. The Flood was over, the earth was dried and cleansed. A symbol of the day when no more assurance of peace will be needed by the soul, because the waves of this troublesome world are all passed, and the land of everlasting life is reached.

Gen. VIII.

12

The first altar mentioned in Scripture. Noah's first act is one of worship. As head and priest of the human family, he offers thanks for its deliverance, and a sacrifice for the sin which has caused its punishment.

20

Sweet savour, in the margin "savour of rest." God accepted the propitiation and was well-pleased, as seeing in it a type of the Perfect Sacrifice in which the whole world shall be accepted. See 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. xiii. 8; Eph. i. 16; v. 2.

21

For the imagination, &c. We have here a fresh unfolding of Divine truth. The sin which has already destroyed the world still remains, and God's wrath must ever burn against it, for He cannot deny Himself. Yet because of the sweet savour of that Propitiation which He foresees, He will forgive. He sees whereof His feeble and erring creatures are made, He compassionates their infirmities. Therefore He is moved not to curse but to pity and bless. He will look upon His Son's great sacrifice until His anger turn away.

By the gracious influences of fruitful seasons He will win man to love and worship Him. Compare Matt. v. 45; Acts xiv. 17.

22

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Mattins.

The judgment which fell upon the world so far renewed it, that a new dispensation began with Noah. It was evident that a fuller one was to come hereafter, for an event which had been foretold was as yet unfulfilled, namely, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. But Noah's new world now opened with *Sacrifice* as its starting-point, a confession of the sinfulness of man and his need of redemption. And God gave proof of His acceptance by making a new covenant with man.

Gen. IX.

The fear of you, &c. Perhaps this is intended to remove the fear that the smallness of their number might make them the prey of savage beasts. But Noah does not receive *dominion* over them to the extent that Adam did (i. 28). It is only Christ the restorer of Man's innocence who can receive this (see Mark i. 13; Ps. viii. 6, 7, with Heb. ii. 9).

2

Probably animal food was eaten before the Flood, but this is the first time that God expressly gives the permission for it. This permission by implication shows the sinfulness of idolatry, men *worshipping what they eat*.

3

Gen. IX.

4 **Flesh with the life.** Most Jewish commentators suppose that this is a prohibition of the horrible practice, still in use with some savage nations, of cutting and eating raw flesh from living animals. The ancients believed that the life was in the blood, and it is literally true that the shedding of blood is the destruction of life. This therefore is a prohibition of needless cruelty.

5 **Blood of your lives, i. e. life-blood.** It was so sacred that God would take it into His own keeping and require it. **Every beast.** See Ex. xxi. 28.

6 The command to put the murderer to death is here based upon a truth which is everlasting,—Man is made in the image of God. To destroy man, therefore, is sacrilege, and an outrage upon the Father of men. Cf. James iii. 9.

10 We may regard this as the first *Law* given to man.

10 **From all, &c.** The latter part of this verse seems to imply that death by the Flood was not the portion of all animals. We have already said that the narrative merely requires us to believe that the judgment was upon man and that portion of the world which was then his dwelling-place.

13 **I do set, &c.** Lit. "I did set." Some suppose that this is the first appearance of the Rainbow, and that no rain had fallen before the Flood. But there is nothing in the text to make it necessary to believe this. The words may mean only "Henceforward let the Rainbow appearing out of the storm-cloud be a witness of My gracious promise of mercy and forbearance." Just as Water became by the institution of Baptism a sign of newness of life, and Bread and Wine became a continuing symbol of our union through the death of Christ.

18 **And Ham is the father of Canaan.** This is mentioned because the descendants of Canaan took so conspicuous a part in early history. They colonized the Holy Land, and formed seven nations who held possession of it until they became servants of Shem (ix. 26).

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Gen. XII.

After the covenant of God with Noah, which we had in this morning's Lesson, the descendants of Noah journeyed into the land of Shinar, between the Euphrates and the Tigris. In order to prevent this dispersion they formed an unholy band of union, unholy because its principle lay not in being the children of God their Father, but in building for themselves a tower, making their own strength and resting in it. (See on *Monday in Whitsun-week*). Therefore God dispersed them. Here there was another development of God's plan for the world. Ungodliness and brute tyranny were defeated, and men were scattered abroad, to be united no more save through the seed of the woman.

For a while therefore the world was left in partial darkness (Acts xvii. 27, 28), holding partial beliefs only. The children of Shem retained the fullest knowledge of God, but even they in course of time succumbed to the principles of heathenism. But out of the common degeneracy and unbelief God now lays hold of one man to furnish him with new powers and new helps for carrying out the Divine plan. Hitherto the promise had been that deliverance should come through the *seed of the woman*, now the promise becomes more definite, it shall come through *the seed of Abraham*.

His father Terah appears to have been an idolater (Josh. xxiv. 2). But moved by a Divine impulse, the family moved westwards from their dwelling-place, Ur of the Chaldees, and came to Haran. There Terah died (ch. xi. 27—32). And after his death Abram, who had been previously commanded by God, left Haran, and “went forth, not knowing whither he went” (Heb. xi. 8), but full of trust and faith. It is this trait especially which marks Abraham and his race. They expect nothing from their own power, but all from the care of Jehovah. They look not on things present, but have endurance to hope and long for things future, prophecies and worship and customs all point forwards. It is true that the people fall grievously many a time, but under the discipline of God the faith in the unseen rises again, and is more strong than ever. (Kurtz, i. 127.)

They were led into the land of Canaan, inhabited at that time by the race of Ham (see on ix. 18, p. 112).

Sichem, now **Nablous**, a very beautiful spot. **Plain**, rather “terebinth tree.” **Moreh**, probably the name of some Canaanite chieftain.

In this verse we have the first mention of an appearance of God to man. There is no mention here of the manner, but in later chapters we have the appearance of “*the Angel of the Lord*” described in such a way, that we must believe both expressions to mean the same thing. Some interpreters hold this Angel of the Lord to be a created being, others that it is our Blessed Lord in human form. Undoubtedly the appearance is that of a human form, not to be distinguished from a common man, save by the pious and devout. If a created Angel is meant, then we must believe that the Lord gave him permission to personate Him, for the record continually represents the Angel speaking as if he were God. (See xviii. 13; xix. 21.) The Bishop of Ely inclines to the view that the “Angel” was an appearance of our Saviour. “The apparent identification of the Angel of God with God Himself in very many passages (*e.g.* Gen. xxxii. 24, cf. vv. 28, 30; Hos. xii. 3, 4; Gen. xvi. 10, 13; xlvi. 15, 16; Josh. v. 14; vi. 2; Judg. ii. 1; xiii. 22; Is. vi. 1; cf. John xii. 41; Is. lxiii. 9) leads markedly to the conclusion that God spake to man by an Angel or Messenger, and yet that that Angel or Messenger was Himself God. No

Gen. XII.

man saw God at any time, but the only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, He declared Him. He who was the Word of God, the Voice of God to His creatures, was yet "in the beginning with God, and was God."

7 **Unto thy seed,** &c. A distinct promise, followed by an act of thanksgiving on the part of Abram. He hallows the gift by burnt-offering, and on removing to another spot, again builds an altar (verse 8), as a token that he has nothing except from God, that his whole life is God's.

8 **He removed,** lit. "he pulled up," i.e. his tent-pegs. Expressive of the fact that he moved about continually, as the Bedouins still do, finding fresh pastures for his cattle. He left only one permanent memorial of each resting-place behind him, namely, the altars which he had built to the Lord. He was a stranger and pilgrim, but the promise of the Lord stood fast that the land should be his children's, and the birthplace of the world's blessing.

9 **The south.** Heb. "*the negeb*," the desert country between Canaan and Egypt. Egypt itself was particularly fertile, and a continual resource during the famines which, in consequence of imperfect cultivation, not unfrequently afflicted Canaan.

10 **To sojourn,** not to dwell; his faith in God's promise was not overthrown.

11 Sarai was now 60 years old, an age, at that period, of middle life. She was fair and therefore a contrast to the swarthy Egyptians. They were licentious and cruel. Abram's faith and religious feeling were quite genuine, but his conscience was imperfectly enlightened as yet, and he fell into this natural but not less grievous error. The historian does not attempt concealment, but on the contrary holds up the uprightness and manliness of Pharaoh in contrast to his duplicity.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.Genesis
XIII.

1 **The south.** See on xii. 9.

2 In the whole history of the chosen race Egypt stands as the type of the world which is at enmity with God. It was now in great prosperity, the huge pyramids, which are still the astonishment of travellers, must have met the eye of Abram in his wanderings, and probably were already old. All around him the Patriarch beheld degrading idolatry, the worship of beasts and creeping things, and, along with this, great luxury and riches. He had himself fallen into sin there, resting on his own understanding, and the accusations of his conscience must have marred the pleasure of the worldly riches which he had gained.

6 **The land was not able to bear them.** Probably because of the drought from which it was only beginning to recover; moreover **the Canaanite and Perizzite dwelt then in the land**

(ver. 7), and this would increase the scarcity. The word Perizzite is of doubtful meaning, but some take it to signify "mountaineer."

"Bad servants often make a great deal of mischief in families, by their pride and passion, their lying, slandering, and tale-bearing. Those who do so are their masters' worst enemies" (Matt. Henry). 7

The nobleness and "gentlemanly feeling," if the expression does not seem out of place, displayed in Abram's words, are among the most interesting passages in his life. By his gentleness he turned away wrath, and in his love of peace he was willing, though the elder, to make the first overture of reconciliation. He stood upon no *rights*, no punctilios of honour, no considerations of interest. An illustration of S. Paul's exhortation, "As far as lieth *in you* (as far as your part is concerned), live peaceably with all men" (Rom. xii. 18). His plea for peace ought not to be lost sight of by Christians,—“We have lived together and loved one another so long. We are brethren. We are of the same family, the same religion. We are companions in patience, in obedience, in hope.” 8

He sees that it is better to part. "Let us," he says, "depart friends." He might have commanded, but he rather beseeches (Philemon 8, 9). When God beseeches us, we may well afford to beseech one another (2 Cor. v. 20). 9

As thou comest, or "as far as to." Lot might have taken warning, as he gazed on the fertile plain of Jordan, from his experience of fertile but sinful Egypt. But he did not, and his choice proved a sad one for him. 10

The fertility of the country had brought luxury and with it utter depravity and vice. This is stated here apparently to exhibit the recklessness of Lot's choice. 13

Abram retires into the less fertile, but also less dangerous mountain country, approved by his conscience and satisfied with his choice, and is now rewarded by the renewed assurance of God's care and favour. 14

Plain, rather "terebinth," as in xii. 6. **Mamre** was an Amorite chief (xiv. 13), whose home was here. 18

ASH WEDNESDAY.

Mattins.

This is the beginning of the third part of Isaiah's prophecies. The Prophet receives a command to appear as the preacher of condemnation, but the Lord immediately takes the word out of his mouth, and Himself becomes the preacher. **Is. LVIII.**

Shew my people. Because they were deceiving themselves, trusting to formal and barren ceremonial, and unconscious of their deep moral sickness.

Is. LVIII.

2 In spite of this sinfulness they acted as if there were nothing to be amended in them, as if their godliness and rectitude were so clear that they could not think of expecting anything but good; they sought God every day, with a view to knowing what He was going to do in their favour next. Cf. Ezekiel xx. 1; xxxiii. 30, 31.

3 They boasted of their fasting, and wondered that God took no heed of it.

There was only one fast prescribed by the Law of Moses, namely the 10th day of Tisri, the Day of Atonement. But others were added in memory of particular events, such as the destruction of the Temple by the Chaldæans, and others of which we have no certain knowledge. See Zech. viii. 19. The Jews here boasted of keeping these fasts, and are told by Isaiah that the fasts, properly kept, would have been well-pleasing to God, but that these are formal, heartless, and worthless. They did not deny themselves, but took their bodily pleasure. They did not allow their servants to share in the devout exercises, but exacted all their work from them. They turned their religion into matter of controversy and strife.

5-7 The Lord meets all this self-deception, by shewing in what true worship consists, namely, in deeds of mercy and love.

A day for a man, &c. This translation is right, and not that of the margin. We must understand the repetition of "Is it." "Do you call this a day of affliction of soul?" See a miserable instance of the sin that the Prophet is now denouncing in the record of Jer. xxxiv. 8-22. For parallel verses to the present see Job xxxi. 13-23; Ezek. xviii. 7, 8; James i. 27; Neh. v. 1-11.

8 The blessing which is promised to true and godly fasting, to self-sacrificing love. What before was dark shall become light, the sunlight shall illumine the darkened soul, and health shall revisit the sin-stricken. The righteousness of Israel shall go before her like the cloudy pillar, shewing her the way in which God would lead her, and His glory shall close up the rear to protect the faithful, and keep them together, and prevent any from being lost.

9 No longer then shall Israel complain of praying in vain (see ver. 3). Every cry shall be immediately answered.

But the Prophet earnestly repeats the condition, for no blessing can come until that be fulfilled.

The yoke, the practice of oppression. **The putting forth of the finger**, scornfulness of humbler men, and of the godly. See Prov. vi. 13; Is. lvii. 4; and Luke xviii. 11, where the Pharisee contemptuously speaks of "this publican."

10 **Draw out**, lit. "cause it to long on behalf of the hungry." The Prophet repeats, but in an intenser form, the promises in ver. 9, and goes on in the next verse to add fresh ones.

There will be a continual and steady gift of heavenly grace, guidance, refreshment, strength, fruit of righteousness.

The promise conveyed here must have had a very happy meaning to exiles pining for home, as the Jews were in Babylon. The children born in captivity (**they that shall be of thee**) will acknowledge their mother country, and hasten back to it; and Israel shall be known by the honourable name of "Repairer of broken places, Restorer of desolate paths."

This is the promise offered to the Church of old, and this is offered to the Church now. God fulfil it to her! May the Church of England heal the rents in the kingdom, and be the guardian and saviour of the poor, and may writer and reader alike have a share in the blessing!

Evensong.

"All conversion is the work of the grace of God. That of Nineveh remains, in the history of mankind, an instance of God's overpowering grace." (Dr Pusey.)

Jonah appears, after his deliverance, to have returned home, or possibly to Jerusalem to offer thanks. The word **Arise** would hardly be used except of one who was resting.

Nineveh has been described by an ancient historian, Diodorus Siculus, who gives the dimensions as 480 furlongs (60 miles) circumference. This exactly corresponds with "the three days' journey" of Jonah, for, as Dr Pusey has shewn, this measurement must refer to *circumference*. The researches of Mr Layard confirm the statements of Diodorus in many particulars, among which are those of the dimensions (Layard's *Nineveh*, p. 640). This comprises the portion within walls. Much of it doubtless was under tillage, and the population was far less than that of our metropolis. The buildings were very seldom allowed to approach the walls in such cities. They were more like walled peoples than cities in our sense. See Pusey's note, *Minor Prophets*, p. 278.

Began to enter, a Hebraism signifying "began and continued to enter." The day's journey in all probability carried him straight through the diameter of the city, about 20 miles. And he apparently reiterated the same cry, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh overthrown." The sentence was conditional, as all God's threatenings are, until the final judgment comes.

The Assyrians had probably heard of Jonah already. It was according to his prediction that their ancient enemies the Syrians had been humiliated (2 Kings xiv. 25), and his words therefore would come with the force of conviction upon them. And there are signs that the Assyrians at this time had deep reverence for the gods. (Pusey, p. 255.)

The result was a repentance more deep, sincere, complete,

Is. LVIII.

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Jonah III.

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Jonah III.

than any recorded in the Bible. All, as with one accord, joined in it. It was a repentance apparently founded upon trust, as well as upon fear. They **believed**, not merely the proclamation of Jonah, but **in God**, apparently feeling that He who would send His prophet thus far to warn them, must have a purpose of mercy in such an act.

6 The king in all probability was Ivalush III., called in Scripture Pul. **Arose**, an act of haste and earnestness.

The causing the beasts to join in the general humiliation is not without like example in Eastern history. Herodotus relates that, after the battle of Plataea, the Persians, mourning for their general, shaved the hair from themselves, from their horses, and from the beasts of burden. Plutarch records like cases (see Keil, I. 408). There was a true instinct in this act of the heathen king. He felt that God cared for the dumb beasts, and that their unconscious wail could be heard by Him. And the moanings and lowings of the animals, and their voices of distress, must have added to the sad aspect of the city.

8 The characteristics of true repentance are all here. There is the outward act of humility, the earnest cry for pardon, the change of life.

Violence, the special sin of the Assyrians. Nahum iii. 1; ii. 12; iii. 19. "The Assyrian records are nothing but a dry register of military campaigns, spoliations, and cruelties." (Layard.)

The Ninevites could not be so confident of finding mercy upon their repentance as we may be who have the promise and covenant of God to depend upon, and especially the merit and mediation of Christ. But they had a general trust in God's mercy. Hope of mercy is the great help to repentance and reformation. The more inexcusable shall we be, if with the light of the Gospel we persist in unbelief and self-indulgence. This is the practical lesson drawn by our Lord Himself.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

Mattins.

Gen. XIX.

12—30

12

We read last Sunday that the men of Sodom were sinners before the Lord exceedingly. In the xviiiith chapter (see on *Trinity Sunday*) we are told that the measure of their iniquities was full and that God came down to take vengeance upon them, and though He promised to spare them if ten righteous could be found within the city, the ten could not be found. The Lesson before us gives the account of the dreadful overthrow. Two angels came to Sodom, the executors of God's wrath. But first there was an act of mercy to be done. Lot had foolishly and selfishly chosen to dwell among these sinners. But the merciful care of God had protected him from his own

folly so far that he had not joined them in their sin (2 Pet. ii. 7). And therefore he was to be plucked out of the burning.

Gen. XIX.

Lot had two unmarried daughters. He may have had others married, in which case they must have perished in the doomed city. But most commentators suppose that "married" in this verse means "were betrothed to."

14

Which are here. Implying "There is no time to be lost. They are on the spot, and therefore there is just time to save them. Your sons-in-law must be left to their fate."

15

All the plain. All the fertile region, which he had with such short-sightedness made choice of.

17

The mountain, the mountainous regions of Moab.

19

Zoar was probably infected with the vices of Sodom, but Lot pleaded that as it had few inhabitants, they might be left, if haply they might yet be brought to repentance.

20

Perhaps these words are written as an awful contrast to what follows. The sun was risen, the morning was clear and bright, and no sign was visible that the night would descend upon a scene of horror and desolation. "How suddenly do they consume, perish, and come to a fearful end!"

23

The whole country around was and is bituminous. The natural inference, therefore, with these words before us is that lightning from heaven set the whole country in a blaze; though some contend that the words will bear the interpretation of a tremendous volcanic eruption. We are told that it was done by "the Lord," i.e. apparently by the angels executing His work. And Holy Scripture speaks often of natural events being under the control of angels. Ps. civ. 4; John v. 4. That the account before us implies miraculous agency needs not to be said.

24

It has been commonly supposed by Jewish commentators that she was killed by the brimstone and fire whilst lingering, and then gradually incrustrated by the salt with which the whole country abounds to a wonderful degree.

26

Remembered Abraham, i.e. the intercession which the Patriarch had made on behalf of the righteous.

29

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Abraham was now in peace and prosperity. He dwelt in a fertile country, was very rich, and on friendly terms with the people of the land. His eldest son, Ishmael, had left him, but was prospering; the child of promise, Isaac, was grown or growing to manhood. Prosperity often needs trial, and it was so now.

Gen. XXII.

Tempt. The Heb. word signifies "to test closely," and is translated "prove," "try," "essay" much oftener than "tempt." In fact it has, in the majority of cases where it is used, a good

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Gen. XXII. and not a bad meaning. We must therefore understand here "God did prove Abraham." God, who had led him from Ur into Canaan and had guided his moral and spiritual as well as natural life, saw fit now to try him more deeply than He had done before.

2 **Moriah.** Almost universal consent has identified this with the Mount Moriah on which Solomon's Temple was built (2 Chr. iii. 1), and there is no sufficient reason for doubting it.

Human sacrifice, as we know, is abominable to God. One may even say that God Himself could not sanction such a sacrifice, for He cannot deny Himself, or change the laws of His own holiness or of the morality which He has implanted in us. How then shall we explain this command?

Abraham's highest aim, the highest aim of all men who fear God, is to obey the will of God, as far as He has made it known to them. Abraham believed that what God commands must be right. He saw the heathen around him offering their children to their gods, and it was not yet clearly revealed to him that such offerings were abomination. They were at least proofs of the worshipper's earnestness and devotion. And no proof could be too great of the love which he owed to *his* Lord. He knew clearly that God had led him thus far in righteousness, and would lead him still. To believe less would have been unworthy of his trustfulness and obedience. He put himself, therefore, into the hand of God to be led according to His will.

11 It is surely remarkable that whereas in the preceding part of the chapter it is "*God*" who is spoken of throughout, here we have "**the Angel of the Lord** (Jehovah)," the covenant name, the Guardian and Protector of His people.

12 **Now I know.** God needed not to learn for His own part, but He would shew the Patriarch himself, and would shew us, that his faith and obedience were complete. The prohibition of the human sacrifice now, and the providing of the lamb instead, was a witness once for all to Abraham, that human offerings cannot be otherwise than hateful to God.

It remains to see what lessons this event taught Abraham, and what deep truths it revealed to future ages. As we have already said, it testified once and for ever against the human sacrifices of the heathen. But it also taught, and with equal force, that a man is to sacrifice his child, himself, his most tender and intimate feelings, to the God who cares for him. The faith of Abraham is imitated truly, though it may be at a distance, in the case of every parent whose child God takes away, and who earnestly looks up to heaven and says "God's will be done. Father, I commit it to Thee. Thou knowest what is best for us, Thou doest all things well." We are not yet in full communion with God if we keep back anything from Him, if we are in any respect self-willed, self-seeking.

Genesis
XXII.

But there was a yet deeper lesson still. Man was made in the image of God. Therefore the sacrifice of his son by Abraham, the highest sacrifice that he could be called upon to make, was a reflex of some mighty sacrifice on the part of his Maker. What was the Sacrifice which the Most High could make? Abraham could not have answered that question, but he knew that an answer there must be. "God will provide a lamb," he said. And before he quitted the mountain he called it "Jehovah-jireh," i. e. "The Lord will see," or "provide." From that time forwards his children were taught to look for the day which should unfold the mystery. The light grew clearer as the ages passed on, until at the last "God spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all."

In a type of such deep significance no detail can be passed by lightly, and it is no wonder that devout commentators of both ancient and modern times have found so many points bearing on the history of the Antitype. The three days' journey, for example, in verse 4, has been regarded as anticipatory of the words of our Lord in S. Luke xiii. 32, 33, and again, the separation of Isaac from the servants (ver. 5) of Christ separated from His disciples, left alone with God. Who will refuse to see in Abraham laying the wood upon Isaac his son, a foreshadowing of the Lord laying upon His Son the iniquity of us all (Is. liii. 6), and of the Redeemer going forth bearing His Cross?

Nor must we overlook the significance of the ram caught in a thicket, and offered instead of Isaac. It represented visibly the sacrifice of Isaac even unto death, which Abraham in will had offered. The sacrifice was not left imperfect to Abraham's sight. The ram died for Isaac, and he, as he descended from the altar, in figure rose from the dead (Heb. xi. 19).

Jehovah-jireh. The same Hebrew word is used in v. 8. **In the mount,** &c. More probably this should be rendered "In the mount the Lord shall be seen." One can hardly doubt that to this our Lord referred when He said "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad."

The following references will give the various events wherein the Lord was manifested on Moriah: 2 Sam. xxiv. 25 (His *mercy*); 2 Chron. vii. 1—3 (His *covenant*); Isaiah vi. 1 (His *uncreated glory*); John ii. 14 (His *incarnate glory*); Acts ii. 1 (His *gift of the Spirit*).

A second and fuller promise to Abraham. **By myself have I sworn,** i. e. through the Angel. Another proof, apparently, that the Angel was Christ.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Sarah is the only woman whose age is recorded in Scripture. We come here also to the first recorded burial, and we

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16

Genesis
XXIII.

Genesis
XXIII.

find in the touching details a Divine sanction for the reverence and hopeful piety wherewith we lay our loved ones to their rest.

2 **Came**, i. e. into the tent where her body lay, and where he could be in retirement.

3 **Stood up**. Probably he had been mourning on the ground after the Oriental manner. His rising up indicates that he "sorrowed not even as others which have no hope," as do also the expressions "his dead," "my dead," since they imply that she was not lost to him, but would be restored to him in a better world. We may call this the first sign in the Bible of a belief in the Communion of Saints.

4 **Stranger and sojourner**. In the LXX. Version the words are the same as those in 1 Pet. ii. 11. Abraham was a stranger and pilgrim, as all his faithful children were, having no home here, but hastening to the home above.

7—9 The mingled courtesy and dignity of the old man's sorrow is described for us here in a most touching manner. He had no part with the Canaanites; their faith and life were alien from his; it was for him and his children therefore to keep separate from them in life and in death until God should break the partition down. They would sleep apart in their loneliness, separate from the world. His children followed his example (ch. l. 5, 25; Acts vii. 16). Canaan abounded in **caves**, which were therefore commonly used for sepulture. This cave of Machpelah, the first recorded burial-place in history, is jealously guarded unto this day by the Mahometan inhabitants of the country. The cave is covered by a rich Mosque, which had not for ages been entered by foreign feet until the Prince of Wales and his party were permitted to do so in 1863. There is a very interesting account of his visit in Dean Stanley's *Sermons in the East*.

10 **At the gate**, the public place of the Eastern cities.

13 Cf. 2 Sam. xxiv. 24 and 1 Chron. xxi. 24.

14 **Four hundred shekels**, probably about fifty guineas.

17 The bargain is legally conveyed and publicly attested, and the land becomes Abraham's. And this is the only land which he possessed in Palestine—even *a grave*. This was his earnest of future possession, and by it his children were endeared to the land.

The sepulchre was at "the end of the field;" and wherever our possessions are there is a sepulchre at the end of them. But what a token this was of the Resurrection to come! Abraham was content to wander as a pilgrim in life, but he secured a place where his flesh might rest in hope.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Mattins.

Little is told us in the Bible concerning Isaac. Probably there was little to tell. His life seems to have been very uneventful. "The character of the child of promise is one gentle and amiable, but somewhat weak. He is full of natural affection, grieving over his mother's death, calling the wells after the names which his father had given them, living evidently under the power of the greater energy of his wife, seeking to turn aside the blessing to his best-loved son in spite of God's previous warning, and yet, when this had failed, blessing Jacob affectionately before he sent him away. But there are no points marked out to us of deep faith or strength of character. His preference for Esau's brilliant and superficial character argues something of this want of depth in himself, and the direct imitation of Abraham's deceit towards Abimelech is remarkably consistent with this absence of originality." (*Barry's Introduction to the Old Testament.*)

Genesis
XXVII.

1—40

Old. Jewish interpreters say, 137.

Isaac's partiality for Esau, while knowing his worldly and reckless character, is much to be blamed. There is a very characteristic sentence in ch. xxv. 28, which throws light on the present passage. "Isaac loved Esau, *because he did eat of his venison.*" His appetite was a snare to him, and led him to wish to contravene God's purposes.

That my soul may bless thee. The head of the family in Patriarchal times was also its priest. The solemnity of the ceremony before him causes Isaac to add, **before the Lord.**

Rebekah knew God's intention (xxv. 23), and her strength of character had doubtless led her to discern the shallowness and recklessness of Esau's character (ch. xxv. 32). And she was grieved with his unholy marriages with the women of Canaan (xxvi. 34, 35). It was therefore with good intent, but by a sinful expedient, that she now proceeded.

Jacob's words are characteristic. He has no objection apparently to the fraud, but he dreads being detected in it.

Goodly raiment, lit. "the beautiful raiment." Ancient expositors record the Hebrew tradition that it was a special robe, belonging by right to the firstborn, which was worn at the offering of sacrifice. And this is probable in itself, for Esau had a home of his own, and his ordinary raiment would have been there.

The hair of the Syrian goat is very fine and silky, like human hair, and the Roman poet Martial mentions that it was worn as a substitute for it. (Cf. Song of Solomon iv. 1.)

Isaac's questions denote surprise. Perhaps he doubted the wisdom of his own purpose and had expected that Esau would fail in his hunting. And the questions indicate that he was ill

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18—21

Genesis
XXVII.

at ease; probably he doubted greatly, yet wished to believe against his conviction. It is characteristic that he eats before giving the blessing.

29 The blessing no doubt refers in part to the extension of the kingdom under David and Solomon, but much more to the victory of Israel over all nations in the person of Him who is King of kings. See Rom. ix. 12--15; Zech. xiv. 9.

33 We must commend here the faith and steadfastness of Isaac. That he felt the deceit of Jacob is plain (ver. 35), but he would not break out into a curse against him, because he knew that the blessing which he had uttered came from a Higher than himself, that he was only the channel of conveying it.

34 "Every evildoer can wish himself well; no man would be miserable if it were enough to desire happiness. Esau's tears find no place for Isaac's repentance, except it were that he hath done that by will which he should have done upon duty." (Bp. Hall.)

39 The Hebrew is literally "Behold, thy dwelling shall be *from the fatness*," and some scholars hold that this signifies "far from the fatness of the earth—far from the dew of heaven." This makes the contrast greater between Esau and Jacob, and would refer to the warlike predatory life of the Edomites in a wild and rocky country. The Bp. of Ely (*Speaker's Commentary*) prefers the present version, holding that Isaac was promising Esau some temporal blessing. The one blessing of *special* love is for Israel, but God is merciful, and gives a second blessing to one who had loved Him little.

40 **Shalt serve thy brother.** 1 Sam. xiv. 47; 2 Sam. viii. 14; 1 Kings xi. 14; 2 Kings xiv. 7, 22. **Shalt break his yoke, &c.** 2 Kings xvi. 6. The Edomites received circumcision under the Maccabees, and were incorporated into the Jewish nation.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Genesis
XXVIII.

1 Isaac acquiesced entirely in what he saw to be God's will. **Thou shalt not, &c.**, as Esau had done (xxvi. 34). **Padan-aram.** This compound name signifies the lofty table-land of Mesopotamia.

3 **The blessing of Abraham,** spiritual and temporal. Ch. xvii. 5; Gal. iii. 16; Heb. xi. 16.

8, 9 This marriage of Esau might have pleased his father better than those with the Canaanites, but it could not have been pleasing to God. It is a kind of compromise between the faith of Abraham and the unbelief of Canaan.

12 The first lesson which the Vision would convey to the sleeper must have been this, that there was a way open from God to himself, and from himself to God. The angels going to and fro shewed him God's care and providence over him, and the Lord above all gave him assurance of the fulfilment of the promise and

the impossibility of its failure. But our Lord threw a further light upon the Vision when He blessed Nathanael (John i. 47—51). He told him that HE is the ladder, that by Him alone we ascend to the Father. He joins earth to heaven, the seen to the unseen. Through Him man's spirit may ascend to God, and God's Spirit has come down to man. There is a significance in His calling Nathanael an "Israelite indeed;" the Vision to Israel was made substantial to the faithful descendant.

The dream had come and gone in a night. But there was a permanent reality left, the knowledge of the care and presence of God. As he went on and found fresh evidences of the Divine love he would find that every place might become to him a house of God, as it will to every man who with the eye of faith sees Christ in His ordinances, and prays with the faith that Christ's Spirit is within him helping him.

This setting-up of pillars was afterwards forbidden, owing to the idolatrous abuse of the practice. Deut. xvi. 22. The pouring oil upon it was a natural way of expressing its sanctity.

This is the first vow mentioned in Scripture. It gives us the impression of a character not yet purified from selfishness. He catches more at the temporal than at the spiritual blessing, natural perhaps in his lonely and hard circumstances. And it looks like making a bargain with God. But along with it there is a firm faith in God's power, and it is this faith which God accepts and works upon. How he purged out the evil and selfish element in Jacob's character the succeeding chapters shew.

Another instance of the payment of tithes to God (see xiv. 20) before their commandment by the Law.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The Bp. of Ely (in *Speaker's Commentary*) reckons that Jacob had now been forty years absent from his home*. He was now on his way back, and nearing the Jordan, which was the eastern boundary of Canaan. When he was leaving Canaan he had seen the angels ascending and descending the ladder of heaven, and had heard the voice of God for his encouragement. Now that he is returning, fearing to meet Esau, he receives another vision of angels. The name **Mahanaim** signifies "two hosts," which perhaps implies that they encamped on each side of him as for protection to him.

Esau had not yet made Seir his home (ch. xxxvi. 6), but probably he was now engaged in expelling the inhabitants, which would account for his having 400 men with him.

* The grounds of this reckoning form no part of the subject of the present Volume, but the reader who is interested will find them in the Commentary referred to, 1p. 177, 8.

Genesis
XXVIII.

16

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Genesis
XXXII.

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Genesis 9 Jacob's prayer is very beautiful, not only from its earnest-
XXXII. ness, but on account of its humility and its pleading trustful-
ness.

22 **Jabbok** (the name probably means "the wrestler") is a
mountain stream flowing into the Jordan on the eastern side,
midway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

24 We here come to the event which was the crisis in Jacob's
spiritual life. One cannot call it his *conversion*, for he was
always being turned to God (which is what conversion means),
from the time that he slept under the stars at Bethel. But the
event before us was the outward sign of the conversion, and
from the time when he left Padan-aram his deceit almost dis-
appears. At Jabbok, where the water wrestles through the
rocks on its way to the Jordan, he was left alone praying. Yet
not alone, for a man wrestled with him. He wept and made
supplication with the Angel (Hosea xii. 4).

Even so it has been with us all at crises of our life. God has
sent forth visitations, bereavements, sicknesses, disappointments
to try us. Angels all, though in our blindness we take them for
enemies. We know them not until the breaking of the day,
then we see that they hold a blessing which we may seize.
Jacob had sinned grievously in past years, his victory with the
Angel was a sign that his bitter repentance and agony of prayer
had been accepted before God.

25 We must wrestle with God and, so to speak, force blessings
from Him. He encourages us to such violence, such eagerness,
such earnestness. And Jacob, who by this time knew his
Divine Antagonist, was encouraged to continue the struggle by
the success which God had already given him. "I will not let
Thee go," he said, "except Thou bless me." The touching of
the hollow of his thigh is a parallel to S. Paul's "thorn in the
flesh" (2 Cor. xii. 7). He won the victory, but not without
bearing the marks of the conflict. When he was weak then he
was strong.

28 He receives the blessing, and it is the gift of a new name,—
Israel, "Prince with God." A sign that God, who had thus
far delivered him from his self-seeking, was still with him to
destroy evil.

29 Jacob in return asks his Antagonist's name. Perhaps the
reply may signify "Why dost thou ask? Is it not plain to you
who I am?"

30 **Peniel**, "face of God." Jacob had seen God in His love
and faithfulness, and this was to him, as to us all, the source
of all blessing. He fears no longer the wrath of his brother—
"My life is preserved," he says. All lesser thoughts have
vanished in the memory that he has been face to face with
God. If God do but bless us, none can curse, neither things
seen nor things unseen. "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with
me."

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

Mattins.

The first words of the chapter are a happy opening of the Lesson, because they bring Jacob back to the place from which he had fled. He is once again settled in Canaan, Esau has withdrawn to Mount Seir.

The beginning of the history of Joseph takes us back to a time before the death of Isaac. And it is not unlikely that the first passages of this narrative took place before the death of Rachel.

Many commentators suppose that the coat here mentioned was a priestly garment, the rightful vesture of the firstborn son (see on xxvii. 15), and that by giving it to Joseph Jacob intended to mark him for his heir.

It is not, perhaps, to be wondered at that his brethren were irritated by his dreams, for it is possible that, along with his heroic aspirations and consciousness of greatness, there was weakness as well, self-conceit and vanity. Such a combination it is by no means unusual to find in the biographies of great men. Affliction was needed to purge the dross from the gold. But it must not be lost sight of that he was upright. He took no steps for fulfilling his dreams. As he himself said to the servants of Pharaoh, "Interpretations belong to God."

Binding sheaves. Proving that the nomad life was ended in great measure with the Patriarchs.

Thy mother. This may mean Leah, or Bilhah, or even Rachel herself. See on ver. 2.

Probably Jacob's anxiety for his sons at Shechem arose from the violence which they had lately committed there (xxxiv. 25—30).

Some pit, one of the deep cisterns dug by shepherds to preserve the rain-water. **We shall see,** &c. Their act was the means of fulfilling his dream. So does God overrule the counsel of the wicked, and turn the fierceness of man to his praise.

See on Zech. ix. 11 (*Easter Even*).

And they sat down, &c. A proof of their heartless indifference. It was not till years after that conscience awoke and shewed them their cruelty (xlii. 21). Reuben had left them, intending to seek help to rescue him. (See vv. 22 and 29.) **A company,** i.e. caravan. **Ishmaelites,** called in ver. 28 "Midianites." Midian and Ishmael were cousins (xvi. 15; xxv. 2), and their descendants near neighbours, and in consequence allies.

Spicery, the *styrax*, or tragacanth, a resinous gum. **Balm,** or balsam, a much esteemed medicine for wounds. See Jer. viii. 22; xlvi. 11.

Captain of the guard, rather "chief of the executioners."

Genesis
XXXVII.

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Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.Genesis
XXXIX.

The first virtues which Joseph exhibits are honesty and industry in the place where Providence has placed him. The sacred historian is careful to keep before our minds the cause of this excellence,—The Lord was with him, and he feared God. No other motive can ever keep any man safe through trial. The desire for the praise of men or self-interest will not suffice to make man or woman true in the inward parts. They must remember the holy lessons of childhood, must pray, must look to the word of God as the light to their feet, the lantern to their path. For Satan has so many devices. If he be foiled on one side he tries another, and the man who has overcome one temptation will fall by another, unless his whole life be under the dominion of the Spirit of God. This is the safeguard of Joseph under a new and more terrible temptation which now assaults him—“How can I do this great wickedness and sin *against God?*”

10 He preserved himself from sin by keeping out of the way of temptation (Prov. iv. 14—15). Young men have no need to be told here how manifold are the enticements to evil in the world,—books, songs, pictures, invented by the devil to inflame and corrupt their souls. Their only safety is to think upon God, to love purity because He is pure. If they do so, then like Joseph they will rise triumphant above temptation, with conscience unspotted, bright, pure, and beautiful.

14 “True love is strong as death, but lust soon turns to hate” (Bp. Wordsworth).

20 Joseph’s holiness at first brought him sorrow. He was treated with great harshness (Ps. cv. 17, 18), and for awhile apparently his spirit was broken. Doubtless God saw this to be good for him. Hitherto the world in Egypt had gone smoothly with him. He might have settled down into contented honest selfishness, wanting tenderness and sympathy. He was not sent to Egypt to be praised by Potiphar, but to carry out God’s purpose towards his brethren, the chosen family. And for this he passed through trial. And not merely so, but doubtless he did good and holy work among the captives of the dungeon. His brethren were going on their way prospering, his father was mourning for him, and the active member of the Church was shut up and unknown by the world.

Genesis
XL.**Evensong.** SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

1 **Butler**, cupbearer.

13 **Lift up thine head**, i. e. probably “take thee out of prison.”

14 The forbearance of this speech is very remarkable. He makes no complaint of his cruel brethren, or of the wickedness

of his master's wife. He would not rail, he left his cause to God, and held his peace.

Gen. XL.

Land of the Hebrews. He uses the expression apparently to guard against being thought a Canaanite. "Hebrew" was probably not an unfamiliar name to them, from Abram's visit to their court.

15

White baskets, or, "Baskets of white bread." Men carry burdens on their heads in Egypt, women on their shoulders.

16

Lift thine head from thee, i.e. behead thee. Doubtless the warning was given through Joseph that he might repent of his sins before death.

19

The servants being obliged to appear on such an occasion, probably the two who were in prison were missed, and enquiry was made for them.

20

Hanged, i.e. after decapitation, as the custom was. Commentators have compared this passage with the history of our Lord upon the Cross. He assured one of the malefactors by His side of deliverance and joy, whilst the other was left by Divine justice to perdition.

22

Such ingratitude is too common, and we must not fret if we experience it. Probably Joseph depended upon the chief butler and promised himself too much from him, but his disappointment would teach him to look to God. We cannot expect too much from Him, or too little from man. And the passage may perchance remind us of our ingratitude towards Christ. Joseph *foretold* the cupbearer's deliverance, but Christ *wrought* ours. Yet too often our hearts grow cold, and we forget Him.

23

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

Mattins.

The xlist Chapter, which is not read among the Sunday lessons, contains the record of Joseph's deliverance from prison, and exaltation to the post of chief minister of Pharaoh, and also the birth of his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. The chapter before us brings us back to Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan.

Gen. XLII.

The fulfilment of Joseph's dream.

6

Joseph was only 17 when he was sold, he was now at least 37. He had doubtless adopted the dress and manners of the Egyptians, and moreover his complexion would probably be darkened by exposure in that southern climate. He **spoke roughly**, it was his brotherly duty so to do; they had not yet awoke to the heinousness of their sin. By a wise course he brought them to know it and to repent of it. Even so Christ chastens us, "speaks roughly" to us in love, by afflictions and trials, that He may bring us to Himself.

7

The nakedness of the land, i.e. its assailable points. It

9

- Gen. XLII. was weakest on the N.E. side, and the Egyptians were especially suspicious of visitors from that quarter.
- 14 **That is it** &c. Perhaps he feared, as he had sufficient reason to do, that they had made away with his brother Benjamin, as they had with himself.
- 17 He had been in prison three *years*. In his desire for their reformation, he puts them in ward for three *days*, a slight taste of what he had passed through.
- 19 Reuben, the eldest son, had meant kindly to Joseph. Simeon was next to him, and may have been selected now on that account. But it is not unlikely that he had been exceptionally cruel to his brother, considering what we know of his cruelty to the Shechemites. Ch. xxxiv. 25; xlix. 5.
- 20 Joseph was firm and unyielding in his determination to have Benjamin in Egypt. The event proved that he was right, and we may therefore believe that he was guided by God. It was necessary in order to clear his brethren from suspicion of foul play; it was also necessary to bring his father down. Doubtless it was the cause of much sorrow to Jacob, but it was sorrow which brought joy and peace after it.
- 21 Compare the penitence of those Jews who were converted by S. Peter, Acts ii. 37, and cf. Zech. xiii. 10.
- 24 A proof that he was not moved by vindictiveness, but by a desire for their good.
- 27 **The inn.** The caravanserais of the East are places of rest and shelter, but provide no food for men or cattle. But probably even these did not exist at this time. The Heb. word means "resting-place" or "station," and may have been only an open place near a well where tents might be pitched.
- 36 Evidently he had come to suspect that Joseph had met with unfair treatment from them. **All these things are against me.** Literally "*All this cometh upon me,*" that is, I have to bear the weight of all. Nobody helps or pities me.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

- Gen. XLIII. Judah, who had been the instigator of the sale of Joseph, is now made by God the agent of reconciliation.
- 3
6 The patriarch is throughout this part of the narrative called **Israel**. In the previous chapters he is *Jacob*. Bp. Wordsworth very ably and convincingly points out the meaning of the distinction. "In the preceding chapter, when speaking the words of human weakness and despondency, the patriarch is called *Jacob* (xlii. 36). But now he is resigned to God's will, and he submits his beloved Benjamin to God's disposal; and he provides for the journey of his children into Egypt, and enters into the consideration of little details such as the present of honey, nuts, and almonds, for their favourable reception, and com-

mands them to do what is honest, and to take back the money in their sacks; and invokes God's blessings upon their journey, and prays God to restore Simeon and Benjamin: and now he is called *Israel* (v. 8, 11) he has been disciplined by sorrow, and has given himself up to the will of God, and so rises to victory; and *Jacob* becomes *Israel*, a prince of God."

Honey. This means here a substance not made by bees, but from grapes boiled down to a jelly. It is still exported from Palestine to Egypt. **Nuts.** Pistachio nuts. **Spices,** &c. see on xxxvii. 25.

The last words express mingled sorrow and resignation. He had lost Rachel, Joseph, Benjamin. To two he will be restored again on earth; but his discipline and submission will do more than this for him. It is preparing him for death, and for the joy after death.

These words of the steward imply that Joseph had trained his household in godliness and piety, as his ancestor Abraham had done (xviii. 19). **I had your money**—Lit. "Your money came to me."

Joseph would, according to Eastern custom, dine alone on account of his high rank. The other distinctions are doubtless those of caste, which are observed with like strictness in India now. Herodotus mentions that an Egyptian would not kiss a Greek, nor use the knife or spit of any man who killed or ate cows.

Messes. Dishes from his own table. Like custom prevails in the East still. Cf. 1 Sam. ix. 23. 24.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The prominent feature of Joseph's character in all the later portion of his life is his tenderness of heart. We have seen his integrity and purity, and his deep wisdom, in the course of the history, but his tenderness is the highest quality of all. The first time that he saw his brothers, he turned from them and wept, and we have the sentence repeated over and over again until we come to the touching statement here, that he could no longer refrain himself.

We have before said that his imprisonment may have been a great cause of this. Nothing hardens the heart, unless Divine grace preserves it, so much as an easy life and everything going well. No kindness is so tender, so self-denying, so pure, as that of the suffering and the poor. But we all have before us the means of learning tenderness and pity, namely the example and the help of Him who for our sakes became poor, who loved us to the death, even the death of the cross.

Earing. i.e. ploughing, from Lat. *arare* "to plough."

Goshen. A most fertile province in Lower Egypt, on the Eastern branch of the Delta.

Gen. XLIII.

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Gen. XLV.

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Gen. XLV.

11

Thy household. Probably this included some hundreds of dependants.

19

Wagons were common in Egypt, but not in Palestine. On the monuments they appear as two-wheeled carts, for the conveyance of corn.

24

Probably his direction arose from the fear that they might fall to quarrelling, now that they were reconciled to Joseph, as to their relative blame in selling him.

When it is remembered that we are now considering the history of the ancient Church of God, it is not surprising to find throughout the whole of this narrative parallels to the history of the Church of Christ. For example, the reconciliation begins with the impassioned appeal of Judah (xliv. 18—34), and the Bishop of Lincoln shows how in the Synagogue worship this passage was always read with Ezekiel xxxvii. 15—28, a prophecy of the union of Israel under Christ their head. Then again the reconciliation itself reminds us in its details of Christ upon the Cross, and of His own description of His work, John iii. 16, and of S. Peter's speech to the Jews on their parallel sin, Acts iii. 17. There are other comparisons of mystical character which may be read in the Bishop's commentary, not without interest and value, but out of the scope of the present work.

This is the last passage which the Sunday Lessons give of the life of Joseph. His dying words show the calm steadfastness of his faith. He would rest nowhere but in the land which his children should inherit.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON EXODUS.

Introduc-
tion to the
Lessons
from
Exodus.

A long interval elapsed between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses, *how* long we cannot say for certain. The reader is referred to larger works for a discussion of this interesting question, and it is sufficient to say here that the chief living authority on Egyptian matters, Canon Cook, thinks it most probable that the Exodus took place B.C. 1492, and that the Israelites had been 430 years in Egypt, reckoning from Jacob's descent. He also believes that the Pharaoh who exalted Joseph was Amenemha II., of what is called the 12th Dynasty. After the Israelites had been settled some years in Egypt, a famous invasion took place by a dynasty who are called the Hyksos, or Shepherd Kings. They overran and devastated the country, destroying many temples and monuments, but seem to have left the Israelites in Goshen undisturbed. There were three successive dynasties of these, but they were expelled by

the 18th dynasty, the first member of which was Aahmes I., whom Canon Cook identifies with the Pharaoh who dealt craftily with the Israelites (ch. i. 10). He "arose up a new king," i.e. as a conqueror, and of course "knew not Joseph." Even his name may have been unknown to him, these dynasties having intervened. He found the Israelites in undisturbed possession of Goshen, carrying on their pastoral pursuits, grown to be of vast numbers, commanding the approach to the East. Accordingly he set himself to prevent their increase and to utilize their labour. He set them to build fortified places on the frontier, Pithom and Raamses. Moses was born in his reign, and became the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. On the death of Aahmes, his son Amenhotep succeeded, and was a great warrior. According to Josephus Moses, his adopted nephew, accompanied him in an expedition against the Ethiopians. If Mr Cook's identification is correct, this statement of Josephus appears very probable. But at the close of the reign Moses killed the Egyptian and fled into the land of Midian. Possibly his adopted mother was now dead. The king who now reigned in Egypt, Thotmes I., was a mighty conqueror, and Egypt rapidly advanced in greatness and prosperity. Then came his son Thotmes II. And here we come to the following facts. The monuments of his predecessors are covered with memorials of greatness and success, but there are none of him, except a successful war upon some nomads in the beginning of his reign. His reign, therefore, must have been very inglorious, and in all probability a short one. No account is given of his death, no son succeeded him. His wife, who was also his sister (such marriages not being uncommon in Egypt), was clever and energetic, and succeeded him as Queen Regnant. After seventeen years her brother Thotmes III. succeeded. He defaced the monuments of her regency, and reckoned the years of his reign from his brother's death. Everything points to a period of national disaster.

Leaving the reader to examine, according to his opportunities, Canon Cook's grounds for his conclusion that Thotmes II. is the Pharaoh who perished in the Red Sea, we can see in the chapters before us how entirely it harmonises with the Scripture account. The Pharaoh of the sacred narrative is both obstinate

Introduction to the
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from
Exodus.

and capricious, headstrong and vacillating, most fatal characteristics in a monarch. "His wife may well have helped her brother and husband to harden his heart after each ague fit of misgiving and terror. That she was a woman of strong religious prejudices is proved by her own inscriptions: as such she could not but be revolted by the insults heaped upon the soothsayers, priests, temples, and idols of Egypt."

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

Mattins.

Exod. III.

1 **Jethro**, more probably "*brother-in-law* of Moses." **The backside**, i.e. the West, the side nearest Egypt. **Desert**, rather wilderness. It is still good and well-watered pasturage on this side. **The mountain of God**, Sinai. **Even to**, rather "towards."

2 **A bush**, Heb. "the seneh," a proper name, signifying in all probability the thorny acacia. It represented the low condition into which Israel had now fallen; "the church was in bondage in Egypt, burning in the brickkilns, yet not consumed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed. And it is a fit representation of the Church in every age, under its severest persecutions preserved from destruction by the presence of God." (Matt. Henry.)

The attention of Moses had been arrested by a *wonder*. But that was only a preparation. The sight of the bush was forgotten when he heard the voice of God, and he hid his face, overwhelmed by the thought that he was in the very presence of Him to whom all hearts are open. Even so Elijah stood unmoved before the earthquake and the fire and the wind (2 Kings xix.), but covered his face before the still small voice. S. John heard the voices, the thunderings and the trumpets, but when he saw the Son of Man in His holiness, he fell down as one dead (Rev. i. 17). Thus it was with Moses now, and thus he was prepared for his Divine Mission.

5 **Put off thy shoes**. Still a universal custom in Eastern Temples. The Jewish priests always ministered barefoot.

6 Our Lord adduces this passage as a proof that the resurrection was taught in the Old Testament. God could not call Himself a God of dead men. If He spoke of Himself as their God it must follow that they lived with Him.

7 **Taskmasters**—lit. "oppressors." **I know their sorrows**. An expression of the most tender compassion and of consolation to all mourners. The sorrow and anguish of heart which have been the lot of many of us, which are the portion of thousands upon thousands, are little thought of by those who do not them-

selves suffer,—but they are not forgotten by God. The parent watching by the sick child, the fatherless children following the coffin to the grave,—the world gives a glance of pity and forgets, but the Most Merciful forgets not. His pity fails not. And the thousands whose misery is yet deeper, the heathens in far off lands, and the miserable dwellers in the streets and lanes of our cities, crying for deliverance they know not to whom, and with inarticulate voice,—He sees them all,—and treasures every sigh. Why He suffers their misery we know not, but we are sure that He is good, and will not forsake the creatures which His hand has made.

Milk and honey, the produce of land rich in pasture and flowers. See Deut. viii. 7—9. 7

Moses had desired to be a Deliverer, he had thought himself called to the office (Acts vii. 25). Yet now he shrinks from it. Such conflict of feelings, the desire to do noble deeds and along with this the sense of unworthiness, the consciousness of a vocation and a reluctance to enter on it, all this is characteristic of great men. So Moses speaks the thoughts of his heart, he knows that God will suffer no prevarication, he tells his fears in the belief that what is wrong God will put right. 11

This shall be a token, &c. When Moses should have brought the people as far as Sinai, his work would be only in its beginning, 40 years more must elapse before they were settled in the promised land. Therefore God gives him this word of encouragement,—“When thou hast brought them thus far, remember My words, and let the fulfilment of My promise so far be a pledge of thy final success.” It was a merciful provision, for Moses had sore need of such encouragement when he came to deal with the vast undisciplined host. 13

The Egyptians had a plurality of gods—“What is *Thy* Name?” said Moses, “God of our fathers, what shall I call thee?”

“I AM THAT I AM (Heb.: EHYEH ESHER EHYEH), the Eternal, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. There is none beside Me. I AM GOD, I alone.” Moses could not have gone to his people with a vague name, nor with high-sounding phrases. He was to tell them of a Living Person. The same had been God of their fathers, and would be God of their children after them. 14

Three days' journey. As God is not mocked, so neither does God mock, and we must not suppose that this demand was made in mockery. God gave the command in gentleness, He would treat with Pharaoh gently, and not drive him to recklessness by what seemed unreasonable requests. Had Pharaoh granted this, it would have been a right action, and as such would have been accepted. Doubtless God's intention was to deliver His people altogether ultimately, but it rested in Pharaoh's free choice whether this departure should be that of friends or enemies. 18

Exod. III.

22 **Borrow.** An entirely wrong translation. The Heb. word is a very common one, and always means to "ask" or "demand." If it be objected that this was dishonesty on the part of the Hebrews, the answer is that the Egyptians had long most cruelly oppressed them and "made them to serve with rigour in all manner of service in the fields." The claim therefore was a just, but very inadequate one. The war indemnity demanded by a victorious nation as the price of peace, stands on no sounder footing.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Exod. V.

1 **Went in.** Pharaoh's court was in all probability at Zoan, or Tanis, on the East branch of the Delta, near Goshen.

1 **In the wilderness.** Because the animals which they would sacrifice were worshipped by the Egyptians.

2 **Who is the Lord** [Jehovah]? As much as saying, "Jehovah is no God of mine. I have my own deities, and do not acknowledge Him."

3 Let it be noticed here that they began with no miracle. They spoke respectfully and moderately. Pharaoh had no reason to complain of being abruptly dealt with. God was forbearing with him.

6 **Taskmasters** were probably Egyptian, and the **officers** Hebrew, officials.

7 The oldest bricks found in Egypt are of clay, intermingled with chopped straw. They are baked in the sun and wonderfully durable.

12 **Stubble instead of, rather stubble for.** By stubble is meant the straw left by the reapers, who in Egypt always cut off the ears of corn at the top, leaving the whole stalk. The Hebrews had to cut this, and then chop it up small for themselves.

14 The cruelty of the Egyptians towards their slaves is proved by the sculptures on the monuments. In Knight's *Pictorial Bible* there is a copy of an Egyptian picture of brickmaking, and in one compartment is a man undergoing the bastinado.

19 The officers saw that Pharaoh was determined to find pretexts for fresh cruelty against them.

20 Moses and Aaron were evidently waiting outside the palace to learn the result of the interview. There is a loving discipline in all disappointments, if we will only bring them to God, and tell our sorrows to Him. Moses does so impetuously; we are bound to say almost irreverently. But God accepts him for his honesty's sake. To day's Gospel however tells us of One who bore greater contradictions than Moses, and bore them meekly, committing His cause to God. To bear meekly for the truth's sake is to be like Christ; it is a sign which He gives us that we are His. And therefore the writer to the Hebrews is able to

call the reproach heaped on Moses, "the reproach of Christ." And the Epistle of to-day has also its bearing on this subject, for it tells us how Christ, through the tabernacle of His flesh, passed into the highest heavens, having obtained eternal deliverance for us. For the joy that was set before Him, the joy of delivering His people, He endured the cross, despising the shame.

Exod. V.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

This verse is in the closest connexion with the end of the preceding chapter. It is God's answer to Moses' remonstrance, telling him to have patience and wait upon God. After the answer is given there seems to be a pause. Verse 2 begins a fresh revelation to Moses. During the interval, perhaps of some months, the privations of the Israelites must have increased, yet these privations were the best preparation, the only effectual one, for their sojourn in the wilderness. Before Pharaoh began to deal roughly with them, they seem to have led an easy, sensual life, which would have soon sunk them to the Egyptian level. We see them in the wilderness, lusting more than once for the flesh pots and melons and leeks of Egypt. The cruelty of Pharaoh is now bringing them to endure hardship and to learn self-dependence.

Exod. VI.

I

God Almighty. In the Hebrew *El Shaddai*. The Name **Jehovah** was known to the Patriarchs, but God was not known to them by it in all the full meaning of it. It was at Mount Sinai that its *meaning* was revealed to Moses, the name of the Lord who makes a covenant with His people, and gives them salvation and deliverance. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had not come into collision with the gods of the heathen. But now the God of the Hebrews was about to wage fearful war upon the idols of Egypt. It was needful therefore to declare at the outset that He was Lord alone, the Eternal, Supreme Lord of the whole earth.

3

Two grounds for God's promise given in verse 6. First, He made a covenant with the Patriarchs; second, He had heard the sorrows of Israel, and as He heard, remembered his covenant.

4 5

Stretched-out arm. An image in all probability taken from the figures on the monuments, which represented *Might* by two outstretched arms.

6

See note on v. 1.

The demand upon Pharaoh is now greater than before. Moderation and forbearance had produced no good effect, therefore the message becomes more imperative.

9

11

Uncircumcised lips, i.e. not fluent of speech, just as an uncircumcised ear signifies one that does not hear well.

12

Exod. VI.

13

A renewal of the solemn commission to the two brothers, preparatory to the opening of the plagues which are now imminent.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

Mattins.

Exod. IX.

Four plagues have fallen upon Egypt before the opening of this chapter: the turning of the river into blood, the frogs, the lice, and the swarms of insects. It has been truly observed that natural causes would produce the same sequence, and there are traces of natural causes visible throughout nearly all the history of the Israelites. But the history is also plainly miraculous and supernatural. It is right, as far as we can, to trace out natural causes in all God's dealings with man, in vindication of His order, and in reverence for the laws appointed for the universe. But it is also a duty, which brings rest on the fulfilment of it, to believe that God is Almighty. In the history of the plagues it would not, I believe, be wrong to say that they were produced by natural causes miraculously intensified, miraculously foretold, and miraculously limited. Travellers have seen the Nile like a running stream of blood, offensive to smell and taste. And Sir S. Baker describes what he saw by saying that "it was as though the very dust were turned into lice."

1 The plague of murrain, or pestilence, is more terrible than any preceding; the others had caused suffering, but this attacks the resources of the nation. Such murrains, in character like that which afflicted England in 1866, are by no means uncommon. In the present case, apparently not in the preceding ones, the Israelites were miraculously exempted.

7 Probably Pharaoh may have "rationalized" upon the subject, and attributed the exemption of the Israelites to their superior pastoral knowledge and the healthiness of the district.

The heart of Pharaoh was hardened. The expression meets us continually in the history, but five times we hear that *the Lord* hardened Pharaoh's heart. And many good men have faltered at the expression, while others have used it as a proof of their doctrine that God has created some men for the purpose of destroying them. As regards this last view, one can only say that we reject it, because we believe in God, not in Moloch. We have no concern with the other texts which are similarly perverted to bear up the dogma, but keep to this. When a man obstinately resists the loving call of God, then that love must harden his heart. One resistance leads to another, and every fresh act of goodness makes him worse. Because God's love withstood Pharaoh, his evil will was lashed to fury. His better feelings were aroused it is true, from time to time, but he trampled them down, and that so successfully that at

last they were destroyed. They might have led him to repentance, but he would not. Let it be noted that God said "I have hardened the heart of Pharaoh and the heart of his servants" (x. 1). Pharaoh might yet have repented therefore, for his servants did so (x. 7).

But it is better to turn from speculations to the practical question, "Is God hardening my heart? The trials or the exhortations that come to me; am I the better for them, or does their repetition make my heart callous? Do the public prayers grow cold to me, and speak less to my soul?" The services of the Holy Week which we begin to day will shew us how the love and tenderness of Jesus hardened men's hearts. It was so with Judas. It was so with the soldiers who spit in the Saviour's face and buffeted Him. It was so with the fierce crowd who cried "Away with Him, crucify Him," when Pilate brought Him forth to move their pity (John xix. 6). It was so with the priests when they cried as He hung upon the Cross "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

The plague of boils comes without warning. It was produced by the throwing of ashes towards heaven. It is said that the Egyptians were in the habit of doing so to Typhon. This therefore would appear to be a challenge to the Egyptian deities.

Blains, ulcers.

This is the first time the magicians have been named in our Sunday lessons. We must understand by the word, cunning jugglers, such as to this day excite the marvel of all Europeans who see them. They had been able by sleight of hand to produce imitations of most of the previous signs, but they now retired from the contest, and confessed their defeat.

See on ver. 7.

There is a change of tone observable now. Probably the preceding plagues had occurred at considerable intervals of time. But the words **at this time** imply that the plagues shall now come in tremendous power and rapid succession.

These verses should be rendered thus, "*For now indeed if I had stretched forth my hand and smitten thee and thy people with the pestilence, then thou wouldest have been cut off from the earth. But in very deed for this cause I suffered thee to stand,*" &c. It will be seen that the second verse gives the reason why Pharaoh had been allowed to live on, namely, that God's victory might be openly and confessedly complete. Pharaoh was not created that he might be the object of God's vengeance; but having resisted God's will, God did not at once annihilate him, but allowed him to live until the Divine purpose was accomplished.

This verse implies that God is yet willing to accept his repentance. He is entreated to take warning (cf. Rom. ii. 4). **Exaltest thou?** Lit. "Settest thou thyself as a river dam?"

Exod. IX.

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15, 16

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- Exod. IX.** There is a paronomasia therefore in the next verse, "I will cause it to *rain*."
- 19 Thus the whole of the elements are in turn enlisted against Pharaoh. First the River, then the Earth, now the Air. This plague took place in February (ver. 31). The cattle are in the field from January to April, the pasturage being good; the rest of the year they are stalled. It was about 10 months since the first plague, when the Israelites were "gathering stubble" after the harvest, which was in April.
- 20 The first indication of repentance among the Egyptians. Cf. xi. 3.
- 23 **The fire.** Fire was worshipped as the god of Memphis, and the Pharaohs were called by a name signifying "loved of the fire-god." (*Bp. Wordsworth*).
- This time.** That is, "I confess my sin at last." It was the first time that he had done so, though he had tried to treat with them before (viii. 8, 25).
- 29 **The earth is the Lord's.** Referring to the Egyptian belief that each country had its own deities.
- 31 **Bolled**, in blossom. "In Egypt flax and barley are nearly ripe when wheat and rye [spelt] are yet green, i.e. in February." Flax was a very important article in Egypt, linen being preferred to any other material of clothing. It is often found on the monuments.
- 32 **Rye**, or spelt, was the common food of the poor in Egypt.
- 34, 35 **Hardened.** There are two words in the Heb. both translated "hardened" in these verses. The first word means literally "was heavy," and implies obtuseness, incapacity for forming a right judgment. The second word implies fierce and stubborn resolution.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

- Exod. X.** **Hardened.** Made heavy. His conscience was blunted and his judgment blinded. Perhaps he prided himself on the fact that the late visitation had not hurt the corn.
- 1 **How long** &c. Another indication that Pharaoh's will is free, that God would not the death of the sinner, but would bring him to repentance.
- 3 The frightful devastation caused by locusts is described by many travellers. The ruin inflicted by a plague of locusts in Syria in 1866, will occur to the memory of many who read the account of it in the newspapers.
- 4 **Every tree**, not only the leaves and the bark, but the very wood itself is not spared by the locusts.
- 5 A locust swarm, almost in a moment, penetrates into all the chambers of an Eastern house.
- 6 We have here a further step in Egyptian conviction. Pha-
- 7

Pharaoh's servants take heed to the warning, and remonstrate with him before the infliction comes. Even he so far yields as to allow them to be brought into his presence. **The men** is to be taken strictly, "let the men go and the women and children remain as hostages." Pharaoh was willing to treat on this basis.

Our young. For God loves the worship of little children. Matt. xxi. 16.

Evil is before you. Probably this is a threat, though some explain it, "your intentions are evil."

Here is an apparent further advance in the work of repentance, but it takes no root, and so withers away.

Again we have a plague sent without warning, directed against the central object of the Egyptian mythology, the Sun. We have here as before (see Introductory note to Ch. ix.), a probable result of natural causes, intensified by supernatural power. It was about the time of the vernal equinox, for, as we have seen, the hail came in February, and the Exodus took place in April. At the time of this equinox the wind blows continuously from the S.W., filling the atmosphere with sand, and sometimes bringing on darkness deeper than that of the densest fogs. No one can go out, people shut themselves up, and beasts hide themselves in terror. Even artificial light is of no avail against the dense clouds of sand. It severely affects the eyes. That this was an altogether unusual visitation appears from Pharaoh's consternation.

Goshen was in the north, and therefore would be more likely to escape, though, as we have said, we must see God's special providence here.

Pharaoh evidently was determined not to give them their liberty, and demands a security for their return. It was out of the question now to accept it. He had no right to keep them at all. He might have made friends and allies with them earlier, but he had refused to do so. There was no possibility, now that they were on the point of victory, of anything but entire and unconditional emancipation. The demand of Moses is only one of simple justice.

Pharaoh threatens him with death, and receives in answer a prophecy of the death of his firstborn, revealed to Moses apparently as he stood before the king. See on xi. 4.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

These verses are parenthetical. The opening words should read "Now the Lord *had* said." Moses before the last visit to Pharaoh (x. 24—26) had received these Divine commands.

Altogether, with children, flocks, herds, everything. The object of the communication was to prepare the people for the hasty departure.

Exod. X.

9

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16, 17

21

23

24

28

Exod. XI.

1—3

Exod. XI. 2

Borrow. See on iii. 22.

3

There are signs during the history of the plagues that some of the Egyptians did not share their king's hatred. The mention of Moses' greatness is made to account for the compliance of the Egyptians with the demands of the Israelites. They respected him, and believed in his good faith and his good will to them. He had done all he could to spare them suffering. He had always been ready to intercede for them with God. It may be uncertain whether this verse was inserted at a later period, or by Moses himself, but there is no reason against the latter supposition. Moses is not exalting himself. He does not speak of his own high qualifications, but he tells, what must have been well known, that his own personal influence was very great.

4

And Moses said, i. e. to Pharaoh. These words are closely connected with the last words of the preceding chapter. Moses said to Pharaoh, "I will see thy face again no more," and then he went on, **Thus saith the Lord,** &c. The announcement of the deliverance was evidently made some few days before, in order that the people might prepare the Passover, and make their requirements upon the Egyptians. **About midnight.** The warning is impressive and awful. Night shall come to the Egyptians, and no morning. The pestilence shall walk in darkness. Typical of that event for the commemoration of which we are now preparing, when *Our* Deliverer at midnight overthrew the powers of hell.

Behind the mill. The work of grinding at the mill was done by the lowest slaves. **Firstborn of beasts.** There was not one which was not worshipped in some part or other of Egypt.

"The punishment of a people for the sins of its rulers is a fact which none can dispute who reads the history of nations; and they who urge objections to the chastisement recorded in this narrative cannot stop there, but must proceed to deny that the World is under a Moral Governor. The objections in question are not only objections against Revelation, but against natural Religion. They lead to Atheism.

"At the same time, these national visitations show that this World is not every thing; but that there is a Judgment to come, when every one individually will be equitably dealt with. Although, in this present life, Egyptians may be involved in the punishment of their Pharaohs, yet if the hearts of Egyptians have been touched by the warnings and judgements of God, then death will not have been an evil to them, but a passage to a happy Eternity." (*Wordsworth.*)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS.

This Book was written by Jeremiah on the destruction of the Temple by the Chaldeans. It is always read in the Jewish synagogues on the Fast of the fifth month, the Anniversary of that event.

The LXX and Vulgate have this heading to the Book, "And it came to pass after Israel was taken captive, and Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremias sat weeping, and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said, How doth the city," &c.

The Book is highly artificial in its structure. It comprises five dirges, or elegies. In the first, second, and fourth, each verse begins with the successive letter of the Hebrew Alphabet, the first with *Aleph*, the second with *Beth*, and so on. There are some other interesting peculiarities, which are not easy to make clear without using Hebrew letters. It is probable that these Poems were written to be used as Hymns, and arranged with a view to their being committed to memory. But independently of this, the instinct of men has always led them to throw the deepest feelings of their soul, especially grief, into rhythmical form. We need go no further for an example than Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.

There is no need to enlarge upon the deep fitness of this Book to furnish the Lessons for the Holy Week. The use of it by the Hebrew Church has already been stated, and the Ancient Latin Church appointed it to be read in the Holy Week. It is so read likewise in the Lutheran Church. It is due to Bishop Wordsworth to state, that the suggestion which has been adopted by the framers of the present Lectionary to make a like use in the Church of England, was made by him (Introduction to Lamentations, p. 139, n.).

The weeping prophet mourns over the fallen Temple, and yet more over the sins which brought this fall. Even so did the Man of Sorrows weep over the city in the opening of the week of His Passion, and not over the city only, but over the sin everywhere which has desolated the earth, and which now made His soul sorrowful even unto death. We shall read this book

**Introduc-
tion to the
Lessons
from
Lamenta-
tions.**

Introduction to the Lessons from Lamentations.

to little profit if we do not find in the Lamentations over the Temple a voice which we may echo over the sins which hide God's face from us, and separate us from Him.

MONDAY BEFORE EASTER.

Mattins.

Lamen. I.

1

The population of Jerusalem was unquestionably very large in the prosperous days of the monarchy, and vast crowds visited it at the great festivals. Moreover at one time it was one of the chief mercantile cities of the East. But now its king having been removed and its Temple thrown down, it is represented as in the state of widowhood, and the Prophet utters this most pathetic elegy upon it. The opening words remind us of the medal which was afterwards struck by Titus, on the capture of the city—of a female figure sitting under a palm-tree, with the inscription, *Judæa Capta*.

Tributary. Lit. "for tribute." This is now the only function of her who has been a princess, to be a vassal, paying tribute.

2

In the night—rather "all through the night," when others forget their troubles and take their rest.

Her lovers. Those whose unworthy acquaintance she had courted, when she was the Bride of God. Jer. ii. 36, 37; iv. 30.

3

Because of oppression, &c. i.e. because of her cruelties to others, and her oppressive conduct towards the slaves. See Jer. xxxiv.

The straits. The narrow mountain passes in which fugitives might be easily caught. Such passes are much infested by robbers in the East.

4

The ways of Zion, the roads to Jerusalem. Cf. Jer. xiv. 2. **Her priests—her virgins,** whose office it was, the one to minister the sacrifices, the other to sing at the festivals.

5

Are the chief, are come to be her head, when but for her sins they might have been in subjection. **Her children.** "In the representations which we find on ancient sculptures nothing is more affecting than to observe females and young children driven as captives before their conquerors" (*Henderson*).

7

The bitterest ingredient in the cup of adversity is the memory of past happiness, especially when it is to be remembered that we were not thankful for such happiness when it was in our hands.

Her sabbaths. She herself had profaned them (Jer. xvii. 21, 22; Ezek. xxii. 8), and now the heathen made a jest of them. Juvenal did so afterwards

"Cui septima quæque fuit lux
Ignava et vitæ partem non attigit ullam."

Removed—rather “an abomination.”

In her skirts, visible to all, not to be denied.

Her last end. She did not consider what the inevitable consequence of sin would be.

Her pleasant things, the treasures of the Temple. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10. **They should not enter**, Deut. xxiii. 3. The heathen have now not only entered but profaned and devastated.

See, O Lord. Here, as in v. 9, she pathetically cries to God for pity, and in the next verse beseeches sympathy from man.

Plainly these words apply in their first meaning to Zion. But we have become accustomed to apply them to the mournful cries of our Blessed Lord, and Handel has embodied the idea in his *Messiah*. Such an application is well grounded. The cry of Zion in her anguish was the anticipation of the Head of the Race, when the sins of the whole world rested upon Him. He was made sin for us. His entire sympathy with us in our sins and misery weighed down his soul, until our sins seemed to be His own.

The prophet expresses the miseries of Zion in a succession of metaphors. The first is taken from the great pain of inflammation of the bones, the next from the work of the hunter, the next from the yoke bound firmly on the neck of the ox.

From above, like the lightning from heaven which destroyed Sodom.

Wreathed, like withes which fasten the yoke the tighter.

Evensong.

What thing, &c., i. e. what comparison shall I use to express thy misery? I have exhausted all my powers. It is as vast as the sea itself.

Foolish things. The Heb. expresses anything insipid or frothy. Henderson's familiar rendering exactly expresses the meaning, “Thy prophets see for thee vanity and stuff.”

They have seen any cause but the right (namely the apostasy of Judah) for her misery. **False burdens**, &c., false visions which have been causes of thy banishment.

The perfection, &c. See Ps. l. 2; xlvi. 3. These had been her names—such names seemed monstrous now.

Their heart, &c. Zion, finding the worthlessness of her false prophets, and in despair at the taunts of the heathen, cried to the Lord in her distress.

There should be a full stop after “Lord.” The Prophet encourages her, and exhorts her to continue this cry as her only hope.

O wall, &c. The wall being thrown down, is a fitting representation of Zion in her desolate condition, and as such is poetically addressed.

Cf. Ezek. v. 12; Baruch ii. 25; Josephus, *Ant.* x 7 § 4.

Lam. I.
8, 9

10

11

13, 14

Lam. II.
13

14

15

18

19, 20

Lam. II.

22

A solemn day, i. e. a festival day. On such days the people were called by the blowing of trumpets, and the cries of the minstrels, to a meeting of joy and gladness. But now a congregation of terrors are summoned to Jerusalem. Troops of Chaldeans swarmed into the city, thick as ever worshippers had been, but they came to make Jerusalem a slaughter-house.

TUESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

Mattins.

Lam. III.

The subject of this lesson is the personal experience of Jeremiah, which became the experience of Christ as He wept over Jerusalem and foresaw the day when the Romans should lay her even with the ground and her children within her. The sufferings of Jerusalem were a personal agony to Himself. "If this chapter be read with constant reference to the three great Passion Psalms (xxii., lxix., lxxxviii.), it will acquire new beauty and interest for the Christian, especially for the Christian penitent. And there are few portions of Holy Scripture which can more fitly exercise his devotional affections at this season of the Lord's Passion than this divine elegy, in which we may hear the voice of the Lord Himself, speaking by the Prophet, sometimes bewailing the sins of His fallen creatures, sometimes lamenting the injuries He himself received at their hands; and then proceeding to magnify God's justice and mercy, and to pray for His servants, and to represent His own Death, Burial, and Resurrection, and to declare the judicial retribution with which all His enemies shall be visited at the Day of Doom, when He who died on the cross for the sins of the world, will appear in the clouds of heaven, in power and great glory, and will sit on His throne as King and Judge of all." (*Bp. Wordsworth.*)

4--6

Builed, as an enemy a fortress against a besieged town.

5

Images derived from suffering of the body.

Dark places, i. e. sepulchres.

7-9

Images from the sufferings of a prisoner.

10, 11

He is a traveller whose road is blocked up and who is forced to turn aside into devious paths, and so is exposed to wild beasts.

14, 15

When He looked for pity even from his own people, He found instead insult and scoffing. He was made the butt of their ridicule and the subject of their mocking song. Cf. Ps. lxix. 12.

17

Thou. Suddenly He turns, with pathetic earnestness, to address Himself to God. Cf. Ps. lxxxviii. 14-18.

19

Remembering. For this read "*Remember.*" It is a prayer.

20

Many translators also make this a prayer, "*Remember, O remember, for my soul,*" &c. Bp. Wordsworth inclines to the present version.

21

The clouds begin to scatter, and the sky to clear up. Without hope the heart would break. The Prophet says that his

calling to mind gives him hope. He remembers what repentance and humiliation have been able to do in years past.

The Prophet seems to be referring to his own early call (i. 6, 7). From that time onwards he had been despised and persecuted by his countrymen, but he recognizes now the benefit of this; it has been a holy discipline for him. It has given him strength to bear this affliction; it has made him humble and penitent; it has taught him to hope in the extremity of sadness; it even enables him—hardest thing of all—to bear unjust reproaches.

The reason *why* he is thus enabled to bear—he knows the lovingkindness of God, and therefore is assured of deliverance. Compare the latter part of Psalm xxii.

Evensong.

To crush, &c. As the Chaldæans have done. The Prophet knows that such cruelties are not approved by God; therefore he is sure that there is some purpose in God's suffering them, and that all will be light when the darkness is past.

The evil has been done,—and it could not have been done without God's permission. And He cannot work but with righteous intent. Therefore the people might be certain that there was a good and loving purpose beneath all the suffering.

Why does a man, whose life is still spared though his sins have deserved death, why does he murmur, instead of using his voice to pray? He has life, and therefore there is still hope for him that he may repent.

This is said as an Introduction to what follows, an Exhortation to the people to repentance.

The prayer to the Lord on behalf of the people.

Mine eye, &c. That is, what I *see* grieves my spirit.

The prophet returns from the suffering of the nation to his own personal affliction.

Cut off my life, lit. "made my life silent." Probably there is a literal reminiscence here of his sufferings in the dungeon. (See Jer. xxxviii.) He takes courage from his deliverance then to beseech a like deliverance now.

I am their musick. Cf. Ps. lxix. 12. There are several allusions to this Psalm running through the present Chapter.

WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

Mattins.

The disastrous condition of Jerusalem, the overthrow of the Temple, the captivity, the hope of restoration—these are the subjects of the present chapter.

No hands, &c. That is, Sodom was destroyed in a moment

Lam. III.

26—30

31

Lam. III.

34

37, 38

39

42

51

52

53

Lam. IV.

6

Lam. IV.

by the fire of God. No human hands helped at that destruction, whereas here the Chaldæans had taken a cruel part in torturing and slaying.

Nazarites, "separated ones," those bound by special vows (Num. vi. 3—21). There had been a time when these were holy and pure, but that time was past, ver. 8.

Polishing—rather "figure."

10

There is no mention of these horrors in the history of the siege by Nebuchadnezzar, but the present and other verses show that such occurred. See ch. ii. 20. It was prophesied by Moses in Deut. xxviii. 57. Josephus gives a horrible account in his history of the last siege of Jerusalem (Jewish Wars, x. 9).

12

The natural situation of Jerusalem caused it to be considered impregnable.

13

See 2 Chron. xxiv. 15—23. And afterwards the Jews consummated their guilt by killing their Lord Himself, and His Apostles. Acts vii. 52; xii. 2.

14

So stained were they with blood that they were legally unclean, and men could not touch them.

15

They, the Jews. The leper was bound to cry out "Unclean," on the approach of any one, to give him warning to escape defilement, Lev. xiii. 45. This was the punishment of the self-righteous who had once said "Stand back, I am holier than thou" (Is. lxv. 5).

16

Divided them, scattered them far and wide.

17

This alludes to the vain hope which the people had entertained, that hope would come to them from Egypt (Jer. viii. 20; xxxvii. 4—10; xlvi. 17).

20

The breath, &c. Zedekiah. It is true that he was a bad man. Still true loyalty recognized his appointment by God, for there is no power but of Him. And the national life was bound up with the monarchy. The fall of the king was the fall of the nation.

Evensong.

Dan. IX.

Daniel tells in the first verse of this chapter how in the first year of Darius, by study of the holy books, he learned that the captivity of the Jews was coming to an end (Jer. xxv. 11; xxix. 10; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21). Darius became king B.C. 538, two years before the expiration of the seventy years. Accordingly Daniel "set his face unto the Lord his God, to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (ver. 3). His earnest prayer occupies the whole of the preceding part of the chapter (ver. 4—19), and closes with these fervent words, "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by Thy name." Whilst he was thus praying, the vision came which forms our present lesson.

The man, for in human form the angels always appeared. Cf. Acts i. 10, and Dan. viii. 10. **Being caused to fly swiftly**, the reward of fervent prayer. No sooner did Daniel's supplication begin (see ver. 23) than God in the fulness of His mercy and love sent forth Gabriel to answer it. "While they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Is. lxxv. 24; Luke xv. 20).

The time of the evening oblation. Though the Temple and its altar were now in ruins and the Jews in exile far away, yet the holy and devout forgot not the times when the oblations should be offered. And the lifting up of their hands was in the sight of God as an evening sacrifice. Ps. cxli. 2.

This was the hour when God was entreated of David, and stayed the pestilence upon Jerusalem (2 Sam. xxiv. 15); when He answered His prophet Elijah's prayer by fire (1 Kings xviii. 29); when He comforted Ezra in his distress (Ezra ix. 4, 5). It was the hour when the Paschal lamb was always offered; and it was the hour when the true Paschal Lamb, in the evening of the world, expired upon the cross, and His blood flowed back upon all other holy sacrifices to the very beginning, and made them acceptable to His Father.

Greatly beloved. Cf. x. 11, 19. It was for his obedience, his courage, and his prayers. And the highest token of love which he could receive from God was the revelation of His Son. Matt. Henry points out the similarity in the words of Gabriel to Mary, "Thou that art highly favoured."

These weeks are evidently weeks of years (Lev. xxv. 8). Evidently, too, the number bears a reference to the seventy years of captivity, and also to the seventy years which elapsed before a Jubilee. We might venture to paraphrase it, "Seventy years of desolation will have been; but seventy times seven years of joy shall follow, and they shall bring in the acceptable year of the Lord, a year of eternal rejoicing; when **transgression shall be finished, and sins ended**, the debt being cancelled, and the power taken away, by the **reconciliation** (or *atonement*) **which is made for iniquity**; when the **everlasting righteousness is brought in** by the Lord our Righteousness (Jer. xxiii. 6; Is. xlvi. 13; li. 5; liii. 11); when all **vision and prophecy shall be sealed up**, having their fulfilment and end in Christ; when the **All-holy One shall be anointed**, a Prophet, Priest, King,—the Messiah."

This therefore was the answer to Daniel's prayer,—a definite statement, calculated by the exactness of its detail to cheer and comfort and support the anxious seekers after God. The prophets had one and all pointed forward to a Redeemer, but never before had the time been definitely indicated.

It seems impossible for us to fix the dates here indicated with exact accuracy. The reader must consult Dr Pusey's exhaustive work on Daniel to learn all that can be said upon the subject. Evidently the question of the seventy weeks turns

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21

23

24

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upon the year from which we are to begin. And this must be the year of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It is not the year of Cyrus' decree (B. C. 536), for that was for the rebuilding of the *Temple*, this is of the *city* (ver. 25). The decree referred to is probably that by virtue of which Ezra came to Jerusalem in the 7th year of Artaxerxes, B. C. 458. Ezra vii. 12—28, cf. ix. 9.

25 There shall be seven weeks following the decree during which **the street and the wall shall be built**. Now Ezra and Nehemiah laboured, partly conjointly, partly separately, for more than 45 years. Here then we have one epoch, the "seven weeks," at the close of which the city is completed. The **troublesome times** are explained by a reference to Neh. ix. 36, 37.

26 Threescore and two weeks followed, and Messiah began His ministry. This makes a total of 69 weeks. In the middle of the week following He was cut off.

But not for Himself. This translation seems to be an erroneous one. The Heb. rather signifies, "and there shall not be to Him," which Bp. Wordsworth explains, "And there shall no longer be to Him His people whose Prince He was, for He will disown them because they have rejected Him." Cf. Dr. Pusey on Daniel, p. 183, n.¹

The prince that shall come is clearly Titus, the Roman general, who shall utterly destroy the city and sanctuary.

27 **One week.** We have had "seven weeks," and "threescore and two weeks," making 69. Here we have one other, completing the seventy. During this He shall **confirm the covenant with many**, that is by the preaching of Himself and His apostles. But **in the midst of it** a great event shall be—**He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease**. This shall be by His own death, by the sacrifice of Himself. The consummation was declared in His own words, when He declared "It is finished," when "the veil of the Temple was rent from the top to the bottom," when He solemnly declared as He left the Temple for the last time (Matt. xxiii. 38), "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Certainly the form of sacrifices went on for a while, but the life and power was gone—they were abolished by the death on the cross.

The overspreading of abominations is evidently "the abomination of desolation" spoken of by our Saviour (Matt. xxiv. 15), and signifies the Jewish army of zealots and assassins who took up their abode in the Temple.

In these solemn words the angel reveals to the Prophet, in the midst of the glad tidings of Messiah and the fulfilment of God's good pleasure, the further knowledge that the outward Temple and visible sacrifices shall cease once and for ever.

This is the only place where Messiah is mentioned by name in the Old Testament. From this passage it passed into the

¹ Vulgate, "et non erit ejus populus, qui eum negaturus est."

Jews' popular language, and at the time when our Lord came they were looking for him, apparently excited by the words before us.

Dan. IX.

THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER.

Mattins.

The opening of this Chapter is a description of Israel's deep fall. There was a time when she was under God's favour, but that time is past, she has spurned the favour, and betaken herself to idols.

Hosea
XIII.

Trembling, rather "there was trembling." Once Ephraim was so distinguished that his word filled the other tribes with awe. And this led to pride, **he exalted himself in Israel**. Judges viii. 1; xii. 1; 2 Sam. v. 5; xv. 2, 5, 10; 1 Kings xi. 26. And having, in jealousy of the house of David, set up a rival kingdom under Jeroboam, Ephraim proceeded to idolatry in order to establish his kingdom. This was the beginning of his destruction,—**he died**. The sin of Jeroboam, the worship of the calves, led to the worship of Baal under Ahab, and this again, as appears from the next verse, was followed by a besotted frenzy of idolatry; it was introduced into every home, and idols were introduced in every house.

1

Molten, probably plated. **Idols**, &c. This was the special mark of idolatry. It was rationalistic. It knew no deity but that of the understanding. The gods were conceived, planned, made after the understanding of the makers. Man made his own God, not recognizing anything else whereon to lean. As a matter of course, the deity was inferior to the man, because the maker must be greater than the thing made. It was all **the work of the craftsmen**, and nothing better.

2

They say of them, &c. That is, "If any one feels a desire to do sacrifice, here is a proper object for him, let him kiss the calves." No words could more forcibly convey the prophet's scorn. Kissing upon the hand or foot was a common act of homage. 1 Kings xix. 18.

3

Therefore their apparent prosperity shall be shortlived.

Contrast between the faithless nation and their faithful God. He had preserved them from Egyptian slavery onwards until now. **Thou shalt know**, rather "thou knowest." Israel has never found any other helper and preserver all these many ages. She ought to have learned therefore in whom lies her strength.

4

I did know thee in the day of trouble and trial, therefore oughtest thou to have known me.

5

See Deut. viii. 11—13; xxxi. 20; xxxii. 15. **According to**, i.e. because they had such good pasture. In the wilderness they had retained some knowledge of God, but in prosperity

6

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XIII.

they forgot Him. And so what should have been for their health was an occasion of falling. With the attainment of their hearts' desire came leanness into their soul.

7 This comparison is suggested by the preceding verse, which represents them as a flock feeding on rich pasture. This flock shall be torn in pieces. A terrible comparison. He who had borne them as on eagles' wings, who had been their Shepherd, shall become to them as a fierce lion, as a swift leopard, as a bereaved she-bear.

The caul of their heart, i.e. the pericardium. This awful image is taken from the practice of the lion which is said to rush, when it attacks, straight at the heart and tear it from its enclosure.

9 The original is a little obscure, but the meaning of it in all probability is, **O Israel, thy destruction is that thou hast been against** [i.e. hast rebelled against] **Me, against thy help.** (Thus both *Dr Pusey* and *Keil*.) The truth conveyed is, therefore, that God is our help, we are our own destruction. God gives life, our death is from ourselves; He predestines, we choose reprobation; He redeems, we spurn the redemption.

10 The commentators we have just referred to also agree in amending the translation of this verse as follows, **Where is thy king, that he may save, &c.** Israel had demanded a king of Samuel, thereby shewing mistrust of God. They again rebelled against the Lord when they rejected the house of David, and chose Jeroboam because of Rehoboam's taxes. Certainly it was by God's permission that they did so, and because of Solomon's sin, but they were unconscious instruments of His punishment, and their own part was sinful.

And now their own punishment was come. They had expected their kings to fight their battles, 1 Sam. ix. 19, 20; 1 Kings xii. 16 ff. And the prophet asks, "What is become of your king now? What help do you find in him?" The kingdom was in anarchy, the Assyrians fiercely assaulting it. God could have helped them, but Him they had cast off.

11 **I gave, &c.** The Hebrew expresses *oft-renewed* giving, like the Latin imperfect. We in English express the idea by the present, **I give thee kings in my anger, and I take them away in My wrath.** Saul was given in displeasure, the people were heard, as we are warned that sinners sometimes are, to their sorrow. They were given up to their own hearts' desire, and though God was displeased He let them have their own way. They wilfully chose Jeroboam, and God suffered it, but it brought woe upon the nation. In like manner the same kings were taken away in wrath. There was no help in them, not one of them was a good king. Nearly all died violent deaths, especially in the later times of the monarchy, through conspiracy and murder, and the kingdom was visibly breaking up whilst the prophet lived. It would have been better to accept

the kings who were given them, even in anger, than to be impatient of their punishment and to move God to take them away in anger, and so bring fresh misery and slaughter upon them.

Bound up, as in a purse, to be taken great care of. The same Heb. word is used in Job xiv. 17; 1 Sam. xxv. 29. **Hid**. This also signifies carefully put away so as not to be lost (Job xxi. 19). This was to be the lot of Ephraim, his sins were laid up, to be brought forth in due season. "One by one, sins enter into the treasure-house of wrath; silently they are stored up, until the measure is full; to be brought out and unfolded in the Great Day. Ephraim thought, as all sinners do, that because God does not punish at once, He never will" (*Pusey*). Cf. Eccl. viii. 11; Deut. xxxii. 34, 35; Ps. l. 21; Rom. ii. 4—6.

His agony shall come in due time, irresistible, open and plain to all. He shall not be able to conceal it. The image of childbirth has a twofold reference, first to the agony, but also to the new life, the regeneration which God would have it effect.

He is an unwise son. The words which follow explain this. He will not come to the birth (cf. 2 Kings xix. 3). He lingers in the opening of the womb, and hesitates whether to be born or not. Thereby the birth is retarded and the life of mother and child destroyed. Under this wonderful image the folly of Ephraim is depicted; whilst the chastening judgment goes on, he delays his conversion, he vacillates, hesitates whether to repent or not, until at length the impulses grow weaker, the time is past, and he dies.

And now, when Israel has thus destroyed itself, the promise of God throws light upon the darkness. The nation shall die. That is inevitable. Sentence has gone forth, the destroying Assyrian is at the door. But there is a Life to come out of that death. The temporal destruction shall be followed by eternal deliverance, and those who have gone down into death shall not be beyond the Deliverer's voice. It is a distinct promise of that Eternal Life which is stronger than Death, which the Lord of Life brought forth by His Atoning Death and His Resurrection. The death of Ephraim, the death of each man, is the gate of life, because Christ's death brought life; sorrow brings joy, and the grave is the portal of everlasting salvation.

Therefore the Prophet goes on with the triumphant cry of exultation over death. The Heb. will bear the affirmative sense which our translation gives it, but probably it is a question, **O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction?** Thus S. Paul quotes it, 1 Cor. xv. 55.

Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes, i.e. my purpose of salvation shall be irrevocably accomplished, and Death shall have no power of resistance (Ps. lxxxix. 35; cx. 4).

Hosea
XIII.

12

13

14

Evensong.Hosea
XIV.

These are the concluding words of the prophet Hosea. He has foretold in solemn and awful words the fall of the kingdom of Israel. Ephraim is to be taken away, and as a kingdom, never to be restored. But though the *kingdom* should never be again, yet the *people* were not shut out from mercy. They were still children of Abraham, and as such were in covenant with God. The nation had begun in schism, it had gone on into heathenism, it had perished through civil war and cruelty. And therefore its destruction was a call to each member to return and repent and take warning by God's judgment. The chapter before us is the Prophet's assurance that they may yet do so, that God's arms are still open to receive them.

1 This is the first requirement from fallen man, that he should return to the Lord. It is the same thought which causes our public worship to begin with the Exhortation and Confession.

2 **Words**, confession of guilt. The simplest form of worship, the only form which befitted them. They were not worthy to bring Him costly offerings, such offerings with a heart estranged would be no better than bribes. They must first bring confession and prayer in humility. And the Prophet puts the fitting words in their mouths. They had fallen by their iniquity, therefore they are to pray that God will take all iniquity away. **All**, not leaving one sin to be cherished, but making a complete and entire conversion. For if we give up some sin but refuse to part with all, our work is still useless.

Receive us graciously. This should be "*receive good.*" The translators evidently avoided this, the correct translation, because it might be said "What good had the people to bring?" The good which they offer is their Repentance, their desire to be God's servants. We pray God, "though we be unworthy to offer any sacrifice, yet to accept our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits but pardoning our offences." The service is poor, yea worthless, but Christ dips it into the fountain of His Blood ere He presents it to His Father, and therefore though God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, yet He is well pleased with it.

The calves of our lips—perpetual thank-offerings. See Ps. lxix. 30, 31.

3 The promise not to return to worldliness and worldly trust.

The fatherless; allusion to their desolate state now that their kingdom is fallen. Their sins have left them fatherless and destitute, but they remind God that He has called Himself "the Father of the fatherless," and as such may be called upon to help them (Ps. lxxviii. 5).

4 The answer which God promises to their prayers. He promises first to heal their backsliding. Fickleness had been at the root of their sin and ruin.

I will love them freely. "God loves us freely in loving us against our deserts, because *He is love*; He loves us freely in that He freely became Man, and having become Man, freely shed His blood for the remission of our sins, freely forgave our sins, He loves us freely in *giving us grace according to the good pleasure of His Will*, to become pleasing to Him, and causing all good in us; He loves us freely in rewarding infinitely the good which we have from Him." (*Pusey*).

Hosea
XIV.

For mine anger, &c. Is. lx. 10; Ps. lxxxv. 2, 3.

Because of the sins of Israel, the curse of barrenness had been pronounced against him, "his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up,"—and now the sign of his forgiveness shall be that the Lord shall be as the dew to him. Then follows a succession of images to express the blessedness of his state. He shall be clothed with the beauty and grace of holiness—represented by the **lily**;—but this beauty shall not be transient as the beauty of the lily, for **he shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon**, shall be "rooted and grounded in love" and thus stand immovable against opposing shocks; **his branches shall spread** until they gather all nations beneath them (Matt. xiii. 32); **his beauty shall be as the olive**, ever-green, constant, lasting, even as the tree of life which bears fruit every month (Rev. xxii. 2); **and his smell as Lebanon**, which was famous for its fragrant flowers and spices (Cant. iv. 11); his deeds of love and faith and his prayers shall come up as a sweet savour before God (Phil. iv. 18; Rev. v. 8).

5

His shadow, i. e. Israel's, which has just been compared to a beautiful tree uniting all perfections in itself.

7

They shall revive as the corn, which falls into the ground and in its outward form dies. Even so shall the people who seemed dead live again, and bear fruit abundantly. Such blessing shall the loving chastisement of God produce.

They shall **grow as the vine, the scent** (or *renown*) **of which is like the wine of Lebanon**, which has been famous from time immemorial. The grapes of Lebanon have been called the finest in the world (see many references to ancient authors in Keil's *Minor Prophets*). Israel had formerly brought forth wild grapes (Is. v. 2), but now shall produce the noblest fruit, because of the watering of the Spirit of God.

The *entire* conversion of Ephraim. He shall declare against all the idols wherein he had boasted, once and for ever.

8

And God shall make answer, **I have heard him, and observed him.** Heard his prayer, no longer refusing to answer as in the days of his apostasy, but turning My face towards him, and watching even that I may anticipate his wants.

I am like a green fir tree. Some expositors take this to be the word of Ephraim, exulting in his newly gotten prosperity, God making answer, **From me is thy fruit found** (thus Dr Pusey). Others interpret both sentences as spoken by God.

Hosea XIV. "I am like a green cypress, giving thee shelter, shadow, protection; yea, I am the true Tree of Life to thee, giving thee the fruit of life and salvation."

9 The epilogue to the whole book. The Prophet in bringing his words to a close, declares emphatically that wisdom will justify what he has said concerning the severity and the mercy of God, His love for Israel, His wrath against sin. Wisdom will justify him; **for the ways of the Lord**, His rules in the guidance and government of men, **are right**, they are founded upon principles of eternal justice. **The just**, those who desire to obey God's will, find the way sufficient for them to walk in. To **walk** is not merely to stand, but to progress, to draw ever nearer to the goal. But **the transgressors**, those who set the law of God at nought, shall find the world which He has made full of snares and pitfalls. Things good in themselves shall be to them occasions of falling, works of nature and mysteries of grace shall alike be stumblingblocks. Deut. xxxi. 20; 1 Cor. i. 18.

GOOD FRIDAY.

Mattins.

Gen. XXII.
to v. 20.

See 1st Sunday in Lent, 1st Alternative Lesson.

The Second Lesson this morning and the Gospel comprise the account of the Lord's Passion and Death given by the beloved Apostle, S. John.

Evensong.

Isaiah LII.
13 & LIII.

See 1st Sunday after the Epiphany, 1st Alternative Lesson.

The Second Lesson is a practical Commentary upon the First. It is an exhortation to holiness, steadfastness, self-denial, based upon the example of Christ in His sufferings, and ending by the direct application of Isaiah's prophecy, and the declaration that though all we like sheep have gone astray, we have now returned, through the power of the Redeemer's love.

EASTER EVEN.

Mattins.

Zech. IX.

1 **In**, or *against*, **Hadrach**. This name occurs nowhere else in Scripture, and there has been much questioning as to its meaning. Some have taken it to mean an ancient city not far from Damascus, called in Deut. i. 4, Edrei. But this is altogether improbable, and the best authorities now accept an explanation which dates back from S. Jerome. He states that it is a symbolical name, as so many names in the prophets are

(e.g. Dumah for Edom, Jareb for Assyria, Maktesh for Jerusalem). **Hadrach** then is compounded of two words signifying "Active-weak," or "strong-soft," and is therefore used to designate a power which has great worldly strength, but shall be proved to be powerless under the hand of God (Bp. Wordsworth gives similar instances of play upon words. And see Keil's excellent note, II. 322). It then becomes a question what land is thus designated, and the authors just named shew very conclusively that it signifies the Medo-Persian Empire. That Empire in Zechariah's time ruled over all the lands named in the ensuing verses, and the Prophet declares that in order to the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom all worldly kingdoms must bow down. This is the substance of the whole of this chapter. Worldly power shall be powerless, strength of arms shall be weakness; and lowliness and humility shall be irresistible, gaining a dominion which shall be from sea to sea, even to the ends of the earth. The King of the whole earth, as on this day, has humbled Himself even to the death of the Cross, and now lies dead in Joseph's tomb. His weakness is complete, and we turn to Him in that weakness to-day, because out of it shall be forgotten the power of His risen life.

Damascus shall be the rest thereof, i.e. the judgment of God shall light upon Damascus.

When (rather *And*) **the eyes**, &c. All men, heathen as well as Jews, shall see the judgments of the Lord, and acknowledge His might.

Shall border, rather, *which borders*. Hamath was close to Damascus. 2

Tyrus and Sidon are grouped together as being the two chief cities of Phœnicia, as Damascus and Hamath were of Syria. **Though it be very wise**. This appears to be spoken indefinitely of both cities, but it has a special reference to Tyre. Tyre was a place of great strength, through the masterly skill with which its fortifications were constructed. It built itself a fortress in its insular position, three or four stadia from the mainland, of such strength that Shalmaneser and Nebuchadnezzar besieged it without success, the one for five the other for thirteen years. Within this fortress immense treasures were heaped up. But the wisdom of such might would be of no help to it. The Lord would overthrow it.

The Prophet next turns his threats against the Philistines. 5

A bastard. This certainly may be the meaning of the Hebrew word, which is a very unusual one, but probably it means a mongrel, degraded race. 6

This is a prophecy against the Philistine idolatry, the image intended being that of a man engaged in idolatrous sacrifice; he has the blood and flesh of the slain animals between his teeth, when suddenly God descends and wrests it from him, and puts him to confusion. 7

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But here, as everywhere, God in the midst of justice will remember mercy. The destruction shall not be indiscriminate. There will be there **those who remain**, those who have sought the Lord; and He will be mindful of His own, and Ekron (put for Philistia) will be to the Kingdom of God as the Jebusites were to Ancient Jerusalem. When David took that city from the Jebusites, they who accepted the Jewish faith were incorporated into the nation of the Lord. See 2 Sam. xxiv. 16 ff. **A governor**, a tribe-prince, a name applied to heads of the families into which the tribes were divided.

Such is the prophecy concerning the powers of this world. As we have already said, it is directed against the Medo-Persian Empire, and the states which were tributary to it. The following beautiful passage will show how the prophecy was fulfilled.

“There is here a prophecy of a heavy calamity, which falls in succession upon Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, Zidon, and the maritime cities of Philistia, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod, in which calamity the temple of God was to be guarded, not by human power, but by His unseen presence. *I will encamp about mine house, because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth* (Zech. ix. 8). And this, while God should *smite the power of Tyre in the sea*. The selection of the places and of the whole line of country corresponds very exactly to the march of Alexander after the battle of Issus, when the capture of Damascus, which Darius had chosen as the strong depository of his wealth, of Persian women of rank, confidential officers and envoys, opened Cœle-Syria; Zidon surrendered; Tyre, specially marked out by Zechariah (ix. 3), was taken with great effort, after a seven months' siege; Gaza too resisted for five months, was taken, and, it is said, plucked up; but Alexander passed by with his victorious army and returned, and Jerusalem remained uninjured. History gives no further explanation of Zechariah's prophecy than this conquest by Alexander: that conquest agrees minutely with the prophecy. No other event in history does. But, apart from this, the victory of the Jews over the Greeks was, of all events of history, then the most improbable. There was not the most distant likelihood of collision between them; they had no point of contact. The name of Greece was known to the Jews only as that of one of the many countries which traded with Tyre; a distant nation, to whom Tyre and Zidon had, in their slave-trade, sold Jewish youths, *that they might remove them far from their border*; but the guilt and the punishment belonged to Tyre and Zidon, not to them. Joel had, for this sin, prophesied the punishment of Tyre (ii. 4—6, not of Greece. Eichhorn writes thus of the prophecy, ‘The conquests of Alexander are described so clearly that they cannot be mistaken.’ ‘In what is said of Tyre, who can mistake Alexander's wonderful conquests?’ ‘All the chief places, which Alexander, after the battle of Issus, either took

possession of or conquered, are named one by one, the land of Hadrach, Damascus and Hamath, Tyre and Zidon, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod.' Greece was, until Alexander, a colonizing, not a conquering nation; the Hebrews had no human knowledge of the site of Greece. There was not a little cloud, like a man's hand, when Zechariah thus absolutely foretold the conflict and its issue. Yet here we have a definite prophecy, expanding a part of it, reaching beyond the time of Antiochus, and fore-announcing the help of God in two definite ways of protection; (1) *without war*, against the army of Alexander; (2) *in* the war of the Maccabees; and those, two of the most critical periods in their history, after the Captivity. Yet, being expansions of part of the prophecy of Daniel, the period to which they belong became clearer in the event by aid of the more comprehensive prophecies. They were two points in the larger prediction of the third empire."

Whilst the heathen world thus shakes, the Lord shall be mindful of His own, and save them. He **will encamp about His house**, His family, **because of the army**, because of the enemies of His Kingdom, who go to and fro in the hope of finding a place of attack.

For now have I seen with mine eyes, namely the oppression under which His people have so long groaned. In thus speaking, the Prophet, in the true spirit of prophecy, overleaps in imagination all intervening obstacles, and, in startling contrast to the kingdom of Persia, portrays the kingdom of Christ. He is the King who shall lead the people to victory, and give peace to all the earth. Having foretold His victory Zechariah again returns to his own time, and resumes the prediction of what God will do for them before the Messiah shall come. In other words, having introduced the kingdom of Christ he returns to the history of Israel, and leading up from this, again comes to the Kingdom of Christ at the end of the chapter. See note on the opening of Is. xl., which supplies an exact parallel.

Daughter of Zion, the believing members of the covenant nation, the true Jerusalem. The sudden summons to her to rejoice, to shout with joy, indicates the vast importance of the announcement which follows. The seer, filled with holy enthusiasm, overleaps, in the power of his imagination, all intervening events, and is transported to the very epoch of the King's victory.

Thy King. Emphatic,—He who alone is worthy of the Name, He of whom all the prophets have spoken, and for whom thou eagerly lookest, the Messiah.

Just, righteous. Having salvation, literally "saved," or "endowed with salvation." Salvation is a gift which God has given to Him. He is *just* toward His subjects, He has received salvation as regards the malice of His enemies, and has been

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8

9

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delivered from it. In His deliverance from death He received salvation. But the beginning of the verse shews that He has not received it for Himself, for the stress lies on the fact that the justice and salvation which are given to Him are for the sake of the daughter of Zion. The salvation flows from Him to His people because He is their head. Being saved from Death "He is the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey Him."

Along with the prophecy of His gift of salvation is blended that of His humiliation. The word rendered "**lowly**," does not mean gentle, but "bowed down with suffering," and signifies the degraded, agonized condition of the Saviour, as was foretold in the 53rd of Isaiah, and witnessed in the history of His Passion. **Riding upon an ass.** This also signifies, not the bringing of peace, as is sometimes supposed, but low and mean estate. Until lately Christians and Jews about Damascus were allowed to ride upon asses only, in order to place them below the Mohammedans.

10 Nor will the Kingdom be established by worldly might. The very instruments of worldly might, the chariots and horses, shall be entirely exterminated from Ephraim and Jerusalem (cf. Micah v. 9, 10). **He shall speak peace**, shall bring the contests of the nations to an end. Cf. Micah iv. 3, and Is. xi. and notes.

From sea to sea. Alluding probably to the ancient belief that the whole world was surrounded by sea. The meaning therefore will be from every sea to every sea. And whereas the dominion of Israel was declared to be from the sea to the river (Ex. xxiii. 31), the kingdom of Christ shall be from the river to the ends of the earth, a Kingdom of unlimited extent.

11 **For thee**, i. e. Zion. **By the blood of thy covenant**, by the blood with which God's covenant with Israel was sealed (Ex. xxiv. 8). The covenant of God cannot change; sin can render it nugatory, Israel not fulfilling *his* part; but God is always ready to continue His loving-kindness. This is the reason that to Christians there is only One Baptism, because the promises of God are without repentance. What He hath promised He will surely keep and perform, and therefore they who after living in sin return with true repentance and amendment of heart can plead the Baptismal covenant. In the present verse God declares that the covenant which He made in the wilderness stands good, He will abide by it in the day when Israel shall return to His obedience, and will redeem them from their prison. **Pits without water** (empty cisterns) were often used as dungeons (Jer. xxxviii. 6). There was no way of escape out of such a pit, the captive would invariably perish if he were not drawn out.

The verse before us has a new light thrown upon it by what

we are told concerning our dear Lord, whilst, as at this time, His Body lay in the grave. He went and preached unto the spirits in prison (1 Pet. iii. 19), and by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant drew them forth.

The stronghold, opposed to *the pit*, a place whereon they can stand firmly. Cf. Ps. xl. 2. Our stronghold is the risen Christ. The reference here is to the King whom the prophet has foretold in vv. 9, 10. He is to be victorious for them, and they also are to be victorious in His strength; the part of the chapter which follows describes the conflict which lies before them. **Prisoners of hope**, so called because though prisoners they have hope of redemption in the covenant blood. **Double**, i. e. double measure of glory for all their sufferings. See on Is. xl. 2; lxi. 7.

The double recompense which Israel shall receive after her liberation from bondage shall consist in independence and in victory over the power of the world. This is expressed in a striking figure; Judah is bent as a bow, and Ephraim fitted as an arrow to the string of it; the united nation shall become God's instrument of war. And this He shall use against the sons of Greece, which become now the representatives of the world-power. Undoubtedly we have here a prediction of the conflict of the Jews under the Maccabees with the Greeks under Antiochus Epiphanes (Pusey on Daniel, p. 279), and we may imagine how the heart of Judas and his fellow-heroes must have been encouraged in their warfare by remembering this prophecy.

The Lord shall appear above them, defending them from heaven, shooting forth His arrows on their behalf, giving the signal for battle, and fighting from the midst of the storm.

He shall be their shield to protect them from counter assaults, and they **shall eat** (lit. "devour" as a lion, the simile being apparently taken from Num. xxiii. 24), **and** (this is the right translation) **trample down the sling stones** (treat as perfectly harmless the worst weapons brought against them); **they shall drink** (the blood of the slain, another reference to Num.), **and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls**, like the sacrificial bowls in which the blood of the sacrificed animals was caught, and **like the corners of the altar** which were sprinkled with the same blood.

It is very clear that these announcements refer to ante-Messianic times. There shall be a holy war and victory, but a warfare of this world, against oppression and in defence of religion. The history of the brave Maccabees explains it. But, as we have so often said, we are not precluded hereby from seeing in this victory a shadow of the victory of Messiah, and in the verses which follow the greater seems to come into view again. But there is no clear distinction between the two, "the failure of perspective," of which we have before spoken, meets us again, the two events are blended in our sight, as they are in

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the one purpose of God to put down evil, and exalt righteousness in its place.

16

Save, lit. "endow with salvation." Their deliverance has been already spoken of; now the Prophet proceeds further,—having been themselves saved they shall become the means of salvation to others. They shall be the Lord's chosen band, the flock of His people. It is a prophecy of the Christian Church begotten out of Zion.

His people shall be as the jewels in His crown, a praise and glory for all nations. Zeph. iii. 19. **Lifted up as an ensign** should be translated by the one word "*sparkling*." This is the highest glory the Church can desire, to shine as the light of the world, reflecting the light of her Lord in heaven.

17

And in reflecting the light of Christ, the Church shall be manifesting the glory of God the Father. The Prophet utters this joyous exclamation of wonder and praise at the goodness manifested by God in the salvation of His people, at the beauty of His love and tenderness, His riches of goodness and grace. Cf. Jer. xxxi. 12; Ps. xxxi. 20; xlv. 3; Deut. xxxiii. 28.

Evensong.

Hosea V.

8

The Lesson begins with a striking description of the fall of the Kingdom of Israel. The Prophet throws himself in imagination into the moment of the catastrophe, the alarm trumpet is sounding within Gibeah and Ramah, the frontier cities of Ephraim, the first places which lie open to attack; Beth-aven is crying aloud in terror. **Beth-aven** signifies "house of naught," and the name is applied contemptuously by the Prophet to Bethel, where Jeroboam's idolatry began.

The next words imply that the enemy having ravaged the kingdom of Israel is passing onwards to Benjamin, and the Prophet cries out therefore the warning, **After thee, O Benjamin**, i. e. he threatens thee.

9

The desolation of Ephraim was complete, the kingdom was destroyed utterly, and was never revived. As a nation it perished off the face of the earth. This, says the Prophet, has been declared unmistakably by God.

10

Judah also shall not escape her punishment. Her sin here is declared to be the removing of boundaries (ref. to Deut. xxvii. 17). Hengstenberg interprets this as referring to idolatry, the removal of the boundary between the Lord and Baal. But it is simpler to explain it of the avarice and oppressiveness of the great men (cf. Is. v. 8, 9), or perhaps of the selfishness of Judah in looking with secret delight on the misfortunes of her sister kingdom, in the hope of being enriched thereby. "The unregenerate heart, instead of being awed by God's judgment on

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others, looks out to see what advantage it may gain from them. Times of calamity are also times of greediness. Israel had been a continual sore to Judah. The princes of Judah rejoiced in the prospect of their removal, instead of mourning their sin and fearing for themselves" (Dr Pusey). **Like water.** Like a stream of water. They had broken the boundaries, and thereby laid open the way for the flood of the wrath of God.

Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, by the unjust and tyrannical judgment of men, **because he willingly obeyed an unrighteous commandment** of man, namely of Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 28—33). Herein lay the fitness and righteousness of the punishment.

Will I be, rather "have I been." Whilst Ephraim had wilfully followed sin, the judgments of God had preyed upon him by little and little. There was for a long time little outward sign of destruction. There was time for repentance, whilst the prophets earnestly exhorted. But all exhortations were unheeded, and now destruction was come unawares.

And to Judah also God's judgments were **a rottenness**, or *cavities*. The idea is taken from the eating of the worm in wood. The destruction is slower, and may therefore be stayed more easily, but it is no less effective if it is unchecked. So it is with sinners who persist in going on in defiance of warning, till suddenly they find health, peace, intellectual power, faith, hope,—all gone, and they are only fit to be led away captive.

When the sinful nations first became aware of their danger, they did not turn to Him who was ready to help and restore them, they "made flesh their arm," went to a heathen king, who had no help in him, but brought greater destruction upon them. **The Assyrian** must mean Pul, who was subsidized by Menahem, 2 Kings xv. 19. **Jareb**, which occurs here and at ch. x. 6, is an epithet apparently coined by the Prophet himself. It means "avenger," or "striver." Probably there was some reason which would give the word a special significance to the readers of the prophecy, which has been lost (see Mr Aldis Wright's very interesting essay on the word in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*).

They have dared God by resorting to heathen helpers, therefore in His wrath He shall burst upon them suddenly and resistlessly as a lion. Cf. xiii. 7.

The image is still borrowed from the lion which withdraws into its cave when it has seized its prey. Even so God, having manifested Himself as a Destroyer, would withdraw His presence altogether, until in their agony and desolation they should acknowledge their offence. Having done so, they would turn to Him. "For to own sin without turning to God is the despair of Judas" (Pusey). This turning would be the beginning of a new life.

Accordingly, the next words shew them in a state of conversion. In their former affliction they had gone to the Assy-

11

12

13

14

15

VI. 1

Hosea VI.

rian ; they do not do so now. **Come, they say, let us return to the Lord.** And they confess His power; it is He who hath torn, therefore He can heal.

2 Whether we are to call these words a direct prophecy of the Resurrection of Christ, in other words whether the Prophet had the event distinctly revealed to him, is a question on which opinions differ. I cannot think so. But it seems to me evident that our Lord was referring to it and applying it to Himself when He foretold His sufferings to His disciples (S. Luke xviii. 33). This being so, there is no difficulty in the natural interpretation of the verse. **After two days** is a phrase not uncommonly used to express "for a short time," and **in the third day** will signify the suddenness and unexpectedness of the deliverance. "When the Lord turned away the captivity of Zion, then were we like unto them that dream" (cf. Amos i. 3; Job v. 19; Prov. vi. 16; xxx. 15, for forms of expression similar to that used here). Our Lord therefore, adopting the Prophet's words, declares that what was spoken of the nation generally shall not only be fulfilled literally as far as He is concerned, but also by His resurrection the prophecy shall be fulfilled to the nation. God revives us through Christ. In our risen Lord we live in God's sight. Eph. ii. 4—6. He is the Resurrection and the Life, what He did He did for His Nation, and not for them only, but for all the children of God. S. John xi. 25, 51, 52.

3 **Then shall we know, if we follow on,** &c. Rather, *Then shall we know, shall follow on to know.* Our knowledge of God will continually grow and increase. Want of the knowledge of God had been the ruin of Israel (see ch. iv. 1, 6). But in the day of regeneration knowledge shall beget knowledge, and light shall multiply as a flood of waters.

His going forth is prepared as the morning. As surely as in the dark night we know that the day is being prepared, that the earth's axle is turning towards the light, even so in the day of trouble there is a day of mercy preparing. The love of God does not always come in the way we desire; God sometimes whets his sword and pierces the reins and the marrow, and mercy comes riding on the pale horse. But when the morning shall dawn, nothing shall be hid from the heat thereof. When Christ lay in the grave, all was terrible indeed to the Apostles and holy women, yet His going forth from the tomb was prepared, and in the morning, ere dawn, He brake forth gloriously, and opened the Kingdom of Heaven.

He shall come unto us, &c. In Palestine there were two great rains which fell upon the earth. One fell at the time when the seed was cast into the ground. And then for a long time all was dry. But when the ear was well-formed and needed filling up, the second rain fell. This is what we all need, Grace to begin with, Grace to go on with and make us perfect. Christ is the Beginning and the End of our spiritual life.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for as the rain falls upon the thirsty pastures and fills the pools, so God who has been gracious before waits to be gracious yet again. Human nature becomes wearied with prayer and watching. But God strengthens it. His love is sufficient, and will bring us at last to the palace-gate.

Hosea VI.

EASTER DAY.

Mattins.

In the land of Egypt. Therefore the order of the Jewish Ecclesiastical year was established before the promulgation of the Law on Sinai.

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1

This month, Abib. Ch. xiii. 4. Sometimes called also Nisan.

2

The tenth day, i. e. four days before it was offered, ver. 6. Bp. Wordsworth suggests that this typifies our Lord going up to Jerusalem four days before His Passion, Matt. xxi. 1. **According to the house of their fathers,** i. e. one for each family.

If the household, &c. Jewish practice, according to the account in Josephus, made the partakers of the Passover to consist of a number not less than ten.

4

Shall make your count, i. e. the master of the household was to reckon how much each man was likely to consume, taking his age and strength into consideration.

Without blemish. Cf. Lev. xxii. 20. This, of course, was to represent the perfectness of the Lamb of God, and the completeness of His Sacrifice. Probably also the restriction to lambs or kids of the first year was to indicate the perfect innocence of the Divine Antitype.

5

Keep it up, keep it well fed, from the day of its selection until its death, so as to ensure its unabated strength.

6

The Jews believed as ages went on that on this same day the redemption by the promised Messiah should take place, and the expectation was fulfilled (S. John xviii. 28). **In the evening.** "In the afternoon" would give a more correct version of the peculiar Hebrew expression. The custom was to slay it about 3 in the afternoon, the hour, be it remembered, at which our Blessed Lord died.

The upper doorpost, or lintel (ver. 23), the cross-beam. Some however suppose it to mean the lattice over the door. The sprinkling of blood was only intended to take place on the first Passover night. It represented the life offered for the salvation of the life of the firstborn, pleaded before God for their sake. It was a witness to the Jews that the difference was made between them and the Egyptians, not for their own deservings, but because God accepted the propitiation.

7

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8 **On that night**, after sunset. According to Jewish custom of reckoning, this would be the beginning of the 15th day of the month. **Roast with fire**, this is probably to indicate the great holiness of the Feast, fire being always the symbol of purity. **Unleavened bread**. This was partly to commemorate the haste with which Israel was sent out of Egypt, and the consequent impossibility of leavening their bread. Even so our redemption was wrought suddenly and without the expectation of the Church, whilst the Apostles had forsaken the Deliverer and fled. Evidently the command to eat unleavened bread implied forbidding of the leaven of sin. See S. Matt. xvi. 6, 1 Cor. v. 7. **Bitter herbs**, representing, no doubt, the sufferings of Israel in Egypt and also the humility and repentance required for a right partaking of the holy Feast. By consequence we see in the Antitype the bitter sufferings of Christ, the bitterness of the sorrow with which we ought to regard them, the bitter anguish of those at the last who regard them not.

9 **Raw**, as in some heathen feasts. But the Hebrew may also mean "under-cooked."

Seething was a more common form of cooking than roasting. See on preceding verse. **Purtenance**, intestines. Lambs and sheep are still cooked whole in Persia. The bowels were taken out and washed after cooking.

10 This command is to prevent profanity and careless handling of holy things on the one side, and superstitious abuse on the other. The same motives led to the rubric of the Church concerning the unconsumed elements in the Holy Eucharist.

11 All indicative of the haste of the departure. **The Lord's passover**, Heb. *Peshachu la-Jehovah*. The first word, as will be seen, is connected with our word "Pass." It signifies to "pass rapidly" like a flying bird. The Lord will hover over His people to defend them, stretching His protecting wings over them. See Is. xxxi. 5, and Ps. xci. 4.

12 **Pass through**, an entirely different word (*ghavr'thi*) from that just commented on. *This* is a passage of vengeance as *that* is of protection. **The gods**, the objects of Egyptian worship.

This night, rather "that night," the night of the coming Passover.

I am the Lord. God, by executing judgment that night upon the gods of Egypt, will shew once and for ever that He, and none else, is the Eternal Lord of Heaven and Earth.

13 **A token**. A reminder during the awful hour, of My mercy to you. **The blood**. See Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; Heb. ix. 22; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; Rev. i. 5, 6; v. 9, 12.

14 The verses which follow contain instructions for the *future* keeping of the Passover as a memorial to all generations of the deliverance once effected. It was the work of holy men who came after to see how the continual observance was pointing to

something still to come. At present all thought centred round the deliverance of the firstborn and the freedom from captivity. There was no room for any other thought. But after God by degrees and by divers manners had spoken by the prophets, He spoke at length by His Son. When He sat at the table, and brake the bread, He said "This do in remembrance of ME." Thereby He abrogated the old ordinance, for now the Great Deliverance was come, the deliverance not from Egypt but from all the evils and sorrows which can afflict mankind, and therefore the Feast of the Bread and Wine was to supersede the ordinance of 1400 years.

That soul. This strict command is given because whosoever disobeyed would be a rebel. 15

Convocation, religious assembly. 16

The fourteenth day, i.e. at the full moon. A symbol of the Church, deriving her light from the Sun of Righteousness, through His Death and Resurrection. 18

Moses communicates to the elders the instructions which he has received from God. **The passover.** Here we have the lamb itself called by the name of the event which it was to commemorate (see on ver. 11). The Sacrament is called by the name of the thing signified. 21

Bason. There is good authority for this translation, but some translations (as LXX. and Vulg.) have it "threshold," which, if correct, would prove that the lamb was slain there. 22

None of you, &c. There is no safety apart from the Atoning Sacrifice.

This thing, the general observance, *not* the sprinkling of the door. See on ver. 7. 24

The sacrifice of the Lord's passover, rather "of the Passover *to* the Lord." Here we have again (as in ver. 21) the lamb itself called the Passover. It was therefore the sacrifice of the Passover ordained that He might pass over the Israelites,—a repetition which is familiar to us all. God ordains sacrifice to be done to Himself. 27

Such was the original institution of the greatest of the Jewish Feasts. It remains to us to shew the several points in which it was intended to be a type of the Death and Resurrection of our Lord. We, who are keeping the Easter Feast this day, are but celebrating the Christian Passover. The first burst of song in our Services to-day was "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast." The same thought runs through all the Services. In the Proper Preface in the Communion Service we thank God that Christ is "the very Paschal Lamb." And the first Song in the Evening Service opens with the grand burst, "When Israel came out of Egypt." The Passover was to be from its institution the beginning of the year. It is not so with us, because our Ecclesiastical Year is able to begin, which the Jews' was

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not, with the coming of Christ in the flesh. But Easter Day is the Festival which settles the time of other festivals; and it was the event of Easter Day which made for ever the first day of the week to be the Lord's Day. All Christian people are bidden to commemorate the Lord's Death in Holy Communion at least three times a year, "whereof Easter is to be one," because it gives life and meaning to all Communions. The opening verses for Easter Day in the *Christian Year* express this:

O day of days! shall hearts set free
No "minstrel rapture" find for thee?
Thou art the Sun of other days,
They shine by giving back thy rays.

Enthroned in thy sovereign sphere
Thou shedd'st thy light on all the year,
Sundays by thee more glorious break,
An Easter Day in every week.

Every means was taken to impress the Israelites with a deep sense of the holiness of the Passover. We have already spoken of the significance of the lamb without blemish and of the first year—the people also were to prepare themselves to be a *holy* convocation. In later commands the rules of living during this season were made very explicit; a foreshadowing of the duty which lies upon us to examine ourselves whether we repent of our former sins, and are in thankfulness, faith, and charity. Along with this strictness of life, there was to be no gloominess. Everything implied cheerfulness (see Deut. xxvii. 7), and all care was to be laid aside (see Mr Clark's Art. *Passover* in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*).

The lamb was to be sacrificed by the whole congregation, every head of a family was to kill his own, and all of it was to be consumed. For that night the whole nation became a priesthood. This was before the institution of the separate Priesthood. When that was instituted the slaying of the lamb still devolved on the head of the household, though the *place* was transferred from the threshold to the Temple, and the blood was to be sprinkled on the altar by the regular Priest. Our Blessed Lord was offered once for all as an expiatory and propitiatory sacrifice, and in Him all humanity was offered and presented to God, all men were in power made Priests unto God (Rev. i. 5, 6). Of this perfect Sacrifice the Holy Eucharist is a memorial. But as the Passover still preserved a sacrificial character, though the blood was no longer needed on the doorpost, so the Church has constantly taught that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. The Jews, as often as they kept the Passover, pleaded the "old loving-kindness" of the Lord, and invoked His constant care over them. No one can read how the Feasts are spoken of by the prophets without feeling this. The devout worshippers "put God in remembrance," and by so doing called forth His love (Is. xliii. 23—26). Even so Christ having

died once dieth no more, but as often as we break the bread and pour out the wine we shew forth His Death, we plead it before Him and "put Him in remembrance" of the Propitiation once made and for ever effectual to the putting away of sin. Therefore the Eucharist is not merely a *symbol*, it is an *assurance* to us, and seal of God's mercy.

Further, as the Great High Priest offered us up in Himself, we by virtue of His offering become priests, and "offer and present ourselves, our spirits, souls, and bodies, a living sacrifice." And as the whole substance of the lamb, except the offered blood, was to enter into the substance of the worshippers and be consumed by them, so the Humanity of Christ, its spiritual and eternal essence, is transfused into His Church; we spiritually eat His flesh and drink His blood, and become one with Him and He one with us.

And we, as ancient Israel did, have still to eat as pilgrims and travellers to Canaan, "through a wilderness where there will be much drought and lack of bread; as warriors who must suffer because we are to drive out enemies from a land that God has promised us¹." We must eat therefore *with loins girded* (S. Luke xii. 35; 1 Pet. i. 13); *with feet shod* (Eph. vi. 15); *with staff in hand*, as knowing that we have no rest here (Micah ii. 10); *in haste*, with godly earnestness and zeal, in departing from the Egypt of sin, hasting for our life, because the time is short.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The Lesson this morning gave us the Institution of the Passover, for the deliverance of Israel from death. We saw there how the Passover foreshadowed the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, and in consequence the commemoration of that Sacrifice in the Holy Communion. Our Lesson now describes the next step in the Act of Deliverance, the March from the Land of Egypt, the type, therefore, of another aspect of our Lord's Sacrifice, even our deliverance from the power of sin.

The Lord, i. e. by a destroying angel. Heb. xi. 28.

At midnight, &c. The parallel is obvious. Who shall imagine the terror of the Prince of Darkness and his angels on that midnight when Christ entered into his stronghold to give him battle, to drive him from his throne and wrest his power from him? At midnight yet once more there shall suddenly be a cry heard, "Behold, the Lord cometh," and only they over whom the wings of Jehovah are passing shall be safe in that hour.

Pharaoh's submission is complete, though temporary.

Kneading-troughs. These among the Arabs are small

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29

30—32
34

¹ Maurice, *Death and Life*, a Sermon, 1855.

- Exod. XII. wooden bows. **Their clothes**, i. e. mantles, or burnouses, such as are still worn by the Bedouins, who use the deep folds as bags.
- 35 **Borrowed.** See on iii. 22. **Lent** in the next verse means "gave" in the original.
- 37 **Rameses.** Mr Clark, in his learned and exhaustive *Bible Atlas* (S. P. C. K.), identifies this with *Abu Kesheib*, NNW. of the Gulf of Suez. It was evidently the capital of Goshen, and probably Pharaoh was there or close to it. **Succoth** must have been very near, a halting-place clear of Rameses, where they could review themselves and see if they were in marching order. **Six hundred thousand.** All the males who could march, i. e. from 12 or 14 years old. Probably, therefore, the total number would be two millions.
- 38 **A mixed multitude.** Canon Cook supposes that these were remnants of the old Semitic population, perhaps of the Hyksos. They would have been objects of suspicion to the Egyptians if they had remained, and therefore departed with Israel.
- 40 **Four hundred and thirty years.** According to some chronologists, this is taken to mean, from the first entrance of Abram into Egypt to the Exodus. This is the view of the compilers of the Chronology in our ordinary Reference Bibles. Others take it to mean from the going down of Jacob and his family. The question is one of great interest, but the discussion of it would be out of place in a Commentary on the Sunday Lessons only, and the reader is referred to Smith's *Bible Dictionary* or the *Speaker's Commentary*. Let it suffice here to say that I take the latter view to be the more correct one, that of the longer stay in Egypt.
- 43 Additional instructions concerning the Passover, occasioned apparently by the adhesion of the mixed multitude. **No stranger.** That is, no uncircumcised person. This is the sole restriction. See ver. 48. Any one who would be circumcised was admitted as a Jew. An intimation of the admission of all nations to believe in Christ, who is the Passover of God, and a warning against the selfish exclusiveness which proved fatal to the Jews at last.
- 46 No man might partake in two different households. He must eat it with his family. A security of unity in holy things. Compare the first Collect for *Good Friday*. The command not to break a bone is also evidently a mark of unity, a type of the Christian Church, which is "one body in Christ." The deep significance of the command is attested by S. John, xix. 36. The Lord's blood was poured out for the life of the world, but the unity of His body suffered no infraction.
- 50 **Thus did**, &c., i. e. at Succoth. They at once began carrying out the injunctions laid upon them.
- 51 **Thus did God** in His love bring His son Israel out of Egypt

(Hosea xi. 1). To remember that these words of the Prophet are applied to Christ (Matt. ii. 15), is to see another ground of union of the Old and New Feasts. Israel comes out of Egypt in token that Christ shall come also, and Christ Himself comes out of Egypt as a token that He will bring His people at last with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob into the heavenly Canaan. Matt. viii. 11. See Archbp. Trench's *Westminster Abbey Sermons*, p. 21.

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Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Israel was now at Etham, which Mr Clark and Canon Cook hold to be the same as Pithom, the frontier town towards the wilderness. Hitherto they appeared to be on their way to the wilderness to sacrifice, but now they are told to turn towards the Red Sea. By so doing they would put a series of lakes between them and the wilderness. The two authorities already referred to identify **Pi-hahiroth** with a spot now named Ajrūd, a halting-place for caravans, well supplied with water. **Migdol** they identify with Bir Suez, about two miles from Suez; and **Baal-zephon** with Suez itself. (See Clark's *Bible Atlas*, p. 22.)

Exod. XIV.

The wilderness hath shut them in, rather, "the wilderness is closed to them." For they had got out of the road to the wilderness, the lakes lay between them and it, and the Red Sea was in front.

The following passage from Mr Cook's *Excursus on Egyptian History* is very ingenious and suggestive. "That the wife of Thotmes II. [the Pharaoh before us] was a woman of strong religious prejudices is proved by her own inscriptions: as such she could not but be revolted by the insults heaped upon the soothsayers, priests, temples, and idols of Egypt. When her heart was crushed by the loss of her firstborn son, we can conceive the mingled feelings which would send her to the king, if not to suggest, yet to strengthen his resolution to make one more effort to save his kingdom from disgrace, and to avenge the long series of calamities upon Israel" (*Sp. Comm.* p. 457).

Chariots. These were two-horse vehicles, each containing a driver bearing a shield, and a warrior fully armed.

Captains over every one, rather "over the whole."

Egypt was covered with tombs and monuments, hence their bitter taunt. See vi. 9. This is a characteristic speech, and a token of their future conduct in the wilderness.

Wherefore, &c. Moses then had interceded with God for them.

Go forward. Matt. Henry quaintly but piously says, "There was no way left open for them but one, and that was upwards; but God took them under His care; it was all easy for them then." The command, "Go forward," expresses the duty of

1

3

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11, 12

15

Exod. XIV.

God's children evermore. No great deeds are done but by brave men. Our faithlessness holds us back, and shews us lions in our path, but God gives us strength to slay them if we go to Him. We shall not conquer unless we quit us like men, and are strong. Had Israel not gone forward when they were commanded, they had fallen once more into the hands of Pharaoh.

16

Lift up thy rod. The visible act was for an assurance to the people that they were under God's care, that He, who could cause the liberating wind to blow, would continue it until they had passed through. The sea at Suez was about two-thirds of a mile wide. North of that it joined the deep lakes, and on the south was the deep sea. We have here another instance, of which we have had several, of a miracle, if one may so speak, produced by natural causes. The laws of nature are not interfered with, but they are miraculously adapted to produce a required result. A strong east wind acting on the ebb-tide would naturally have the effect of driving the waters from the small arm of the sea at Suez and leaving it dry, while the lakes above and the sea below would of course remain covered with water. Thus on both sides the waters would be a wall. (Robinson's *Biblical Researches*, i. 57.)

20

A cloud and a darkness. All God's dealings are such to those who will not receive them as light. The love of God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Cf. S. Luke ii. 34: 2 Cor. ii. 16.

23

Under ordinary circumstances the Egyptians would have had ample time to have crossed.

24

In the morning watch, at day-dawn. The foreshadowing of that morning wherein the Lord should come forth from the tomb, with Death for ever trampled beneath his feet. **Troubled,** threw them into a panic. See Ps. lxxvii. 18, 19, which certainly refers to this event. Josephus says there was a fearful storm of thunder and lightning.

The pillar of fire. See ch. xiii. 21. Signals of smoke and fire were used by the Persians and Egyptians, and are represented on the monuments. Here the Lord did it miraculously, as proving that He was verily the King of His people, leading them on to victory.

25

Took off, &c., some translate this "clogged."

26, 27

The sudden change of the wind (see xv. 10) would produce such a catastrophe as is here described, especially as it was now full moon, and there would be a spring tide.

When we come to regard this mighty event as a type of the greater event of to-day, we have a fresh aspect presented to us of the Resurrection of Christ. We have had in the Morning's Lesson the type of the Remission of Sin, and in the Afternoon's that of the conquest of the power of hell, Deliverance from the *power* of Sin. We have here the Resurrection typified

as the *giving of a new life* to man. Both of the great Christian Sacraments derive their power from the Event of this Queen of Festivals. This morning we had a type of the Eucharist, now we have that of Baptism. "Our fathers," says S. Paul, "all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Cor. x. 1, 2.) We may take this verse as the key to the Christian exposition of the chapter.

"The Lord shall fight for you," said Moses, "stand still, and see the salvation of God." Here is the emphatic declaration of God's free grace and all-sufficient power. "His own arm brought salvation." (Cf. Is. lxiii. 1—12.) There is also *man's* part expressed in the words "Go forward." Accept the salvation offered to you freely. Have *faith* in God's promises.

In this faith Israel went forward, and left Baal-zephon behind them, the sanctuary of the foul Egyptian idolatries. And thereby they represented the *forsaking of sin* required of those who will become the children of God and members of Christ. They moved along under the *cloud*, representing the guiding and lightgiving Spirit, pure, awful, glorious. Out of the cloud the voice of God came to Moses, and under its shadow was peace, refreshment, and light; even so to us is given the Comforter who shall teach us all things and abide with us for ever.

They went down into the deep waters, and were buried, so to speak, between the high walls, which, while they closed them in, kept them in safety. And when they emerged from that watery burial, and came forth into sight again, they were emancipated from their bondage; Egypt with its tyranny and its shameful idolatries was left behind, its armies were destroyed beneath the waves, and Israel was a free people. A type of the Death unto Sin, the new Birth unto Righteousness which we have received, not for works of righteousness which we have done, but according to the mercy of God our Saviour, in the laver of Regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And this because Christ went down into the grave, and the Light of the world was hidden, until in the "morning watch" He came forth again travelling in the greatness of His strength; and the spiritual Egyptian was overthrown in that gulf into which he had driven Israel. Christ has passed through the Red Sea as the Head of the body, and it is in His might and for His merits' sake, that the water of Christian Baptism is sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin. We doubt not, but earnestly believe, that if the free grace which He gives be not received in vain, it shall carry the receiver on through the waves of this troublesome world, until the day when the power of the Resurrection shall shine forth visibly, and Death shall be swallowed up in victory.

Exod. XIV.

EASTER MONDAY.

Mattins.

Exod. XV.

We have here the first great Hymn of Praise in the Bible, the song of triumph over the victory of the Red Sea. We need not shew how fitting a Lesson it is for this day, the morrow of the anniversary of the world's deliverance. So complete is the parallel between the type and antitype, so entirely was one feast merged in the other, that the saints in light are described by S. John as singing *the Song of Moses* and the *Song of the Lamb* (Rev. xv. 3). The first five verses speak of the Lord in the third person, in the sixth He is directly addressed until the end.

1 **He hath triumphed gloriously.** Lit. "He is gloriously glorious."

2 **The Lord, &c.** Rather, "My strength and song is the Lord." This is to assert that He who had revealed Himself by this Name at the bush, has fulfilled the promise which he connected with it. **I will prepare Him a habitation.** The best scholars render this, "I will give Him adoration."

3 Cf. Habakkuk iii. 4—11. Moses asserts that the deliverance had been God's work alone, He had vindicated His Name of the Lord, "the Eternal."

4 **Cast,** lit. "hurled as from a sling."

5 **As a stone,** probably this is intended to be taken in the strict letter. The Egyptian soldiers are represented on the monuments as wearing heavy armour, which on the overthrow of the chariots would plunge them instantaneously and helplessly to the bottom.

6 The inspired poet now directly addresses the Lord, and recalls the circumstances of the catastrophe in detail.

7 **Wrath,** lit. "burning."

8 **The blast of thy nostrils,** a grand image to express the power of the east wind (xiv. 21).

9, 10 Notice the wonderful contrast of these two verses, in the one the raging haste, excitement, evil passion of the Egyptian, in the other the calm majesty of the Lord.

11 **The gods.** The power and strength which the Egyptians imagined their gods to possess have been shewn to be as nothing before the power of Jehovah. Cf. Ps. lxxxvi. 8.

Fearful in praises. So glorious and awful in His Majesty, that angels and saints even praise Him with fear.

13 See Zech. ix. 11, and note (*Easter Even*). **Thou hast guided, &c.** A prophetic vision of the future, so clear before his mind's eye, that he speaks of it as already done.

14 **The people,** lit. "the peoples." i.e. the surrounding nations. **Shall hear,** lit. "have heard." The verbs in this and next verse are all in the past tense. See note on preceding verse. **Palestina,** that is, the country of the Philistines. Lying as they did

on the Egyptian frontier of the Promised Land, they would have been attacked first, but for the faintheartedness of the Israelites.

The dukes of Edom. See Gen. xxxvi. 15. **Mighty men of Moab.** Jer. xlviii. 41.

The song closes with the confidence of Moses, rapt into the highest inspiration by the greatness of the victory, that God would continue to bless and preserve His people, and complete their triumph by planting them in the mountain of His inheritance, and establishing His Sanctuary among them.

The hope may well find an echo in our minds on the morrow of Easter Day. May God who raised up Christ from the dead raise us up also, until we attain our promised inheritance, even the resurrection of the dead and a place among the saints in light, in the heavenly Sanctuary!

With this triumphant close compare Rev. xix. 6.

The *men* appear to have sung the hymn under the lead of Moses; Miriam and the women sang the refrain with the timbrel accompaniment at the pauses. She is called a prophetess, as receiving Divine inspirations. Her name is the same word as "Mary." Her part in the first great Hymn is an earnest of the exaltation of women by the Christian Church to their rightful place in society. The respect paid to women is a distinctive mark of Christianity, it is unknown in Eastern nations.

NOTE ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

The Song of Solomon was probably written in his young, and therefore holier years. Its imagery is all taken from the freshness and purity of his first love, probably of the daughter of the king of Egypt. The love of the wise and glorious king for his pure and beautiful bride, while it depicts to us the holiness and innocence of the marriage state, mirrors also, from the very nature of the case, the love of the Lord for His people, His bride, the chosen object of His love. See Hosea ii. 18, 21; Isaiah liv. 5; lxii. 4, 5; Jer. ii. 2; iii. 1 ff; iv. 30; xiii. 22, 26; xxx. 14; Ezek. xvi. 8. This relationship thus described in the Old Testament is taken up by the New, and the manifestation of Christ is declared to be the manifestation of the love of the bridegroom for the bride. There is sacred and deep communion between them. It is a "great mystery," but it is God Himself who declared it in Eden. John iii. 29; Matt. ix. 15; Eph. v. 31. The interpretation of the passage before us, there-

Exod. XV.

15

17

19

20

Introductory
Note
to the
Canticles.

Introductory Note
to the
Canticles.

fore, by means of the New Testament, is a matter of duty. But as only one of our Lessons is taken from it it is out of our scope to make general notes on the whole Book. Two reasons apparently led to the choice of the present passage at Easter-tide. First, there is the joyousness of it, befitting the season when life and immortality were brought to light, and, further, it is a literal description of the spring-tide. The joy which we have in seeing the opening of the buds and listening to the cuckoo's note will be only an echo of the deeper joy within, if we remember that the heavenly spring began when Christ arose, and the season of the fruits will come soon, and we shall be gathered into God's barn.

Evensong.

Cant. II.

The preceding verses have expressed the longing of the bride because the bridegroom comes not. By day and night, dreaming and waking, he is in her thoughts. She is forlorn, but her love is faithful unto death. Suddenly in the midst of her lonely watch she hears the sound of his voice, "Hark! my beloved, lo! here he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills." He comes and addresses her in the words which form our Lesson.

10 **Spake and said.** Lit. "answered and said," answered the thoughts of her heart before she had time to utter them.

Rise up my love, &c. "Such was Christ's voice to the Church on the morning of His resurrection, and such is His voice on every deliverance of the Church, after patient waiting and endurance of affliction.....and such will be His voice to her at the Great Day." (Wordsworth.)

11-13 **The winter,** &c. The storm of the Agony and Passion, of persecution and suffering. The instincts of the devout heart will at once realize the Divine beauty of all this imagery. When Christ sprang forth from the tomb, all Creation blossomed into gladness, it was now a redeemed earth. Though the effects did not visibly appear, the curse was for ever taken away.

The voice of the turtle dove is the special mark in those countries of the return of the spring, as that of the cuckoo with us.

The earth is redeemed, the time of gladness is come, for the risen life of Christ has begun, therefore (ver. 13) **Arise, my dear, my fair one, and go forth.** It is the mission of the Church to go forth and preach the return of the Bridegroom in His resurrection.

14 The tenderly caressing language still continues. He has

used the words "the voice of the turtle," which suggest now His calling the Church His **dove**, in reference to her purity and beauty. He compares Himself to one standing below, and calling to her in her hiding-place **in the clefts, in the secret of the cliffs**. He would fain embrace her, and hold her in His hand. So it is with thee and me, reader; Christ stands at the door and knocks. And He longs to see the beauty of His Church, He yearns for her love, to see her countenance bent upon Him and to hear her voice.

Most commentators take this to be the Bride's answer to his request, "Let us hear thy voice." She sings it as a song. There is much to justify the view. The verse is in the form of song. The Hebrew is wonderfully luscious and beautiful in sound. Yet Bp. Wordsworth's view seems to me the more natural. He takes it as a song of the Bridegroom to the Bride, calling upon her to remove the foxes (jackals) out of *their* vineyard (His and hers). By these we must understand anything that defileth, whether false teaching or evil practice. The evils may seem **little**, but then the vines are **tender**. All sin seems trifling in its conception, but "when it is finished it bringeth forth death." When the foxes become great, they are not easily captured.

The Church's answer to the Bridegroom's voice. He has spoken of **our vines**, and she joyously catches up the expression as implying entire unity of purpose and property. **He feedeth among the lilies**, loves to dwell among the pure and holy.

Until, &c. This translation gives a wrong idea of the meaning, which is **Until the day grows cool** (i.e. in the evening) and **the shadows vanish** (i.e. into night). It is a prayer that Christ will return before darkness comes. What prayer can more fully express the desire of our heart, that Christ will be with us ere the night come, and the shadow of Death fall upon us.

Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die.

And the latter part of the verse is equally expressive of the longings of the devout soul. **Be like a roe or a young hart**, be strong to save. "Put forth thy strength, O Saviour, and come and help me." Be thou my strong confidence when all other helpers fail. **In the mountains of Bether**. The last word means "precipitous and craggy places," and we may therefore take it to signify in hard trials and sore distress, in the hard trials of life, most of all in the agony of death. Bp. Wordsworth further supposes that the word Bether "division," signifies that the Church calls Christ to her aid in all times of religious division and strife.

TUESDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

Mattins.2 Kings
XIII.

On this chapter generally see Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

14

Whereof he died, or "whereof he was to die;" his mortal sickness. There is a tacit contrast between him and Elijah, who ascended into heaven. In this point Elisha has been compared to the Apostles of Our Lord, following Him after His ascension, carrying on His work successfully, and then dying to join Him in His Kingdom.

O my father, &c. The same words which Elisha had said to his departing master (ii. 12). They signify, "The defence of my country against its enemies." The king believed that this defence, even Elisha, was passing away, and that now there would be no protector left for the nation.

15

Joash was not a good king (ver. 11), but he had some faith and trust, and revered and loved the Lord's prophet. And He who breaks not the bruised reed, had respect to this feeble faith, and rewarded it. The symbolical action which followed was intended to shew him that the Lord's power to protect was not removed by Elisha's death, that if he would trust in the Lord no harm should come to him; nay more, God would make Joash himself a defender and strength of the nation.

16

Put thine hand upon the bow. Hebrew (as in margin), "Make thine hand to ride upon the bow." An allusion to the king's cry, as saying "The bow shall be thy chariots and horses. Let thine hand ride upon it for the deliverance of thy people."

Elisha put his hands, &c., signifying that as God's minister he was bestowing God's strength, that the power belonged to the Lord, not to Joash. Cf. Ps. cxliv. 1.

17

Eastward, towards Gilcad and Syria.

"This history has a spiritual significance for all Christians, especially for Christian preachers. We put our hands on the bow when we take the Word of God into our hands, and we discharge arrows from the bow when we send forth the missiles of that Word against the enemies of our faith. Christ Himself deigns to put His hand upon our hand in order that we may draw the bow aright. He is the Divine Conqueror, riding on the horse of victory, and holding His bow in His hand (see Ps. xlv. 5, 6, and Rev. vi. 2). He makes His hand to ride on the bow, and strengthens us in our work. But we must shoot forth His arrows boldly; we must do our part with faith, earnestness, energy, and perseverance, if we are to have a blessing from Him." (*Bp. Wordsworth.*)

Aphék, now *Fik*, six miles east of the sea of Galilee, on the great road from Damascus to Israel.

18

Smite upon the ground, to signify the prostration and subjection which shall be the portion of Syria.

Stayed, as doubting the omnipotence of God, and thinking that three victories must be the utmost which God would be able to give him.

Five or six times, with all the arrows in thy quiver. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. Thou shouldest have used all thy endeavours, and trusted in Him.

There is only a verbal contradiction between the end of this verse and the end of verse 18. God's promise was full and ample. It was the weakness of the king's faith which prevented the entire carrying out of it.

They buried him. With splendid pomp and ceremony, according to Josephus (*Ant.* ix. 8, § 6).

Touched the bones, &c. The dead were not enclosed in coffins, but wrapt in linen cloths.

"The object of the miracle was to convince in the most effectual manner people and king of the truth of the promise of the victory over the Syrians, which the dying Elisha had announced to king Joash by the laying of his hands upon the hands of the king. The historian implies this object when immediately after the account of this miracle he records the historical fulfilment of that promise (vv. 22—25)." (*Keil.*)

The typical meaning of this narrative is clear. As when Israel was in distress from the Moabites God sent this token of deliverance, so by the Resurrection of Christ does He deliver those who through fear of death are subject to bondage. In days of tribulation and in the hour of death, those who touch the Crucified by faith shall revive and stand upon their feet.

Evensong.

For general note on the prophet Ezekiel see on 18th Sunday after Trinity.

We have here what is called the *Vision of the valley of dry bones*. It was given to Ezekiel as a prophecy of the restoration of his captive nation, which had now given up hope. (Ps. cxxxvii.)

The valley, &c. The same valley, apparently, where he had seen the Vision of the destruction of Jerusalem, iii. 22, 23. Where he saw the Death, he now sees the Resurrection.

He passed by them round about. Walked round on the hills above, and beheld them lying in the valley beneath. **Very dry**, parched and bleached in the sun.

The question is asked to excite his attention and test his faith. He answers by appealing to Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence. "Thou, Lord, knowest, whether thou wilt do it. If Thou wilt, thou canst."

He is rewarded for his faith by being made the messenger of hope and deliverance.

A noise. Lit. "a voice," i. e. a Divine voice. Then the

2 Kings
XIII.

19

20

21

Ezek.
XXXVII.

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2

3

4

7, 8

- Ezek.
XXXVII.
- bones came together and adhered, but as yet were motionless skeletons. Then came the restoration of beauty. But still no life.
- 9 Then the prophet is commanded to exercise his office again. He calls for the wind (lit. the *breath*) to come from the four quarters of the earth, signifying the complete restoration that is at hand.
- 10 Then came the Resurrection. The slain rose up, as in a battle-field, an exceeding great army.
- 11 The captives had given up all for lost. **We are cut off for our parts.** As far as we are concerned;—cut off from our country, from all our hopes, from our God.
- 12 The prophecy of their restoration. The restoration by Cyrus was like a Resurrection from the dead to them. And, as we have so often shewn, that restoration would have had no abiding or satisfying consolation, had it not taught them to expect their spiritual restoration; a real “life from the dead” (Rom. xi. 15). And this national restoration could not be, except they believed in the Resurrection of Jesus, nor, again, could that faith be except they regarded Him as the firstfruits of them that slept (1 Cor. xv. 13). The Vision of the dry bones therefore is, not allegorically, but directly, a Vision of the Resurrection of the dead in Christ, “the quickening of our mortal bodies by *His Spirit* that dwelleth in us.”

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Mattins.

Numbers
XVI.

The lessons which were read before Easter described Israel in bondage, and therefore were suited for the season of Lent. We have come to day to the history of Israel freed from bondage, and so our lessons still run in union with the thoughts begotten by the season. Israel freed from the oppressor but falling again and again under the slavery of its own evil will—is not this the description of the Christian's condition in this world?

Further, we have now the Jewish priesthood brought before our notice. All the three lessons to day bear upon this subject, and so illustrate the special teaching of the Epistle and Gospel. Aaron standing between the dead and the living is the great type of Him “who came by water and blood”—the budding rod designating the minister of God's word and ordinances foreshadowed that eventide when Christ breathed on His disciples His solemn Ordination, and sent them forth to carry His Gospel to men.

Aaron has hitherto been entirely in the background. In Egypt he appears as no more than Moses' minister. After the

deliverance he went up into Sinai with Moses, but left Him there in communion with God. Aaron became the agent of the people's idolatry and made the golden calf. And yet he had been already designated as Priest (Ex. xxviii. 1): a sign that God's treasures are committed to earthen vessels, and that the sins of the priest hinder not His grace.

The appointment of the Priesthood was part of the organization of the whole people. The order was not paramount, it was only distinct. The priest was bound on the right hand and on the left by laws, he could not overstep them but by violating the title-deeds upon which he held his authority. The sacredness of his profession did not lessen the strength of his obligations. The sin of Korah began by his treating as a mere privilege and caste an Office which was appointed by God, and clothed with the most solemn responsibilities.

Son of signifies here, as very often, "descendant of." **Izhar** was brother of Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron. **Korah** belonged to the priestly tribe and to that family of it which had the most honourable charge, but a younger branch of the family had been made its chief, and this probably excited his anger. See ch. iii. 27. 30.

Dathan, Abiram, and On, evidently were dissatisfied because the birthright had been taken away from their father Reuben. On's name is not mentioned again, which leads us to suppose that he repented and withdrew from the rebellion.

The **two hundred and fifty** appear to have belonged to various tribes.

The real cause of jealousy was what we have already stated. But in order to gain the support of all who might be discontented, Korah takes a different ground, therefore a hypocritical one. "The *whole congregation* is holy," he says, "they are *all* priests, therefore the Levites have no right to claim any spiritual powers." But God, who had appointed the work of life to each one of the tribes, had appointed the family of Aaron to be the spokesmen of the nation of priests. Korah represented that they had usurped arbitrary powers, and made themselves "rulers over God's heritage." To claim the right of offering sacrifice on the part of all, was to introduce the principle of self-will, which sacrifice was ordained to protest against,—to turn God's order into anarchy and confusion. Of course his foundation had a great truth in it (see Ex. xix. 6), but he built a false and destructive doctrine upon that foundation. Attempts have been made before now, to set light by the Christian ministry, because *all* Christians are kings and priests unto God (Rev. i. 5, 6). And the Christian priesthood must meet such attempts by remembering that it is only faithful when it acknowledges God as the source of all life, the ever-present Bestower of blessing, the daily life of the Church, not suffering His priests to act for their own vain-glory, but for His honour and

Numbers
XVI.

1

2

3

Numbers
XVI.

for the welfare of His people. A priesthood which imagines that its great business is to struggle for dominion, which knows not the power of meekness, whose weapons are strife, ambition, selfish craft, cannot stand in the day of gainsaying. It will perish with Korah.

4 **Fell upon his face**, overwhelmed by the sense of the evil which he saw would arise.

7 **Upon you, ye sons of Levi.** Evidently this is said to shew that he was aware of the hypocrisy of their plea for religious equality, that they had merely put it forward to win over the Reubenites.

11 It is **against the Lord**, not against Aaron, that they are really rebelling, for it was the Lord who had made Aaron the high priest.

13 **Is it a small thing.** They tauntingly take up the words which he had spoken against Korah (ver. 9) as he had taken up Korah's words "ye take too much upon you," verses 7 and 3.

A land flowing with milk and honey, an ill-conditioned and perverse way of describing Egypt, for the purpose of taunting him.

14 **Wilt thou put out the eyes, &c.**, exactly equivalent to our familiar expression "throw dust in their eyes," for "deceive them."

15 **I have not taken, &c.** Have not treated them oppressively; cf. 1 Sam. xii. 3.

24 **Tabernacle.** The Heb. word so translated is not that commonly used for "Tabernacle." It means strictly "dwelling-place," and this is the meaning here. The stations of the Kohathites and of the Reubenites were close together, the Reubenites being in the outermost circle. The latter were swallowed up, but Korah and his two hundred and fifty were consumed by fire. (See a very interesting note in Blunt's *Undesigned Coincidences*.)

27 **Stood in the door**, in defiance.

32 **All that appertained to Korah**, i. e. his servants, and his followers in the rebellion. But not his sons. They took no part in the rebellion, or if they did they repented. See xxvi. 11. They perpetuated the family, and became sweet Psalmists. Samuel was one of them. See Plumptre's *Biblical Studies*, p. 147.

35 **From the Lord**, apparently from the altar of the Tabernacle. The catastrophe which destroyed the gainsayers was evidently miraculous; but since the Bible is a revelation of laws and not of anomalies, we must look upon it as throwing a light upon all natural judgments, which, though we may trace their physical causes, are not the less executors of God's will. "The earthquake of Lisbon was a handwriting on the wall to all Europe. The attempts of the seers of the age to decipher it shewed that they felt it to be so. And when that natural admonition was disregarded there came in due time a more

fearful moral earthquake, of which not one but all kingdoms felt the shock." (*Maurice's Patriarchs and Lawgivers*. Many thoughts in the present exposition are taken from the same striking sermon.)

Numbers
XVI.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Unto Eleazar. Not to Aaron, for as high priest it was not meet that he should be defiled by going among the dead. But the form of the command implied also that the dignity was hereditary. 37

The censers being hallowed were to be put to no common use, but they were not to be used again for offering, and **the coals** were to be thrown **yonder** (i.e. into the far distance), as never to be used for any purpose again.

The censers thus served a twofold purpose. They shewed that what was once hallowed could never become common, they were also a solemn memorial in the eyes of Israel of the sin of rebellion. 38

Fell upon their faces, in intercession. 45

A censer. Heb. "*the censer*," that used by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. 46

Make an atonement. The high priest answers the evil speech against himself by making intercession for the evil speakers. A foreshadowing of the cry, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

"The means resorted to by Moses to stay the plague shewed afresh how the faithful servant of God bore the rescue of his people upon his heart. All the motives which he had hitherto pleaded, in his repeated intercession that this evil congregation might be spared, were now exhausted. He could not stake his life for the nation as at Horeb (Ex. xxxii. 32), for the nation had rejected him. He could no longer appeal to the honour of Jehovah among the heathen, seeing that the Lord, even when sentencing the rebellious race to fall in the desert, had assured him that the whole earth should be filled with His glory (chap. xiv. 20 sqq.). Still less could he pray to God that He would not be wrathful with all for the sake of one or a few sinners, as in chap. xvi. 22, seeing that the whole congregation had taken part with the rebels. In this condition of things there was but one way left of averting the threatened destruction of the whole nation, namely, to adopt the means which the Lord Himself had given to His congregation, in the high-priestly office, to wipe away their sins, and recover the Divine grace which they had forfeited through sin,—viz. the offering of incense, which embodied the high-priestly prayer, and the strength and operation of which were not dependent upon the sincerity and earnestness of Aaron's faith, but had a firm and immovable foundation in the power of the Divine appointment." (*Keil*.)

Numbers

XVI.

48

The atonement is accepted, the very priesthood which the rebels had rejected becomes the instrument of their salvation.

“I know not whether more to marvel at the courage or mercy of Aaron; his mercy, that he would save so rebellious a people; his courage, that he would save them with so great a danger to himself. For, as one that would part a fray, he thrusts himself under the strokes of God, and puts it to the choice of the revenger, whether he will smite him or forbear the rest; he stands boldly betwixt the living and the dead, as one that will either die with them, or have them live with him. The sight of fourteen hundred carcasses dismayed him not; he that before feared the threats of the people, now fears not the strokes of God. It is not for God’s ministers to stand upon their own perils in the common causes of the Church; their prayers must oppose the judgments of the Almighty; when the fire of God’s anger is kindled, their censers must smoke with fire from the altar. Every Christian must pray the removal of vengeance; how much more they whom God hath appointed to mediate for his people; every man’s mouth is his own, but they are mouths to all.

“Had Aaron thrust in himself with empty hands, I doubt whether he had prevailed. Now his censer was his protection. When we come with supplications in our hands we need not fear the strokes of God. We have leave to resist the divine judgments by our prayers, with favour and success. So soon as the incense of Aaron ascended up to God he smelt a savour of rest; he will rather spare the offenders than strike their intercessor. How hardly can any people miscarry that have faithful ministers to sue for their safety! Nothing but the smoke of hearty prayers can cleanse the air from the plagues of God.

“If Aaron’s sacrifice were thus accepted, how much more shall the High Priest of the New Testament deliver the offenders from death! The plague was entered upon all the sons of men. O Saviour, thou stoodest betwixt the living and the dead, that all which believe in thee should not perish! Aaron offered and was not stricken, but thou, O Redeemer! wouldst offer and be struck, that by thy stripes we might be healed! So stoodest thou betwixt the dead and the living, that thou wert both alive and dead; and all this, that we, when we were dead, might live for ever.” (Hall’s *Contemplations*.)

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Numbers

XVII.

We have here a vindication of the priesthood of Aaron, rendered necessary by the opposition of the Levites in the late rebellion.

Princes, heads of the tribes.

2

God bids Moses assert Aaron's position by writing his name on the rod of Levi, though he was from the second son (Ex. vi. 16). The event would shew the nation whether this act was in accordance with His will. The rod, or staff, was the natural symbol of authority (Gen. xlix. 10, "sceptre").

The testimony. The two tables of the Law.

Twelve. There were twelve, probably, exclusive of Aaron's. It is so stated in the Vulgate translation. For there were two princes of the house of Joseph, those of Ephraim and Manasseh.

The significance of this miracle is plain. As God gave life and power to the dry rod, so He gave to Aaron, who had no natural preeminence, the power of His Spirit through his consecration with the holy anointing oil. Ordinances which have no power in themselves become fraught with life and efficacy when God's Spirit descends upon them.

The almond-tree is the first of all trees to flower and bear fruit. Its Hebrew name signifies "the waking tree." It becomes now the sign of the speed and certainty with which God accomplishes His will, and of the nation which, beginning with Aaron's priesthood, should all become holy, and fill the earth with the beauty of God's glory.

"Our Lord proved Himself to be the Messiah, the true High Priest over all the tribes of faithful Israelites, by coming forth as a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, when the house of David was in a low estate like a dead and sere stick, and 'as a root out of a dry ground' (Is. xi. 1; liii. 2); and He is 'the man whose name is the BRANCH' (Zech. vi. 12); and in Him are fulfilled the prophecies, 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch; in his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The LORD our RIGHTEOUSNESS' (Jer. xxiii. 6). 'In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious' (Is. iv. 2).

"The figure was further fulfilled in the Resurrection of Christ from the grave, who was 'declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the Resurrection from the dead' (see Rom. i. 4). Christ at His death had seemed for a time to be withered, and to have become like a dry tree. But in the *morning* He *awakened* from the dead, and the BRANCH put forth, as an Almond-tree, the buds and blossoms and ripe fruits of life and immortality." (*Bp. Wordsworth.*)

The testimony. The Two Tables. The rod was laid up with these in the Ark in after years. Heb. ix. 4. But probably it was lost when the Philistines took the Ark (1 Sam. iii), for it was not there in Solomon's days. See 1 Kings viii. 8, 9.

Numbers
XVII.

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10

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Mattins.**Numbers
xx.**

In the present lesson we have the people nearing the end of their wanderings. It is the 40th year of the Exodus, and they are passing round Mount Seir towards Pisgah on the east of the Jordan. The chief subject of to-day's lessons is the change of leaders. We have first the sentence on Moses and Aaron, that they shall not go into the promised land, and then (xx. 22) the death of Aaron. But Moses is still strong in the confidence of the Lord, and the people go on to fresh victories (xxi. 10—end). As the lessons of last Sunday ran parallel with the history of the establishment of the Christian Priesthood, so do the present ones with the victory of the Church as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

1 The interval that elapsed between the sentence passed in ch. xiv. 34 and the present time, a period of 38 years, is almost a blank in the history. We have a list of stations (Num. xxxiii.), and that is nearly all. It seems not unlikely that the organized camp was broken up, except as regards the Tabernacle and the Levites surrounding it, the great bulk of the people being scattered hither and thither leading a nomadic life. The opening words here imply that now they were drawn together again in Kadesh. **The desert of Zin** was the north-eastern portion of the wilderness of Paran, forming a portion of the southern boundary of Canaan.

The first month, that is of the 40th year of wandering.

Miriam. For her history see Num. xxvi. 59; Ex. xv. 20, 21; Num. xii.; Deut. xxiv. 9.

2 They were at or near the spring of Kadesh, but the concentration of the whole people rendered this spring quite insufficient for their needs.

6 **Fell upon their faces** in sorrow for this fresh trouble, and in supplication for deliverance from it.

8 **The rod**, i. e. of Moses. As the memorial of so many Divine mercies it had been laid up in the Tabernacle. See next verse.

10 "He spake unadvisedly with his lips," writes the Psalmist, Ps. cvi. 33. There is little doubt that the Hebrew word translated "**rebels**" was that condemned by our Lord in Matt v. 22, translated in our Version, "Thou fool." It is a word evidently spoken in violent anger, which is also shown in his smiting the rock twice when he was told to speak to it. The words "**Must we**" following the epithet "ye rebels" imply that he takes this murmuring as a personal injury, instead of a sin against God. He did not "sanctify God in the eyes of the congregation" (ver. 12). A lesson to Christian ministers, that they never regard themselves as sources of Divine grace, but only as ministers and channels of it.

Meribah, i.e. "Strife." There are two points deserving of notice here which cannot be expressed in the English version. The word "Meribah" is from the same root as that translated "rebel" in v. 10, and "He was sanctified" is from the Hebrew root *Kadesh*, i.e. "Holy." Their strife made the place Meribah, but God's vindication of His holiness made it Kadesh. Cf. ch. xxvii. 14 and Deut. xxxii. 51. Moses does not endeavour to conceal his own sin or God's punishment of it. He relates it fully here, and refers to it again in ch. xxvii. 14; Deut. i. 37; iii. 23—26; xxxii. 48—51.

Bp. Wordsworth has a very interesting note, drawing spiritual types out of the narrative. He compares the Rock smitten *once* (Ex. xvii. 4) to Christ once offered for the life of man. It was to be smitten once, and no more. Afterwards its power of salvation was to be educed by the *word*. The Christian ministry speaks the word, and it brings life, deriving all its virtue from the Rock once smitten for us all, and eliciting therefrom streams of living water.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The direct approach to Canaan was from the South, and when the people were in Kadesh 38 years before (Num. xiii.) that was the route proposed. But now, for reasons which are not explained (it has been conjectured that there were Egyptian troops moving in that quarter), they are moved eastwards round the Dead Sea. In order to get there by the direct route they would have to pass through the heart of the Edomite mountains.

Thy brother. An appeal to Edom to renew the old kindnesses of his father Esau, Gen. xxxiii.

The king's highway. The expression denotes a military causeway. The high road through the mountains of Edom abounds in springs and pasturage. This explains their engagement not to drink of the wells, which were private property; they would drink of the rivers only.

The churlishness of Edom became a byword, and as the message came from God, the refusal was an offence against Him. See Deut. ii. 1, and cf. Deut. xxiii. 7.

Mount Hor, now Jebel Harun, close to the city of Petra. It is a mountain of 5000 ft. height, "rising like a huge castellated building from a lower base" (*Stanley*).

His garments, the priestly robes with which Moses had invested him. They were to be put upon Eleazar, in token of the solemn transference of Aaron's office to him. The transference was a witness of imperfection. There were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.

**Numbers
XX.**

13

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| Numbers XX. | Thus the Church remained, until Christ came, who remaineth a Priest for ever. |
| 29 | They had rebelled against him when living; they learnt his worth when he was dead. Aaron was aged 123. Ch. xxxiii. |
| XXI. | 39. |
| 1 | King Arad , rather "the King of Arad," which was a town some 20 miles south of Hebron. In all probability the event here recorded took place before the death of Aaron, for the congregation at the time of his death were moving away from the neighbourhood of Arad, towards the Eastern gulf of the Red Sea (see Mr Clark's <i>Bible Atlas</i>). They had excited the king's apprehensions when they were at Kadesh, for he expected an attack similar to that which followed the return of the spies, chs. xiii. xiv. But this narrative is placed here, as the first of a series of victories gained by Moses, which become now the subject of the history. |
| 2 | This vow is the Old Testament form of the total renunciation of the works of darkness. It was as necessary now for the prosperity of the commonwealth of Israel to wage war against ungodly nations, as it is for Christians to utterly renounce spiritual wickedness. |
| 3 | Hormah , i.e. "Anathema." |
| 4 | They were now in the Arabah, in full march southward toward the Elamitic arm of the Red Sea, the limestone cliffs of El-Tih on one hand, and the granite range of Mount Seir on the other. The Arabah is an almost total desert of sand and gravel, and much troubled by hot winds. Hence the discouragement of the people. |
| 5 | Light . The Heb. word signifies "mean," "contemptible." |
| 6 | The whole of the East side of the hills of Edom swarms with venomous reptiles. (See Clark's <i>Bible Atlas</i> , Map 3.) The epithet " fiery " refers to the character of the bite, which was inflammatory and caused intense thirst. Several ancient writers attest the dangers to which travellers were exposed in the deserts of Arabia from these animals. |
| 8 | The people were commanded to look at the figure of the instrument of their punishment. To do so denoted their confession of sin, submission to God's will, faith in His power to heal. It is our Lord Himself who has bidden us see herein a type of Himself, made a curse for us, that we might be healed. John iii. 14, 15. Made a curse for us—made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. viii. 3), yet holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and in this represented by the serpent of brass, which had no venom in it. |
| | "In this troublesome desert we are all stung by that fiery and old serpent. O Saviour! it is to thee we must look and be cured: it is thou who wast their paschal lamb, their manna, their rock, their serpent. To all purposes dost thou vary thyself to thy church, that we may find thee everywhere. Thou art |

for our nourishment, refreshing, cure; as hereafter, so even now, all in all." (*Bp. Hall.*)

Numbers
XXI.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Oboth. The Hebrew name probably means "place of the necromancers" (see Wordsworth on Lev. xix. 31).

10

The people had now reached their southernmost limit, and turning sharply to the East they rounded the hills of Edom, and commenced a northward march on the Eastern side of the range. There is now, probably there was then, a well-trodden road from the Red Sea to Damascus.

Ije-Abarim. That is, "the ruins in Abarim." Abarim was the name of the whole upland region East of the Jordan, the same district that was called in New Testament times, Perea. **The sunrising** is of course the East.

11

Valley of Zared, rather "the watercourse of Zared." It was the first westward-flowing brook that crossed the line of march. This therefore was an important epoch in their march, and this importance is marked in the command to the people to cross it, preserved in Deut. ii. 13.

12

Arnon, now Wady Møjeb, was an impetuous stream, the greatest of all the streams which flow into the Dead Sea, except the Jordan. By crossing it they invaded the country of the Amorites, that is to say, the country which the Amorites had recently taken from the Moabites. (Deut. ii. 24.) This therefore is Israel's first war of aggression, and as such is celebrated in the song which follows.

13

The book of the wars of the Lord is not referred to elsewhere. But it was probably a collection of odes on the different triumphant events of the wandering, in which case it would begin with the Song of Miriam, Ex. xv. The passage before us is plainly only a fragment, a quotation from a larger ode.

14

In the Red Sea. This translation is taken from the Vulgate, but nearly all Hebrew authorities hold it to be erroneous. The most approved rendering is, *In a storm the Lord conquered Vaheb* [the proper name of some place near the crossing of the river] *and the brooks of Arnon; the stream of the brooks that goeth down, &c.*

The dwelling of Ar was lower down the river, and was the frontier town of the Moabites. The Israelites did not attack it, hitherto they had respected the land of the Moabites.

Beer, i. e. *Well*, so called because here they drank not from rivers, but from the first digged well. It was the first sign of possession, that they were commanded to do so. Hence their exultation, expressed in the song which follows, and hence the significance of the history of the well as given in the present verse. It was God's command which provided the well, because the time for possession was come. Therefore Moses by His com-

16

Numbers
XXI.

mand gathered the people, and by His command the princes and nobles digged it. It was done with solemn ceremony. The lawgiver was there to direct, the princes were there with their staves, with the visible badges of office. This was their part. Then came God's part—He gave them water. When we gather together in His Name there is He in the midst of us. He gives us water of Life when we diligently seek it by digging in His Word and Sacraments.

This well is called in Is. xv. 8 Beer-elim, i. e. "Well of the Princes."

"Wells, in Scripture, are figures of Spiritual blessings. In Origen's works there is an interesting and beautiful homily on the numerous events recorded in connexion with Wells of Water in the Bible, and on the spiritual instruction to be derived from them. Abraham digged a well at Beer-sheba (Gen. xxi. 31). God revealed himself to Hagar at a Well (Gen. xxi. 19). Abraham's servant met Rebekah at a Well (Gen. xxiv. 13). Isaac reopened the Wells which his father's servant had digged (xxvi. 15). Jacob met Rachel at a Well (xxix. 10). Jacob gave a Well at Sichem to his children (John iv. 5, 12). Moses met his future wife at a Well, and became a shepherd, and fed the flock of Jethro at Horeb, and had a vision of God (Exod. ii. 15; iii. 1). The Israelites came to Elim, where were twelve Wells of water (Exod. xv. 27). Christ came to the Well of Jacob, at Sichem, and revealed Himself as the Messiah to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 6, 26). Go through all the Scriptures, says Origen, seeking out the Wells, till you come to the Gospels, and there you will find the Well by which our Saviour sat and set forth the divine significance of all wells, and compares himself to a fountain of living water." (*Wordsworth.*)

19 For the places named here see Clark's *Bible Atlas*. They came at length to Pisgah, the ridge apparently which divided the Amorites proper from the district which they had taken from Moab, and which Israel had now in turn taken from them. **Jeshimon**, i. e. the *wilderness*, that particular district now called *El-Ghor*, on the N.E. of the Dead Sea.

21 Sihon's capital was Heshbon. His dominion extended from the Arnon to the Jabbok. The request here made dates back before the event of ver. 13. The narrative of conquest and advance goes on unbroken to the end of the 19th verse, then the historian goes back to explain why Sihon was attacked. Peace was open to him, if he would have accepted it. But his answer to this request was an attack, and the battle of Jahaz, close to the Arnon, was fought; he was defeated, and then the Israelites crossed the river.

27 **In proverbs**, i. e. in national odes. See ver. 14.

"It would seem that as the Israelites approached nearer to the Land of Promise, the hearts of the People were more warmed with thankfulness, and gave vent to their feelings in

hymns of praise. They had entered the wilderness after their deliverance from Egypt with songs of victory, and now they approach Canaan after their weary pilgrimage with psalms of joy. How joyful will be the songs of the true Israel when they come to their heavenly Canaan, and to the Jerusalem that is above!" (*Bp. Wordsworth.*)

The first part of the song describes the previous victory of Sihon over Moab. **Fire**, i.e. destruction, had gone **out of Heshbon**, and laid Moab waste. **Chemosh** was the false god of Moab and Ammon (Jer. xlviii. 7; Jud. xi. 24), and is taunted for inability to save his devotees. **He hath given his sons that escaped** (more correctly, *to be fugitives*), and his daughters into captivity to Sihon.

Then comes the triumphant cry of Israel, who have conquered the conquerors, invaded the invaders, and laid them low. **Which reacheth**. The Septuagint reads, *with fire to Medeba*. One letter in the Hebrew makes the difference, and probably the LXX. is the correct reading. The places here named have all been identified by modern research. It was at Dibon (now Dhibân) that the famous Moabite stone was discovered in 1868.

The fall of Sihon was followed by that of Og, at the great battle of Edrei. Bashan was north of the Amorites. See Deut. iii. 1—13.

Numbers
XXI.

29

30

33

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Mattins.

The people were now only separated by Jordan from the land of their inheritance. They were **in the plains of Moab**, i.e. in the plains which had belonged to Moab, but had been taken by Sihon, and now from him by Israel. They moved no more until they crossed the Jordan after Moses' death.

Balak was inviting mischief on himself. He was distressed at the fall of Sihon, yet the Amorites were enemies of Moab, and Israel had received a command not to hurt the Moabites, because of their descent from Lot.

Balaam has not been named before. He appears thus suddenly dwelling at Pethor, in Mesopotamia. He is held up before us in the New Testament as a false prophet (Rev. ii. 14), yet his inspirations were from God. And his predictions are among the most beautiful and divine in Holy Scripture. Again and again we are told that God put words in his mouth. A careful study of his history will explain the contradiction.

This is not the first time that we read of God speaking to and teaching heathens. He spoke to Laban, to Abimelech, to Pharaoh. And always He is the teacher of men. Whatever they learn that is good, and true, and wise, they learn from Him.

Numbers
XXII.

2

5

Numbers
XXII.

So far then we are able to assert, that whatever there was in Balaam of intelligence, foresight, power, whatever he understood about the world around him was a gift of God. And because men recognized these powers in him they counted him for a prophet. They saw that he divined secrets which were hidden from the many, and was able to connect the past, the present, and the future, and explain things which to them seemed hopeless puzzles. But the error of Balak gives the key to what was wrong. He looked upon Balaam's powers as *his own*, not as God's. "I wot," he said, "that he whom thou cursest is cursed, and he whom thou blessest is blessed." And his messengers came with **the rewards of divination** in their hands. They would *buy* his malediction upon their enemies. Here we see the temptation under which the prophet fell. Led away by the love of praise and of gain, "his inward eye becomes more dim, the light that was in the man turns to darkness. Himself takes the place of the God whom he believed in and worshipped. He awakes, like Samson after the hair has been shorn, and feels that his strength is departed. But the shadow of it must be preserved. He must persuade himself, and persuade others, that wisdom and power are his still. He resorts to the tricks of the diviner. He imposes upon men with appearances, leading them to fancy that he obtains his insight by some conjuring arts which he can exhibit before them. Speedily the falsehood, which he has been practising on others, returns upon himself. Though he has vaunted of the powers which set him above ordinary men, he begins to covet their possessions, to think that, after all, these are the most real things. And why should not he, the wise man, obtain them, nay, have a larger share of them than others? Henceforth this becomes the only end which he can distinctly propose to himself." (Maurice, *Patriarchs and Lawgivers*, p. 227.)

8 The words which we have just quoted say truly that Balaam *distinctly* proposes a selfish end to himself. But the Spirit of God strives with that selfishness and urges him to seek a nobler end, that for which God gave him his powers. He refuses to go with the messengers, he will wait for a night. And in the still night God's voice comes to him, and as yet is potent with him to restrain him.

15 The words with which he refuses to go display a heart which is not right. His desire is to go. He dares not disobey God, but he would if he dared.

Balak thought he had not bidden high enough. He was like most seekers after soothsayers, he thought their services were venal. The gods themselves were supposed to be capable of taking bribes.

18 This fine sentence, "**If Balak would give,**" &c. is another bad sign. He was playing with the hook whilst he thought he was pushing it away. So he asked for another night to consider.

Just as a man talks of "thinking the question calmly over" when he is tempted to do wrong, and when he knows in his secret heart what God's will is, only he is in hopes of finding some plan for putting his conscience to sleep.

Numbers
XXII.

Balaam had already learned God's will, "Thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed" (ver. 12). No delay could alter this, yet he still hoped some loophole might be found which would suffer him to go, and so to win Balak's riches and honours. Had his obedience been hearty the matter would have been ended. As it was, his heart would in any case have been with the messengers. Now therefore God removes the prohibition. Let him go whither his heart led him. Yet he is warned that even thus he cannot gainsay God's will.

20

No wonder then that though God removed the prohibition, He was yet angry with him because he went. God saw his evil and wilful heart, and his hope that by some means the coveted honours might be his. God does not crush men's wills by an act of omnipotence, He gives them their hearts' desires while He strives with them to win those hearts to Himself.

22

The angel, i.e. the angel who guided Israel through the wilderness, "the Captain of the Lord's host."

Hitherto he had been riding in the open country. The locality as here described indicates the approach to some city, probably that to which he was bound.

24

The occurrence before us has been taken by some to have been an articulate speaking by the ass with human voice, by others to have occurred in a Vision, whilst Balaam was in a trance. (See Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Balaam.") Certainly this seems the most natural view, but it is a question on which I am indifferent. To quote once more the beautiful sermon which I have followed throughout this chapter, "How the dumb ass rebuked the madness of the prophet I know not, nor care to know. But I believe that whatever sounds it uttered, they did convey exactly that meaning to the mind of the prophet which it is said that they conveyed. He felt that the instinct of a brute was made the instrument of teaching him; that what he could not learn by gracious inward discipline, was brought home to him by rough, humiliating, outward discipline." (*Maurice.*)

25

Perverse, rather "headlong," or "mad."

32

A city of Moab, lit. "*Ir-Moab*," probably the *Ar* of xxi. 15.

36

Kirjath-huzoth, i.e. "city of streets." Probably Balak's residence. It appears to be a place now called Shihân, about four miles from Ar.

39

High places of Baal, lit. *Bamoth-Baal*. See xxi. 19.

41

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Balaam still tampers with the inward Voice. He allows the oxen to be slain, and the altars to be built. He practises the

Numbers
XXIII.

**Numbers
XXIII.**

usual arts of the diviner. But God has not ceased to strive with him, and when he goes away to a high place (ver. 3) or a *cliff*, God puts a word in his mouth. A mightier inspiration than any he has yet known takes possession of him, and he returns to the heathen king. Then we have Balaam's first "*parable*," verses 7—10.

7 **Aram**, Mesopotamia.

9 **For.** The word seems to denote his unwillingness to speak as he is doing. "I desired not to bless," he seems to say, "but how can I help it? For when I went to the top of the rock (ver. 3), to watch for the expected augury, I was met by God. I saw Him; He gives me no choice. It is a people that dwelleth alone, no curse can prevail against them."

10 **The fourth part of Israel.** Alluding to the four camps into which the congregation was divided, and of which probably he had seen but one.

And the marvellous spectacle of a people which God hath blessed, a holy nation, fills him with a belief which had been hidden from him before, of God not merely as the Giver of wisdom to favourite men, but as the Righteous Being, the Author of a Divine Order. "Out of that thought another unfolds itself; a deep sense, if it were but a transient one, of his own unrighteousness. What has he been living for? To be called a prophet; to be praised, glorified, sought after.

"It has been weariness and vexation of spirit. Oh, for the possibility of being right and true, of being like Him whose words he has uttered! Oh, if he might but get that gift at last, when Balak's gifts and all his own will look to him even more paltry than they looked then! Oh, that he might die the death of the righteous, and his last end be like his!" (*Maurice.*)

13 Balak apparently thought that the inspiration had come to Balaam's mind in consequence of his seeing them from the high place, where vast numbers were in sight. He would take him now to another place, where he would only see a few stragglers on the outskirts of the camp. Perhaps this would change his mode of thought. Balak evidently still regards Balaam as the source of his own prophecies, and refuses to look upon them as words of which he is only the instrument of utterance.

It is to this infatuation that Balaam addresses himself in the opening words of his second Parable, verses 18—24.

22 Evidently the history of the Israelites was familiar to him. He has several allusions to it. He is enraptured for the time at the sight of a body of men whom God Himself has marshalled in their hosts. The comparison, "the shout of a king is among them," was probably suggested by the joyous cries which reached his ear from the camp, or from the sound of the trumpets which were blown at certain seasons. The word "shout" is the same word which is used to describe the sound of the silver trumpets, Lev. xxiii. 24.

The Spirit of God is still mighty with him. He now plainly confesses what he knew before, that his enchantments are powerless against God's will, and that God's will is so plainly made known as regards Israel, that any further attempts are useless. The people had been blessed, and would go on in the might of God to victory and to rest.

Jeshimon, i.e. the waste. Peor was on the northern side of Pisgah. It "is a rough and narrow dell, watered at its bottom by an abundant spring that gushes from beneath the enclosing rocks, and is overshadowed by the gnarled and twisted boughs of some of the largest terebinths that the Holy Land contains." (Tristram, *Land of Israel*, p. 542.)

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Under the influence of the nobler feeling which for a while held possession of him, he no longer sought enchantments. He gazed down upon the vast host beneath his feet, and yielded himself to the feelings which the sight excited within him.

Apparently he is here describing a condition which was not that of the faithful prophets of God. They did not fall into trances, violent states of ecstasy. "With Balaam the word of God could only prevail by first subduing the alien will, and overpowering the bodily energies which the will ordinarily directs." (*Speaker's Commentary*.)

This third Parable leaves out of sight, as already disposed of, the possibility of his getting leave to curse them. He gives free course therefore to the poetry which wells up from his heart as he looks down upon the mighty host.

The **aloe** furnished one of the most precious of spices. Cf. Ps. xlv. 8. The **cedar** was the most majestic and beautiful of trees.

His buckets. The land which was not river bank was fertilized in Balaam's country as in Egypt by means of buckets which were swung round on a pivot. Balaam therefore means that Israel shall not only be most fertile himself, but shall also be the means of spreading fertility far and wide. **Agag**, the hereditary name of the kings of Amalek.

The Vulgate reads the latter part of the verse thus, "*and I will advise thee what thy people shall do to this people*"¹. And many Jewish commentators take the same view, and suppose that this was Balaam's preface to the evil counsel which he afterwards gave Balak (ch. xxxi. 16; Rev. ii. 14), the counsel itself not being recorded here, as having been whispered to Balak in secret. But probably the English version is right. The words that follow imply that the Spirit of holiness still holds him, that his day of grace is not over.

¹ Dabo consilium quid populus tuus populo huic faciat.

Numbers
XXIII.

23

28

Numbers
XXIV.

3, 4

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6

7

14

Numbers

XXIV.

15 Balaam's fourth and last Parable is uttered in a tone of deep melancholy. He is filled with admiration at the sight of Israel in his camp, it gives him a sense of life and joy. But his affections are not in unison with it. "It is the sight of spring to a man whose spirit is wintry. The nation has a strength within it which must conquer, because God has blessed it. It shall be higher than Agag; Amalek must fall before it; all that seems great now must be broken; there are victories in the distance which the prophet sees dimly, and can only express in words rising far above his own conceptions. But what has he to do with these triumphs of God? *He will see them, but not now; he will behold them, but not nigh.* A Star he sees is rising upon the world, a Light that shall one day fill it. *But who shall live when God doeth this?* What would he give if he could sympathize with the great purpose which will be accomplished in the world; if he could care to see righteousness and truth established in it!" (*Maurice.*)

17 **Him**, the King, represented by the Star and the Sceptre. He looks upward from the vast camp of the people, being taught by them to see in the Eternal Counsel of God the concentration of their glory in One Person. Moab was at this moment the representative of the opposers of God's people. Therefore the words referring to Moab here signify "shall put all His enemies under His feet."

Destroy all the children of Sheth, i.e. of *tumult*, referring to the fierce warriors of Moab. See Jer. xviii. 45.

18 **Seir**, the mountain-land, south of Moab, which the Edomites inhabited.

19 **Shall destroy**, &c., i.e. his victory shall be so complete that he shall not only overcome each city, but shall capture and overcome all stragglers who escape from them.

20 **Amalek was**—rather *is*. We have already noticed that Amalek at this time was the strongest of the nations of the desert.

21 The **Kenites** (see Gen. xv. 19; Jud. i. 16; 1 Sam. xxx. 26, 29) were near neighbours of the Amalekites: 1 Sam. xv. 6. And Balaam here distinguishes between them and the Amalekites whom he is denouncing. For the correct rendering of the words is, *Strong be thy dwellingplace, and make thou thy rest in the rock. For the Kenite shall not be destroyed until Asshur*, &c. The Kenites shall have long prosperity, and shall be partakers both of the prosperity and adversity of Israel, 2 Kings xvii. 6. They returned after the Captivity, 1 Chron. ii. 55.

24 **Chittim** was properly Cyprus, the only island of the West visible from Palestine. It thus becomes the representative to Balaam of the whole unknown lands of the Mediterranean, from which in his vision he foresaw would come the power which would eventually destroy the great Empires of the East. The

words were fulfilled first in the conquests of Alexander, but more completely in the victories of the Roman Empire.

To his place, i.e., one would suppose, to his own home. Truth for a while had prevailed within him. "But the evil spirit returned to the house that was empty, swept, and garnished, and took with it seven spirits more wicked than itself. The magician could not bear to gaze upon the broken wand; to part with power, even the reputation of possessing it, that he might die the death of the righteous. He had felt sin at the core of his life, without seeking to have it cast out; he had known God as a Righteous Being. Henceforth they were at war. He returns to Balak filled with a deeper spite against the people whom he might not curse than it was possible for Balak to feel; he has been permitted to know the secret of their strength; he sees how it may be sapped. 'Curse them not, but tempt them to lust and corruption; then they will be as weak and contemptible as yourselves.'" (*Maurice.*) The end of Balaam is recorded ch. xxxi. 8.

Note. I have made large excerpts from Mr Maurice's admirable sermon on this subject, and can only refer the reader to the following additional writers for valuable thoughts. Hall's *Contemplations*; Bp. Butler's *Sermons*; J. H. Newman's *Sermons*, New Ed. iv. 18; Is. Williams' *Sermons on Old Testament Characters*; Cowie's *Hulsean Lectures*, 1853; Bp. of Winchester's *Sermons*.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Mattins.

The chapters from the Books of Moses which we have hitherto read are all historical, and have given us an account of the journey towards the promised land. The first three chapters of Deuteronomy are also historical. Moses assembles the people together and gives a summary of the past. In the present chapter he begins a series of exhortations founded upon the experience of the past. It is a practical application of all that has preceded, and therefore the Church begins the lessons from Deuteronomy with this chapter, and we may call the Lessons for the present and two following Sundays homilies upon those of the Sundays preceding. As we read at this time of the Jewish lawgiver giving his last instructions to his people before his departure, we may compare him with our Blessed Lawgiver and King, who as at this time was comforting and exhorting His disciples, and speaking to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, i.e. because of all the things they had passed

Numbers
XXIV.

25

Deut. IV.

Deut. IV. through, and of which he had just been reminding them. They had entered into a covenant with God, and this covenant Moses now proceeds to expound to them.

2 **Ye shall not add**, as the Pharisees afterwards did. Cf. ch. xiii. 1; Jer. xxvi. 2; Prov. xxx. 6; Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

3 **Baal-peor.** When Balaam had been unable to curse the people at Balak's request, he invented a way horrible and too effective of meeting his patron's views. But in so doing he destroyed Balak and himself, as well as three-and-twenty thousand of the people. They "joined themselves to Baal-peor," gave themselves up to idolatry and shameful lusts (Num. xxv.).

10-19 Warning against idolatry. Moses finds his warning upon the solemn and awful scenes of Sinai, wherein throughout they saw no similitude whatever of God. They only heard a voice. He warns them first against images of men and women. This, no doubt, was to guard them against the hero-worship so common in the ancient empires, and of which we may see the monuments in the Assyrian and Egyptian colossal sculptures which are laid up in our museum. There are signs of such worship among the children of Shem. See Joshua xxiv. 2; Gen. xxxi. 19, 30, 32; xxxv. 2; and cf. Judges viii. 27; and xvii. 4, 5. Moses next speaks of Nature worship, whether mean and debased like that of Egypt, or of a loftier character, the worship of the Universe, of the sun and moon and planets.

19 **Which the Lord,** &c. He has given them as ministers of light to all nations; they are creatures for man's use, therefore not his lords.

20 **The iron furnace,** expressive of the terrible sufferings of Israel in Egypt. Cf. 1 Kings viii. 51; Jer. xi. 4.

21, 22 See on Numbers xx. (*Second Sunday after Easter*). The lawgiver speaks in an undertone of sadness, which however is overcome by his unselfish joy at seeing the people that he loved within sight of victory. His work was done, and its happy result was in full view. Much as he desired to enter into the good land, he could cheerfully forego that desire for his loved nation's sake. Their victory was assured, for the rest let God do what seemed Him good. He was content to leave himself to God.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

23 Moses continues his warnings against idolatry, taking now as his ground the terrible punishment which shall follow the commission of it. If they fall into the sins of the nations around, those nations shall devour them. Instead of standing the first of the nations they shall dwindle away and lose their distinction, and be scattered and left few in number. The lesson remains unaltered to every Christian nation, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." "For ye are

dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The Jews were tempted to idolatry because it was the prevalent sin of the world around them. And we in like manner are tempted to the sins of the evil world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. The threatenings which proved true then will prove true still, to nations, and to each soul of man that doeth evil.

The threatening conveyed in this verse follows from the laws of God's government. The more refined forms of idolatry shall degenerate into coarser and coarser forms, until the whole nature of idol worship is manifested in all its feebleness. Beginning with worship of heavenly bodies, this is what they will end in. When once the God of revelation is given up, the God of beauty and reason will be given up also, and the end will be mere fetish worship.

But hope springs even yet out of the darkness. If judgment shall lead Israel to repentance, then shall forgiveness follow. Compare Lev. xxvi. 33—46, an instructive and interesting parallel with this passage.

He encourages them to repentance if they shall fall into sin, by bringing before them the proofs of God's mercy and power in the days that are passed, by evoking their feelings of gratitude and love.

Their seed after them. Lit. this is, "chose his seed after him," a bold change of construction, referring to Abraham.

In his sight. Lit. "by His presence." See Ex. xxxiii. 14.

This day. By the destruction of Sihon and Og, which made the people masters of the land on which they were, and gave a pledge of the total conquest hereafter.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The preceding chapter, as we have seen, consists of a general exhortation to faithfulness towards God and abhorrence of idolatry. Moses now proceeds to recapitulate the Law in all the important details. It was needful to do this because the men who had heard it from Sinai were nearly all passed away, a new generation had risen up. To these the great lawgiver now addresses himself, not unmindful of the fact that his own voice will soon be stilled; he has been the means of giving the law, he has hitherto been able to enforce it, but soon his authority will be at an end. Therefore once more he urges them to obedience with deep and earnest solemnity. The chapter before us chiefly consists of the repetition of the Ten Commandments.

Our fathers. The Patriarchs, Abraham, &c. See iv. 37. The special covenant here spoken of is the covenant in the wilderness.

Face to face, not through Moses. The other parts of the law were given by the hand of Moses, but the Ten Command-

Deut. IV.

28

29—31

32—38

37

38

Deut. V.

3

4

Deut. V. | ments were uttered with a great voice from Sinai whilst Moses was up in the mount. See verses 22—25; and iv. 11, 12.

5 | During that utterance Moses was in the mount as mediator to receive each of the Commandments, to understand them, and rehearse them to the people, though they were borne down the mountain in the thunder.

6 | The Lord did not proclaim Himself as the Creator of all things, and base His claim to obedience on that. For He addressed Israel as His own special and elect people, whom He had redeemed and brought into covenant.

7 | **Before Me**, lit. *before my face*, the meaning being that no god should be worshipped in addition to Jehovah. The Jews in their idolatrous times did not exclude Jehovah from their worship, but they included false gods in their worship along with Him.

8 | **Graven image.** Any sort of image is included in this expression; the word **or**, which follows in Exodus xx. 4 (but not here in the Hebrew), may be rendered *even*. Cf. ch. iv. 16—19. The Jews afterwards imagined, and other people have been found even in these times to agree with them, that this command was a prohibition of the arts of painting and sculpture. Besides that this idea is sufficiently contradicted by the figures in the Tabernacle and the manifold sculptures in the Temple, the words of the original signify, “Thou shalt not make...*in order* to bow down to them.” What is forbidden is to make any image as a symbol of Jehovah. This was the sin committed in the matter of the golden calf, Ex. xxxii. 4.

9 | **Visiting, &c.** I venture to quote on this passage Mr Clark’s admirable and exhaustive note.

“The visitation here spoken of can hardly be any other than that which we are accustomed to witness in the common experience of life. (Cf. xxxiv. 7; Jer. xxxii. 18.) Sons and remote descendants inherit the consequences of their father’s sins, in disease, poverty, captivity, with all the influences of bad example and evil communications. (See Lev. xxvi. 39; Lam. v. 7 sq.) The ‘inherited curse’ seems to fall often most heavily on the least guilty persons, as is abundantly proved in all history and is pointedly illustrated in Greek tragedy. But such suffering must always be free from the sting of conscience; it is not like the visitation for sin on the individual by whom the sin has been committed. The sufferings, or loss of advantages, entailed on the unoffending son, is a condition under which he has to carry on the struggle of life, and, like all other inevitable conditions imposed upon men, it cannot tend to his ultimate disadvantage, if he struggles well and perseveres to the end. He may never attain in this world to a high standard of knowledge or of outward conduct, compared with others, but the Searcher of hearts will regard him with favour, not in proportion to his visible conduct, but to his unseen struggles. As

regards the administration of justice by earthly tribunals, the law holds good, 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin' (Deut. xxiv. 16). The same principle is carried out in spiritual matters by the Supreme Judge. The Israelites in a later age made a confusion in the use of their common proverb, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' There would have been truth in this saying had it been used only in reference to the mere natural consequences of their fathers' sins. In this sense their teeth were set on edge by the sour grapes their fathers had eaten. But the Prophets pointed out the falsehood involved in the proverb as it was understood by the people. They shewed that it was utterly false when applied to the spiritual relation in which each person stands in the judgment of Him who is no respecter of persons. (Jer. xxxi. 29, 30; Ezek. xviii. 2—4 sq.)"

Deut. V.

Thousands, i.e. the thousandth generation.

10

Take. The Heb. word means *lift up* as an ensign. Thou shalt not lift up on high the holy Name as a vain thing, for falsehood, or for irreverent use.

11

The fourth Commandment as it is here given by Moses is much amplified from Ex. xx. The 15th verse is entirely new. The people are enjoined to give their servants rest, because they were once servants themselves. Note here that this Commandment differs from all the others in being a positive enactment, not carrying its own reason on the face of it, as they do, but to be obeyed because God has so ordained it. That men and beasts require intervals of rest from labour is certainly a natural law. But the observation of one day in seven depends upon a special command. It is to be obeyed from faith and loyalty to God. But there are indications if we search for them, that there are special reasons founded upon moral and natural expediency, why the *seventh* day is to be thus observed, reasons which we shall know more fully hereafter. (See Wordsworth, p. 272.)

12

Most Biblical scholars are now agreed that the fifth Commandment belonged to the first Table (See Art. "Ten Commandments" in Smith's *Bible Dict.*). All faith in God centres in the filial feeling, and we are to be dutiful to our parents because they stand between us and Him as no one else can. And this is the "commandment with promise," because the recognition of filial duty is the surest bond of union which a nation can have. Nations which recognise the authority of fathers, whatever be their shortcomings, always last and prosper. The history of China is a case in point.

16

He added no more, i.e. to the utterance of the Ten Commandments in the voice of the thunder. See on ver. 4. The other parts of the Law were given to Moses. But these words were spoken from the Mount in the ears of the people, and

22

Deut. V.

afterwards, before Moses left the Mount, were committed to the Tables of Stone.

23

Nearly the whole of this to the end of the chapter is an addition to the narrative in Exodus. Moses reminds them of the circumstances now, to shew them that it was of their own desire that he became their Mediator, and also that God approved of their humility and sense of sin. The consciousness of sin was awakened by the terrors of Sinai, which was the purpose for which God sent them.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Mattins.

Deut. VI.

Moses has repeated the Ten Commandments in the ears of the people, and the history of their promulgation. In the present chapter he goes on to discourse upon the central teaching of these Commandments, the nature of God and the right mode of worshipping Him. By obedience and faithful worship, he tells them, they will honour God, and will ensure their own happiness.

2

4

The Heb. is "*Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, The Lord One.*" It is an assertion not only of the Unity of God, but of His absolute Lordship and sole Godhead. He is Jehovah, the Eternal, the Uncaused, and there is none other but He. Verses 4—9 are recited by the Jews in their daily Service, and may be called the Jewish Creed.

5

Matt. xxii. 37. There is but One God, therefore absolute surrender must be yielded to Him. **The heart**, the centre of the affections, **the soul**, of the will and the intellect, **the might**, of the whole energy and practical power, must all be given to Him who is their absolute Creator and Lord.

8

The Jews took this command literally. Moses probably intended them to do so. The ancient Egyptians used to wear idolatrous amulets, and Moses now checks the danger which Israel might be in, by bidding them wear instead the commands against idolatry and towards the love of God. The "phylacteries" consisted of bands or fillets thus inscribed, and worn especially at the hour of prayer. There were also "mezuzoth," texts written on the door-posts. These texts are now written on parchment, rolled up in cylinders, and affixed to the right-hand door-post in a Jewish house. How the Pharisees came to despise the spirit of the law while they still performed these commandments literally, we need not describe here.

10—12

Warning against being ruined by prosperity, becoming worldly and ungodly. For they were about to exchange a wandering isolated life for a fixed one among other nations, and new temptations would open upon them.

Shalt swear by His Name, i.e. when legal observation so requires. The injunction forbids any swearing by another Name, because there is no other God.

Deut. VI.
13

The Septuagint version of these words is that quoted by our Lord in His answer to the temptation of the devil, Matt. iv. 10.

Tempt, doubt His power, and demand of Him a proof of it. This text also was quoted by Christ to the Tempter, Matt. iv. 7. **In Massah**, Ex. xvii. 2.

16

The verses which follow are an amplification of ver. 7, and are in fact the command as to the religious instruction of the nation.

20

It shall be our righteousness. Lit. "righteousness shall be to us," i.e. this will be the test to our nation of what righteousness is. God will hold us righteous if we make this our standard of aim. Rom. x. 5. We have here in fact an emphatic declaration that righteousness lies not in external ordinance, but in obedience and submission of the heart and affections. It is an anticipation of the Sermon on the Mount.

25

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

This chapter is a warning against self-righteousness, an exhortation to humility. Moses shews from their past history that they have been perverse towards God, and beseeches them by the memory of that, not to be lifted up in their prosperity into belief in their own good deserving.

Deut. IX.

The Anakim dwelt in the south of Canaan. Their capital was Hebron. See Num. xiii. 22. The root *Anak*, very curiously, is identical with our word "neck," and the word indicates either *length of neck*, tallness; or *strength*, the neck being very commonly used as a symbol of strength. They were dispossessed by Joshua (Josh. xi. 21; xiv. 14, 15; xv. 14; Jud. i. 20).

2

Cf. Titus iii. 5; Rom. xi. 6; 2 Tim. i. 9.

5

He addresses them as a nation. Most of those whom he addressed were children at the time of the commission of some of the sins which he brings forward, but he bids them, and us through them, to recognize the fact of national existence and national responsibility.

6

Moses interceded for the people twice; first, on the announcement by God of their sin (Ex. xxxii. 11), and secondly, when he had broken the Tables and punished the people for their sin, Ex. xxxiv. 28. It is the latter intercession which he dwells upon here, and in vv. 25—29.

18

Into the brook, an incidental proof that the Israelites did not suffer in general from lack of water. His thus making the people drink of it (cf. Ex. xxxii. 20) obviously represents the punishment of sin, that it returns back upon the sinner. He humbly drinks of it when he sincerely repents, taking it to him-

21

Deut. IX. self, not passing it by as of no concern to him. Then the water becomes a type of Christ (1 Cor. x. 4); in the living water which flows from Him is sin dissolved.

22 **Taberah**, Num. xi. 1, 3; **Massah**, Ex. xvii. 7; **Kibroth-hattaavah**, Num. xi. 34.

23 **Kadesh-barnea**, Num. xiii. 26; xiv. 1—5.

25 Moses in verses 22, 23 has departed from the account of their sin at Sinai, in order to adduce even more heinous acts of guilt. But he now returns to his intercession at Sinai; and in the chapter which follows he states the good result of that intercession.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Deut. X. One result of the intercession of Moses was that Aaron was forgiven (see ix. 20); another, which forms the beginning of the present chapter, was the renewal of the two Tables, which had been broken in consequence of their sin. The renewal was a proof that God had not cast them off.

6 This is not a break in the address of Moses. He is still the speaker, and addressing the congregation. **Mosera** was evidently near Mount Hor. It was probably the place of the encampment at the foot of the mountain. Aaron died in the mountain itself. See Num. xx. 25. Moses mentions the death here to introduce the fact of the continuation of the priesthood, to shew that Aaron's sin had not destroyed his priesthood—a further proof of the reconciliation which had been effected.

7 The same subject is continued. The people were still led on, and their way lay through pleasant places.

8 **At that time.** At the time of the restoration of the broken covenant. The choice of the Levites was made in consequence of the zeal which they shewed at Horeb. **To bear the ark.** This was generally the work of the Kohathites (Num. iv. 15), sometimes also of the Priests (Josh. iii. 6).

9 See Num. xviii. 20—24.

10 In this verse Moses sums up the result of his intercession.

11 He reminds them of God's full and unconditional goodness, His promise to lead them safely to their rest.

12 Having thus shewn that the blessedness of Israel is not for their own works or deservings, but of God's free grace, he appeals to this fact as a reason why they should fear and love God. The demand for fear, love, and reverence towards God is hard to the natural man, but it follows naturally on our discernment of God's love and grace. There cannot be fear of God without love, nor love without fear; the separation of them in thought leads men to be remiss on one side or servile on the other. Fear of God springs from our knowledge of our unholiness in His sight, and only fear can enable us to comprehend His mercy, and this in turn awakens love.

A proof of the might of God's love, that He who fills the earth and all the heavens has made Israel His special care.

Seeing that God requires entire obedience, he urges them to lay aside all insensibility and uncircumcision *of heart*. (See on this verse in p. 49.)

God is absolute Lord of all, terrible and mighty, yet of great pity to the helpless and oppressed.

Love ye the stranger is one of those passages which bade receptive hearts look for the coming of the Gospel. Cf. Ex. xxii. 21; 1 John iii. 10—17.

The three proofs of the love of God in the heart, serving him (in deed); cleaving to him (in heart); swearing by His Name, confessing Him with the mouth, and declaring allegiance.

Deut. X.

14, 15

16

17, 18

19

20

THE ASCENSION DAY.

Mattins.

Daniel has described in the first eight verses the four great Empires, under the similitude of four beasts. He has portrayed these Empires as godless, boastful, and cruel, and then he goes on to foretell the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ, and its triumph over them all.

But the passage in which this is foretold is an illustration of S. Paul's words "We know in part, and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor xiii. 9). For Daniel seems not to contemplate the *conversion* of the heathen kingdoms, only the victory of Christ over them. The Book of Revelation, which takes up this passage and amplifies it, expressly foretells that the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into the Kingdom of Christ. Daniel sees only the final victory, Christian history was to shew the steps by which it shall be attained.

The Lesson before us begins by describing the Eternal Lord seated on His throne, ruling from everlasting. Verses 9 and 10 seem to be a description of God as He always is, enthroned in the Heaven of Heavens, and ever ruling the nations in judgment.

Till the thrones were cast down. If this translation be correct we must take this as saying, "I saw one worldly throne after another cast down, and as I gazed in awe I saw one throne which is never moved, the throne of the Eternal." But it seems that this is not the right translation. The LXX. and Vulgate both read, **I beheld till the thrones of judgments were set.** The Prophet's eye rested not until he saw the Vision of the Judge and King of all the earth upon His throne. No lesser Vision could give coherence to the facts of history. **The Ancient of Days**, i.e. the Eternal One. **Whose garment**, &c. All these

Dan. VII.

9

Dan. VII.

are emblems of the perfect holiness and purity of God, as well as of His resistless power and awful majesty. Cf. Rev. i. 14; Ezek. i. 15—20.

10 This is hardly a description of the last judgment. It is rather a picture and description of what is always, of God the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Thousand thousands of angels minister to Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand, even the whole race of men from the beginning, stand ever before Him. He loses sight of none, He knows the hearts of each several one. His judgment is passing everlastingly upon all, and the book of each man's life lies open before Him.

S. John certainly adopts the phraseology of this verse (Rev. xx. 12), in describing the final consummation of all things. But that description is only the completion of a process which has ever been continuing. That God shall judge the world hereafter does not weaken our belief that He is judging it now. In the present case what follows, and the general bearing of the prophecy, indicate a continual truth, namely God's eternal government of the world.

11 The Prophet has previously described the ungodly power of the world under the similitude of a fierce and hideous beast. And out of it came a horn speaking proud things. The Roman Empire was the incarnation of ungodliness. The Prophet looked up to heaven and there saw the Ancient of Days. He looked down upon the earth and saw the beast's horn speaking proud things. The one Vision prepared him for the other. He saw the strength of God opposed by the fierceness of man, and he foresaw that the one would prevail over the other, that the beast should be slain and his body given to the burning flame.

12 The other Empires were ungodly, yet not in the measure that the Empire of Rome was. There is no history so entirely abominable and foul as *that* history. The Prophet in vision sees that Empire utterly cast down, because it is to him the complete type of ungodliness. There were other powers which had many ungodly elements in them, but had good elements as well. Wherever such powers exist, their dominion is taken away, but their lives are prolonged for a time. God winks at their wickedness (Acts xvii. 30), as knowing that the day shall come when they shall be brought to repentance.

It is impossible to fit definitely these words with the facts of history as they have occurred. I have taken the view that the vision represents principles, and that the facts in detail were not revealed to the Prophet. Nor have they as yet all been made known to us, for the battle is still proceeding and we are in the midst of it. The Holy Ghost reveals principles, successive revelations are making God's dealings known.

13 Here we have another Vision not necessarily following the preceding in order of time. It is rather a Vision which explains the manner of the Victory of God. We have seen the Lord

Almighty seated on His throne from everlasting, ruling the nations, and with the books of their judgment always open before Him. Here we have one like the Son of Man riding upon the clouds of heaven, coming to Him; and we have to ask, What did the Prophet mean by the expression **Son of Man**? It is not sufficient to answer that this signifies Christ, until we endeavour to learn what the Name itself meant in the Prophet's mouth. It had been applied to himself and to the prophet Ezekiel, the two prophets of the Captivity, as representing the fallen and humbled state of the chosen people, whose hardships and weakness they were sharing, and whose representatives they were before God.

Now what was the Vision that Daniel saw? He does not say, "*I saw the Son of Man*," leaving us merely to name Christ as the Person so seen. He speaks to teach those who heard him. And for their help and encouragement he says, I saw **one like the Son of Man**, One made in all points like unto Daniel and his people. It is the Vision first of the Incarnation, and of the Suffering One—then of His Victory. **He came with the clouds of heaven.** Our Lord applied the prophecy to Himself before the High Priest in the day of His Agony, and declared that from that day the fulfilment of this Prophecy of Victory should begin. "Henceforward shall ye see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). The Resurrection was the beginning of His glorified humanity, and the compilers of the Lectionary have most wisely chosen this passage as the lesson for the Ascension Day. He who was borne on the clouds of heaven up to the Throne of the Father, the Ancient of Days, was the glorified Son of Man. As Man He had never ascended, though in His Godhead He had been with His Father from the beginning. As Man He received all power in heaven and in earth (Matt. xxviii. 18), and as Man He is expecting at His Father's right hand until all enemies shall be put under His feet.

Let it be noted here that the expression "Son of Man," as adopted by our Lord, is taken from this passage of Daniel. What it signified we have already seen. He used it principally in two connexions, (1) of His humiliation and sufferings, (2) of His future judgment. Cf. Matt. xx. 28; Luke xxiv. 7; John xii. 34; and Matt. x. 23; xvi. 27, 28; xix. 28; xxiv. 30; xxv. 31; xxvi. 64. "In such passages as these its appropriateness and significance can only be seen, as it is explained by the Book of Daniel, where heavenly majesty is associated with appearing as a Son of Man. It then acquires an argumentative force. It grants the humanity which is evident to the eyes of all, but proclaims at the same time the hidden majesty behind. It is as much as to say, Do not stumble at my lowly humanity, that is not at variance with prophecy; on the contrary, it is attested by it; it does not prevent my being a Son of God, but

Dan. VII.

Dan. VII.

even according to prophecy the two go hand-in-hand. *Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?* He asks His disciples (Matt. xvi. 13), where the words in apposition 'The Son of Man' indicate the possibility of various opinions prevailing against Christ, some of them very derogatory, and at the same time furnish the groundwork of a correct reply, and contain the germ of Peter's answer, 'Thou art the Son of the living God.' He says to His disciples, Be not ye offended, like the ignorant multitude, at my lowly humanity. Remember that in Daniel the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven. The scribes looked upon it as blasphemy when Christ forgave sins, because he was a man. And it would really have been so even if Jesus had been the ideal man. When Jesus says to them in Matt. ix. 6, 'that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins,' he refutes the argument drawn from his humanity, by his allusion to the passage in Daniel, in which divinity is associated with humanity, 'For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath' (Matt. xii. 8). I am so, notwithstanding my human lowliness, which Daniel has shewn to be attended by divinity. In John v. 27, he says, 'he hath given him power to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.' To Christ is committed the execution of judgment not because of his humanity alone; even an 'ideal man' would have no right to act as a judge, and we must not imagine that an ideal man is referred to merely because the article is omitted—it is upon his combined divinity and humanity that this appointment rests. But there is no intimation of this in the expression Son of Man, except as it is compared with the prediction in Daniel." Hengstenberg's *Christology of O. T.* III. 91.

Evensong.

2 Kings II.

I

Elijah's work was done. His battle with the apostate King Ahab was at an end, and it was revealed to him that his departure was near.

Probably it was about ten years since Elisha, the son of Shaphat, had become Elijah's faithful minister and disciple.

Gilgal. Some suppose this to be a spot now called *Filjilich*, about seven miles north of Bethel, in the centre of the kingdom of Israel, and from whence a wide view could be obtained of the scene of his labours from the Great Sea to Gilead. (So Keil, Clark, Stanley, Grove.) Bp. Wordsworth thinks, however, that it was the Gilgal of Joshua iv. 19, in the Jordan valley by Jericho, and that the Prophet was making the circuit of the scenes of his past life, scenes hallowed also by memories of events in the history of the chosen seed. This Gilgal was the place from which Joshua's victories began.

2

"With that tenderness which is sometimes blended with the most rugged natures, at each successive halt the older Prophet

turned to his youthful companion and entreated him to stay. **2 Kings II.** But in each case Elisha replied with an asseveration that expressed his undivided and unshaken trust in his master and his master's God." (Stanley, II. 320.)

Bethel, where Jacob had seen heaven opened, and the angels ascending and descending on the ladder which reached to God's throne.

The schools of the Prophets had been in all probability established by Samuel for the purpose of teaching the people. They had been apparently guided and increased by Elijah, and he visits them all now, we may suppose, to give his last instructions, even as Christ in the great forty days spake of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

Knowest thou, &c. Apparently the departure of Elijah had been revealed to the prophets, "that God's approval of Elijah's faithfulness might be more manifest; and that Elisha and the prophets might be encouraged to tread in Elijah's steps; and that all of every age might be confirmed in the true faith." (*Bp. Wordsworth.*)

From thy head. Alluding to the custom of disciples of sitting at their master's feet.

Yea, I know it, &c. The dread of the final parting could not hinder him from the mournful comfort of seeing that parting with his own eyes, and hearing his master's last words. He knew that the parting must come. His thoughts were too deep for words, and therefore he emphatically enjoined them to silence.

"The aged Gileadite cannot rest till he again sets foot on his own side of the river." (Grove in Smith's *Bible Dictionary.*) His mantle was his prophetic badge, as the rod of Moses was the badge of the Ruler.

Elisha's constancy and faithfulness are now to be rewarded. His master asks what legacy of love he desires. He asks for a double portion of his master's spirit. By this is meant the position and rights of a firstborn son among the disciples of Elijah. (See Deut. xxi. 17.) He desires to be the chief carrier on of his master's work against the idols, and on behalf of the schools of the prophets.

The request was granted, on one condition. If he could endure to the end, with the same brave perseverance, keeping his eye on the departing Prophet to the last, it should be given. And he did.

"In all this story a higher meaning is ever present with us as we read. We read of Elijah, but we feel that a greater than Elijah is here. Our thoughts carry us on to One who, like the Prophet of the elder dispensation, had finished the work upon earth which His Father had given him to do; who had borne the burden and the heat of a yet fiercer day than the Prophet had ever borne, endured with a diviner patience, a worse contra-

2 Kings II.

diction of sinners, had drunk the cup of a bitter agony, had been baptized with the baptism of a more searching pain, and who, now about to leave the earth, announced to His faithful disciples that legacy of love, that promise of the Father, that double portion of the Spirit, which He would bequeath to them, and which should compensate them for His bodily absence in those coming times when they should behold no more Him whom the Heavens had received out of their sight."

11 **Whirlwind**, rather "fierce tempest¹." In the thunderstorm God displays His omnipotence in the most visible manner. See Job xxxviii. 1; Ezek. i. 4.

It is very instructive to compare this narrative with that of the Ascension of Christ, many points of comparison and of contrast are suggested. "Elijah is translated, a chariot of fire and horses of fire are commissioned to snatch him away from the earth, and carry him to heaven; but our Lord is borne upward by His innate power. He is not translated, He ascends. He came *from* heaven, and He returns *to* heaven, as to His natural home. The wonder is, not that He should now at length *go* to heaven, but that He should so long have tarried upon earth. Calmly, majestically, He ascends, carrying with Him that body which He had redeemed from the grave. No fire-chariot is needed for Him; and why? there is nothing of earthly dross requiring to be burnt out of Him, no wondrous transformation, no last baptism of cleansing fire before He can endure to pass into the presence of His Father; but such as He was upon earth, exactly such He passes into the heavens. No shock, no whirlwind, no violent rapture in His case; for in His Ascension there is no breach of the laws of His natural life, but all is in exactest conformity with them. Surely in all this matter the comparison between the servant and the Son brings out to us the greatness indeed of both; but at the same time the transcendent superiorities of the Son, who in all things hath the pre-eminence." (Archbp. Trench's *Westminster Abbey Sermons*.)

12 **The chariot, &c.** The words plainly were suggested by the sight which appeared. The fiery chariot and horses were signs of the Divine presence and power. But further, Elisha probably meant that Elijah himself had been, by God's power, a defence and strength to Israel. The Targum reads, "O my master, who wast better to Israel by thy prayers than chariots and horses." (*Wordsworth*.) Cf. Ps. lxxviii. 4, 17.

Rent them, &c. He had no more need of them. The mantle of Elijah had fallen upon him, and the request which he had made to his master was granted. Even so when the mantle of Christ had fallen on His Apostles they were new men, filled with a new Spirit.

13 Elisha wasted no time in idle lamentations. Even so the

¹ So the LXX. εἰς σφοδρὰς, and Luther "Elia fuhr also im Wetter gen Himmel."

Apostles stood not long gazing into heaven. They returned to Jerusalem and waited for the promise of the Father, and immediately on receiving it became their Lord's witnesses all over the earth. They felt that His departure had made them not weaker, but stronger. "It was expedient for them that He should go away." Even so, our Lord's presence at the right hand of God is for our sakes, it is our strength. And therefore Ascension Day, next to the three great Festivals, should be made the highest day in the Christian year.

In the LXX. and Vulgate Versions it is stated that when he smote the waters "they divided not." Then he invoked them with the words, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and smote them again, whereupon they divided. The first miracle of Elisha is the same as the last of Elijah, and there is great significance in this. "We are reminded of Him who being Himself anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, did yet, when He left the earth, not so leave it but that He left behind Him gifts and graces and power with His Church, so effectually endowing it that the works which He did, it was able to do the same. These powers, these gifts, were, so to speak, the mantle which fell from Our ascending Lord, the mantle which the Church took up with which it has arrayed itself. And with that power it continues and completes His work, repeats and multiplies His grace all over the world." (*Abp. Trench.*)

The scholars recognized the significance of the act. They saw that the blessing of God was continued to them, that the departing Prophet had left a successor to carry his work on unbroken. This was the reason of their now doing homage. An imperfect type of the parting assurance of Our Lord, who before He was taken up declared, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

2 Kings II.

14

15

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.

Mattins.

Moses is now drawing nigh to the end of his discourse. He has cast his mind far into the future, and contemplated the possibility of Israel in spite of his warnings falling into sin, and so being led into captivity. And he urges them to believe that even thus all is not lost. God's good will cannot be changed by their rebellion, He is ever willing to pardon and restore those who return to Him. We recognize a fitness in the choice of this lesson for the Sunday after Ascension Day. The last days began when Christ ascended into Heaven—the Church was left

Deut.
XXX.

Deut.
XXX.

in probation. The Redemption which had been wrought was sufficient for all ages, and as long as the world shall last, the covenant stands sure, and nothing can break it. The whole earth is overshadowed with mercy, and the Gospel is an everlasting echo of these words of Moses.

They were fulfilled of course in part to the Jews as often as God delivered them from their enemies in following times, but the higher fulfilment seems to be directly declared in the history of the gift of Pentecost. The testimony of the devout men *out of every nation under heaven* (Acts ii. 5) seems a purposed reference to the words of verse 4. Cf. Neh. i. 9. That was the beginning of the spiritual Israel, the earnest of the "one flock, one Shepherd."

6 See on ch. x. 16.

11 Moses declares that the righteousness on which Israel is to rest is not at a great distance from him, in some far-off heaven or deep abyss. Nor is it a *mere* observance of precepts. Though such precepts were commanded to the Jew (Lev. xviii. 5 compared with Rom. x. 5), yet there was a far higher righteousness than obedience to them, not created by men's works, but the foundation of all good works, the heritage, therefore, of Gentile as well as Jew. The commandment on which *this* righteousness rests, says Moses, is close to man, it is within him, he stands upon it, and his faith confesses it as the ground of his existence;—**The WORD is very nigh thee.** What he and the prophets meant by this expression, *The Word*, is clear—they meant the message of the Invisible God to their own spirits. The growth of the ages brought the conviction to earnest Jews that this Word, this Speech, of God must verily be a Person, until S. John spake definitely, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and we beheld His glory."

14 This is the way in which the present passage is used by S. Paul, Rom. x. 6—8. Moses, he says, declared that the Word was close to them and with them, and therein he had spoken of Christ, who was the ground of that righteousness of which holy precepts are the outward expression. And with this doctrine the Apostle connects the facts of the Gospel. The confession, he says, that the Lord Jesus has been raised from the dead, is the true righteousness of man. There could be no deliverance from the fear of death without the belief that Death has found a conqueror. Man may gaze into the abyss in vain, and wander in speculation and enquiry into the abyss; until he sees both one and the other penetrated and explained by Christ the Word, Christ the Son of Man, he will be in doubt and uncertainty, and unable to find a righteousness to rest upon.

15 The lawgiver's last solemn appeal.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

After exhorting and blessing the people, Moses went up Mount Nebo, according to God's command to him (ch. xxxii. 48—51). There God shewed him the promised land, to reward as well as to strengthen his faith. He was to see that the Lord had not failed of His word, that his own work was not thrown away, but would bear the most happy fruit, and nothing would fail of all that he had hoped on behalf of his nation. Having seen it, he was to depart in peace.

Dan, a place mentioned in Gen. xiv. 14, not the tribe of Dan.

Naphtali, Southern Galilee, **Ephraim and Manasseh**, the country south of it. **Utmost Sea**, Mediterranean.

South, the Negeb, reaching to the Arabian desert. **Zoar**, at the southern end of the Dead Sea.

The sight was not an ecstatic vision apparently, but with the bodily eyes,—the power of vision perhaps enhanced by the gift of God. There is said to be a magnificent view from Nebo which is a peak of Pisgah. (*Burckhardt*, quoted by Keil, III. 214.)

According, &c. i.e. according to the sentence which God pronounced against his sin. Num. xx. 12.

“The end and aim of all our actions is to be called **The servant of the Lord**. When thou hast overcome thy ghostly enemies, thine Egyptians, thine Amalekites, Edom, and Midian, then may it be thy great reward,—the crowning of thy whole life—to be called in God's Book, ‘the servant of the Lord.’” (*Gregory of Nyssa*, quoted by Wordsworth. See the whole of his beautiful note.)

He, the Lord. “He that took charge of his birth, and preservation in the reeds, takes charge of his carriage out of the world. The care of God ceaseth not over his own, either in death or after it. How justly do we take care of the comely burials of our friends, when God Himself gives us this example!” (*Bp. Hall*.) “The fact that the Lord buried His servant Moses, and no man knows of his sepulchre, is in perfect keeping with the relation in which Moses stood to the Lord when he was alive. Even though his sin at the waters of strife rendered it necessary that he should suffer the punishment of death as a memorable example of the terrible severity of the holy God against sin, even in the case of His faithful servant; yet after the justice of God had been satisfied by this punishment, he was to be distinguished in death before all the people, and glorified as the servant who had been found faithful in all the house of God, whom the Lord had known face to face, and

Deut.
XXXIV.

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Deut.
XXXIV.

with whom He had spoken mouth to mouth (Num. xii. 7, 8). The burial of Moses by the Lord was hardly intended to conceal his grave, for the purpose of guarding against an idolatrous reverence for it; for with the opinion held by the Israelites that graves defiled, there was but little fear of this; but, as we may infer from the account of our Lord's Transfiguration, the intention was to place him in the same category with Enoch and Elijah." (*Kcil.*)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

Introductory Note
on the
Book of
Joshua.

The Pentateuch and the Four Gospels narrate the establishment, the one of the Old, the other of the New Covenant. The Book of Joshua and the Acts of the Apostles respectively unfold the promulgation of the Covenant among men, and show how, under God's providence and guidance, both the Old and the New began to accomplish the end for which they were designed. The Old Testament indeed contains several historical books, the New only one beside the Gospels. For the history of the whole Old Covenant lies before us, an open book. We see how God dealt with His covenant people under the economy which He had imposed upon them, until the fulness of the time was come, and that which had waxed old vanished away. But the history of the New Covenant is still unclosed, the end of the world alone will see the end of the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood. The Acts shows us only the launching of the ship; she still sails forth over the waves of the world, bearing Christ within her. Her history from the Pentecost till now, from now to the end, can only be read in heaven, when she shall have landed on the eternal shore.

By those who reverently remember the purpose of God while they read the narrative of the Book of Joshua, Wisdom will be justified. That narrative shows us a series of human events carried on visibly under Divine guidance. The march of Israel against Jericho was not more in accordance with God's will than

are all expeditions against sin and ungodliness. The missionary who goes forth for Christ's sake into the dark and cruel places of the earth is as much God's servant as was Joshua, and is as fully assured of the blessing of Jehovah. No miracle attests his mission, because we walk by faith, not by sight. But the miracles of Joshua and of the Apostles are in accordance with God's plan, who marked the *beginnings* of great movements with manifestations of His presence and power. The fall of the walls of Jericho is a sign and a testimony that at the last God will throw down *all* oppressions and strongholds of iniquity, even as the smiting of Elymas blind is a visible sign of the unfailing judgment of God against all who pervert the right ways of the Lord.

The Book of Joshua, as we have shown further in the notes to the first chapter, is connected with the Pentateuch, the opening verses being retrospective. It forms in the Hebrew Canon the first book of the *Propheta Priores*, "earlier prophets," the others being the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The book consists of two parts. The first twelve chapters contain the history of the conquest. First, the frontier towns Jericho and Ai fall; the Gibeonites save their lives by an artifice, the southern kings combine but are overthrown at the battle of Beth-horon; then, apparently after a pause, Joshua overthrows the confederacy of northern kings at the battle of Merom. Nearly the whole of this period is marked by miraculous events.

The second part of the book (chapters xiii.—xxii.) describes the division of the land by lot among the several tribes. There was a temporary interruption (xviii.), but the work was presently concluded at a meeting at Shiloh. The xxiiird chapter contains Joshua's charge to the elders, and the xxivth that to the assembled tribes.

Four Sunday lessons are taken from this book. They comprise the transfer of command to Joshua, and God's blessing upon it (i.); the crossing of Jordan (iv.), the beginning of the conquest in the fall of Jericho (v. 13—vi. 20), and Joshua's final charge, leading to a solemn renewal of the national covenant, and followed by Joshua's death (xxiv.).

The author of the Book is not named. Internal evidence

Introductory Note on the Book of Joshua.

goes to prove that it was compiled from records some time after the death of Joshua, but before the establishment of the kingdom under Saul. (See Keil, pp. 15—19.)

The book covers a period of about 25 years (1451—1426).

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Joshua I.

The twofold character of the Book of which we have spoken in the foregoing note, is exemplified in the present chapter.

Verses 1—9 are a supplement to the Pentateuch, and are linked to it. The first word "**Now**," is in the Heb. "*And*," and implies continuation of the past. This introductory portion leads on to the new scenes which open in ver. 10.

After the death, i.e. after the thirty days of mourning were expired (Deut. xxxiv. 8).

The servant of the Lord. Was a standing epithet applied to Moses. See Num. xii. 7, 8; Ex. xv. 31; Deut. xxxiv. 5 (note); 1 Kings viii. 56; 2 Kings xviii. 12; Ps. cv. 26. And also the expression **Moses' minister** is a phrase constantly applied to Joshua. Ex. xvii. 9; Num. xiii. 16; Ex. xxiv. 13; &c.

Joshua had been already designated as Moses' successor (Num. xxvii. 18), and had received a solemn charge from Moses (Deut. xxxi. 3—7). He now receives a direct command from God to lead the people on to battle and to victory. The bravest men, however prepared beforehand, often hesitate when the time for a great step has come. The exhortation therefore was not superfluous. And it was a witness to the people that he had God's sanction and guidance.

This Jordan, the river then flowing close to his feet.

Not a single foot's breadth was to be excepted from God's gift to the nation. **I have given.** The purpose had been already formed, it was announced even to Abraham. **As I said unto Moses**, Ex. xxiii. 30, 31.

This Lebanon. It was visible from the camp. **The Hittites** were the children of Heth. They were settled in the South of the land of promise, and dwelt quietly there, having long given up the nomadic life. Hebron was their capital. Apparently they are put here for the whole inhabitants of the south.

The conditions of Joshua's success—he was to be strong of purpose and very courageous. He was also to love and obey the law of God. His Divine Antitype, *our* Joshua, in like manner, came "to fulfil the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. v. 17); He was also strong and courageous, "mighty to save" (Is. lxiii. 1).

The preceding part, as we have already said, looks back upon the work of Moses, and regards Joshua as completing it. Now

begins the prospective portion of the chapter, the coming victory of the nation.

Officers. Heb. "scribes." These were keepers of the family registers, keeping account of the men bound to serve in the army, and circulating the commands of the generals.

It does not seem quite clear whether the manna had already ceased (ch. v. 12), but in any case they would have little time for gathering it, and therefore are commanded to prepare food for the coming struggle.

If the crossing took place within three days, the spies must have already gone on their expedition (for see ii. 22). But this is very improbable. As Keil has shewn, the sense is "Prepare you victuals for crossing over Jordan within three days." They were to leave Shittim within that time, on their march to the river. Joshua no doubt expected the return of the spies to be earlier than it was. But their unexpected detection obliged them to hide in the mountains for three days, and when they returned he waited a day, then proceeded to Jordan, and halted for three days longer before crossing.

The arrangement referred to by Joshua in these verses will be found in Numbers xxxii. 16—27, and Deut. iii. 18—20.

The tribes thus appealed to responded heartily and devoutly, expressing their confidence that God would be with Joshua as he had been with Moses.

Joshua I.

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12—15

16

WHITSUNDAY.

Mattins.

In this Lesson Moses before his departure finally recapitulates the Commandments concerning the Jewish Feasts. The people are on the threshold of the promised Land, he addresses them as if it were already won, and he tells them to let these feasts remind them evermore of their victories, and of God's care over them. Such a chapter is well fitted for Whitsunday, for it reminds us that we are the spiritual Israel, that all the blessings of which we have been hearing in the previous Sundays are ours, all spiritualized and made eternal by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost which came as on this day. In our Sunday Lessons we are leaving the History of the Giving of the Law behind us, but we do not leave it without being thus reminded that the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ.

Probably the command of Moses in the present chapter is the *restoration* of the Jewish festivals, for, as Bp. Wordsworth has shown, there is every reason to conclude that from the time of their ban at Kadesh-barnea (Num. xiv.) in the year

Deut. XVI.

Deut. XVI. of the Exodus, they never kept another Passover until their entry into Canaan.

Abib means "ear of corn," and was applied to the time of early Spring fruit. Compare our word "Spring," and "April," from *aperio*, "to open."

2 We have here a new and specific command; namely that the Passover, the Pentecost (ver. 11) and the Feast of Tabernacles (ver. 15), were to be kept **at the place** which God should choose,—there and nowhere else. The restriction is made six times in the present Lesson. It was an emphatic command to the people to maintain their national and religious unity, to avoid isolation or schism. Though God was the God of the whole earth, He placed His Name in a chosen place whither His people might seek after Him, and find Him.

When the mystery of the Gospel was made known to all nations, such a restriction could no longer exist, and the early Christian writers point to the fact as an evidence that the Levitical Laws were only intended for a temporary purpose. But the spiritual truth which was symbolized lasts for ever; there is One Body and One Spirit, and we ought to be bound together with one heart and one voice in the worship of God.

Of the Feast of the Passover we have already spoken (see on Ex. xii. Easter Day).

9 The Feast of Pentecost was closely connected with that of the Passover. The name "**Feast of Weeks**" indicates that it was the completion of that Feast. The second of the seven days of unleavened bread was the lawful commencement of harvest (Lev. xxiii. 14. 15), the **beginning to put the sickle to the corn**. From that day seven complete weeks—a week of weeks—were to be reckoned. The name *Pentecost*, i. e. "fiftieth," is found in the Apocrypha and in the New Testament, but not in the Old Testament. There it is "the Feast of Weeks," or "of harvest" (Ex. xxiii.), or "of the first fruits" (Num. xxviii. 26).

The distinctive ceremony connected with the day was the presentation in the Sanctuary of *two wave loaves*, made of the new harvest. They were to be leavened, specimens in fact of such bread as is fittest for the nourishment of life. It was therefore an act of solemn thanksgiving to God.

The Jews have a tradition that the festival also commemorated the giving of the Law on Sinai, but there is no statement in Scripture to this effect, though the giving of the Law certainly took place 50 days after the departure from Egypt, and some have thought verse 12 of the present chapter to be an allusion to the connexion. That it was the custom as early as the time of our Saviour to give especial thanks at this season for the Law, appears certain from ancient Jewish commentators (see art. "Pentecost" in *Smith's Bibl. Dict.* § 4).

But the connexion which we have already noticed between the Passover and the Feast of Weeks shows us that this was not

only a thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth, but also something beyond it. It was a sign that He who had delivered His people from Egypt had not stopped there, but provided for them and sustained them from year to year. He who had begun a good work in them, was carrying it on until the day of Jesus Christ. The Jews themselves called the Feast "The concluding assembly."

We are able therefore to see the spiritual significance of the Feast in connexion with the Christian Pentecost. As the wave loaves, the first-fruits of the harvest, brought to the Sanctuary, sanctified the year, even so Christ entering the hearts of His people, sanctified the world. The work of the Christian Passover was completed by the ingathering of souls at Pentecost. The wave loaves of the first Christian believers were the earnest of what Christ's Victory had wrought; and as often as we keep the Feast of to-day we testify our belief that the Spirit of the Lord is amongst us, the Giver of Life. The harvest of grace takes the place in our thoughts to-day of the produce of a brief year.

And if the Jews gave thanks to God for the Law written on tables of stone, much more shall we for that Law which is written by the Teacher and Comforter which God has sent, upon the fleshy tables of the heart. The giving of the Hebrew Law was the Divine Act which gave unity to the chosen race, and the gift of the Spirit perfected the work of Christ in the Church, by uniting all its members in Him. Viewed in this light, how beautiful are the Proper Psalms for this morning's service. Pentecost apparently was the last Jewish Feast which S. Paul wished to keep (Acts xx. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 8). Whitsuntide was the first annual festival instituted in the Christian Church. It was the Church's birthday.

The feast of Tabernacles was held on the 15th—21st of Tisri (October). Christian writers have always traced a parallel between this Feast and our Christmas. The Jews' feast was held first in memory of the chosen seed dwelling in tents in the wilderness, as ours commemorates the Eternal Word made flesh and tabernacling among us (S. John i. 14). The feast moreover was a witness of the equality of the whole of the chosen race in God's sight (see *B. D.* s. v. "Tabernacles," § vi.). All, during the week, poor and rich, lived in the plainest huts. Even so Christmas Day reminds us all that we are brethren, having one Elder Brother Christ, and one Father, even God. The joyousness which marked the feast, and the acts of kindness which accompanied it, are a further type of the "awful mirth" of Christmas. See Nehemiah viii. 10.

The command not to appear empty marked both the Old and the New Covenant. Offerings were commanded to be made in token of thankfulness for God's mercies, and also of brotherhood with men. Almsgiving for the use of the poor is strictly enjoined in such passages as the following: Deut. xv.

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Deut. XVI. 11 ; Prov. v. 15, 16 ; Matt. vi. 2, 3 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 2, &c. &c. And God's blessing is promised ; Prov. xix. 17 ; xxviii. 27 ; Matt. xxv. 34—40 ; 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7. Offerings also are required by God for the support of His ministers and the due performance of His worship. It was an offering for the Temple which our Saviour paid with the money taken from the fish's mouth (Matt. xvii. 24—27), and which the poor widow was paying into the Treasury when our Lord saw her and blessed her deed (Luke xxi. 4). Mr Blunt (*Dictionary of Theology*) distinguishes Oblations and Alms, as offered, the one to the Father, the other to the Son.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Isai. XI. On verses 1—10 see under Second Sunday in Advent (p. 14).
 11 An enumeration of nations drawn to the Cross, a prophecy, therefore, of Pentecost (cf. Acts ii. 9—11). **Pathros**, Upper Egypt, the Thebaid. **Cush**, the country along the East of the Red Sea. **Elam**, Persia. **Shinar**, Babylonia. **Hamath**, Syria. **The isles of the sea**, Greece and the distant lands of the Mediterranean, as yet dimly known.

13 The prophecy of this call of the nations reminds Isaiah of the ancient envy between Judah and Ephraim. They had been the two foremost tribes at the first (see Gen. xlix. 8—12, 12—26), and for a while Ephraim seemed to have the precedence. Joshua belonged to it, and Shiloh, the first place of the sanctuary, was within its borders. As its importance declined, several signs appeared of its dissatisfaction (Judges viii. 1 ; xii. 1), and at length Jeroboam, a member of this tribe, set up a rival kingdom. The attempts made by some of the kings (e. g. Ahab and Jehoshaphat) to heal the schism were failures, because the proposed basis was an unholy one ; it was the centralization of military force, political union of heterogeneous materials. Such an expedient for fusion is always destructive to national life.

But the prophet foretells that there shall be a successful union now, for it shall rest upon organic unity of national worship, of equal rights and justice.

15 The second victory shall far exceed those of the preceding days. The separating waters shall not be *temporarily* thrown back, as was the Red Sea, but shall be **utterly destroyed** ; the Gospel shall go forth conquering and to conquer, and no seas shall hold it back. In like manner the dividing of Jordan shall have its antitype,—the Lord shall swing His hand over Euphrates, beyond which lay the ungodly Assyrian Empire, and it shall be divided into seven shallow streams, through which the preachers may walk in sandals, and through which scattered Israel may return to their home.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The Lord, by the mouth of His Prophet, has been foretelling that He will bring His people from captivity and pour out His blessings upon them in their own land. He declares here that to fit them for such blessings, to enable them to enjoy them, He will work in them a complete change of character. For when we are in a corrupt and sinful state we cannot see God. And He expresses the idea under the symbol of purification as practised under the Mosaic law. See Num. xix. 18. The promise was fulfilled in part when Israel came back from Babylon cured of idolatry. See Ezra x. 1—19. But this was only a shadow of the good things to come, a "rough draft," as M. Henry calls it, "of the covenant of grace." It is fulfilled in the experience of all who are converted to God by the power of the Holy Ghost, fulfilled to the spiritual Israel from Pentecost until now. Their guilt is pardoned, their nature sanctified, and God is sanctified in them. He takes away the hard and obstinate heart which had led them to reject His counsels, and makes them impressible by His love, so that their spiritual senses are exercised, they are conscious of sin, and long after perfect obedience to His will. And this longing shall be fulfilled, for He will give them the power to fulfil it, will prevent them with His gracious favour, and further them with His continual help. He will put His spirit *within* them, not dragging them by external violence, but drawing them with the cords of love. This is His part of the new, even the Christian, covenant. Man's part is expressed in the latter part of the verse. Man shall *use* the gracious gifts and heavenly power bestowed upon him,—“ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” The two parts of the covenant are emphatically repeated in the next verse:—**Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.** Such a union is heaven itself (Rev. xxi. 3, 7). And in all who attain to it, heaven has begun, the promise has begun to be fulfilled, wherever their home may be, **Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your Fathers.** To the true Israel, Canaan is everywhere, for Christ is there, God is there.

He says elsewhere that “their sins have withheld good things from them.” Here is the converse promise; when they have been cleansed from their uncleannesses the good things shall flow back to them in plenty, and the heathen who had taunted them with being starved, while they dwelt in a fruitful land, shall do so no more.

The blessed and happy change shall bring them to a deeper consciousness than ever of sin. They shall hate more and more the sin which has kept them separate from their loving and faithful God. Any experience which we ever have of the goodness of God, ought always to have this effect upon us, to make

Ezekiel
XXXVI.

25

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Ezekiel
XXXVI.

us ashamed of ourselves for forgetting Him. It is a hard heart which is not thus melted.

35

And this blessed change should tell for good on all the heathen round about, and bring them to a better knowledge of God. Their previous taunts (ver. 30) shall be changed into wonder and admiration; they shall see that God is able to rebuild cities that seemed to be ruined for ever, to replant lands that were turned into a wilderness. It will prove to them that He is a God of truth, that what He hath promised He is able to perform. **I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.**

37

We have here a law of the Kingdom, concerning which our Blessed Lord also taught us. Though God will give all this blessing of His own good will and pleasure, because He delights in mercy and lovingkindness, yet He will **be enquired of** and entreated to do it. The people shall not stand by passive and indifferent, they shall pray Him earnestly to do this for them. Exactly what our Lord spake when He saw the multitude scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. *The harvest, He said, is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.* Pray Him, that is, to do the work which He is going to do, which He has sent His Only-Begotten Son on purpose to do. A blessed privilege which God grants to His people, to share with Him the joy of His work, to take part in it, to urge Him to do it. They are to "remind Him, and give Him no rest" (Is. lxii. 6, 7), to do violence to the Kingdom of Heaven, and take it by force.

38

The glory and completeness of the work of the Holy Ghost is compared here to the holy flock of worshippers who were brought to Jerusalem at the great feasts. Not Jerusalem only, but even all the waste cities, shall be crowded with believers, all eager to dedicate themselves to Him, to offer and present themselves a living sacrifice, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him. It shall be a worship which has no uncertain object, no doubts shall cloud it—**They shall know that I am the Lord.**

MONDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

Mattins.

Gen. XI.

One language. It is impossible to say what the original language of man was. The general opinion of the Jews and ancient Christians was that it was Hebrew. But we cannot be sure of it.

2

From the East. Probably this should be rendered "Eastwards." They were apparently moving from Armenia.

3

The plains of Assyria and Babylonia were abundant in brick-earth. **Slime**, asphalt or bitumen. Herodotus describes the

building of the walls of Babylon much as this narrative does the building of Babel.

Gen. XI.

Whose top may reach unto heaven, i.e. one of exceeding loftiness (cf. Deut. i. 28; ix. 1). Let us make us a name. Josephus says that they intended to provide against another deluge, which scarcely harmonizes with this sentence. Apparently Nimrod, for he in all probability was their leader, aimed at setting up a monarchy, of which this strong citadel should be the centre. Not satisfied with the simple patriarchal life, nor obedient to the command to spread over the face of the earth, maintaining an inward Unity by service of the one God, he aimed at setting up a worldly Unity, founded upon brute tyranny.

4

A contrast is implied between the Lord, who was the true King, dwelling enthroned on high, and the children of men, whose work He came down to see (take judicial cognizance of). "He who dwelleth on high shall laugh them to scorn, the Lord shall have them in derision."

5

This they begin to do. This is the beginning of a course of godlessness and impiety, which must therefore be effectually checked.

6

Go to, lit. "Up," in ironical imitation of their own words.

7

The mound called Birs Nimroud is generally supposed to be the ruins of the temple of Belus. "The cement by which its bricks are united is of so tenacious a quality that it is almost impossible to detach one from the other." (Layard, p. 499.)

8

Babel. i.e. confusion.

9

The confusion of tongues was certainly miraculous, but we can trace something of the *rationale* of it in remembering that when sin, which is the spirit of discord, once disturbed the inward unity, the breach immediately must begin to widen. Emotion, thought, will, would immediately fall at variance. That of itself is ever a cause of difference of language. But a miraculous interposition intensified the natural process, and a miraculous suspension of mutual understanding frustrated their enterprise. The gift of Pentecost on the day of the foundation of the Christian Church was a symbolical removal of the curse of Babel. Then men from every nation under heaven heard, every man in his own tongue, the wonderful works of God set forth: an earnest of the day for which we look when all differences shall cease, and the whole race of mankind shall again be of one language and of one speech.

The Second Lesson is very instructive when considered along with the first. S. Paul is about to rebuke confusions in the Church at Corinth, confusions which endangered the peace of the Church, and threatened to turn this very gift of tongues into the materials of a new Babel. Accordingly in this Chapter he shews them that the variety of gifts came from one and the

1 Cor. XII.

1—13

1 Cor. XII.

same Spirit, that if the gifts are valued for selfish or vain-glorious purposes, they become instruments of discord, but when held from God, He brings unity out of diversity. *The Unity of the Body*—this is the emphatic subject of the whole lesson.

Evensong.

Numbers
XI

The children of Israel had once more complained, and had been punished by the consuming fire of the Lord. The mixed multitude also fell a lusting, and had led the congregation to cry out for flesh. The courage of Moses gave way under the trial, and he cried bitterly to God: "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness."

16

The present lesson is God's answer to this appeal. He graciously provides the means for the relief of Moses, and the more thorough management of the congregation.

It would appear that the arrangement here made was temporary only. The seventy do not appear in the early days of the monarchy. In subsequent ages, however, the Sanhedrin was formed, and its members numbered seventy, after this example.

17

Here we have a Jewish foreshadowing of the Christian Pentecost. A portion of the Spirit that was given to Moses was given to each of the seventy, for there could be no work of ministration done on God's behalf without that Spirit. "Not as if the spiritual gifts of Moses were thereby lessened. As the Hebrew Expositors say, Moses was like the central light in the seven-branched golden candlestick which was lighted from God's altar, and from which the other lights were lighted. All his gifts were from the Father of lights (James i. 17), who kindled their light at His light to do him honour, and to show the need of unity in government, both of churches and nations, without impairing his lustre." (*Bp. Wordsworth.*)

18-20

But first there is the judgment upon the people for their evil lust to be uttered. The fulfilment of their desires shall be their punishment. Cf. Ps. lxxviii. 29—31; cvi. 14, 15.

25

Cf. Acts ii. 1—4.

Prophesied, uttered the praises of God, under the extraordinary impulse of the Holy Ghost.

Did not cease, rather "did not add." It means that they prophesied for that day and no more. It was a temporary sign, like Aaron's budding rod, to guarantee their divine appointment, but was not continued. Even thus the gift of tongues to the Christian church was only a temporary sign of the ever abiding Presence and Indwelling of the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

26

Of them that were written, i.e. of the chosen seventy.

Why these two remained we are not told. Their motive may have been modesty and humility, or some feeling less worthy. The point proved by their separation from the rest was that the Holy Spirit was not bound to one form of calling, but bloweth where he listeth. And it was shewn also to all that Moses was not the author of the gift, he was only an instrument of God's grace.

Cf. Mark ix. 38, 39. Joshua here, as John there, was jealous on his Master's behalf. And here Moses, as there Christ, shewed that he sought not his own honour, but God's glory.

The wish that God would put his Spirit upon all his people was fulfilled at Pentecost. Not that they are all Prophets,—there are diversities of gifts and operations, but they are all wrought by One and the selfsame Spirit.

TUESDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

Mattins.

The Prophet in the preceding part of the chapter has described with wonderful power a great plague of locusts, which have desolated all the land. And he calls on the people to humble themselves and beseech God that His anger may be turned away. Upon their doing so He will drive away this great and dreadful "army," and bring it to utter destruction. It shall become a type of all enemies that rise up against the people of the Lord, its very might shall make its destruction greater.

In the verse with which our Lesson begins the Prophet foresees and foretells the overthrow. He sees the people humbled and penitent, and God thereupon gracious and forgiving. The enemy has "done great things" (ver. 20), and has come to nought, and now it is Jehovah's turn, He too will do great things. The land has been bidden to tremble (ver. 1), it is now bidden to fear not. It was bidden to mourn, now it is to rejoice and be glad.

And as the judgment against man is now reversed, so also is that against cattle. The famine caused by the locusts had brought suffering on the beasts of the field, but now the pastures of the wilderness spring again, and the trees bear their fruit.

Note the phrase, **children of Zion**. The blessing returned to them because God had made a covenant with them, and they were His people. They were to rejoice not merely in God, but in **the Lord their God**.

The former rain moderately. The margin has a widely different version, "*a teacher of righteousness.*" The word rendered "moderately" is everywhere else rendered "righteousness," and there seems no doubt that this is the meaning. The other word is rendered "former rain" in the latter part of the verse, but elsewhere commonly signifies "teacher." And the

Numbers
XI.

28

29

Joel II.

21

22

23

Joel II.

Jewish commentators for the most part so render it. In all probability then this is the Prophet's meaning,—“He shall send you a teacher of righteousness.” And then having said so, and used a word which sometimes bears the meaning of “rain,” he plays upon the word and goes on, as our Version has it, “and he will cause to come down,” &c.

It follows that the teacher here spoken of must be Christ, the promised Messiah, who shall bring in everlasting righteousness. And as the Lord, in compassion for His creatures, sends the rain upon their fields, so shall Christ water the Church of His love with the perpetual dew of His blessing, early and latter rain, grace to begin with and grace to go on with, Sacramental grace, filling the barns with the bread of life, and the fats with the wine of Christ's blood, and the oil whence comes the Unction of the Holy One.

25 Through repentance that which has been lost by sin shall be restored. God shall forgive their wickedness through the blood of Jesus. (See a striking sermon on this text by F. W. Farrar, in *The Fall of Man, and other Sermons.*)

26 Satisfying can only come by God's blessing. Plenty without that is not satisfying; though men have their heart's desire, there is leanness in their soul. And when God's people are satisfied, they do not forget Him the Giver; **they praise the name of the Lord their God, who hath dealt wondrously with them**, both in His judgments and in His forgiveness.

27 The heathen had mocked them, saying, *Where is their God?* (ii. 17). Now they shall be ready with an answer, such as maketh not ashamed.

28 **Afterward.** After the coming of the Teacher of Righteousness. See on ver. 23.

Before the coming of Christ the Spirit had been poured only on the chosen people; thence only had the order of prophets come. But after He was lifted up He drew all men unto Him, and the gift of Pentecost broke the partition down, and brought **all flesh**, all the human race, into the family of God.

“God says, *I will pour my Spirit*, i.e. give largely, as though He would empty out Him who is infinite, so that there should be no measure of His giving, save our capacity of receiving.” (*Dr Pusey.*)

Your sons and daughters—those of the Jews. They were the first to receive the Pentecostal gift. It was literally fulfilled upon the Apostles and the holy women, and then upon the prophets of whom we read throughout the Acts (xi. 28; xiii. 1; xx. 29; xxi. 9, 10, &c.).

29 **The servants and handmaidens**—slaves, those in abject condition of life. There shall be no respect of persons, because Christ should stoop to all that He might raise all, and restore the brotherhood of all mankind.

“The prophetic word circles round to that wherewith it

began. It began with including the heathen,—*I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh*; it instances individual gifts; and then it ends by resting on the slaves; and on these too in those days I will pour out My Spirit.” (*Pusey.*)

Joel II.

And the sign of Pentecost shall be preparatory to another, the sign of the Son of Man, for the revelation of God will continue until the last day. The end of the age is evidently here the primary thought, the winding-up of the ancient dispensation, the end of the law, the sacrifices, the Temple. Great phenomena preceded the fall of Jerusalem. (*Josephus, Wars of the Jews, vi. 5. § 3.*) But we look for yet greater signs before the final appearing of the Lord, when the earth and heaven shall pass away.

30

The love of God shall not fail to be manifested in the midst of judgment. No danger can hurt those who trust in Him, and worship His Name.

32

In Mount Zion. There was the sanctuary, the appointed place where God might be found. And this sanctuary is now transferred to the universal Church, the body of those who believe, love, and obey its Head.

In the remnant. Evidently the closing words of Acts ii. 47, *οἱ σωζόμενοι*, refer to this. *Those who were escaping*, who were fulfilling the Prophet's behest, and calling on the Name of Christ.

Evensong.

Micah iv. 1—7. See 25th Sunday after Trinity, Morning.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

We have already spoken at length on this chapter, as the lesson for the evening of S. John's Day, and we therefore refer the reader to that, p. 34. It only remains here to say a word as to the *Trisagion*, which the Seraphim sang. We naturally ask, Did the thrice repeated **Holy** reveal to the Prophet ought of the mystery of the Holy Trinity? That it speaks of that mystery to us I need not say; our whole public worship implies that we so understand it. But what of the words as they were heard by Isaiah? Taken along with the references to them in the Book of the Revelation I cannot doubt that there is an indication of the great doctrine, that the Seraphim were singing the praises of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. I will quote the note of Delitzsch on this subject. To many it will appear mystical, but I hold it to be true and sound. “Did this thrice-holy refer to the triune God? Knobel contents himself with saying that the threefold repetition of the word ‘Holy’ serves to give it the greater emphasis. No doubt men are accustomed to say three times what they wish to say in an exhaustive and satisfying manner; for three is the number of

Isaiah VI.

I—II

Isaiah VI.

expanded unity, of satisfied and satisfying development, of the key-note extended into the chord. But why is this? The Pythagoreans said that numbers were the first principle of all things; but the Scriptures, according to which God created the world in twice three days by ten mighty words, and completed it in seven days, teach us that God is the first principle of all numbers. The fact that three is the number of developed and yet self-contained unity, has its ultimate ground in the circumstance that it is the number of trinitarian process; and consequently the trilogy (trisagion) of the seraphim (like that of the cherubim in Rev. iv. 8), whether Isaiah was aware of it or no, really pointed in the distinct consciousness of the spirits themselves to the triune God."

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.Genesis
xviii.

In the Jewish worship this Lesson is read in combination with 2 Kings iv. 1—37. In the one case we have the wonderful birth of Isaac foretold, in the other the birth of the Shunammite's son and his recall from death.

The narrative opens with the declaration that the Lord manifested Himself to Abraham, and goes on to connect this manifestation with the appearance of three men. Some commentators both in ancient and modern times have taken these three to be an indication of the three Persons of the Trinity. (See Bp. Wordsworth's *Commentary*, who adopts this view, and quotes several Fathers in support of it.) Others hold that one of these "three men" was the Eternal Word, the Son, and that the other two were angels; and this is the view which seems most to harmonize with the narrative, though certainly there is much that is mysterious and baffling to the understanding in the record. If we adopt this second view and take one only of the angels for a manifestation of God, it makes the chapter none the less fitting for Trinity Sunday. For He who revealed Himself to Abraham is the same who revealed to us this great mystery: "No man hath seen God at any time; the Only Begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

Bowed Himself. After the usual manner of the Eastern salutations. It is not that he paid them divine reverence, for he was entertaining angels *unawares* (Heb. xiii. 2). But apparently he observed a special dignity in one of the strangers, for he begins his address with, "My Lord" (plu. in the Heb. "Adonai"), which the LXX. renders *κύριε*, and the Vulg. "Domine."

"The holy Patriarch depreciates his own gifts, he proffers little and provides much." (*Wordsworth*.)

The writer just quoted connects this and the following verses with two passages in the New Testament. The "three measures of fine meal" are consecrated to spiritual things by our Blessed

Lord in a parable (Matt. xiii. 33). The woman in that parable is the Church, the spiritual Sarah, which by leavening the world with the Gospel, prepares a banquet of joy for the angels of God.

Secondly, there are several points of similarity between Abraham's hospitality and that of Zacchæus; and the Bishop points out how probable it is that our Lord referred to these when He called Zacchæus "a son of Abraham."

They did eat. Not in appearance but in reality. A proof of the reality of the heavenly vision. Our Lord ate of a broiled fish and a honeycomb in His glorified body. Luke xxiv. 42, 43.

They, one of the three heavenly guests, speaking for the others. This is changed in the next verse for the singular number, for the language is only suited for Almighty God.

According to the time of life. The best scholars render this "At this time next year." **Behind him,** stated to shew that the heavenly Visitor had Divine Knowledge of what was passing.

Abraham had laughed at a like previous announcement (xvii. 17), the laughter of joy. Sarah's was that of unbelief. But she quickly repented of it (ver. 15), and believed the promise (Heb. xi. 11).

My lord. S. Peter's commentary on this title (1 Pet. iii. 6) entirely explains the meaning of it.

"Sarah is not brought prominently forward in the Old Testament. But this reserve is instructive. It reminds us that the beauty of Womanhood is in meekness and retirement. There is an eloquence in the silence of Scripture, especially in its treatment of the characters of holy women, particularly the Blessed Virgin, of whom we hear nothing after the Ascension of Christ.

"But though the Holy Spirit thus teaches that holy women find their happiness in modest retirement, where they shine in the eyes of the Angels and of God, yet He guards us against the notion that their life is insignificant. He does this by the terms in which He comments upon them, especially in the New Testament, and by which He teaches us to read aright the history of the Old." (*Wordsworth.*)

Abraham went with them. An ancient tradition says that he went as far as *Caphar-barucha*, whence the Dead Sea can be seen through a ravine.

The Lord gives His reason for revealing His purpose to Abraham. He is to become a great nation, **for I know him,** rather, "*I have acknowledged him* (in anticipative love) *in order that he may command his children and his whole posterity to keep the way,*" &c.

The announcement of the destruction of the cities of the plain was made to Abraham with the above object in view, in order that the desolate site might remain an example in the

Genesis
XVIII.

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Genesis
XVIII.

21 eyes of Israel for ever of the avenging righteousness of God, and of the fate of the ungodly. **The cry** means the appeal for vengeance (cf. iv. 10), and the words **I will go down** imply in phrase borrowed from human things the righteousness of God's dealing. He will not punish until after judicial investigation, that He may be justified in the eyes of the universe.

22 **The men**, apparently two of the three (see xix. 1). But we are not distinctly told so, nor is there any further mention of a visible presence.

23 Abraham is "moved by the love which springs from the consciousness that one's own preservation and rescue are due to compassionate grace alone; love, too, which cannot conceive of the guilt of others as too great for salvation to be possible." (*Keil*.)

His intercession is based upon the righteousness of God, and upon nought else. He does not pray that wickedness may continue to exist, but that if there be any righteous left within the city, it may be spared for their sakes. He asks this, because the Judge of all the earth will do *right*, because He is not a mere Being of power who can do what He *chooses*. "On that foundation his intercession is built; the first recorded in Scripture, the model of all the rest. It is man beseeching that right may prevail; that it may prevail among men; by destruction, if that must be; by the infusion of a new life, if it is possible. It is man asking that the gracious order of God may be victorious, in such way as He knows is best, over the disorder which His rebellious subjects have striven to establish in His universe. The mercy which is prayed for is not an exception from the righteousness, but the fruit of it." (Maurice, *Patriarchs and Lawgivers*, p. 93.)

See Delitzsch's note, and Dr Vaughan's beautiful Sermon on this passage in *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 381.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

See Septuagesima Sunday.

Genesis
I—II. 4

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Josh. III.

We have come to-day to the beginning of the Conquest of Canaan. The event to which all previous events have been leading is the entry into God's rest. It is the practical result of the leadership of Moses. Even so the teaching of the Gospels concerning Christ, which has been before us in the Sundays which are passed, must result in Christian *practice*, and bring forth good fruit. And as of old, so now, while we

have a sure confidence, we have also a hard battle to fight. The enemy is mighty, we need all God's strength to overcome him. But that strength is sufficient for us.

The crossing is prefaced by a word of encouragement from God, **This day will I begin** &c. The crossing of Jordan shall be only the beginning of a series of miraculous victories, and it shall be the accrediting of Joshua in the eyes of the people as the crossing of the Red Sea was of Moses.

Command the priests. Moses had used his rod at the Red Sea, Joshua uses the Ark as the symbol of God's covenant and presence. "Wherever the ordinary means of grace are at hand God attaches the operations of His grace to them; for He is a God of order." (*Keil*.)

To the brink, that is to the nearest bank. They were to stay as soon as their feet reached the water. The Church of Christ shall stand still in the world, no floods shall carry her away, until God's people are all passed over into their rest.

A few words may be said here on the names of the nations. The **Canaanites** proper were "lowlanders," dwellers in the plains. The deep valley of the Jordan was one of their habitations, but the other plains, the Shefela and Esdraelon, were also inhabited by them. The richness and importance of these plains caused the inhabitants to give their name to the whole country, and the people of the whole land are therefore often called Canaanites. Of the **Hittites** we have already spoken (Josh. i. 4). The **Hivites** were either "Midlanders" (Ewald), or "country people" (Gesenius). The latter supposition is the more probable. Hamor the Shechemite and the Gibeonites were of this tribe (Gen. xxxiv. 2; Joshua ix. 3). The main part of them were at this time living in the north (Josh. xi. 3). The **Perizzites** were probably also "country people." Mr Grove in the *Bible Dictionary* quotes a learned disquisition which goes to prove that whereas the Hivites were feeders of cattle, the Perizzites were agriculturists, like the Fellahs of the Arabs. Of the **Girgashites** nothing whatever has been ascertained. The **Amorites** were "mountaineers." It would seem that they had originally lived west of Jordan (Gen. xiv. 13), but had migrated to the rich land of Gilead, where they formed a kingdom under Sihon. But some of them remained in the west, for we hear of them again. The **Jebusites** lived in the mountain-country around their capital Jebus. They were finally conquered by David, who made their capital his own.

Joshua mentions them all here as showing that there is not one of them who shall be able to resist. One and all are destined to fall before Israel. With the same encouraging purpose in view he speaks of "the living God," and of "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth." This latter epithet "exalted the government of God over all the elements

Josh. III.

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10

Josh. III.

of the world, that the Israelites might have no doubt that as seas and rivers are under His control, the waters, although liquid by nature, would become stable at His nod." (*Calvin.*)

12

The purpose of this is stated in ch. iv. 2.

15

16

Bp. Wordsworth points out a typical meaning in the miracle,—When *our* Joshua stood forth on our behalf, the waters of Sin were rolled back. **Zaretan** is probably the Zartan of 1 Kings vii. 46. The spot with which it is supposed to be identical is about 17 miles N. of Jericho. **From the city Adam**, should be, "at the city Adam." Stanley translates "High up, far, far away, at the city Adam," &c. No place of this name has been discovered, and it is not elsewhere mentioned.

Bishop Wordsworth suggests a mystical significance in the occurrence of the name thus:—

"The waters which would have obstructed our passage to Canaan, and which would have overflowed us, if God had not checked them, have been checked for us in *Adam*; the stream of Sin and Death which was coming down upon us from *Adam*, to destroy us, was checked at the Baptism of our Divine Joshua in the Jordan, when He sanctified water to the washing away of sins, whereby 'the old Adam is buried in us, and the new man is raised up in us.' Those waters which would have impeded our course to heaven, and would have drowned us in destruction, have been driven back, and fixed far off in *Adam*; and a way has been opened to us in Christ, and by our baptismal incorporation in Him, under the guidance of the Ark, His Church, for entrance into Canaan, the dark descending current of Death has been stemmed and thrown back by Christ. The issue of blood, which had flowed so long in our diseased Humanity, has been stanchd and dried up by Christ; and spiritual life and Health has been given us by Him.

"This is what the Apostle has expressed in the Epistle to the Romans,—'By one man Sin entered into the world, and Death by Sin, and so Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' (Rom. v. 12). The waters of a dark Jordan of death were flowing upon us from Adam, who, says the Apostle, was 'the figure of Him that was to come,' Christ (v. 14). 'But not as the offence, so is the free gift; for if through the offence of the one (Adam) many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by the one Man (*τοῦ ἐνὸς*) JESUS CHRIST, hath abounded unto many,' v. 15; see also v. 17, 'Death reigned by the one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by the One, JESUS CHRIST.'"

Josh. IV.

1, 2

The command has been given before (iii. 12), but is repeated here. Joshua had already prepared the men, doubtless by revelation from God. He is told now that the time for the act is come. We may call this, therefore, the first command for the establishment of the Church in Canaan, the witness and

pillar of the truth. "These twelve men and the twelve stones prefigured the twelve Apostles, who were builders and also foundation stones." (*Theodoret.*)

The lodging-place. Gilgal (ver. 20).

It was an old Patristic fancy that these stones remained until the time of Our Lord, and that the Baptist pointed to them when he said "God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham."

The LXX. has "other twelve stones," which evidently conveys the true sense. These were in the bed of the river, the others on the Canaan bank. **Unto this day** means, of course, to the date of the writing of the book.

Hasted. Everything indicates a rapidity of action. They had crossed the Red Sea in narrow file, between two walls of water, but here the river is dry for miles, and the crossing was quickly effected. Emblematic of the violence with which the Kingdom of heaven is taken by the faithful, and of the eagerness with which men pressed into the visible Church.

The ark of the Lord and the priests. True order of precedence. It was not the priests who divided the waters, but the Lord whose throne the ark represented.

The LXX. adds to this verse "And they ate of the fruit of the land of palm-trees."

Forty thousand. There were 110,000 men in these tribes capable of bearing arms (Num. xxvi. 7, 18, 34). The remainder doubtless were required for the protection of the women, children, and flocks from the still formidable eastern tribes. **The plains of Jericho,** are a portion of the Ghor, consisting of low-lying steppes of 3 or 4 hours' journey in breadth.

"This was not the chief end of the miracle that Joshua increased in power and authority; but since it was a matter of great importance, so far as the public interests were concerned, that the government of Joshua should be established, it is mentioned as an addition to the benefits which were conferred, that he was invested as it were with sacred insignia, which produced such a feeling of veneration among the people that no one dared to treat him with disrespect." (*Calvin.*)

It ought not to be passed by that in a succeeding verse (19) we are told that the people crossed the Jordan on "the 10th day of the first month." It was the same day that Our Lord rode in triumph to Jerusalem, six days before the Passover. The Divine Captain went forth to His Victory on the same day that His earthly type began *his*.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

As soon as Israel had crossed the Jordan, Joshua had the rite of Circumcision performed, and then proceeded to keep

Josh. IV. .

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Josh. V.

- Josh. V. the Passover. And the name of the place was called Gilgal, i. e. "Rolling," because now the reproach of Egypt was rolled away (verses 9, 10). All was now ready for going forth to battle, and Joshua was standing before Jericho, the frontier town of the East, apparently deep in meditation concerning its capture, when there came to him the Vision with which our present lesson opens. It is a happy thing that the compilers of the Lectionary have removed the obscurity into which the narrative was thrown by the division between chapters v. and vi. The connexion is most close. Many commentators suppose that the **Man** who appeared to Joshua is the Archangel Michael (see *Lee on Inspiration*, p. 129, and Appendix I. to that work, quoting the learned note of Dr W. H. Mill). But the greater number take it to be the Uncreated Word of God, the Captain of our Salvation, The Presence of God had been partially withdrawn from the people after the apostasy at Horeb, now that they are restored to favour, God returns again. "Art thou one of us, or one of our enemies?" asked Joshua, ignorant who his Visitor was. And the answer was "Neither." This is the force of the word "Nay." He was neither Israelite nor Canaanite, but Prince of the army of the Lord, i. e. of the angels. When Joshua recognized Him and paid Him worship, he received a command which must have reminded him of the Vision to Moses at the bush (Ex. iii. 5), and it taught him that the care and protection assured to the nation then were still bestowed upon the people. And whereas the Vision of the burning bush was a type of Israel in affliction yet not consumed, the appearance now is changed to meet the need of the nation in its altered circumstances; the Warrior with His drawn sword indicates that a heavenly army is fighting beside the earthly army, and assuring to it the Victory.
- Josh. VI. As we have already noticed, the Vision does not end with the 1st vth chapter. The 1st verse of ch. vi. is parenthetical, descriptive of the strength of the fortifications of Jericho, and the apparent hopelessness of effecting its capture. Having described this, the historian tells us that the LORD (i. e. the Man with His drawn sword) said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into thy hand." And then He gives him a command touching the manner of the capture: "If their walls had their foundations laid in the centre of the earth; if the battlements had been so high built that an eagle could not soar over them, this is enough, *I have given it thee*. For on whose earth have they raised these castles? out of whose treasures did they dig those piles of stone? Cannot He that gave recal His own?" (Bp. Hall's *Contemplations*.) The command was a trial of the people's faith. They had been brought miraculously across the Jordan, it remained to be seen whether they had learned thereby to trust in God's power. The words **trumpets of rams' horns** should have been translated "trumpets of Ju-

bilee" (see Lev. xxiii. 24; xxv. 9). The use of these indicates assurance of victory, as if it were already won.

Joshua announces this command to the people, and it is obeyed apparently without questioning. "There never was so strange a siege as this of Jericho; here was no mound raised, no sword drawn, no engine planted, no pioneers undermining; here were trumpets sounded, but no enemy seen; here were armed men, but no strokes given; they must walk and not fight; seven several days must they pace about the walls, which they may not once look over, to see what was within. Doubtless these inhabitants of Jericho made themselves merry with this sight, when they had stood six days upon their walls, and beheld none but a walking enemy; What, say they, could Israel find no walk to breathe them with, but about our walls? Have they not travelled enough in their forty years' pilgrimage, but they must stretch their limbs in this circle? Surely, if their eyes were engines, our wall could not stand: we see they are good footmen, but when shall we try their hands? What, do these vain men think Jericho will be won with looking at, or do they only come to count how many paces it is about our city? If this be their manner of siege, we shall have no great cause to fear the sword of Israel. Wicked men think God is in jest, when He is preparing for their judgment. The Almighty hath ways and counsels of His own, utterly unlike to ours; which, because our reason cannot reach, we are ready to condemn as foolishness and impossibility. With us, there is no way to victory but fighting, and the strongest carries the spoil; God can give victory to the feet as well as to the hands, and, when He will, makes weakness no disadvantage. What should we do but follow God through by-ways, and know that He will, in spite of nature, lead us to our end?" (Hall's *Contemplations*.)

The rereward probably means that portion of the people that was not armed. It shows what unanimity existed among the people, and the whole narrative is a type of the Church laying siege to the powers of sin. The victory was not achieved by strength of arm, but by faith in God. The sound of the Gospel, the blowing of its trumpets and the people shouting in echo, these things are foolishness to the world. By the united voice of the Church, the prayers of priesthood and people, all things will be subdued. The promise to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into thine hand," will be fulfilled to the spiritual Joshua, who declared "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

Promptitude was a characteristic of Joshua, iii. 1; vii. 16; x. 9.

The procession must have taken place on the sabbath as well as on the other days. Bp. Wordsworth supposes that the fall was on a sabbath.

Accursed, rather as the margin has it, "devoted." The Heb. word expresses a thing consecrated to Jehovah, not to be touched

Josh. VI.

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Josh. VI.

by men. This was because it was the first-fruits of the land of Canaan. The inhabitants of an idolatrous town thus devoted were to be slain with their cattle, and their houses burned. Lev. xxvii. 29. Rahab was exempted for her faith, a type of those who by repentance and faith in Christ's blood are gathered out of the world into the Church.

20

Thus fell the strongest town in Canaan, and the conquest of the whole land was made possible. The miracle was a sign for an encouragement to the nation to fight manfully and with assurance of victory. The procession of the ark of the Lord, which in one place is spoken of as "The Lord" Himself, the blowing of trumpets and cries of victory, all represent to us the march of God against ungodliness. The manifestation of His grace and love to His children is also a manifestation of His judgment to the ungodly world, to be completed when the last trumpet shall sound, and death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire.

And once more, the seven days' march is significant. Seven is the number of completeness. Six days passed during which all was expectation, and the walls gave no sign of tottering, because the appointed time was not come. Even so we wait for the coming victory; it does not hasten, it does not loiter. However strong evil may appear, exalting itself against the throne and majesty of God, when the seventh day shall come it shall fall in a moment, and rise no more. But, as good Bishop Hall reminds us, we ourselves have every day an enemy to compass, which if we do not, we can have no part in the day of Christ. "Thy ark, O God, hath been long amongst us; how is it that the walls of our corruptions stand still unruined? It hath gone before us, His priests have carried it: we have not followed it, our hearts have not attended it; and therefore how mighty soever it is in itself, yet to us it hath not been powerful."

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Joshua
XXIV.

1

Joshua brings his public ministry to a close by calling on the people to renew their covenant with God. Moses had done so before him. The ark was now at Shiloh, but Joshua chose **Shechem**, because it was hallowed by many sacred reminiscences. It was here that Abraham received his first promise on entering Canaan, and built his first altar (Gen. xii. 6, 7). Here Jacob settled on his return from Mesopotamia (Gen. xxxiii. 18), and here he purified his house from strange gods, burying the idols under the oak (Gen. xxxv. 4). Hither the tribes were assembled after the capture of Jericho and Ai, the blessings and cursings were pronounced and the law was written on stones. Here also the divine Joshua afterwards foretold to the woman of Samaria that the hour was at hand when the

whole world would be called to worship the Father (John iv. 21). It was therefore specially fitting that Joshua should choose the place for the renewal of the covenant, seeing that this act involved renunciation of idolatry (see ver. 23, 25). The solemnity of the occasion is marked by the expression **They presented themselves before God.** "Each one might feel for himself that God was presiding over all that was transacted there, and that they were not engaged in any merely private affair, but were entering into a sacred and inviolable compact with God himself." (*Calvin.*) Hengstenberg shows the distinction between this expression and "before the Lord;" the latter means before the Ark of the Covenant (xviii. 6; xix. 51).

Joshua
XXIV.

Joshua opens his address by recalling to the people the manifold mercies which God has shown them from the calling of Abraham till that day. Herein lies the force of his opening words: "Thus saith Jehovah the *God of Israel.*" He names three proofs of this goodness. The first was the calling of Abraham from his idolatrous connexions on the other side of the flood, i.e. the Euphrates. Of the nature of this idolatry nothing further is told us in the Bible. There are Rabbinical traditions on the subject, but they are plainly only later guesses. We learn, however, from Gen. xxxi. that Laban had teraphim, i.e. *penates*, household gods. The people would naturally draw the inference from Joshua's mention of Abraham's call from idolatry that it was incumbent on them not to frustrate God's purposes by returning to it.

The care of God conducted Abraham throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed and made his son Isaac the ancestor of two nations. Esau received Mount Seir in order that Jacob might have Canaan for his sole possession. Joshua does not dwell upon the details of the history, evidently because they were familiar to his hearers. He hastens on to the second great proof of God's mercy, the deliverance from Egypt, and the sojourn in the wilderness.

The third great act was the giving up the Amorites into the hand of Israel, and the frustration of Balak's wicked purposes. The words, **I would not hearken unto Balaam,** imply "Therefore do not fear the wizards and diviners of the Canaanites."

The last and greatest benefit was the crossing of Jordan and the conquest of Canaan.

The hornet. If this is to be taken literally, it signifies a very large species of wasp most formidable both to man and beast. *Ælian* relates that the Phaselians, who probably were of the same race as the Canaanites, were driven out of the country by wasps, and other writers have collected similar records. But it would seem that we are to take this figuratively; there is not a word in the narrative of the Canaanites being exterminated thus. Joshua appears to mean that the terrors falling upon the Canaanites were like stings which threw them into confusion

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Joshua
XXIV.

and helpless despair, greater than any which the sword and bow of Israel could cause (cf. Ps. xlv. 3, 6).

14 The conclusion which he draws from all these great mercies is obvious, the obligations which they are under to serve the Lord with gratitude and sincerity. Without such sincerity there could be no true worship at all; the worship of the living God must have its roots in the heart; and he teaches them this in the most forcible way of all, by declaring that they had better declare themselves idolaters at once than serve God with a divided heart.

16 The people showed that they felt the force of what he said by their cry of horror at the thought of idolatry, and their echo of his recountal of God's benefits.

19 His warning answer is intended to show them what it was to which they were binding themselves, and their deep responsibility; he would not have them vow inconsiderately. **Ye cannot** signifies in your natural state, by your own resolution, "without the assistance of divine grace, without solid conversion from all idols and without true repentance and faith." (Michaelis.)

22 **Ye are witnesses against yourselves**, i.e. you will condemn yourselves by this testimony of yours if you should now forsake the Lord.

23 **Among you.** This may imply that there were some concealed idols in the camp, but it is not very likely. The Hebrew word means also "within," and we take the words to refer to idols of the heart.

24 On their repeated and emphatic declaration of faithfulness to God, Joshua completed the covenant with them that day. When the ceremony was completed he recorded it in writing in the book of the law of God, evidently the same which Moses had left. He then set up a large stone as a permanent memorial on the spot where the meeting had been held. The **sanctuary** here spoken of cannot be the tabernacle nor the ark. It means apparently the holy place under the oak [terebinth tree] where Abraham had built his altar and Jacob had buried the idols. Having explained to the people the meaning of this stone, and exhorted them to regard it as a silent preacher to them not to deny their God in feeling, word, or deed, he dismissed them to their homes. He had done all that he could, the rest lay with them.

29 He did not formally lay down his office because God had not appointed an immediate successor. The congregation had its heads, judges, officers, and high-priest (ver. 1).

30 Timnath-serah. Tibneh is about seven hours north of Jerusalem, and shows signs of having once been a considerable town.

31 Joshua's labours evidently produced deep effect.

32 This account of the burial of Joseph's bones is placed here,

partly because the narrative could not well have been interrupted before, partly because it was necessary to show that the Israelites fulfilled the promise which their fathers had given to Joseph. No doubt the burial had taken place as soon as Joseph's descendants received Shechem. (See a sermon on "Joseph's bones," by H. W. Burrows. *Par. Sermons*. Third Series.)

The death of Eleazar, the contemporary of Joshua, brings the times of Joshua to a close, and forms a very fitting termination to the book.

"Eleazar and Joshua together make a type of the union of the Priesthood and Government in Christ. The types die, because they *are* types; but the DIVINE ANTITYPE liveth for evermore." (*Wordsworth*.)

A hill that pertained to Phinehas. Heb. Gibeah-Phinehas, a proper name, probably the same as Geba of Benjamin, north-east of Ramah.

Joshua
XXIV.

33

INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

The period following the death of Joshua is described as one in which "there was no king in Israel." There was no unity in the nation, no central power which all recognized. The tribes acted apparently independently of each other, as in the expedition of the Danites, though on special occasions they acted in concert (xix.—xxi.). The evil example of the nations by which they were surrounded oftentimes told upon them for evil, and they fell into idolatry and into consequent misery. The judgment of God was continually made manifest in them; they worshipped the gods of the nations, and forthwith fell a prey to the same nations. They cried then to the LORD in their distress, and were delivered. The instruments of their deliverance were "The Judges," military leaders for the most part, but apparently looked upon, for what they had done, as entitled to rule with more or less authority in times of peace.

The Book of Judges certainly is not arranged in chronological order; the events recorded were many of them in all probability simultaneous. Thus Jephthah seems to have ruled in the N.E. only, and Samson in the land of the Philistines, the latter being contemporary with Eli. The stories of Micah

Introductory
Note
to the Book
of Judges.

Introductory Note to the Book of Judges.

(xvii. xviii.), and of the wickedness of the men of Gibeah (xix.—xxi.) are two appendices to the history of the Judges, and must belong to an early period in that history. The historical value of the book lies in its showing us the progress of the Theocracy in the first stage of the national existence, leading up to the unity of the nation under the influence of Samuel. The account of the seven servitudes, and of the heroes who delivered the people from these, are among the most interesting and romantic of narratives. Two of our lessons comprise the grandest of these narratives, the deliverance wrought by Deborah and Barak, the other lesson contains the call of Gideon.

Jewish tradition ascribes the authorship of the Book to Samuel.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Judges IV.

1

The words **when Ehud was dead** imply that as long as that judge ruled he both kept the people from idolatry, and defended them from hostile attacks.

2

The site of **Hazor** has not yet been certainly discovered, but it was near the source of the Jordan. Dr Robinson supposes it to be *Tel Khuraibeh*, i. e. "the ruins," and except in name, the site answers the description here and in Joshua xi. 10—12; xix. 32, 36. Jabin was evidently king of the whole of northern Canaan, and his name appears to have been the regular royal name there, as Pharaoh in Egypt and Abimelech in Philistia (Josh. xi. 1). In fact we must regard this oppression as a revival of the power of the North, which had been laid in the dust by Joshua at the battle of Merom. **Harosheth of the nations** was in the plain of Galilee, its situation being such as to enable Sisera to exercise his iron chariots, which he could not have done in the mountain-land of the south.

3

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Deborah's dwelling-place, as here described, was situated within the tribe of Benjamin¹. Her prophetic gift resembled

¹ "Under the palm-tree of Deborah, as Saul afterwards under the pomegranate tree of Migron, as S. Louis under the oak-tree of Vincennes, dwelt Deborah the wife of Lapidoth, to whom the sons of Israel came up to receive her wise answers. She is the magnificent impersonation of the *free* spirit of the Jewish people and of Jewish life. On the coins of the Roman Empire Judæa is represented as a woman seated under a palm-tree, captive and weeping. It is the contrast of that figure which will best place before us the character and call of Deborah. It is the same Judæan palm, under whose shadow she sits, but not with downcast eyes and folded hands, and extinguished hopes; with all the fire of faith and energy, eager for the battle, confident

Judges IV.

that of Miriam (Ex. xv. 20) and Huldah (2 Kings xxii. 14), and it qualified her to **judge** the nation, i. e. apparently to settle such disputes as the lower courts were unable to decide. See Deut. xvii. 8, 9. But the Divine call came upon her to rise up in behalf of the oppressed nation, and she summoned Barak from Kedesh in Naphtali, the neighbourhood of Jabin's stronghold, and spoke to him the command which she had received from the Lord. His fame, apparently, must have been widely spread. His name is significant, **Barak**, i. e. "lightning." It is the same name which afterwards reappears among the warriors of Carthage, "Barca."

Tabor is an insulated mountain cone of limestone about 1000 ft. high, on the north-eastern border of the plain of Esdraelon. This was to be Barak's rendezvous, from which he was to attack the army of Sisera, lying in the valley of Kishon below. This valley, called commonly in the O. T. "the valley of Jezreel," has been the battle-field of Palestine both in ancient and modern times. Here Gideon defeated the Midianites; here Saul fled before the Philistines and perished in Gilboa; here Ahaziah fled before Jehu, and Josiah received his death-wound. (See Dean Stanley's graphic account in *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 335 seq.)

Barak's hesitation is yet more strongly represented in the LXX. He calls upon Deborah to name the very day for the expedition, as well as to accompany him. He evidently wanted divine enthusiasm, and Deborah foretold that this want of confidence would lose for him the highest prize of victory.

The tribe of Zebulun was partly in the plain of Jezreel, partly to the north of it. Mr Clark (*Bible Atlas*, Map 9) places Hazor in Naphtali, Harosheth in Zebulun, both with a query, the *exact* sites not being ascertained.

This is a parenthetic statement, introduced in order to the right understanding of what followed. The children of Hobab led a nomad life in the desert of Judah (i. 16); but Heber had separated from them, and pitched his tents in the extreme north under the great terebinth tree [not *plain*] of Zaanaïm. (The plain is still beautiful with these trees.) Heber is called "the Kenite" (cf. Judges i. 16), from the country whence he came. The Kenites entered Canaan, in company with the tribe of Judah, at the time of the occupation of Canaan; but apparently when the wanderings were over, true to their nomadic instincts, they avoided the towns and moved into the open country. Saul found some of them in the land of the Amalekites, and others

of the victory. Like the German prophetess who roused her people against the invaders from Rome; like the simple peasant girl, who by communing with mysterious angels' voices roused the French nation against the English dominion, when princes and statesmen had well-nigh given up the cause,—so the heads of Israel "ceased and ceased, until that she, Deborah, arose, that she arose, a mother in Israel."—(Stanley's *Jewish Church*, p. 316.)

Judges IV.

were dwelling in Palestine in the time of Saul and David. Heber was now on peaceable terms apparently with both the contending parties, he lived clear of the scenes of conflict, and was thus able to preserve neutrality. Sisera, on hearing, apparently from some of the household of Heber, that the northern tribes were gathering, hastened at once into the valley of the Kishon with his army. Deborah's abrupt address indicates her eagerness for the issue. "Is not the Lord gone out before thee?" sc. to the battle. The word translated **discomfited** implies an exertion of supernatural power. It is used in Ex. xiv. 24; Josh. x. 10. Cf. Ps. xviii. 15; cxliv. 6. Probably even the expression **with the edge of the sword** is figurative, and means "like a mighty warrior fighting in front of Barak and routing his enemy utterly." We know from the next chapter that terrific natural phenomena were seen driving Sisera and his army into horrible confusion (v. 20, 21). A tremendous storm swept over the valley, neither horses nor men could stand against it, "the horsehoofs were broken by the pransings," and the river suddenly rising over its banks swept away great numbers of the disorganized host. While Sisera endeavoured to escape out of the ruin on foot, Barak pursued the rout even to Harosheth, the very stronghold of Sisera, with such fierce energy, that not a man entered within the gate to tell the news of the disaster (ch. v. 28).

Sisera believed that he might trust the little settlement to which, in his distress, he now resorted. From them he had learned the gathering of the tribes, and there was peace between them. Arabs, from that day to this, held fidelity to be the most sacred of ties. He betook himself to the tent not of Heber, but of Jael his wife, the most inviolable part of an Arab encampment. The valuables are always kept in the wife's tent for security.

It appeared as if his confidence was not misplaced. She approached him with the accustomed Oriental reverence, bade him not fear, covered him with a rug, and when he raised his head from the ground with an entreaty for a draught of water to his parched lips, she opened the mouth of the large skin-bottle, and poured into the bowl used for illustrious guests the thick curdled cream. His security seemed now complete. He had eaten and drunk in her tent, and injury now would be in the eyes of a Bedouin the foulest of all crimes. Only begging her to stand at the door and turn aside all comers, he fell into a deep and heavy sleep. Then she seized one of the tent-pegs and the wooden hammer used for driving them in, and approaching with quick but stealthy tread, she drove the nail into his temples, and followed it up with blow upon blow, till the nail pierced the very ground (ch. v. 26). The wretched man gave a spring and contortion of agony, rolled over and died at her feet (ib. 27). Apparently her fury did not pause, she still smote and hammered, until she had battered his head to pieces.

Presently Barak came by hot with pursuit, and the chieftainess, triumphant and undaunted, called him in to look at the ghastly corpse.

So much has been said in condemnation and defence of this act of Jael, that I shall add but little here. To accept, indeed, one explanation which has been given, seems to me out of the question. It has been argued that she was sincere in her first acts of kindness, but was moved by a sudden Divine impulse to slay Sisera. A celebrated disputant of our own time said that we must class this as one of the "moral miracles" of God. I cannot see how the word must not be "immoral" in such a case, for God would be commanding treachery, falsehood and murder, and denying Himself.

On the other hand, some of those who have condemned Jael most strongly have declared that her act is not commended, and therefore we need make no difficulty. But it is not possible to regard the words of Deborah (v. 24) as otherwise than commending her.

In truth we are met at the very outset with the difficulty, that we do not know all the facts. The Rabbinical tradition that Sisera insulted her, may safely be set aside as a baseless guess. But there must have been a deep-set hate. The blood relationship and old companionship of her race with the Israelites caused her to look with horror and fierce anger on Sisera's cruel deeds to her neighbours. Some feeling of this sort must have been uppermost, and she was probably biding her time. If she was ever witness of any atrocious deed of oppression,—they were many without doubt,—it would not matter to her that there were members of the tribe who had wished well to Sisera and informed him of Barak's movements.

This being so, and she determined to be an avenger, we have no right to expect to find Christian enlightenment in her or in Deborah. Though *she* was educated in the Christian faith, Charlotte Corday is hardly looked upon with detestation. It would be nearer the truth to say that the generality of readers admire her as they remember what Marat was. The hatred of cruelty and oppression, the desire to see the people of the Lord free, these instincts within Jael were righteous and good. It was the work of progressive Revelation to purge out more and more from men, until the perfect day come, the thoughts that along with these were cruel and bad. The light and darkness were mingled in Jael in those days when they "did every man that which was right in his own eyes," the teaching of God to men's consciences threw clearer light as the years went on, but it was not until the Sermon on the Mount was preached that we were taught fully not to resist evil. Jael was brave, and an earnest hater of oppression; these qualities, at least, we can admire and pray to God to give us. But along with them we have the lesson of the New Testament before us, "Be

ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Judges V.

The song before us was sung by Deborah and Barak together, the author of it was Deborah (vv. 3, 7). Several writers have given new translations of it. We have one by Dean Milman in his *History of the Jews*, another by Dean Stanley in his *Lectures on the Jewish Church*. I have ventured to take one by Mr Plumptre from his volume entitled *Lazarus and other Poems*. It will be an excellent commentary on the Chapter, and what more I have to say upon it can be said in foot-notes.

Song of
Deborah

THE SONG OF DEBORAH.

- 2 FOR the day when the chieftains of Israel towered in the
height of their fame,
For the day when the people that followed, self-offered, with
willing hearts came,
Bless ye the Lord in the highest, His might and His glory
proclaim.
- 3 Hear, O ye kings of the earth, give ear, ye mighty and
strong,
I, even I, will exalt Him, I will praise Him with music and
song ;
To the Lord God of Israel, our King, sing praises to-day as
of old,
- 4 When from Seir He came in His glory with the wonders
our fathers have told ;
From the wild plains of Edom he marched, and the heavens
were shaken with dread,
The torrent-rain fell from the clouds, and the earth was
moved at His tread,

3 She calls heathen nations to witness what the Lord has done
for Israel, and so to fear Him.

4 See on Hab. iii. 3. 26th Sunday after Trinity.

The mountains reeled from their base, they flowed as the
great deep flows,
And Sinai trembled before Him, when the Lord God of Israel
arose.

Song of
Deborah.

5

From the old days of Shamgar-ben-Anath, to the days of
Jael, the land
Lay waste, and devoured by oppressors, a prey to the enemy's
hand ;

6

The highways of Israel that echoed the tramp of the traveller's
tread,

Deserted and silent ran on, as though through the realms of
the dead ;

The straggler that journeyed alone, in his fear of the foeman's
wrath,

In the dark shade of evening stole through the wild hills'
wildest path ;

The villagers ceased to assemble, they cowered from the sight
of their foes,

7

Until I, Debôrâh, appeared, as a mother in Israel arose.

Then, at length, new chieftains they chose, as Gods to guide
and to save,

8

Once more in their gates was heard the shout of the warlike
and brave ;

Yet not even then did they meet as an army arrayed for the
fight,

Not a spear or a shield was seen among all Israel's warriors
of might ;

Having depicted the glorious days when Israel was exalted
as the chosen of the Lord, she comes here to the deep degrada-
tion and disgrace into which Israel had sunk before the recent
events.

6

It is right to note that some commentators take this verse as
descriptive of the sin of Israel, "*They chose new (i.e. false) gods,*
and so brought war on themselves." Thus Keil and Words-
worth. These writers think that the happy change begins in the
next verse. But I think Mr Plumptre's version to be right,
"gods" being equivalent to *chieftains*. Deborah has spoken of
her arising a mother in Israel, and consequent upon that was
the revival of energy and patriotism among the people.

8

Song of
Deborah.

- My whole heart goes forth to greet them, the chieftains spotless in fame,
- 9 The people who, offering their lives, with brave and willing hearts came ;
Bless ye the Lord in the highest, His might and His glory proclaim.
- 10 And ye who ride forth on white asses, as princes and counsellors ride,
Ye who sit in the gate to give judgment, let your voice be heard by their side ;
- 11 From *their* lips who once more can rejoice at eve round the wells cool and calm,
Let the right deeds of God swell your hearts with the tones of the jubilant psalm,
The right deeds of God, which He for the people of Israel hath done,
The people He claims as his own, who went forth to the battle, and won.
- 12 Awake, awake, O Debôrah, awake, O awake to the song,
Arise, O son of Abinoam, arise, O Barak the strong,
Lead forth thy conquered, thy captives, as thou marchest in triumph along.

When they arose they had no weapons in their hands. Cf. 1 Sam. xiii. 22. The above translation omits the number "forty thousand." Probably that is a reference to the 40,000 fighting men who crossed the Jordan with Joshua. No panoply of war like theirs, she says, greeted our eye now.

- 10 There is an omission in the above translation which weakens this verse, "*ye that walk by the way,*" i.e. the lower classes. She is pointedly calling on all classes, high and low, to join in God's praise.

- 11 This verse is obscure ; lit. it is, "From the voice of those who divide between the wells." The "dividers" may be, of spoil, or counters of flocks. In either case they are triumphant, and at rest from fear. Mr Plumptre has also lost sight of the last words of the verse, "*Then the people of the Lord went down to the gates,*" i.e. returned from the mountains and hiding-places to which they had been driven.

The battle was won by the few, of our host but a remnant
 was there,
 But that remnant was noble in heart, and the Lord's arm to
 help them was bare,
 Among all the heroes, the strong ones, to me was the victory
 given,
 A woman's voice guided that host, her words were as coun-
 sels from Heaven.

Foremost of all, ye came, ye warriors of Ephraim, our pride, 14
 True stock of the heroes of old who fighting with Amalek
 died ;

After you came the bravest of Benjamin, goodly and tall ;
 From Machir the chiefs of Manasseh rushed down to the fight
 at my call ;
 Zebulun sent forth her sons, with the sceptre of princes they
 came,
 And Issachar also was true to the height of his ancient fame ; 15
 By the side of Debôrâh the princes of Issachar fought as she
 led,
 By the side of Barak they marched down the valley with
 conquering tread.

Behold ! by the fair streams of Reuben his chieftains met
 in debate,
 Mighty the stirrings of counsel, the searchings of heart, oh,
 how great !

Why after all didst thou linger, tarrying behind in the fold, 16
 To list to the bleating of sheep, when the war-cry summoned
 the bold ?

Song of
Deborah.

13

14

15

16

The vigorous translation makes the sense very clear. That 13, 14
 Mr Plumptre's interpretation of the words "Out of Ephraim,"
 &c., is correct, will be seen, when it is remembered that
 Joshua the Ephraimite was the leader against Amalek (Ex. xvii.
 13, 14; and cf. Judges xii. 15, which is again explained by
 Judges iii. 13, 14, compared with iii. 27). *Machir* (see Num.
 xxvi. 29; xxvii. 1).

"The sceptre of princes," or "the staff of the musterer"
 (2 Kings xxv. 19).

The reference to Reuben is sarcastic. They held great meet- 15, 16

Song of
Deborah.

- By the fair streams of Reuben they gathered, her chieftains
met in debate,
Mighty the stirrings of counsel, the searchings of heart, oh
how great !
17 And Gilcad too held back his strength, content beyond Jordan
to stay,
And Dan watched the fishermen's boats as they plied to and
fro in the bay,
And Asher looked out on the waves, and lazily dwelt on his
coasts ;
Not a man of them all came forth to the help of the Lord
God of Hosts.
18 The people who perilled their lives from Zebulun and Naph-
tali came,
On the heights of the mountains they triumphed, fighting for
freedom and fame.
- 19 They fought, those kings of the nations, the chiefs of the
Canaanites' land,
Where the torrent-streams of Megiddo roll down by Taanach's
strand ;
But not for them was the glory of victors dividing the spoil,
No heaped-up treasure of silver paid them for their blood and
their toil,
20 A mightier army than theirs was fighting unseen on our side,
The stars as they moved in their courses made war upon
Sisera's pride :

ings, and passed great resolutions, and then stayed at home to
listen to the bleating of the sheep instead of the war-cry.

No mention, either in praise or blame, is made of Judah and
Simeon in the enumeration of the tribes. Probably they were
fully engaged in contest with the Philistines.

- 18 The description of the battle begins.

Taanach. See Josh. xii. 21. It (now Lejun) was five miles
from Megiddo, some affluents of the Kishon flowed between
them. The heathen kings came in hope of spoil, but got none ;
lit. "one piece of silver they did not take."

The white-foaming waters of Kishon swept them away in its
 might,
 Kishon, the onward-rushing, swoln with the storm of the night ;
 Struggling, and plunging, and whirling, maddened with fear
 and dismay,
 The horse and his rider went down ; the proud river swept
 them away.

Song of
 Deborah.

21

22

“Curse ye the people of Meroz,”—the word from the Pro-
 phet’s lips came,
 Whose voice, as an Angel of God’s, was mighty to praise and
 to blame ;
 “Yea, with a bitter curse curse them, the craven, the faint-
 hearted crew,
 They came not forth in that hour to the help of God’s chosen
 and true,
 They left them to struggle alone, the mighty and strong to
 pursue.”

23

But blessed, thrice blessed is Jael ; from the tents of that
 stranger-band,
 The name of the wife of Heber shall sound through the breadth
 of the land.

24

He came, hot and parched to her door, the fever of battle
 was strong ;
 He asked her for water to drink, for the way was weary and
 long ;

25

Another clause is omitted here, “O my soul, thou hast
 trodden down strength.” Deborah suddenly interrupts herself
 in her description of the victory, and, borne away by the memory
 of the mighty overthrow which occurred at this point, utters
 this ejaculation of thankfulness and exultation.

26

“In the absence of any record of a visible appearance of an
 angel in the later sense of the term, it is allowable to take the
 neutral word ‘messenger’ as applied to a prophet of the Lord.
 Perhaps as in Malachi (ii. 7) it was used specially of a priestly
 prophet (compare also Eccles. v. 6).” Mr Plumptre’s note. The
 curse against Meroz was so fully carried out, it would seem, that
 the town was utterly destroyed and never appears again in
 sacred history.

27

Song of
Deborah.

With kind words she welcomed him in, and the milk cool and
freshening she poured,

In her costliest vessel she brought it, as a hand-maid waits on
her lord.

Weary and faint he slumbered. She put forth her hand to
the nail,

With the workman's hammer she smote it (not then did her
woman's heart quail)—

She smote him there as he lay, through brow and through
temples it went,

Stricken and bleeding, the carcase of Sisera lay in her tent :

27 One struggle, one cry ; it was over ; the hero, the Canaanites'
pride,

At her feet lay lifeless and pale ; he bowed, he fell down, and
he died.

28 Far off in the palace of Jabin, with looks proud, eager,
amazed,

Forth from her latticed window the mother of Sisera gazed.

“ Why lingers the conqueror's chariot? Why hear I not,
borne on the wind,

The clang of the strong iron wheels, and the tramp of the
army behind?”

29 “ Oh ! dream not of failure,” they answered, her maidens,
swift to divine,

30 (Yea, like answer she made to herself), “ the glory of conquest
is thine,

Surely they conquer once more. In triumph they bring back
their prey,

30 “ *The maidens of Israel.*” The expression in the Heb. indicates the evil purposes for which they were intended. “ And this unholy anticipation is expressed by a woman and a wife, Sisera's mother. Well might a holy and righteous God have interfered to defeat such impure designs, by the hand of a woman and a wife, another Gentile, Jael.” (*Wordsworth.*)

The defeat of Sisera marks the last attempt of the ancient Canaanites to recover the country from their invaders. Forty years passed, and the next enemies we read of were invaders who themselves came from across the Jordan.

The maidens of Israel shall yield to the might of their captors
to-day ;
And for Sisera's neck, as he rides in his glory home from
the fight,
The costliest robes of their priests, with mingled hues glorious
and bright,
Broidered by fair maidens' fingers, on both sides radiant alike,
Meet for the necks of the heroes whose right hands have
known how to strike."

Song of
Deborah.

So let them boast in their folly ; so let them dream in their
pride ;
So perish thy foes, O Jehovah, dying as Sisera died ;
But the people that love Thee, Thy chosen, the heroes who
walk in Thy light,
Let them shine evermore as the sun when he rides through
the heavens in his might.

31

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

After the forty years of peace fresh enemies appeared. The wild hordes of the desert, Midianites, Amalekites, and "the children of the East," swept over the land, and encamped and fed their camels in the midst of the rich corn-fields of Israel. So terrible was the devastation they caused that the people fled to caves and mountain strongholds, the land lay uncultivated, and the cattle died. The Israelites cried to God for succour in their distress, and He sent Gideon as their deliverer, the most heroic of all the Judges. As Barak had sprung from Kedesh-Naphtali where the oppression of Sisera was heaviest, so Gideon belongs to the neighbourhood where the Amalekites were most terrible. Ophrah was in the hills of western Manasseh, overlooking the valley of Esdraelon or Jezreel. He was of noble family, the Abi-ezrites having apparently been at one time the leading family of the tribe of Manasseh (Josh. xvii. 2 ; Num. xxvi. 30), but the fortunes of the family were now at their lowest. He had, however, already won a character for heroic deeds (ver. 12), and his dignity is shown by his having slaves (ver. 27), and an armourbearer, Phurah. His brothers had already fallen victims to the swords of the Midianitish chieftians (viii. 18), and he was meditating the wrongs that his father's house and his people had received, when the vision appeared with which the present lesson opens. He was **threshing wheat in the wine-**

Judges VI.

11

Judges VI.

12 **press**, i.e. beating it with a stick in the cave through which the juice of the grape ran off, when the Vision of the Angel of the Lord appeared to him. The other judges had been raised up by God, but they had not been called by any outward manifestation. The Spirit of the Lord had come upon Othniel; Ehud had killed Eglon by stratagem and then destroyed his army; Barak had received his commission by the voice of Deborah. But it would seem that a higher manifestation was needed now, for the spirit of idolatry was widely and deeply spread. The people moreover were so miserable, so hopeless of any relief, that a miraculous appearance was needed to assure them that help and salvation were not to be found in man, but in God, that He was still as near to them as of old, if only they would acknowledge Him and keep His covenant. The angel appeared in the form of a traveller, leaning on a staff, and sat down under the terebinth-tree. His first words probably answered to Gideon's meditations, and Gideon, not recognizing the visitor, naturally answered doubtfully, yet hopefully.

13 The change here to **the Lord** is exactly what we have noticed before (see Gen. xviii. 17; and Josh. v. 13; vi. 2).

14 **In this thy might**, i.e. the strength which thou now hast as the commissioned one of Jehovah. And He further promises,
16 **Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt surely smite the Midianites as one man**, i.e. with one blow, and therefore without needing a large army to help.

17 Gideon now saw that his Visitor must be God, but to assure himself that he was not under a delusion, but that the appearance was a real one, he makes the request that the angel will wait until he shall have brought him an offering (*minchah*.
18 Our version has "present"). This offering he prepared in the form of such food as people were accustomed to set before a guest whom they were desirous to honour, and by the Lord's command he poured out the broth as a drink-offering upon the
20 meat-offering (Gen. xxxv. 14; Num. vi. 17). And then the Lord Himself became the ministering Priest, and supplied the fire for the sacrifice. Even so it is now, and shall be to the end. Christ visits His Church in her distress and touches our poor sacrifices with the sceptre of His power, and the fire of love comes forth
22 from the Rock, even Himself, and consumes them. Gideon was
23 terrified by the suddenness of the Vision, but an inward voice came to Him to reassure him, a message of peace. And in his
24 gratitude he calls the place **Jehovah-shalom**, the Lord is Peace. Christ is our Peace. He gives us peace with God, with our consciences, with each other; peace in life, peace in death.

25 The next step in God's training of Gideon is the command to throw down the altar of Baal. He was surrounded with idolatry, it was needful to shew himself clear of it. God had acknowledged him as a deliverer, he must now acknowledge God. The English Version would make the **young bullock** to

be the same as **the bullock of seven years old**, but there is little doubt that the marginal reading is correct, "**and the second bullock,**" &c., in fact that there were *two* required. The second began to live, let it be noticed, at the time when Midian's oppression began, when the death of Israel began (vi. 1). Its death was to begin Israel's redemption. He is to throw down the altar of Baal, for nothing can be done until this worship is renounced. He is to cut down also the figure of Ashtaroth¹ beside it. It was his father's, for Joash it is clear had fallen into the prevailing sin; but a higher duty than that even to a father was required of him now. This done he was to build an altar to the Lord **on the top of the rock**, (lit. "of the fortress") on the highest place in Ophrah, where the statue of Baal had been, as the tutelary deity. The second bullock is sacrificed, the young one lives on, a type of the new life which comes to Israel by the destruction of the idol and the sacrifice to the Lord.

The villagers had evidently assembled for their idolatrous worship when they saw what had been done, and speedily discovered who was the doer, and demanded his death.

Will ye plead for Baal? In the Heb. it is "*Will ye, ye plead [or fight] for Baal?*" There is a scornful emphasis on the "ye," as if he said, "Has it come to this, that you must save him whom ye worship that he may save you? Are you to be your god's protectors?"

Whilst it is yet morning, should be rendered, "to-morrow morning." The answer means, let things rest until to-morrow. If Baal be a true god he will be able to avenge himself by that time, and then he who has dared to take the god under his patronage will deserve death for his impiety, in daring to think that Baal could not avenge his own cause. But if Baal have not avenged himself by then, it will prove him to be a false god, and then his defender will deserve death for pleading the cause of an idol. "The answer of Joash is based on that grand principle which runs through so large a part of the history of the Jewish Church, that the real impiety is in those who believe that God cannot defend Himself." (*Stanley.*) The name which the young Iconoclast hereupon received (**Jerubbaal**, i.e. "Let Baal plead") penetrated into the Gentile world, as Hierobaal and Hierombal. (*Keil*)

The lit. translation of the opening words is "*And the Spirit of the Lord put on Gideon*" [as a garment]. See on Job xxix. 14, p. 82. The Abi-ezrites evidently accepted the view taken by Joash, and now regarded the bold youth who had thrown down Baal's altar and come to no hurt, as a champion to be trusted.

Asher acted more bravely than in the war against Sisera (v. 17), **Zebulun and Naphtali** repeat their former noble con-

¹ Not "the grove," as the E. V. has it. The Heb. אֲשֵׁרָה (*Asherah*) means a female figure, made of wood. See Ges. s. v.

Judges VI.

duct. Issachar is not mentioned, the country was in the hands of the enemy.

36

Before going to battle Gideon asked God for a sign, which he himself specified, and because God saw him to be sincere and desirous to obey the sign was granted. First he asked that the fleece of wool might be wet with dew while the surrounding earth remained dry. A type perhaps of the nation of Israel receiving a special gift of the dew of God's favour. See Gen. xxvii. 28, 29; Deut. xxxiii. 13.

39

Yet this sign hardly appeared to him a certain one. Wool generally attracts the dew, while other objects remain dry. He ventured to solicit the grace of God yet once more. If the fleece should remain dry while all the surrounding earth was wet, it would be a convincing sign that God could at pleasure distinguish between Gideon and the Midianites and rain down judgments or mercies at His will. This sign also was granted, and it was enough. He hesitated no longer, but rose up early, and before midnight the land was free.

Bp. Wordsworth, following Origen, sees an allegory in the second sign. The faith of the Hebrew nation dried up at last, while the dew of the Gospel went forth upon all nations. (So Matt. Henry.)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

**Introductory Note
to the
Books of
Samuel.**

These two Books originally formed one. The division was made by the Greek translators for the convenience of closing the one book with the death of Saul, and beginning the second with the accession of David. Though Samuel occupies less space in the Books than either Saul or David, yet they are rightly named after him. He is the central person in the history of the nation at this period. He was the last of the judges, and it was he who designated and anointed both Saul and David to the kingly office.

Samuel was the first of the Order of the Prophets. Though the gift of Prophecy existed among men from the beginning there was no School of the Prophets, no training for the prophetic work. The order was plainly raised up by God to stand side by side with the kingdom.

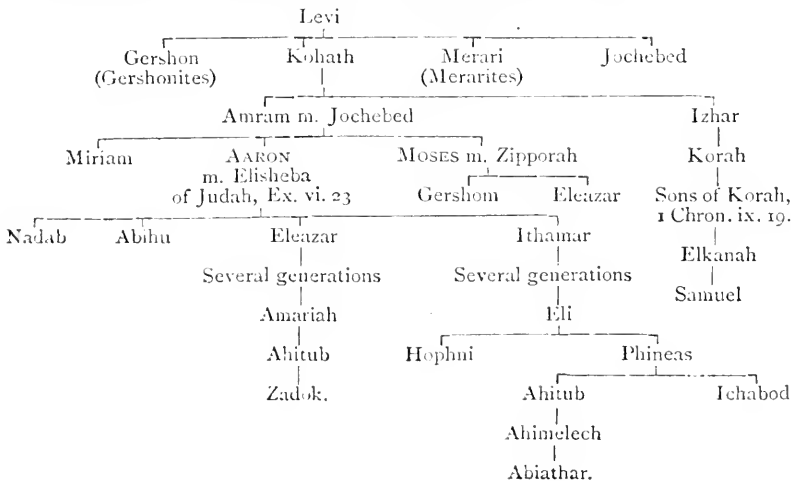
There had been indications during the time of the later Judges of a tendency towards monarchy. Abimelech, Gideon's illegitimate son, had tried to make himself king on the strength of the services which his father had rendered to the nation. But both the conscience of the better Israelites and the tribe

jealousies were against the attempt, and it failed. The only obedience which the people would render was to the champions who rose in emergencies and delivered them from their enemies. The power and influence of these champions died with them; there was no permanence in the office of the judge. The only influence which gave to the people any feeling of unity was the priesthood. That reminded them that though they were divided into tribes, and given to factions, they had been called by the Unseen Lord to be His covenant people.

But at the time when Samuel's life began this priesthood was proving faithless to its duty. The high priest, Eli, was himself a religious man, but his faith was all his own. He had not trained his sons to love or fear God. His religion would die with him. The lamp of God was waxing dim before the ark, for the sins of the priests were so abominable that the people abhorred the offering of the Lord. Consequently the ministry of Samuel must open with shewing that hereditary priesthood derived its worth from the living God, and that without Him it meant nothing and was nothing.

The priesthood of Aaron had passed on to the children of his eldest surviving son, Eleazar, and had continued with them for some generations; then it passed, when or why we know not, to the house of Ithamar¹, the house to which Eli belonged.

¹ It will enable the reader to comprehend at a glance the matters which concern the High-priesthood in these chapters, if we give a Genealogical Table.



Introductory Note
to the
Books of
Samuel.

Bp. Hervey (*Bible Dictionary*, art. "Zadok") gives good reasons for supposing that there was a double priesthood, one in the house of Eleazar the other in that of Ithamar, but that in Samuel's time Eli had attained the higher dignity. We shall see in the chapters before us how the house of Eli was doomed.

The nation fell before the Philistines, and the ark, the symbol of the people's unity, was captured by the heathen. Samuel became the restorer. He reorganized the people, and brought them into greater unity than any of his predecessors had done. He was not a warrior, but a civil ruler. Though he was not a priest, but a Levite, he was called upon during the abeyance of the Priesthood to exercise priestly functions. But these were quite subordinated to his judicial duties, so much more important were the latter in his day. But when the ark was brought back, the Israelites had learned from him really to reverence it and to know what it signified.

The progress of the events will come before us so fully in the chapters which have been selected for our Sunday lessons, that we need not dwell upon them here. It will be seen from this time in what close relation the office of the Prophet stood to that of the King. The Prophet had to reprove, exhort, encourage the King. He was the check both upon disobedience to God and upon tyranny towards the people. From the day when Samuel established the *School of the Prophets*, the prophetic Order assumed the highest importance, and the Prophets became the most prominent religious instructors of the people. Whilst the priesthood remained the witness of God's Order and His unchanging Covenant, the Prophets, freed from hereditary trammels, derived their authority immediately from God, and spoke by direct inspiration of His Spirit. "Thus saith the Lord," was their standing formula.

Before concluding this note I may remark that the expression which afterwards meets us so frequently in the Old Testament, but only once in the New, "The Lord of Hosts" (*Jehovah Sabaoth*) occurs for the first time in 1 Sam. i. 3. It is found eleven times in this Book, more seldom in those which follow until we come to the Psalms, where it occurs fourteen times. It is used by Isaiah sixty-one times, seventy-eight by Jeremiah, not at all in Daniel, fifteen by the first nine minor Prophets,

fourteen by Haggai, forty-eight by Zechariah, twenty-five in the four chapters of Malachi. S. James is the only New Testament writer who has it, and, through the ancient liturgy which is ascribed to him, it has passed into the devotional language of the Christian Church.

Professor Plumptre in his *Biblical Studies* has a very able and exhaustive essay on the subject, from which I have borrowed these facts, and which the reader will be well repaid by reading. The expression would seem to be used at the beginning of the history of the Monarchy as a proclamation once for all that the true King of Israel and its armies was no other than the Lord whom all things in heaven and earth obey. The very hosts of the sky are the work of His hand, therefore He is able to marshal the armies of earth, and to rule the people of His covenant.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The preceding chapter has given the history of the birth of Samuel, the present opens with the song of praise of his mother Hannah. It is a song of prophetic and Messianic character. Keil writes very beautifully: "This hymn is the mature fruit of the Spirit of God. The pious woman, who had gone with all the earnest longings of a mother's heart to the Lord God of Israel for a son, that she might consecrate him to the lifelong service of the Lord, discerned in her own individual experience the general laws of the divine economy, and its signification in relation to the whole history of the kingdom of God. The experience which she, bowed down and oppressed as she was, had had of the gracious government of the omniscient and holy covenant God, was a pledge to her of the gracious way in which the nation itself was led by God, and a sign by which she discerned how God not only delivered at all times the poor and wretched who trusted in Him out of their poverty and distress, and set them up, but would also lift up and glorify His whole nation, which was at that time so deeply bowed down and oppressed by its foes. Acquainted as she was with the destination of Israel to be a *kingdom*, from the promises which God had given to the patriarchs, and filled as she was with the longing that had been awakened in the nation for the realization of these promises, she could see in spirit, and through the inspiration of God, the *king* whom the Lord was about to give to His people, and through whom He would raise it up to might and dominion."

1 Sam. II.

The close resemblance between this song and the Magnificat is too obvious to need dwelling upon. It is yet more plainly noticeable when we read this in the LXX. version.

1 She begins with a burst of praise for the blessing that had reached her, but she proceeds immediately to generalize from this, and to sing the goodness of God to *all* who look up to Him and call upon Him.

My horn is exalted, i.e. my power is great in the Lord. The horn is the symbol of strength, taken from oxen whose strength lies in their horns. Cf. Deut. xxxiii. 17.

2 The holiness of God is made manifest to men by His guidance of the righteous to salvation. The answer to her prayer is a proof to her of the holiness of God, and also of His supremacy. It is because He is absolutely holy that there can be none beside Him, no Rock on which men can stand firm and immovable.

3 Another general remark, arising from the taunts to which Hannah had been subjected (i. 6), out of which she draws a lesson of the moderation and meekness which should characterize the prosperous and happy, instead of boastfulness and pride. And she gives the reason,—**The Lord is a God of knowledge**. He knows what He is doing, and what is His own purpose in casting down one and setting up another. Men are not under a blind fate, but under the will of the God of knowledge, **by whom actions are weighed**, or, rather, *whose* actions are all evenly and justly balanced, though for the present we oftentimes cannot see it.

4 The next verses contain her *proofs* that the Lord's actions are even and just, the marvellous changes in the lives of men testify to the truth; He raises the lowly and humbles the proud.

5 **So that**, rather, "Yea." The expression **seven** here as elsewhere expresses the fulness and completeness of the Divine blessing. Cf. Ruth iv. 15. **Hath waxed feeble**, because she has lost her children, and with them the support of her old age (Jer. xv. 9). This is the work of the **Lord**, who **killeth**, &c. (Deut. xxxii. 39). **Maketh alive**, i.e. rescues from the jaws of death (Ps. xxx. 3, 4). The 8th verse is repeated in Ps. cxiii. 7, 8. Dust and the dunghill are figures to express the deepest degradation, the antithesis being **the throne of glory**.

God does all these things because He is the Creator and Upholder of the world. He will sustain it, as pillars sustain a house, and therefore the righteous have nothing to fear.

9 Cf. Ps. lvi. 13; cxvi. 8; cxxi. 3.

10 The contrast which runs all through the hymn between the power of God and the weakness of His adversaries is brought to a climax here. The verse begins in the Hebrew with the name **Jehovah** placed absolutely: "Jehovah, His adversaries shall be broken to pieces." And in the next clause, **upon them** is

literally "*above him*," above every and each adversary, God speaks as thunder, in token of His approaching judgment. It was literally fulfilled in the history. See ch. vii. 10.

And as certainly as He keeps the righteous and casts down the wicked, so certainly will He judge the whole world, and preserve the kingdom which He shall set up in Israel, for it is to be noted that Hannah foresees the establishment of this kingdom and foretells a blessing upon it. It is true that the motives of the people were low and bad, yet God would overrule them and turn them to His own praise. The king which He would set over them should rule in His might, because He, even He was the King. Each king should be His deputy, the visible sign of His power, until the day when the Son of David should come in the flesh, and all power should be given unto Him in heaven and in earth. This song of Hannah then is the Song of the Monarchy, explaining, before that Monarchy was visibly brought forth, what were its purposes and aims. No diviner beginning of the history of the Monarchy and of the Prophets could be imagined. It must be noted here that the LXX. ends the hymn with the words *χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ*, and the Vulg. with "*Christi sui*." Hannah is the first person to use the expression "*His anointed*."

The history now begins the ministry of Samuel, and describes the evil condition of the nation under the high priesthood of Eli. Had the hopes of the nation depended upon man it would have been in bad case indeed. The contrast is vividly marked; for, following the glorious hope expressed in Hannah's hymn, comes the sad sentence, **Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.** It reminds us of the contrast between Mary of Bethany and Judas in Matt. xxvi. 6.

Milton makes Belial one of the false gods, coming like Baal and Moloch out of Pandæmonium. But there is no ground whatever for this supposition. The word is not a proper name. Its etymology is not certainly known, but probably it is derived from two roots signifying "without use," as we say "good for nothing;" and therefore "son of Belial" is equivalent to worthless or lawless fellow. Probably *μωρέ* in Matt. v. 22 is intended as the equivalent for it. By **knew not the Lord** we must understand did not fear and love Him to whom daily they ministered. They were blinded by their sins.

The sins which are here described were both against man and against God. The first was a robbery of man. When peace-offerings were brought for sacrifice, there were certain portions, the shoulder and the breast, assigned to the priests by the law (Lev. vii. 31—35; Deut. xviii. 3). But the sons of Eli were not contented. With their three-pronged hook they drew forth what belonged to the sacrificer himself, the portion with which he was preparing to feast before the Lord.

But they did yet worse. They dared to rob God of His

1 Sam. II.

11, 12

13, 14

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1 Sam. II.

portion. All the fat was commanded to be placed on the altar-fire (Lev. iii. 3—5, 16; vii. 23, 25, 31). Here the priest's servant came and demanded flesh of the sacrificer before this commandment was obeyed.

16

Presently means directly (lit. "at this time").

17

Their sin was great in itself, including both robbery and sacrilege. But it was tenfold greater in the frightful scandal which it caused to the laity. See Jer. xxiii. 1, 2; Ezek. xxxiv. 2—4; Zech. xi. 17; and the *Exhortation in the Ordering of Priests*.

18

Beside these worthless priests Samuel ministered before the Lord, his white robe symbolizing the purity of his life as compared with theirs. The ephod was a robe worn both by priests (but of less simple materials) and by laymen engaged in the worship of God (2 Sam. vi. 14). The **little coat**, which his mother made him, signifies in the Heb.¹ a garment also worn both by priests and by princes, only there were symbolical ornaments on the hem in the case of priests, which doubtless were absent here. This priestly clothing symbolized the relation in which he stood to the high priest and to God.

21

The historian implies that Eli's blessing was fulfilled in this fruitfulness. They had devoted their firstborn to the Lord, but He, according to the word spoken by His priest, gave them more children.

22

These women who "assembled by troops" (thus in Heb.) at the door were probably devoted to the service of the sanctuary (Ex. xxxviii. 8), and this made the sin of the priests the more horrible. It would seem that they gloated in the opportunity which their position gave them of using holy things and offices as means of sin. Eli reprov'd his sons solemnly, but he did nothing, apparently, to prevent their wickedness. "He did not care that God's order should be established, that wrong-doers should be punished. So long as he could keep his internal quietness, all was well. He wished his sons to be better, no doubt; he told them so. To preserve the commonwealth from pollution, to make the Tabernacle a fit place, not for his devotions, but for God to dwell in,—this did not come within the range of his religion. He honoured God as an individual man, not as a father, as a member of a nation, as a high priest." (*Maurice.*)

23

The judge shall judge him. This should read "God shall judge him." The verse otherwise is rightly translated, but there is a force in the original which no translation can give. The words translated **judge** and **intreat** are different constructions of the same Hebrew verb². This verb means originally to level as with a roller, thence to *judge*, i. e., as with us, either to pass sentence (as in Gen. xlviii. 11), or to arbitrate (Ps. cvi. 30). Then

¹ מְעִיל.

² See Gesenius s. v. פָּלַל.

comes the form used in the second clause, meaning first to act as umpire, or mediator, then to intercede for. The sense here, therefore, is "If a man sins against his fellow, God settles the dispute as arbitrator between them; but if he sins wilfully against the majesty of God, no one can interpose as arbitrator." Eli could have appealed to God to make the wrong right had his sons' sins been against himself, but, he says, "Your sin is not against me, but against God. It is beyond the reach of my intercession."

The Heb. word translated **because** at the end of the verse often means "therefore." Probably this would be the better translation here. But not necessarily so. The sense may well be, "They refused to hearken to their father's voice, for they were hardened;" all God's ordinances and the signs of his presence made them worse, and dragged them down to their destruction. (Cf. notes on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.)

And the Lesson ends with another word concerning the progress and divine training of Samuel. When all was so dark in the nation his life was the one spark of light to it, and in him the Lord kept the lamp of God alive.

Evensong.

FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Samuel, according to Josephus, was at this time 12 years old, the age of our Lord when He went to the Temple with His parents (Luke ii. 46 ff.).

The word of the Lord was precious, i. e. rare. The sins of the priests and people had so hidden God from their eyes that **there was no open** (clear) **vision**. And now the word of the Lord was for the first time issued to Samuel.

The lamp of God was the seven-branched candlestick, fed with oil every evening (Ex. xxvii. 20; Lev. xxiv. 2; 2 Chron. xiii. 11). **Ere it went out** is equivalent to "before the dawn of day."

The call appears to have come from the ark. Eli, no doubt, thought that the child had been dreaming, and Samuel, as the historian explains, had no thought but that it was Eli's voice which he heard, for he did not yet know the Lord as a Revealer of Himself.

When therefore he had lain down once more, **the Lord came and stood**, with some glorious vision, shewing that the revelation was real and no mere imagination. Then He revealed to him the judgment which was about to fall on Eli and his family.

Tingle, sc. with horror. Cf. 2 Kings xxi. 12; Jer. xix. 3; Hab i. 5.

When I begin, &c. The work once begun shall not be hindered until it be fully and completely accomplished.

A more accurate translation of this verse is—"I have told

1 Sam. II.

1 Sam. III.

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1 Sam. III. *him that I will judge his house for ever for this iniquity, that he knew that his sons were making themselves accursed, and restrained them not.*" The words **I have sworn** which follow make the sentence irrevocable, the day of mercy, as far as this world is concerned, is past.

15 It appears to have been Samuel's duty to open the doors. By these we are to understand the entrance to the covered tabernacle from the outer court. The covered building was only entered by the priests, the congregation remained without, looking in through these doors. They were doubtless made of wood, now that the Tabernacle was fixed—in the first Tabernacle they had been curtains.

18 Samuel's communication only confirmed to Eli what he had heard from the prophet (ch. ii. 27). His manner of receiving it shewed that he personally feared God, and his acceptance of the punishment must be regarded as a sign of true and effective repentance. Samuel, too, by his candour and faithfulness towards one whom he loved and venerated, shewed that he had the courage and power requisite for one who was to be the Lord's prophet to the sinful nation.

20 This verse marks the beginning of God's restoration of His people. The routine of daily services and sacrifices had become hateful both to Him and to the people. In ordinary circumstances they treated them with contempt, in times of distress they became a superstition. There was no hope in ordinances, so long as the heart of the nation remained false.

The restoration began with the training of a child, one already dedicated to the public ministry, but uncontaminated with the sins of the ministers. He was taught that he was under the dominion of an unseen Guide, and was to be the spokesman of Him who would not forsake His people when they had forsaken Him. And now the people learnt that he was to be the restorer of living religion among them. When the ark was taken, the Tabernacle burnt, the priests slain with the sword, the nation turned to Samuel in its distress, and found that he was God's voice to them. And **the Lord appeared again** (rather *continued to appear*) **in Shiloh**, revealing His will to Samuel. And, as the first verse of the next chapter tells us, the prophet's authority was universally recognized, **the word of Samuel came to all Israel.**

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

1 Sam. IV.

All was now ready for the retribution upon the priesthood of Eli. The needful provision had been made for the preservation of the covenant between God and His people, by the recognition of Samuel. We come now to the history of the overthrow of the apostates.

The Philistines, by whose hands on the present occasion

the ruin was effected, are here mentioned for the first time in the Sunday Lessons. They had probably migrated from over sea, some suppose from Crete, others from Egypt, and were settled in the south, in the district called the *shephelah*, at the time of the Exodus, and by that time had become formidable enough to alarm the newly-emancipated Israelites (Ex. xiii. 17). In the time of Joshua, they had apparently moved further northward and the whole of the maritime plain of Canaan was in their hands. They were rich in agricultural wealth and had an active commerce, possessing an efficient navy. They were also skilful in the arts (1 Sam. vi. 11; xiii. 20; xvii. 5, 6).

At the division of Canaan in the time of Joshua, their country was allotted to the tribe of Judah (Josh. xv. 2, 12, 45—47), but no conquest of it was effected (Josh. xiii. 2), and in the time of the Judges the Philistines began an aggressive warfare upon Israel. Apparently this warfare consisted of a succession of raids, sometimes just over the border, sometimes far into the country. At the time that Samson was raised up they had become so formidable that the men of Judah were fain to deliver him to the Philistines to avert their wrath. The irregularity and waywardness of his life appear to have prevented the effectiveness which his great strength and energy would otherwise have had, and now in the time of Eli they began a succession of attacks which gave them a complete ascendancy. The history which we shall now have before us will give us the history of their victories and decline. What has been here said was needful to bring their history up to the period we have arrived at.

The sequence of the first two clauses of the chapter seems to imply that it was at Samuel's instigation that the Israelites made the attack. Eben-ezer, so called here by anticipation (see vii. 12), was situated within the tribe of Benjamin. The Philistines, it is therefore evident, had effected a lodgement in the very heart of the country, and it was absolutely essential to the peace of the land to dispossess them, though this first attempt resulted in disaster. The act of the people on meeting with defeat, showed how deeply seated was their delusion. Their reverence for the Ark as God's dwelling-place had become superstition, for they revered it as something holy in itself. They took no counsel apparently with Samuel, nor consulted God's will, and while recognizing the truth that the Lord had smitten them, they did not seek Him by repentance and confession of apostasy, but resolved to fetch the Ark in the belief that it was invincible, that the Lord Himself could do nothing against His own Ark. Had not Jordan divided before it, and the walls of Jericho fallen?

The next words are significant—**the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there**, the impersonation of the unholiness, profanity, superstition of the nation. What are outward forms, when the living Church, priests and people, are unholy?

The enthusiastic shout of the people is intelligible when we

1 Sam. IV.

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1 Sam. IV.

remember that this was probably the first time that the Ark had appeared in the camp since the settlement of the people in Canaan. They no doubt anticipated a renewal of the marvelous victories of Moses and Joshua. The Philistines naturally do not speak of "the LORD," but of the gods. The word is plural all through. All the heathens feared the gods of other nations in a certain degree—these thought that the gods of Israel were especially, if not irresistibly strong, for the report of the wonders of Egypt had reached their ears (see Ex. xv. 14, 15).

The expression **smote the Egyptians in the wilderness** is not an error which they made, but their description of Goshen, which lay on the borders of their own desert.

The result was a practical proof to the degenerate nation that when holiness departed from them, the presence of God departed from the visible signs and the worship. "They who had lived to bring God's altar into contempt, now live to carry His Ark into captivity; and at last, as those who had made up the measure of their wickedness, are slain in their sin." (*Bp. Hall.*)

Even so it will be with us; if we have Christ in no other way than merely *without* us, if we only preach about Him, read, talk, dispute about Him, but will not let Him work and shew His power in us, He will no more help us than the Ark helped the Israelites.

His clothes rent, &c. In sign of the deepest mourning. (Josh. vii. 6.)

Cried out, with terror.

"The good old man, after ninety and eight years, sits in the gate, as one that never thought himself too aged to do God's service, and hears the news of Israel's discomfiture and his sons' death, though with sorrow yet with patience; but when the messenger tells him that the Ark of God is taken he can live no longer; that word strikes him down backwards, and kills him in the fall. No sword of a Philistine could have slain him more painfully; neither know I whether his neck or his heart were first broken." (*Bp. Hall.*)

Shiloh from that time became a desolation, a byword expressive of God's wrath against sin (cf. Jer. vii. 4—12). Thus, as far as could be seen, the visible Church of God lay in ruins. The Philistines however were not suffered to exult in their defeat, and their fancied victory over the God of the Hebrews cost them dear.

The priesthood continued with the house of Eli until the days of Solomon. "He thrust out Abiathar from being priest," and put Zadok in his place. See the Table at bottom of p. 255.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The account of the foundation of the Monarchy in the anointing of Saul does not come within the Sunday Lessons. They pass from the fall of the Sanctuary and the victory of the Philistines to the address of Samuel after the establishment of Saul upon the throne. Twenty years passed away after the fall of the Tabernacle, Samuel labouring unceasingly to bring the people to God. And with good success, for the "whole people of Israel mourned after the Lord." The prophet accordingly convened them at Mizpeh, the place of their former defeat, and the Philistines, apparently thinking this a good omen for them, fell upon them by surprise. A violent storm, however, overtook them, and they were defeated with great slaughter, and their power was crippled for many years. In the next chapter we have the request of the people for a king.

This was a result of Samuel's good and wise government. Putting on one side for a moment the consideration of the wrong motives which were working in the people, it is plain that such a request would not have been possible a few years before, when they did every man what was right in his own eyes. Samuel had taught them to love order, to feel their unity. He had revived the institutions of Moses, as the words "The elders of Israel" shew (1 Sam. viii. 4). His sons also seemed to be succeeding him as a matter of course, plainly showing the tendency to hereditary succession which was growing up. But they did not walk in the ways of their father. They "took bribes and perverted judgment." And in consequence the elders of Israel cried out for change. They wanted some government which should not be irregular and fluctuating; they felt themselves at a disadvantage when they fought with their enemies; the good government of Samuel had led them to pine for the assurance of order and regularity.

Then in what lay their fault? First, in this, they did not see that the order which they had learned to respect and rejoice in was not a human creation, but was sent from their unseen King. Not only were they right to seek the continuance of peace and unity, but they were seeking that form of government which God was evidently in His providence preparing for them. We can see by preceding words and acts of His that He intended to set up a monarchy among them as the visible witness of Himself. But they were seeking to base this monarchy on a human foundation, and leaving Him out of their reckoning. They were evidently ungrateful also to Samuel. He had ruled them so wisely and well, because he had always been possessed with the conviction that the Lord was King of the land. It was in His name and in His might that he had acted, and he had

1 Sam. XII.

(Ch. vii.)

(Ch. viii.)

1 Sam. XII.

robbed none nor touched bribes. He believed that his own government was better than that of a king was likely to be. But he did the best thing he could do, for he cried to the Lord. Then the answer came, "Hearken to their prayer. It is not thee that they have rejected, but Me." If it had been a question personal to Samuel, that would have been a reason for his contesting the point. But the sin was against God, who accordingly would deal with it. He would hearken to their voice, and in doing so would bring good out of evil; would shew them that they could not live or act, save under their unseen King. Their wish would prove to be for their good, but only through God's discipline, who could punish this waywardness, and yet guide the monarchy into the path which he had marked out for it. And thus the kingdom was set up, and the chapter before us gives Samuel's address to the people after the settlement of it. He begins by reminding them that he has acquiesced in their wish, and shews, as he goes along, how thoroughly he has accepted it and identified himself with it. But first he is bound, in justice both to himself and to the Lord whose servant he has been, to challenge any accusations which may be brought against his character. And the people unanimously express their consciousness of his rectitude.

He then rapidly reviews their past history. In his enumeration of the Judges a name meets us not found elsewhere, **Bedan**. He may be the same as *Abdon* (Judges xii. 13), or *Fair* (Judges x. 3, compared with Num. xxxii. 41 and 1 Chron. vii. 17), or *Barak*, which is the reading of the LXX. Or he may be another Judge whose history is not recorded in the Book of Judges, for it seems evident that that book is not a complete history of the period to which it belongs, any more than the *Acts* is a complete history of the Apostles.

The preceding chapter places the deliverance from Nahash *after* the election of Saul (xi. 1). Evidently therefore he had threatened them before, though the fact is not mentioned. It is only said in general terms that they demanded a king to fight their enemies. We must suppose that they had Nahash specially in their minds, who was reviving the claims which Jephthah had for his time put an end to. Samuel calls upon the Lord to attest his faithfulness towards the nation, and to justify him for reproving their godlessness in demanding a king. Even so Moses had done in the rebellion of Korah (Num. xvi.), only in the present case the thunderstorm only *spoke*, no destruction wrought by it is recorded. It was a sign (see Joseph. *Wars*, iv. 4, § 5) of God's anger, but its passing off was a sign of His forgiveness upon their confession. This is exactly expressive of Samuel's position all through the course of events, he grieved over the people's wilfulness and warned them of the consequences. But having laid the case before the Lord, and received His commands, he bowed at once, and all through this address speaks

words of encouragement, and parts from the people with blessing, with the assurance that as long as he lives he will give them his best counsel and his unceasing prayers.

“Moses and Samuel are specified by God as having extraordinary power with Him (Jer. xv. 1). And why? Because they prayed for their enemies” (*S. Gregory apud Wordsworth*).

Evensong.

FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

There is some difficulty in interpreting the opening words, **Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years,** &c. Some suppose it to mean that the preceding narrative, the address of Samuel to the people, took place after Saul had been king a year, and the event with which the present chapter begins, the choice of 3000 men as a body-guard, took place a year after. Others believe that a letter has accidentally been omitted from the MS., which would make the sentence run “Saul was —one years old when he began to reign” (thus the Vulg.). And it is also thought that the “two years” is some clerical error, and that the whole narrative here is the account of the very beginning of Saul’s reign (thus Keil, &c.). This body-guard was evidently chosen on account of the Philistines, who were now very strong throughout the land of Israel. “It had become a Philistine country, almost as much as Spain had in the 9th century become a Mussulman country. As there the Arabic names and Arabic architecture reveal the existence of the intruding race, up to the very frontier of Biscay and the Asturias, so in the very heart of Palestine we stumble on the traces of the Philistine. At Gibeah or Ramah, close by one of the prophetic schools is a garrison or exacting officer of the Philistines. At Michmash is another, at Geba is another.” (Stanley, *J. C.* ii. 13.) The dismissal of the rest of the people would seem to imply that Saul determined to make a stand at Gibeah, the Philistine outpost, with a view of stopping their further progress, but not undertaking a general war against them. We have now the first mention of the noble Jonathan. In a fit of youthful daring he killed the Philistine officer¹ who was stationed near his own post, and Saul had caused the feat to be proclaimed with the blast of the trumpet, which, added to a report of a similar exploit of Saul, was a signal for a general rising. The Philistines on their part, as in the rising under Gideon (Judges vi. 33), came up in vast numbers to crush them. The number of chariots seems disproportionate to the number of men, and some ancient versions read 3000, instead of 30000. But some have supposed that the Philistines gathered other nations from all quarters to come and help them (cf. 1 Chron. xix. 6, 7). The people fled in

1 Sam. XII.

1 Samuel
XIII.

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¹ In our Version “garrison.” The reading above given is that of the LXX. See Gesen. s. v. גִּבְיָהוּ.

1 Samuel
XIII.

7 dismay; some hid themselves in the caves and pits in which the limestone rocks abound, many fled over Jordan into the land of Gilead¹. Even Saul's body-guard were shaken with terror, all but six hundred deserted him (ver. 15), and all those who remained true followed him trembling.

8 And now we come to Saul's first recorded downward step. There are previous indications indeed that all was not right, that he was swayed alternately by heathenish feelings, and by the fear of God. He named his firstborn son *Jonathan*, "gift of Jehovah," his second *Melchi-shua*, "help of Moloch," and another *Ish-baal*, "man of Baal." He was wayward, and entirely governed by impulses, never apparently acting on deep-seated religious principle (see Stanley, *J. C.* ii. 21, and a very interesting essay by Bp. Kip, entitled "Mingling Dispensations," in his work entitled *Unnoticed Things of Holy Scripture*). On the present occasion Samuel had commanded him to wait at Gilgal for seven days (ch. x. 8). He waited until the seventh, but as there were no signs of Samuel's coming, his impatience broke loose, and he would not wait until the day was ended. In this disobedience, and not, as is sometimes supposed, in his usurping the priestly office, his fault lay. "He had shewn that he could not understand the distinction between moral and ceremonial duty, on which the greatness of his people depended. He thought sacrifice greater than obedience." (Stanley, with whom agree Wordsworth, Maurice, Keil.)

13 The rebuke and threatenings of Samuel were severe, but the case apparently was not regarded as hopeless by him. Saul was not rejected from being king, but he was told that his kingdom should not continue to his children. The prophet foresaw that when a man looked upon earthly circumstances instead of upon the definite commandments of God, there was no hope of stability in him. The waiting for seven days was intended for the very trial of his faith, and he had not stood the test. Moreover he should have waited for Samuel's instruction, but instead he had gone on his own way. A contrast to Gideon in very similar circumstances (*Judges* vii. 1—7). Samuel therefore saw Saul's position to be a very alarming one, his warning was probably intended to turn him to the right way, "if so be there might be hope." The prophecy of **the man after God's heart**, i.e. whose mainspring of action should be obedience before sacrifice, was indefinite; certainly David was not now in Samuel's eye. He would merely say, "On principles such as thine the monarchy can never rest, and He who has declared that the kingdom shall be established will seek out one who shall be obedient to the law which He has laid down for it."

16 Saul's untimely sacrifice had failed of the purpose for which

¹ Dean Stanley points out, as a proof how the whole Israelite nation was pushed eastwards, that the sanctuaries in the centre of the country, Bethel, Mizpeh, Shiloh, were all deserted, and Saul had to be inaugurated at Gilgal. (*Vol.* ii. 13.)

he intended it. He was obliged to remain inactive. The LXX. in this verse reads, "And Saul and Jonathan his son, and the people that were found with them, halted in Gibeah of Benjamin, and *wept aloud.*" They had good reason, for the Philistines came forth in three companies to waste and destroy. **Ophrah** was five miles east of Bethel; **Shual**, probably the same as Shalim (ix. 4); **Zeboim** (Neh. xi. 34) was north-east of Jerusalem, **the wilderness** being the desert of Judah. No doubt the Philistines desired, by thus radiating from their centre at Michmash, to entice Saul and Jonathan from their position at Gibeah.

Another proof of the fruitlessness of Saul's enterprise. The Philistines, wherever they came, carried off all the smitten that they met with, and reduced the people to dependence upon themselves even for agricultural tools. Saul and Jonathan alone had arms.

Yet they had a file is an entirely wrong translation. It should be, "*Thus there came bluntness of edge to the mattocks... axes*." These words are parenthetical, then follow "and to sharpen the goads," which are joined to the preceding verse.

The Philistines went out to the valley of Michmash, i.e. put an advanced post into it, to prevent a sudden surprise. This verse is introductory to the next chapter, the exploit of Jonathan and his armourbearer. That exploit relieved the country. The Philistines were severely crippled, and had it not been, apparently, for Saul's wilfulness and folly, would have been quite vanquished. As it was, the nation was left in peace for a while.

1 Samuel
XIII.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THE BOOK OF RUTH.

Our Lessons next Sunday will give the downfall of Saul and the rise of David. Before arriving there and so leaving the time of the Judges behind, we have one chapter from the Book of Ruth, a picture of quiet home life in Israel during the time of the Judges, the more beautiful in the contrast which it presents to the fightings, discords, apostasies which occupy the chief part of the history. The last words of the Book of Judges are mournful in themselves, the beautiful and pious scenes of the Book of Ruth are like sunshine after the clouds and misery. Bp. Wordsworth's exhaustive Introduction to this Book is full of beautiful thoughts. We venture to extract one short passage. It is an answer to the question "Why was the Book written?"

¹ See Wordsworth, and Gesen. s. v. פִּיזְרָה. Vulg. "Retusæ itaque erant acies vomerum."

**Introductory Note
to the
Book of
Ruth.**

“Doubtless it was designed to teach salutary lessons of godliness and virtue by her bright example in times of severe trial, and by the happy consequences of her faith and obedience.

“In days of public degeneracy and national apostasy, such as those of the Judges, the beautiful picture, which is here presented to us, of the private piety of Boaz and his reapers in the harvest-field, and of his kind and merciful treatment of the stranger from Moab, and of his watchful oversight of his labourers, and of his fatherly relation to them, and of his conscientious sense of duty, and of his strict observance of the Divine law with regard to property and marriage, suggests the consolatory reflection, that in times of great national wickedness, when there is, as it were, a foaming forth of iniquity and shame on the turbid surface of society, there is still a silent, quiet, calm, clear under-current of piety in households, in the harvest-fields of rural Bethlehems, where holy words are spoken, and holy thoughts abide.

“And much more, this other comfort is supplied in evil days by this history. It shews that when men and nations are falling away from God and His Church, yet missionary work is not at a standstill, but is steadily and peacefully going on; and while the faith of Israel fails, a Ruth comes forth from Moab to Bethlehem, and is joined to the Church of God.

“The history of Ruth in the dark days of the Judges is like that bright gleam of sunshine which is shed on the black cloud of our Lord’s prophetic description of the world, before His Second Advent: “Iniquity will abound,” “Charity will wax cold,” and the faith will be hard to find. Yet we also know, from the same Divine lips, that, notwithstanding all these hindrances, “this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations—and then shall the end come.”

And the Bishop goes on to point out another use. The Book supplies some connecting links in the chain of evidence which proves that our Lord sprang from Judah (ch. iv. 18—22). And he concludes this part of his subject with the following beautiful passage:

“Was it altogether without Divine providence that the events of this Book occurred not only at a *place*, Bethlehem, which is

consecrated for ever in the Gospels as the birthplace of "Emmanuel, God with us," "God manifest in the flesh," the Divine Bridegroom of the Church; but that they occurred at a *time* which has been solemnized by the great events for which He came into the world? Ruth came to Bethlehem at the Passover, the season of Christ's Death and Resurrection. She gleaned in the fields of Boaz for seven weeks till Pentecost; and the Marriage of Ruth, the figure of the Gentile Church, with Boaz, seems to have been celebrated at that time when the Divine Bridegroom gave the Dowry of the Holy Ghost to the Church, whom He had redeemed, and whom He enabled by that gift to preach the Gospel to all the world, and to raise up children to Himself in all lands and ages of the world. The marriage of Ruth with Boaz was celebrated at Pentecost—at that season when the great Lord of the Harvest sent forth His Apostolic Reapers into the fields white unto harvest, to gather His Wheat into His garner—the garner of Heaven."

Introductory Note to the Book of Ruth.

Evensong.

SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

We cannot say for certain whether, as some suppose, the famine here mentioned is that in the time of Gideon (Judg. vi. 3, 4). Many Jewish Rabbis assert that Boaz was the same as Izban (Judg. xii. 8), while Josephus says that this famine was in the days of Eli.

Bethlehem, which now comes before us for the first time in our readings, was originally "Ephratah" (Gen. xxxv. 16; xlviii. 7). The name "Bethlehem" was given after the Occupation, but the place was still often called by the ancient name, especially in poetry (Ps. cxxxii. 6; Mic. v. 2). It is remarkable that though it was the birthplace of David it never rose to greatness in Old Testament history, though it is occasionally mentioned (2 Chron. xi. 6; Ezra ii. 21; Neh. vii. 26; Jer. xli. 17; Mic. v. 2). Perhaps its isolated position will account for this. Even after our Lord's birth it does not appear in the New Testament.

A note on the meaning of the names in the Book will not be without interest. **Elimelech**, "God is King;" **Naomi**, "pleasant," or "gracious;" **Mahlon**, "sickly," **Chilion**, "pining," (these two last names evidently pointing to the sorrow of the time of their birth); **Ruth**, "beauty," **Boaz**, "alacrity."

Marriage with Canaanitish women was forbidden, but not with Moabitish (Deut. vii. 3).

¹ Uncertain—the name being probably Moabitish.

Ruth I.

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Ruth I.

8 No words are needed to call attention to the exquisite pathos and sweetness of this narrative; the desolation and bereavement of the aged Naomi, the quiet but unshrinking fidelity of Ruth to the dead, testified not only by her mother-in-law's words, but by her clinging to that mother-in-law for her dead husband's sake,—then again Naomi's self-devotion in desiring to send Ruth away, though she was the only one left to love and care for her—these things are presented to us in the narrative, a perfect picture of beauty. Let us merely call attention to the cogency of her argument in vv. 11—13; she supposes three cases of increasing improbability, all standing in the way of the re-settlement of her daughters-in-law. Had she any more sons, then indeed the Levitical law would cause them to be remarried, but she has none, she has no husband, she is of old age, and if she could bear sons to-night, they must wait for their growing up. She does not indeed speak of another possibility, that of their marrying some other Israelite; but evidently she refrained, partly from a delicate motive, their Moabitish descent would be against this,—and also because she could do nothing to bring it about. She would not raise, or even hint at, any false hopes, she would be true to them, as they had been to her.

14 **Orpah kissed her mother-in-law**, and returned back, to a life we may trust of usefulness and piety among her own people. There was not, of course, the self-devotion and deep earnest love of her sister; but she had been faithful to Chilion, and must have been the better woman thereafter.

16 The exquisitely beautiful answer of Ruth must have had a holy and deep effect upon Naomi's soul. Her own bitter experience had shaken her faith in God's love and providence. She spoke to her daughters in the language of the world. Her Israelite countrymen were lax in their religion and she appears to have shared their laxity. After ten years' sojourn with the Moabites she probably thought it of little importance whether Ruth and Orpah followed the religion of their fathers or not. But Ruth's answer shewed her faithful to death and beyond it. From her husband and his mother she had learned that God is to be loved, she knew probably little about Him and His law, but what she had learned taught her to desire deeper and fuller knowledge. Having tasted that the Lord is good, she would fain drink of His fulness. Must not this have been as water to a thirsty land upon Naomi's saddened and desolate spirit, the effect of which would grow within her for good?

21 **Empty**—"of all that makes a mother's heart rich, husband and children."

22 The statement of the time here prepares the way for the further progress of the history in the ensuing chapters. **Barley-harvest** was at Passover-tide. She gleaned until Pentecost, when wheat-harvest began. See Introductory Note, p. 271.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

We have here Saul's second trial. He had already broken the prophet's command once, and had received a solemn warning. Now he receives another command, given in explicit terms, and with solemn preface.

Because we have forgotten our sins, it does not follow that God has. Though He bear long He will not bear always. Justice is often slow, but God's justice is sure. "It is not in the power of time to rase out the arrearages of God." (*Bp. Hall.*) Only repentance can avail for that.

"It pleased God to set a brand of infamy on the Amalekites, on account of their inhumanity, treachery, and impiety, and to take the most exemplary vengeance of them, in order to create the utmost abhorrence of such practices in the eyes of all men" (*Waterland ap. Wordsworth.*)

Telaim, or Telem, was on the extreme south of Judah.

A city, rather "*the city*," i.e. the capital.

See on Numbers xxiv. 21, p. 196.

Havilah was the eastern, **Shur** the western boundary of Amalek, adjoining Egypt.

Agag was the official name of the Amalekite king. Saul probably kept him to grace his own triumphal return, and the sheep either as spoil for himself, or, very possibly (as he told Samuel), for sacrifice. In either case he was altogether forgetting the duties of his office. In the one, to rush upon the prey when he was sent to punish an unrighteous nation, was to turn God's judgment into a gratification of covetousness, in the other he was returning to his superstition and preferring sacrifice to obedience.

Fatlings, the Heb. signifies those which were brought forth at the second birth. They were considered the best.

On the repentance of God, see on Gen. vi. 6, p. 108. There is no contradiction between this verse and ver. 29. For there can be no *changeableness* in the Divine nature. But there was, and ever is, the sorrow of the Divine love at the rebellion of sinners. The grief of Samuel was apparently at the frustration of God's purpose concerning Saul, at the dishonour which would be heaped on God, and the occasion which the deposition of the king whom the prophet had anointed would give to the wicked to blaspheme. His cry to God was plainly for Saul's forgiveness, though when it was revealed to him that it was a case where the sentence must be executed, he maintained the cause of God before Saul without flinching.

Carmel, not the mountain, but a place on the mountains of Judah S. E. of Hebron. Here he had **set him up a place**, i.e.

1 Sam. XV.

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1 Sam. XV.

a monument, or trophy of his victory, so well pleased was he with himself. The LXX. adds that he rode thither in a chariot, a thing without precedent. S. Jerome mentions a Jewish tradition that this monument was composed of olives, myrtles, and palms. Having done so, he had gone to Gilgal, the royal residence.

13 Saul was evidently attempting to hide his consciousness of guilt by a feigned enthusiastic welcome. He had almost succeeded, apparently, in deceiving himself.

15 When Samuel stripped off his hypocrisy at once, Saul declared that it was the people who had persuaded him to his act. If that was true, it shewed that he who was appointed to rule them had become their tool and their slave. And if sacrifice was really their intention they would still be gainers, for the flesh of thank-offerings was eaten by the sacrificers.

16 Saul apparently was going off, as if nothing was amiss, trying to carry things off with a high hand. But Samuel stops him, and calls upon him to hear the judgment of God upon his sin.

17 **When thou wast little in thine own sight.** A reference to Saul's own words (ch. ix. 21). He was great in the sight of God then, because he was humble.

18 The Heb. word translated **utterly destroyed** oftentimes signifies "devoted to Jehovah¹." See on Josh. vi. 17, p. 235. The cities of the Canaanites thus devoted were to be razed to the foundations and the inhabitants slain. This is evidently the reason why Samuel felt that he had no choice but to slay Agag. He was placed under the ban, and obedience was imperative upon him. This appears to explain Saul's meaning here.

20 "I have hearkened," he says, "to the voice of the Lord, and have banned Amalek." And then he goes on to declare that the sparing of the sheep and oxen was a religious act, "The people saved them as firstlings of the ban." Our version makes him contrast his own faithfulness with the unfaithfulness of the people, which can hardly be correct. He is still attempting to justify the act.

Of course, it was no justification, because what was thus devoted was God's already, and could not be offered in sacrifice. See Lev. xxvii. 29; Deut. xiii. 16.

22 Samuel puts a stop to further excuses. His answer is in poetry, which gives a deeper solemnity to his words, as speaking in the tones of a Divine oracle. He did not declare sacrifice worthless, to do so would have been to deny God's own truth. But he declares that the very essence of all true sacrifice lies in obedience, that sacrifice is the outward form and sign of inward devotion. Cf. Prov. xv. 8; Is. i. 11—16; lxvi. 3; Jer. vi. 20; Micah vi. 6—8; Rom. xii. 1; Mark xii. 33.

¹ See Gesenius, s. v. **דָּרַג**.

Rebellion is as sorcery, for it is a consulting of evil spirits instead of God's will. It was idolatry, for it made self-will, the human "I," into a god. Therefore came the final irrevocable sentence.

1 Sam. XV.

23

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The prophet had not yet been able to reconcile himself to the will of God concerning Saul; he feared that the kingdom would suffer from the rejection of him, probably too he was personally attached to the fallen king. The fear which he expressed would seem to imply that signs of Saul's insanity had already appeared. Evidently there was ground for his fear, for God shewed him a method of proceeding which should prevent suspicion. There was no dissimulation in this, he was really about to hold a sacrificial feast. He merely concealed the special object of his mission (see Keil, p. 167). And this command was given in tenderness to Saul himself, who might still have reigned happily during his lifetime, had it not been for his increasing wilfulness. Jesse, like his ancestor Boaz, was evidently the principal person, "the Sheikh," of the village. He was now an old man (ch. xvii. 12). Jewish tradition declares that he was "a weaver of veils for the sanctuary," which derives some probability from the fact that he belonged to the family of Bezaleel. (See *Bible Dictionary*, i. 202, col. i.) On Bethlehem see note, p. 271.

1 Samuel
XVI.

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The elders' question implies that Samuel was in the habit of coming unexpectedly to one place and another to enquire into and rebuke sin. And his reassuring answer indicates that he used to turn his visits to account by offering sacrifice, and building the people up in fellowship to the Lord. Now that the Sanctuary was gone, sacrifice was held in different places. The **sanctification** here spoken of was ceremonial washing, which preceded every sacrifice (Ex. xix. 10, 22). The sacrificial meal was evidently held in Jesse's house. The pouring forth of oil seems to have been the usual mode of invitation.

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"Eliab, by his height and his countenance seemed the natural counterpart of Saul, whose successor the prophet came to select. But the day was gone when kings were chosen because they were head and shoulders taller than the rest" (*Stanley*). Samuel was restrained by a Divine control as son after son passed by him.

6

The future king was brought in. He was **ruddy** (Heb. "golden-haired," looked upon as a special mark of beauty in a southern climate, where hair is commonly black), and of **beautiful countenance**, rather "having beautiful eyes." The inward voice which had been guiding the prophet now signified that the Lord's Anointed was before him. Samuel with a silent gesture, perhaps with a secret whisper into his ear¹, poured the oil on his

12

¹ Thus Josephus, *Ant.* vi. 8. § 1.

1 Samuel
XVI.

head. If the brethren saw the act they did not understand its import. They may have thought that he was being consecrated as one of the School of the Prophets. David certainly understood it, but under Samuel's guidance left the future development of the matter to God, knowing that He was able to work His own will in His own time.

14 The narrative returns to Saul. Perhaps the first sign of his insanity was his rash vow in xiv. 24. The madness came in sudden fits (such is the meaning of the word translated **troubled**), and these were so violent as almost to choke him (LXX. and Joseph.). It appears to have been a fanciful and gloomy superstition, such as we commonly call "religious madness." It is called an evil spirit **from the Lord**. "For that which torments us, and does not suffer us to sink into the ease and security we long for, has surely a commission from God for our good, though it come with a thousand dark suggestions which cannot be from Him, which are perpetual incitements to rebellion against Him" (*Maurice*).

16—18 The means of cure which proved efficacious were the holy Psalms of David. He had cultivated the gift of song and music apparently during his upland wanderings with his sheep. Very probably he had learned the Divine art in the Schools of the Prophets. (See Keil, p. 171, who collects a number of ancient authorities proving the high estimate in which music was held by the ancients as a cure for mental diseases.) In the same shepherd life too David must have learned his courage and strength. Palestine was much infested in those days with wild beasts, bears from Lebanon, and lions from the Jordan valley. The youthful David had wrought more than one exploit (see xvii. 35 and footnote 2 in next page) which merited the words now applied to him by Saul's servant, "a mighty valiant man and a man of war." He who had fought the lion and the bear would not hesitate to defend himself against Philistine thieves, such as we are sure must have frequently troubled the neighbourhood. **Prudent in matters**, rather "eloquent of speech."

20 The presents with which he appeared before Saul shew how simple were the customs of Israel at that time. Such things meet us continually in accounts of oriental history and travel.

21 Thus David came to Saul's court, brought there as his benefactor by God, so that he was being trained for his future high calling, without exciting Saul's suspicion of his Divine election. He met men of high rank and became acquainted with public affairs, yet had always to depend upon God. And he was trained by the strict discipline of outward and inward conflicts, so that when the time should come he would be ready to do his part, and found the true and permanent monarchy of Israel.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

It was probably about two years after David's consecration that the event recorded in this chapter occurred. The Philistines assembled at Shochoh (now *Suweikeh*, three-and-a-half hours south-west of Jerusalem), in the district between the hill-country of Judah and the plain of Philistia, and drew their army together at **Ephes-dammim** (now *Damûm*) about four miles from Shochoh. The name Ephes-dammim, "boundary of blood," indicates that other encounters had taken place there before. The **valley of Elah** (i.e. "of the terebinth") separated the army of Israel from them.

A champion, lit. "a mediator." Goliath, therefore, as the representative of the enemies of Israel, becomes to us a type of the evil one, as David their deliverer does of Christ. Bp. Wordsworth, following Augustine mainly, works out the analogy at great length.

Goliath came from Gath, where some of the Anakim had been left (Josh. xi. 22). His height, about ten feet of our measure, "was hardly greater than that of the great uncle of Iren, who came to Berlin in the year 1857." (*Keil*, who cites other remarkable cases.) **A coat of mail**, scale-armour. A shekel weighed not quite so much as one of our ounces. There is a cuirass in the museum at Dresden which belonged to Augustus the Strong, which weighs 55 lbs. This coat, judging by Assyrian sculptures, probably covered the whole body. For **a target** we should read "a lance." It was slung over his shoulder¹. **Six hundred shekels of iron**, seventeen pounds. All this enumeration of his armour is evidently made in order to mark the terrifying contrast between the Philistines and the defenceless Israelites.

"The king is sitting in his tent in moody despair, Jonathan it appears is absent, but at this juncture David appears on the scene" (*Stanley*)². His father, enfeebled by age, wished to

¹ ἀμφὶ δ' ὤμοισιν, Homer.

² There is a difficulty in reconciling the account which this chapter gives of David's introduction to Saul, with the latter part of the preceding chapter. The Vatican copy of the LXX. omits a considerable portion of the narrative altogether; but this is the most unsatisfactory way at any time of getting rid of a difficulty. Bp. Wordsworth supposes that David had returned for a long time from Saul's court, and that the king in his disordered mental state had forgotten all about him. But this does not get rid of the apparent variation entirely, for the narrative of ch. xvi. implies that he became a soldier at his first coming to court. I cannot now find a discussion of this question which I met with a long time since, which seemed to me to embody a satisfactory solution of the difficulty, though we cannot say what the exact order of events was. It is that chapters xvi. and xvii. were composed by two different hands, that xvii. was written by Samuel, who desired to complete his work by shewing how David took his place at Saul's court, and so leaving him. Accordingly he summarizes rapidly, passing over altogether the encounter with Goliath, which was earlier than the period when he soothed Saul's madness with the harp. The second narrator, perhaps Nathan, begins his account with the fall of Goliath, and omits the portions which had been already told.

1 Samuel
XVII.

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1 Samuel
XVII.

know how his sons in the army fared, and sent David from the care of his sheep to enquire after them. **Take their pledge.** Bring some token to assure me of their safety.

This verse is part of Jesse's address to David, though it does not appear so in our version. For **were** read "*are.*"

20 **The trench**, rather *the waggon rampart*, "the circle of waggons which formed, as in Arab settlements, a rude fortification round the Israelite camp" (*Stanley*).

22 **His carriage.** It may be well to note that this word, as used in Scripture, means "things which he had to carry." (So in Acts. xxi. 15; Is. x. 28; Judg. xviii. 21; and, according to Gesen.¹, Is. xlvi. 1. These are all the places where it is used.) **Keeper of the carriage**, "baggage-master."

25 Saul had evidently made the promises here spoken of, but did not carry them out afterwards, probably because he had not made them to David himself. **Free in Israel**, i.e. free of taxes and public burdens.

26 Evidently David dropped some words which expressed his intention of fighting the Philistine. It is clear from the conversation which follows.

27 **Those few sheep**, spoken angrily as implying, "the loss of a single one will be a serious loss to our family."

29 David's answer is incorrectly translated. It should run, **What have I done, then? It was only a word.** (So LXX. and Vulg.) "It was surely a very allowable inquiry under these evil circumstances, when the armies of the living God are thus insulted." His words were told to Saul, who sent for him immediately.

35 The use of the singular implies that he killed each one by the same method, at different times (*Rosenmüller, Bible Geography*, speaks of lions being sometimes killed by Arabs with a stick). David's courage rested upon his confident belief that the living God, who had made a covenant with Israel, would not suffer them to be defied by the heathen with impunity. And his confidence made even Saul confident, so powerful for good is a spirit that is faithful and courageous for the right.

39 **Assayed.** He tried in vain to walk with them. **Had not proved it**, had never been used to such things. Such armour was good and useful to those who wore it, but "things which are helps to some are encumbrances to others, and an unmeet good may be as inconvenient as an accustomed evil." (*Bp. Hall*.) David could not wear the armour, but he felt none the less that God was on his side and would take care of him.

40 **His staff**, for sure footing probably in descending the valley. **The brook** which ran at the bottom of the Terebinth valley. No doubt he had long practised the use of the sling, and trusted to his often-tried skill, knowing in fact that this would be to him

¹ כִּי־יִשָּׂאָהּ.

what the sword was to the regular soldier. He expected no miraculous intervention—he had “proved” his skill with the sling and smooth stone, and trusted to God’s help in using it.

The use of the plural, **Am I a dog that thou comest to me with sticks?** is a contemptuous exaggeration to express David’s unfitness for the work that he had undertaken. **By his gods,** rather “by his God,” i. e. he used the name of Jehovah in his cursing, and thus defied not David only, but the God of Israel also.

“The last words that ever the Philistine shall speak are curses and brags. Seldom ever was there a good end of ostentation. He is a weak adversary that can be killed with words.” (*Bp. Hall.*)

David answers, “not as a boaster, but as a prophet,” and his prophecy is immediately fulfilled. The fall of their leader strikes terror into the Philistine host, and the shout of victory arises from Israel.

The valley. Some old versions read “to Gath,” and this is probably the correct reading. **Shaaraim,** in the lowland of Judah, now Zakariya.

Jerusalem. The city was in the hands of Israel, though the citadel on Mount Zion was as yet held by the Jebusites. **His tent.** The Heb. word here used means “dwelling-place,” and must be interpreted of his home at Bethlehem. David took Goliath’s armour there as a trophy to gladden the heart of his father. He afterwards dedicated the giant’s sword to the Lord (ch. xxi. 8, 9; xxii. 20).

This victory was the turning-point in David’s career. The Philistines from that time regarded him as king of the land (1 Sam. xxi. 11), and soon Saul’s unhappy jealousy began.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The later portion of Saul’s life is an almost uninterrupted declension, though there are a few glimpses of light upon it (1 Sam. xix. 19—24; xxiv. 16—22; xxvi. 21—25). But more and more this gloom of insanity settled upon him. Scripture does not draw any line for us to distinguish between his madness and his moral responsibility, and we dare not attempt to draw any for ourselves. The chapter before us takes up the history of Israel immediately after his death.

Ziklag was in the south country of Judah, on the borders of the Philistines. Here David had lived for a year and four months (1 Sam. xxvii. 7). During a temporary absence from it the Amalekites burnt it and carried away the inhabitants captive. His vigorous pursuit and rescue are recorded in ch. xxx. Contemporaneously the Philistines and Saul had met in battle in the

1 Samuel
XVII.

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2 Sam. I.

1

2 Sam. I.

north, and Saul had perished. An Amalekite appears, two days after David's return to Ziklag, and brings news of Saul's ruin.

There seems no reason for disbelieving the account given by the Amalekite of what he had done. Josephus takes it as true. After the defeat, apparently in the valley of Jezreel, Israel fled up the side of Gilboa, Saul among them. His three sons had died fighting by his side, he himself was sorely wounded, he had thrown away his shield in his flight, and now sought to escape capture by retiring into some recess and falling upon his sword. At this moment the Amalekite, allured doubtless by the hope of spoil, passed by, and Saul called him. "A dreadful darkness [E. V. **anguish**] has come upon me," he said, "stand upon me and slay me." And it was done, and Saul owed his death to one of that nation which he had been commanded to destroy. "Our sins are our Amalekites, which we ought to destroy, in obedience to God; and which, if we do not destroy them, will destroy us."

12 They wept for **the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel**; on religious and national grounds, because those who had fallen were united with them both in the flesh and in the spirit.

13 **A stranger, an Amalekite**, i.e. an Amalekite who had migrated to Israel.

14 It has been said that David's action may be defended as "dictated by political prudence, to clear himself from the complicity which otherwise would be charged against him," but he really requires no such defence. The Amalekite, it might fairly be presumed, had killed the king for the sake of reward, and no Oriental regarded regicide as other than a terrible crime. What David had twice refrained through reverence from doing, this foreigner had done for the sake of gain, and had expected David to be so base as to pay him for doing it.

17 David's elegy over Saul and Jonathan follows. But between the mention of it and the elegy itself comes a somewhat obscure parenthetical sentence. All modern critics¹ are agreed that the words which our translators have interpolated mar the sense. The sentence should run, **Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the Bow**, meaning the song which follows, to which the title "The Bow" was given because of its mention of the archery of Jonathan. So the vision of Moses is called "The Bush," and another portion of Scripture is called "Elias;" and our Christian hymns are called by their opening words, "The Te Deum," &c. David then directed this song to be learned by his people, to be sung in memory of Saul.

The Book of Jasher is mentioned here and in Josh. x. 13. It means "The book of the upright," and was in all probability

¹ E. g. Ewald, Keil, Stanley, Wordsworth.

a national collection of songs and records of heroic acts. I shall quote the ode at length, altering a few words: 2 Sam. I.

Thy beauty, O Israel, is slain upon thy heights: 19
 Oh, how are the mighty fallen!
 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon,
 Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
 Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let not dew nor rain be upon you; 21
 Nor fields of offerings!
 For there was the shield of the mighty defiled,
 The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, 22
 The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
 And the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were beloved and kind in life, 23
 And in death they are not divided.
 Than eagles they were swifter, than lions more strong.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, 24
 Who clothed you in scarlet with delights,
 Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel,—
 O how are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!

Beauty. Dean Stanley reads "Thy wild roe," and the Heb. word very often bears this meaning. In this case the reference is to Jonathan's fleetness of foot. But the Heb. quite as often is translated "beauty" or "glory," and this seems the more probable meaning here. See, however, Gesen. s. v. *יָפִי*.

Thy heights. Gilboa.

Fields of offerings, i.e. "fertile fields, yielding rich fruits, suitable for oblations to God as firstfruits or tithes." (Gesen.) Cf. Stanley, ii. 30.

Defiled, i.e. with the blood which it ought to have defended. (Heb. *לְעַל*.)

Not anointed with oil. The hallowing of the consecrating oil upon it was gone.

With delights, i.e. in a lovely and beautiful manner.

2 Sam. I.

26

O Jonathan, on thy heights thou wast slain!
 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan.
 Pleasant hast thou been to me exceedingly,
 Wonderful was thy love to me, passing the love of women.

27

How are the mighty fallen,
 And perished the instruments of war!

The word rendered *wonderful* signifies miraculous. The same word that is used in Is. ix. 6.

The instruments of war are not the weapons, but the heroes who carried on the war. (So in Is. xiii. 5.)

It is not possible to avoid asking oneself, What does this song teach us concerning our thoughts for the dead? Of the king who had fallen away from God, who had become a moody and murderous tyrant, who had died a suicide's death,—of him king David spoke words of love and admiration and pity. No one, I presume, would call them words of gross and unmeaning flattery; then, if not that, they reveal a vast depth of hope. The sweet singer had known two Sauls, Saul the kind and pleasant and strong and brave, and Saul the wicked. But the latter was put out of sight now, the other lived in his memory and in his love. The false Saul had sought the life of his God-fearing son Jonathan, and the son had lost his life fighting in his father's cause, and they lay side by side on the bloody field. Was it not a symbol of reconciliation now? Let us hear the words of one, the echoes of whose thrilling earnest voice have not yet ceased to sound in the ears of many of us:—

“Brethren, I believe it is not dangerous but safe,—not a homage to falsehood but to truth, in our judgment of those who are departed,—to follow David's example. We may dwell upon the bright and hallowed moments of lives that have been darkened by many shadows, polluted by many sins; those moments may be welcomed as revelations to us of that which God intended His creatures to be; we may feel that there has been a loveliness in them which God gave them, and which their own evil could not take away. We may think of this loveliness as if it expressed the inner purpose of their existence; the rest may be for us as though it were not. As Nature, with her old mosses and her new spring foliage, hides the ruins which man has made, and gives to the fallen tower and broken cloister a beauty scarcely less than that which belonged to them in their prime,—so human love may be at work too, ‘softening and concealing, and busy with her hand in healing’ the rents which have been made in God's nobler temple, the habitation of His

own Spirit. If it were lawful in the old time to cover with love and hope a multitude of transgressions, it cannot be less lawful now that the earth is overshadowed with a mercy that blotteth out iniquity and transgression and sin; when the blood of sprinkling has a mightier voice than that which cries for vengeance; when the Atoning Sacrifice reveals heights and lengths and depths and breadths of love in which we must rejoice to be lost." (Maurice, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 32.)

Yes, the song of David surely bids us to this pious hope. Can we *do* anything? Can we pray for all our loved ones departed? I dare not doubt that such prayer is good and right, if it be made, as all prayer must be made, without wavering, with the certain assurance that the Judge of all the earth will do right. Our pity and love cannot be stronger than His. That which Jeremy Taylor and Bp. Heber approved will hardly be called alien to the spirit of the Church of England, and it would be a bold thing for any man who believes in Christ to say that there is any case where we may not cast our care on Him, or where there is no way open to the Father.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

David was now at the height of his prosperity. He had put down all opposition of the partisans of Saul and been accepted as king by the whole nation, had captured the stronghold of Zion from the Jebusites and made it and the city of Jerusalem around it the capital of his kingdom, and had removed the Ark of God into it with unexampled beauty of ceremonial (Dean Stanley's beautiful chapter describing it, pp. 81—90, will be remembered by all who have read it). Further, his wars had all prospered, he had prevailed over the Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites. The chapter before us should prompt us all to the prayer, "In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us." Very few of the dwellers in Jerusalem knew how black a secret was hidden under the outward show of prosperity. While Bathsheba became his wife, and Uriah perished in the forefront of the battle, at the siege of Rabbath-Ammon, David went through his official duties, and attended daily the services of the Tabernacle, and appeared, yea felt, most devout. It is easy to understand how he would endeavour to drug his conscience in the matter. *Some one* must go to the forefront of the battle—then why not Uriah? He was a poor man, he would not be missed, his wife would be comforted, and a grievous scandal would be prevented. So it was done.

And David was wretched. He has left, in the xxxiind Psalm, without question referring to this period, a record of the torments that his soul was undergoing. Whilst his intellect was seeking plausibly to justify the acts that he had done and to give them

2 Sam. I.

2 Sam. XII.

2 Sam. XII.

gentle names, there was a voice near him, saying, "Thou hast sinned. Poet, psalmist, king, whatever thou art called, thy heart is not right with God. Thou art living in a lie." And for a while this inward strife went on, and within his soul was anarchy and unquiet. "While I held my tongue," he says, "my bones consumed away through my daily complaining. For thy hand was heavy upon me day and night, and my moisture was like the drought in summer."

This shews us what was his feeling when the prophet Nathan came to him and told him the pathetic anecdote with which this chapter opens. David's rapid and vehement condemnation as well as his remembrance of the law of Moses (Ex. xxii. 1) is characteristic; it is what all transgressors do of other transgressors, to be energetic against them, and so get credit, not so much with the world as with themselves, for a desire after right. For the narrative was so constructed that David had no suspicion whatever that it had reference to him and his sin. Though we may perhaps with Augustine trace a parallel between the traveller, for whose feasting the poor man's lamb was seized, and the lustful temptation to gratify which David so cruelly robbed Uriah, it seems evident that it is not a parable in all the details of which we are to discover corresponding analogies. It is a simple, though most touching story, drawn from real life.

7 But it had exactly the effect intended. **Thou art the man** is, or ought to be, the conclusion, expressed or unexpressed, of every practical sermon. A true description of a real incident, if like in its general character—however unlike to our own case in all the surrounding particulars—strikes home with greater force than the sternest personal invective. This is the mighty function of all great works of fiction. They have in their power that indirect appeal to the conscience, of which the address of Nathan is the first and most exquisite example. (*Stanley.*)

Nathan first points out the ingratitude of David towards God, and his unbridled covetousness, selfishness, and cruelty. He foretells the punishment of his cruelty, "The sword shall never depart from thy house," and of his lust (verses 11 and 12).

8 **I gave thee, &c.** This refers to the Eastern use that when a king died his successor was at liberty to succeed to his harem. Not that David did so, for Saul apparently had but one wife (1 Sam. xiv. 50) and one concubine, who was appropriated by Abner.

9 **With the sword, &c.** To do it with the sword of the enemies of God added to the wickedness.

10 The prophecy was fulfilled, and the bloodshed which we see through the whole of David's after history is all connected with this crime. Ch. xiii. 29; xviii. 14; 1 Kings ii. 24, 25.

11 Cf. 2 Sam. xvi. 22.

Nathan's rebuke "shewed David what he had been hearing in muttered accents in his heart for months before. He brought

him to face steadily the light at which he had been winking, to own that the light was good, and that it was the darkness only which was hateful and horrible." (*Maurice.*)

There is no reason why we should suppose that his words of confession were fuller than are here expressed. The Searcher of hearts knew that his contrition was godly. Saul had made the same confession, but it was not sincere. It was made because he feared the consequences (see 1 Sam. xv. 24). But David made no excuse for himself, no plea of extenuating circumstances. The fifty-first Psalm makes none. That Psalm is his own commentary on the confession which he made to Nathan. And the response to this confession, open, candid, unqualified, was the announcement that his sin was forgiven. And the sign of forgiveness should be the punishments which followed. "What?—These answers to a prayer for forgiveness? Yes, if forgiveness means what David took it to mean,—having truth in the inward parts; knowing wisdom secretly. He had had falsehood in the inward parts; the taking the sins home to himself, instead of imputing them to his circumstances or to God, had brought him into fellowship with truth once more."

The child was to die, and mercy was mingled with judgment in this. Had it lived it would have given opportunity to scoffers to blaspheme David's religion, and would have been subject to insult as the offspring of adultery. In dying it was removed from evil into the kingdom of peace where sin is remembered no more. The bitter pain of the parents would assuredly teach a blessed lesson to them both.

David was right thus to pray. His own defence of himself to his servants is an anticipation of the Apostle's rule, "In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. iv. 6.) Nay—we may truly say of it, it was a prayer dictated by the Spirit which said, "O, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

The house of the Lord was the holy tent upon Mount Zion.

I shall go to him, &c. The paraphrase given in Keil, "I shall go to the dead, the dead will not come to me," can hardly express the fulness of his meaning, when we view it in connexion with what he has written in the Psalms. There *must* have been some thought of meeting him again in Heaven, in the writer of the xvth and xxiii^d Psalms.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The rise and growth of Absalom's rebellion forms no part of the Sunday Lessons, but I cannot refrain from calling the reader's attention to Mr Plumptre's most interesting and instructive papers on this subject (*Biblical Studies*, pp. 87—138, or *Good Words* for 1864 pp. 265, 345). And see also Stanley, *Jewish Church*, ii. 114—125, or *Bibl. Dict.* Art. "David." We

2 Sam. XII.

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2 Samuel
XVIII.

2 Samuel
XVIII.

are not distinctly told how long the rebellion lasted. Absalom had been anointed king (2 Sam. xix. 10), and his cousin Amasa had command of the army. His partisans comprised (1) those dwellers at Jerusalem who, not without reason, were dissatisfied with the king's seclusion and neglect of his duties, (2) a few adherents of the house of Saul, (3) a large number of Ephraimites, jealous of the tribe of Judah. David, having crossed the Jordan at the very beginning of the outbreak, was now lodged in the fortress of Mahanaim, a town which had held firmly to Saul's family until its entire downfall, but which had afterwards become loyal and true to David. There he had been generously and efficiently succoured by Shobi the Ammonite (see Plumptre, p. 120), by Machir a relative of David and friend of Mephibosheth, and by the rich and powerful chieftain Barzillai. Probably the partisans of these three chieftains formed the chief portion of David's army. And here our reading begins. David's army has been carefully organized, Absalom's has crossed the Jordan against him, and the crisis has come.

2 It may be well to note here that Zeruah was David's sister, and that Joab and Abishai were therefore his nephews, though being apparently near him in age they were more like cousins. Their younger brother, Asahel, had been slain by Abner in self-defence (2 Sam. ii. 18); Abishai had been a companion of David's wanderings (1 Sam. xxvi. 6). Joab first appears after the coronation at Hebron, and was commander-in-chief of the army. He was a wild and stern chieftain, unscrupulous in the shedding of blood, but of unswerving loyalty (at least until the last days of his life), and of great skill both in battle and in diplomacy.

Ittai the Gittite (i. e. "of Gath") first appears in the course of this rebellion; see ch. xv. 19—22. This reference and those in the chapter before us are the only places where he is mentioned. But Jerome relates a tradition that it was he who (2 Sam. xii. 30) took the crown off the head of Milcom (not "the king" as E. V.) the Ammonite god, and put it on David's head (*B. D.* i. p. 905, ed. 1).

The locality of the **wood of Ephraim** is uncertain. The tribe was on the western side of Jordan, the battle was evidently fought on the eastern side, not far from Mahanaim. Some suppose that the name was given from this very battle, when Ephraim was defeated, others that there was an Ephraimite settlement there.

8 **The wood devoured**, partly in swamps and pits (see ver. 17), partly by the dense labyrinths so common in this neighbourhood, so rare on the west of Jordan. Losing their way and scattered, the rebels became altogether helpless.

13 **Absalom met the servants of David**, but they would not touch him because of the king's commandment. But then (as Bp. Patrick says) God met and stopped him. **A mule.** Heb.

"the mule," i. e. the king's (cf. Esth. vi. 8, and Shakespeare's *Rich. II.* Act v. Sc. 5). David had walked up Olivet barefoot, Absalom had seized his mule, but it was his destruction. His hair, perhaps, in which he so much gloried caught the thick twigs of a terebinth (so Joseph. says, vii. 10, § 2), and then his head became wedged in a forked bough, and the mule gave up its unnatural burden.

This is evidently intended by Joab as a bribe to the man to return and kill Absalom. **A girdle** meant probably a captain's commission, see Is. xxii. 21.

The Heb. word translated **darts** means staves. Probably these were pointed staves, sufficient therefore to wound horribly, but not to kill. The ten young men who bare Joab's equipments and baggage finished the dreadful work.

Blew the trumpet to recall pursuers, the victory being won. It was in accordance with his usual wise policy, not to needlessly attack desperate men (cf. ch. xx. 16—22). He knew that with the death of Absalom all danger was over.

A cairn in the wild forest, like that which was piled over Achan and over the king of Ai, was the monument which covered David's best-loved son. What a contrast to **the pillars in the king's dale** (about a quarter of a mile E. of Jerusalem, in the valley of Jehoshaphat), beneath which he had hoped to lie, and which now became the monument of his shame!

Ahimaaz, the young priest, was a friend of Joab, who therefore would not make him the messenger of evil tidings. He chose instead **Cushi**, or "the Cushite," i. e. an Ethiopian slave, perhaps one of his ten attendants. His Arab fleetness of foot, as well as his ignorance of the king's feelings, would make him a fitter messenger.

Ahimaaz probably knew the country better.

Between the two gates, in the space of the thickness of the walls, between the inner and outer gates.

If he be alone, then it shews that it is not a flight of straggling fugitives from the field.

"Of all the hours of agony in David's life—of all hours of merely human agony in the history of the Bible, that was, beyond all doubt, the darkest. First, in the loud bitter cry, as he rushed from the awe-struck crowd of soldiers and messengers and townsmen of Mahanaim, then from that chamber of sorrow over the gateway, in the long protracted wailing of a broken heart, did that agony find vent—"O my son Absalom; my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Terrible was it to think that this was the end of that bright morning of beauty and joy in which his heart had exulted; more terrible still to feel that his own sins had wrought out that fearful retribution. Had his own life been purer, that son might have been free from the guilt of incest; had he done his duty as a father and a king, punishing at the right time, forgiving at the right time, all

2 Samuel
XVIII.

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2 Samuel
XVIII.

might have yet been well. And now all was over. The doom of that great woe was irreparable. Of him also it was true, within the limits of man's vision, that "he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

"And yet not the less we may believe that, in that hour of shattered hopes and agony beyond words, when there seemed to have fallen on him the horror of great darkness, the life of David, all unconscious as he was of it, was passing through the refiner's fire, and becoming purer and brighter than it had ever been in the days of his most glowing victories, or the moments of his most ecstatic adoration. The darkest of all human sorrows brings him into contact with that which is superhuman. Here, also, in the truest and deepest sense, the life of David is a type of a higher life, his agony a foreshadowing of the agony of Gethsemane. That passionate cry, "Would God I had died for thee,—died in thy stead, delivering, redeeming thee!" that wonderful union of a father's righteous hatred of the evil, with a yearning, ever-deepening love for the poor wayward doer of the evil, were leading him through that living experience by which, and perhaps by which alone, the mystery of Atonement ceases to be a dogma of the schools, and becomes the most precious of all realities. So it had been before with Moses, when he cried in his intercession, "Blot me, I pray thee, out thy book which thou hast written" (Exod. xxxii. 32). So it was afterwards with Paul, when he wrote in his great heaviness, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 3). That craving of man's spirit when it is most after the likeness of Christ, to sacrifice its own peace, life, blessedness for the sake of others, helps us to understand, vain and fruitless as it may often seem to be (he who makes the sacrifice himself needing pardon), the perfect sacrifice of the Sinless One. "With men this is impossible, but not with God." What kings and prophets desired to do and could not, that the Son of God did, taking away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

"David's lamentation on the death of Absalom, no less than the command so solemnly given as the armies went forth to battle, speaks however of more than sorrow. It bears witness of a day of earnest, passionate intercession. Dare we say that that intercession was unavailing? Was there in those last hours of struggling life a vision of the darkness of the abyss, self-loathing, self-condemnation, the remembrance of earlier days, the return of a child's desire for pardon, the cry, "I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee?" We know not. No voice came out of the dread depths of silence to reveal his fate to David, or to us. It seemed as though all hope was gone. With him, as with the thousands in every age who depart and make no sign, the answer to the question, Is there any hope? lies behind the veil, and that veil no man may withdraw." (*Plumptre.*)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THE BOOKS OF KINGS AND CHRONICLES.

The two Books of Kings, like those of Samuel, were originally one. The Greek translators made the division. They contain the history of the Hebrew monarchy from the days of its greatest splendour to its fall, and comprise the following epochs: (1) The reign of Solomon over all Israel, 1 Kings i.—xi. (2) The two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, 1 Kings xii.—2 Kings xviii. 12. The kingdom of Judah after the extinction of Israel, 2 Kings xviii. 13—end.

The Books of Kings differ very much from those of Samuel in form. The latter give the history of Samuel, Saul, and David with great fulness of detail, and never refer the reader to other sources of information. The Books of Kings give, professedly, only portions of the history of each reign, referring after each one to "*the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah,*" or "*Israel,*" as the case may be. The "Chronicles" here meant are not the existing Books of Chronicles, but a larger collection of writings not now existent.

Jewish tradition makes the author of these books to be Jeremiah, and this is very probable. It is evident that the writer lived after the accession of Evil-Merôdach to the throne of Babylon (2 Kings xxv. 27), and probably not *long* after, for there is no intimation of any approaching termination of the Captivity.

The Books of Kings begin with the promise made by God to David and Solomon, and never lose sight of it, but at the same time they shew how far the idolatry and apostasy of the nations checked its fulfilment, and how it was yet victorious over sin. The Kingdom of Israel was broken off from the house of David and arrayed itself in bitter hostility. But it was to its own mischief. It never prospered.

During the 253 years that it lasted, seven dynasties ruled it, consisting of nineteen kings, of whom there was not one good. It fell at length, under Hoshea, and was never revived. Those of its people who were not carried captive returned to allegiance to the Kingdom of Judah. Many afterwards returned with the returned captives of Judah.

Introductory Note to the Books of Kings and Chronicles.

Introductory Note to the Books of Kings and Chronicles.

The Kingdom of Judah lasted 387 years. It also had nineteen kings, but they all belonged to the dynasty of David. This kingdom also fell by reason of its sin, and still the promise did not fail. The reigning line indeed ended with Jehoiakim and Zedekiah (see on Jer. xxii.), but a collateral line existed through Nathan, and from that line sprang Jesus the Christ.

But though the history of the two kingdoms exhibits that of Israel in the more unhappy light, as being first schismatic, then apostate, the synchronous narrative of the Book is mainly occupied with the Kingdom of Israel. From the division of the monarchy to the fall of Israel, 697 verses are given to Israel, 153 to Judah. But out of these, nine chapters are given to Ahab's reign alone, a great portion of them being occupied with the ministry of Elijah. The work of Elisha too belongs almost entirely to Israel. If their histories be taken out, Judah assumes the greater prominence. But throughout the sacred historian carries forward the contemporaneous histories with wonderful brevity and force. When we come hereafter to speak of the prophets, it will be seen that the greater part of them belonged to Israel. For where men's sin made darkness, there the light of God was needed most, and in His mercy He never left Himself without witness to the crooked nation. The prophets were both His messengers of mercy and His witnesses of judgment.

The Books of Chronicles are so named from their Hebrew title, which signifies "Words of the Days," that is, as we should say, "History of the Times." These books partially cover the times both of the Books of Samuel and of the Kings, but are written from a different point of view. The author of the *Kings*, as we have seen, narrates the course of events to the fall of the Monarchy in such a way as to illustrate God's faithfulness both to His promises and His threatenings. But the author of the *Chronicles*, in all probability Ezra, wrote without question during the times of the Restoration, and is therefore guided by the desire to furnish to the people such facts as shall prove interesting and important to them in their altered circumstances. He devotes a large portion of his work to the genealogies, a matter of the deepest consequence to the returning exiles, especially to priests and Levites. He also

gives special attention to all that pertains to the Temple-service. For example, eight chapters, three of which will come before us in the Sunday Lessons, are occupied with David's preparations for the Temple, xxii.—xxix. See also 1 Chron. xv. 1—15; xix. xx.; 2 Chron. xxix.—xxx. i.; xxxv. 1—19, for records of a like character, not found in the Books of Kings. There are also large omissions. Nothing is related concerning the Kingdom of Israel, except as it had to do with Judah. The record would have no bearing on the reconstruction of the Commonwealth. The unhappy schism was ended. Jerusalem was now the centre of unity to Israel. The chronicler therefore desired to concentrate the devotion of his nation upon her Temple and worship, until the time of refreshing should come. The days of the Prophets too were about to end. The weekly reading of Moses and of these was begun after the Captivity, to continue, until the Lord, whom they sought, should come to His Temple.

The first Book of Chronicles after the genealogies (i.—ix.) begins with the death of Saul (ch. x.), and is then entirely occupied with the reign of David. The second Book synchronizes with the two books of Kings.

Introductory Note to the Books of Kings and Chronicles.

CHRONOLOGICAL SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOKS OF KINGS AND CHRONICLES.

Synopsis.

KINGS OF ALL ISRAEL.

| | | |
|----------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Saul dies | B.C. 1095. | 1 Chr. x. |
| Reign of David | 1055. | 1 Kings i.—ii. 10; 1 Chr. xi.—xxix. |
| „ Solomon | 1015. | „ ii. 11—xi. end; 2 Chr. i.—ix. |

KINGS OF JUDAH.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

| | B.C. | |
|--|------|---|
| 1. Rehoboam, 1 K. xii. 1—24; xiv. 21—end; 2 Chr. x.—xii. | 975 | 1. Jeroboam, 1 K. xii. 25—end; xiii. xiv. 1—2c. |
| 2. Abijah, 1 K. xv. 1—8; 2 Chr. xiii. | 958 | |
| 3. Asa, 1 K. xv. 9—24; 2 Chr. xiv.—xvi. | 955 | |
| | 954 | 2. Nadab, 1 K. xv. 25—31. |
| | 953 | 3. Baasha, 1 K. xv. 32—xvi. 7. |
| | 930 | 4. Elah, 1 K. xvi. 8—14. |
| | 929 | 5. Zimri, 1 K. xvi. 15—20. |
| | 929 | 6. Omri, 1 K. xvi. 21—28. |
| | 918 | 7. Ahab, 1 K. xvi. 29—xxii. 40; 2 Chr. xviii. |

| Synopsis. | KINGS OF JUDAH. | B.C. | KINGS OF ISRAEL. |
|-----------|---|------|---|
| | 4. Jehoshaphat, 1 K. xxii. 41—50; 2 Chr. xvii.—xxi. 3. | 914 | |
| | | 898 | 8. Ahaziah, 1 K. xxii. 51—53; 2 K. i. |
| | | 896 | 9. Jehoram, 2 K. i. 17—viii. 15; ix.; 2 Chr. xxii. 5—9. |
| | 5. Jehoram, 1 K. xxii. 51; 2 K. viii. 16—24; 2 Chr. xxi. 4—20. | 892 | |
| | 6. Ahaziah, 2 K. viii. 25—ix. 27—29; 2 Chr. xxii. | 885 | |
| | 7. Athaliah's usurpation, 2 K. xi. 1—16; 2 Chr. xxii. 10—xxiii. 15. | 884 | 10. Jehu, 2 K. x. |
| | 8. Joash, 2 K. xi. 17—xii. 21; 2 Chr. xxiii. 16—xxiv. | 878 | |
| | | 856 | 11. Jehoahaz, 2 K. xiii. 1—9. |
| | | 841 | 12. Jehoash, 2 K. xiii. 10—end; xiv. 8—16. |
| | 9. Amaziah, 2 K. xiv. 1—20; 2 Chr. xxv. | 839 | |
| | | 825 | 13. Jeroboam II. 2 K. xiv. 23—29. |
| | 10. Uzziah, 2 K. xiv. 21, 22; xv. 1—7; 2 Chr. xxvi. | 810 | |
| | | 783 | Interregnum of about 11 years. |
| | | 773 | 14. Zachariah, 2 K. xv. 8—12. |
| | | 772 | 15. Shallum, 2 K. xv. 13—16. |
| | | 772 | 16. Menahem, 2 K. xv. 16—22. |
| | | 761 | 17. Pekahiah, 2 K. xv. 23—26. |
| | | 759 | 18. Pekah, 2 K. xv. 27—31. |
| | 11. Jotham, 2 K. xv. 32—38; 2 Chr. xxvii. | 758 | |
| | 12. Ahaz, 2 K. xvi.; 2 Chr. xxviii. | 742 | |
| | | 737 | Second interregnum. |
| | | 730 | 19. Hoshea, 2 K. xvii. |
| | 13. Hezekiah, 2 K. xviii.—xx; 2 Chr. xxix.—xxxii. | 726 | |
| | | 721 | Capture of Samaria and end of kingdom of Israel. |
| | 14. Manasseh, 2 K. xxi. 1—16; 2 Chr. xxxiii. 1—20. | 698 | |
| | 15. Amon, 2 K. xxi. 17—26; 2 Chr. xxxiii. 21—25. | 643 | |
| | 16. Josiah, 2 K. xxii.—xxiii. 30; 2 Chr. xxxiv. xxxv. | 641 | |
| | 17. Jehoahaz, 2 K. xxiii. 31—34; 2 Chr. xxxvi. 1—5. | 609 | |
| | 18. Jehoiakim, 2 K. xxiii. 35—xxiv. 7; 2 Chr. xxxvi. 6—8. | 609 | |
| | 19. Jehoiachin or Coniah, 2 K. | 599 | |

| | B.C. |
|---|------|
| KINGS OF JUDAH. | |
| xxiv. 8—16 and xxv. 27—30; 2 Chr. xxxvi. 9, 10. | |
| 20. Zedekiah, 2 K. xxiv. 17—xxv. 26; 2 Chr. xxxvi. 11—21. | 599 |
| Jerusalem destroyed. | 588 |
| Decree of Cyrus for restoration, 2 Chr. xxxvi. 22, 23. | 536 |

Synopsis.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The event recorded in this chapter occurred without question towards the close of David's reign. We are told in the parallel passage, 2 Sam. xxiv., that "the anger of the Lord was moved against Israel," but it is not stated for what sin. Keil and Wordsworth assume "the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba." In consequence He suffered Satan to tempt David. In the parallel narrative, it is "He (that is, the Lord) moved David" &c. A note by Keil certainly embodies the true explanation. God, he says, furnishes to men the opportunity and occasion for the unfolding and practical manifestation of the evil desires of the heart, that sinners may be brought to the knowledge of their evil ways and also to repentance. David had become worldly, proud, forgetful of God, and therefore God suffered Satan to tempt him to overt acts which revealed to him the deep plague of his heart. This is plainly the explanation of David's sin. It was right that he should rejoice to be king over a fast-multiplying people. It was right also that they should be registered, that the tribes and families should be noted down. It was as needful now as it was in the time of the Book of Numbers (Num. i. and xxvi.). But Satan, who is always seeking to mingle poison with our food, prompted him to connect with these thoughts that of becoming a military chief, of exalting himself, and forgetting that God was his strength and that the Most High God was his Redeemer. "I do not know anything so instructive to us if we use them as we ought, as these passages in the Bible, which teach us that all good thoughts, counsels, just works, come from the Spirit of God; and at the same time that we are in the most imminent peril at every moment of turning the divine suggestions into sin, by allowing our selfish and impure conceits and rash generalizations to mix with them." (*Maurice.*)

It is not clear why the project was so hateful to Joab. Though he was a man of earnest loyalty to David, he seems hardly one to be troubled by religious scruples. Perhaps he

1 Chron.
XXI.

1 Chron.
XXI.

saw in the proposal an implied intention of taxation, such as had been foretold by Samuel, and foresaw with what dissatisfaction it would be received by the nation, and with what danger to the throne it was fraught.

4 **Against Joab.** The account in Samuel adds "and against the captains of the host." The same is implied above, ver. 2. The parallel account gives the details of the expedition (vv. 5—8), which are altogether omitted here. But that account omits
6 the fact here recorded that Joab did not reckon the two tribes of Levi and Benjamin (see 1 Chron. xxvii. 24, from which we learn that the numbering was never officially recognized). The
5 numbers do not quite agree with those given in Samuel. Bp. Wordsworth supposes that the reconciliation must be made by adding to the 800,000 fighting men of Israel, 300,000 of David's standing army, and to the men of Judah, 30,000 men with David in Jerusalem not numbered with the rest. Ingenious guesses, but the numbers in the Books of Chronicles are very puzzling throughout, and have probably been tampered with.

8 David's repentance preceded the visit of the prophet Gad (see 2 Sam. xxiv. 10, 11. The word "*for*" at the beginning of ver. 11 should be "and"). His conscience smote him when the takers of the census came to Jerusalem, and the mission of Gad was the echo of the voice of his own conscience.

Gad is mentioned in 1 Sam. xxii. 5, in 1 Sam. xxiv. *passim*, in the present chapter, in ch. xxix. 29, and in 2 Chron. xxix. 25.

12 **Three years.** In Sam. it is "seven," but there also some ancient texts read "three," and it is the more probable reading.

13 David's answer was an unselfish one. In the other calamities offered to him he personally would not have suffered; in pestilence he would be exposed to equal dangers with his subjects. He "utters the high Prophetic truth which finds a response in the nobler souls of every age, 'Better any external calamity than those which are embittered by human violence and weakness.'" (*Stanley.*) The punishment was just that which would bring him and the people back to the feeling that their power did not lie in the number of armed men.

14 The time of the duration of the pestilence is not stated. The parallel account in the English Version has "from the morning" (that is, of Gad's coming) "till the time appointed," which is an erroneous rendering, for the plague was stayed by "God's repenting of the evil." The Hebrew probably means "until the hour of evening prayer."

15 It appears from vv. 28, 29, that David was already on his way to the sanctuary at Gibeon (about eight miles off) to offer sacrifice, but was suddenly arrested by the vision of the destroying angel standing between earth and heaven with his sword drawn over the city. Whilst he fell on his face, overcome by terror, and by his prayer presented a type of that Good Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep, the commandment

came to build an altar on the threshingfloor of Ornan, or Araunah. (The latter word is probably the Jebusite, the former the Hebrew, form of the name.) Ornan saw the angel at the same time, while threshing wheat, and he and his four sons fled into the cave to hide themselves.

The parallel account calls Araunah (in the Heb.) a king (2 Sam. xxiv. 23), and Jewish tradition states that he was the deposed king of the Jebusites. Nothing seems more likely. His threshingfloor was by a rocky cave on Mount Moriah, immediately outside the eastern walls of the city (see 2 Chron. iii. 1).

The oxen, which were now employed in treading out the corn. For these, and for the day's use of the threshingfloor, David paid 50 shekels, refusing to serve God cheaply. He afterwards bought the whole site for ever for the Temple for 600 shekels of gold. It is characteristic of the Book of Chronicles that it makes mention of Ornan's offer of the wheat for a meat-offering (Heb. *minchah*), so that the Levitical ritual might be fully carried out. The earnest of his acceptance followed David's sacrifice, for the Lord answered him by fire,—a circumstance only recorded here. And a further token of grace was that the angel visibly returned his sword to its sheath.

Thus Jew and Gentile united together on the site of the future Temple, a presage of their union in the Church of Christ. David's altar preceding the Temple seems to symbolize the Great Sacrifice out of which the Church sprung, and the price paid for the threshingfloor reminds us that the Church was also "bought with a price," purchased with its Lord's own blood. And we need hardly add, that the acceptance of the Sacrifice which speaketh better things than that of Abel, saved the world from the Pestilence of Sin and Death.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

This chapter is closely connected with the preceding. When David received the command to sacrifice in Ornan's threshing-floor, and was there accepted, he determined from that moment, prompted by the inspiration of God, that this should be the site of the Temple. The rocky cave of Ornan exists to this hour, and is regarded by the Moslems with almost idolatrous reverence. The altar of burnt-offering in the Temple was in all probability built over it.

From that time apparently David began to make large preparations for the building of the Temple. The account here given is found nowhere else, there is no parallel passage in the Book of Samuel, though the latter book does tell us that David had an ardent desire to build the house of God, and was told that not he but his son, should do so (2 Sam. vii.).

1 Chron.
XXI.

20

23

25

23

26

27

1 Chron.
XXII.

1 Chron.
XXII.

Strangers, i.e. aboriginal Canaanites now converted to the faith of Israel. (See 2 Chron. viii. 7—10; 1 Kings ix. 15—23.)

3 **Iron**—not mentioned in the construction of the Tabernacle.
Joinings, iron bands and cramps. **Brass**, copper.

4 **Cedar trees**, which were brought from Lebanon to the Tyrian coast. and thence shipped to Joppa, the port of Jerusalem. The King of Tyre, Hiram, was a warm friend of David.

5 Solomon was now probably about twenty years old.

Exceeding magnificent, lit. "to make exceeding great," that is, to magnify God greatly. David is speaking in this expression of the purpose of the house rather than of its external beauty. It is the purpose which makes him seek the external magnificence.

7 **It was in my mind**. See ch. xvii. 1—15. The wish which
8 David had formed is also recorded in 2 Sam. vii. But David, telling here the circumstances with his own lips, confesses a reason why the wish was not granted which is not given by the former historian, namely, that he had been a man of war and had shed blood abundantly (cf. ch. xxviii. 3).

9 **Solomon**, i.e. "Peaceful;" nearly the same meaning as our name *Frederick*.

10 **For ever**. Let it be remembered that this was written after the fall of the Monarchy; it will therefore be clear that the writer looked forward to a spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of Christ.

14 **In my trouble**, rather "by my strenuous labour." The numbers here are manifestly impossible. They indicate a sum nearly sufficient to pay off the national debt of Great Britain, and there is no mention of any such sum elsewhere. The text may be corrupt, or else we may suppose the expressions to be Hebraisms, signifying merely "vast quantities." There is no doubt that David acquired very large treasures by his conquests. Assuming the second hypothesis that David only meant "I have prepared vast materials for thee," we may approve Bp. Wordsworth's comparison, between David who gathered spoils from the heathen for God's worship, and the King of the Church who brings everything into subjection to Himself, and lays the intellectual, scientific, literary treasures of the world under tribute for the building of His own Temple.

16 The concluding words of the old man's charge to his son are a prayer for him. Probably Solomon was referring to this prayer when he asked for a wise and understanding heart. Pious parents leave sweet memories to their children, and their holy words and prayers bear fruit after they are gone. With the prayer David joins the exhortation, **Arise and be doing**. The hope of God's presence must not slacken our endeavours; we must work out our own salvation, because God worketh in us.

17 Finally, David calls on the princes of Israel to assist his son.

He appeals to their gratitude by telling them how great things God had done for them. And then he gives them a motive for action: **Set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.** If they seek God's glory as their highest end and aim, placing their happiness in His favour, and making religion the business of life, then the head and hand will follow the heart, and the whole nature will be employed for Him. If they once find Him, they will spare no pains to do Him honour, and to promote the glory of His dwelling-place.

1 Chron.
XXII.

19

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

We have here recorded a circumstance of later date than that of the chapter preceding. It is subsequent to the rebellion of Adonijah (see on xxix. 22—24, p. 300). David calls a great assembly of the **princes of the tribes** (see xxvii. 16—22); **the captains of the companies that, &c.** (xxvii. 1—15); **of thousands and hundreds** (xxvii. 1); **the stewards, &c.** (xxvii. 25—31).

1 Chron.
XXVIII.

1

Stood up upon his feet. He was aged and infirm (see 1 K. 1—4, 15), and for the most part lying upon his couch. But the vision which rises before him of the finished Temple of God, wherein His glory shall dwell, rekindles his energies, and like Jacob (Gen. xlix.) and Joseph (Gen. l. 24, 25) and Moses (Deut. i. 1—3) and Joshua (Josh. xxiv. 1), he convenes his people to a solemn assembly, and publicly sets forth his will, first concerning the Temple, secondly concerning the succession. Bp. Wordsworth well compares the aged king, moved by his zeal to a last effort for God's glory, to the extraordinary exertions made by King Edward the Confessor before his death for the completion and consecration of Westminster Abbey.

2

The opening words are very touching and earnest.

My brethren, 1 Sam. xxx. 23; 2 Sam. xix. 13.

And for the footstool, rather "even for," &c. The ark was His footstool, because the glory of the Lord was enthroned above it between the cherubim.

Chose me, &c. See ch. xi. 2. **And Judah, &c.** (Gen. xlix. 10; 1 Chron. v. 2.)

4

The throne of the kingdom of the Lord. The expression only occurs here. But there is a very similar one in xxix. 23. It marks David's appreciation of the high purpose of the kingdom, and of the truth that he and his posterity were God's deputies until Incarnate God should come to claim His own.

5

In the middle of a deeply impressive and solemn address he suddenly turns to Solomon. The exhortation to him is contained in vv. 9, 10, and (after the long parenthesis in vv. 11—19) in vv. 20, 21. The whole proceedings of the assembly are

9

1 Chron.
XXVIII.

described with dramatic distinctness and power, and we are enabled to enter thoroughly into the lifelike narrative.

11 **The porch**, 1 K. vi. 2; 2 Chron. iii. 4. **The houses**, i.e. the two parts—the holy place, and the holy of holies. The two stood relatively as the nave and chancel of a church, only that the nave was occupied by the priests alone, the holy of holies was entered by the high priest alone, and that but once in the year. The congregation remained in the court outside, where the great altar of burnt-offering was. **The treasuries** were chambers attached to the outer wall (1 K. vi. 5). **Upper chambers**. These were probably over the holy of holies. That portion of the building was not so high as the nave, whereas the roof was of level height throughout. **The inner parlours** were attached to the wall of the Temple itself. See 1 K. vi. 8—10. **The place of the mercy-seat** was in the holy of holies (1 K. vi. 23—28).

12 **By the spirit**. For all such work, whether invention or skill of execution, is the work of the Holy Ghost (cf. Ex. xxxi. 2—5). “Sacred architecture, beyond all else that has ever been devised by man, seems to lift the soul above it, to solemnize it, to chase away from it, for the time at least, thoughts of earth, and to fill it with thoughts of heaven. As one [Hawthorne] has well said, ‘A church represents indeed the beauty, the calmness, the mystery, and the sanctity of religion, and that in many ways; still, I will say, more than all these it represents to us its eternity.’”

“Now whence came this glorious embodiment of religious thought, and reverence, and devotion? Is it of the earth, earthy? Can that be of earth which inspires such heavenly emotions? Is it not true to say with him whom I have just quoted, ‘All that is so noble in their architecture, all that captivates the eye, and makes its way to the heart, is not a human imagination, but a Divine gift, a moral result, a spiritual work?’”

“Well, then, if God gave to this Bezaleel no less a gift than His Spirit to enable him to devise, and to execute aright for the erection and adornment of a tabernacle, all whose furniture and arrangements were but shadows of the good things set forth in our worship, must not the conceptions of an architecture so sublime, reverential, and withal so Christian, as the architecture of our old churches, have been, in its whole conception, the inspiration of the same Spirit?” (*Rev. M. F. Sadler.*)

15—17

Candlesticks (1 K. vii. 49). They typified the light of the Holy Spirit. **Tables of shewbread** (see 2 Chron. iv. 8). We are only told of one table of shewbread, but probably these ten were in connexion with that. The **tables of silver** are mentioned nowhere else. The Rabbins say they were by the great altar, and intended to receive the flesh of the animals sacrificed. **Bowls** for sprinkling blood. **Cups** for libations (Ex. xxvii. 3; xxxvii. 16). **Basons**, ewers. Cf. Ezra i. 10.

The chariot of the cherubim The two words are in apposition, and signify "the cherubim, which are the chariot of God." On them He sits enthroned, with His feet on the Ark beneath (ver. 2). **The altar of incense** stood in the holy place (Luke i. 9—11). Its material of refined gold typified the intercession of Christ.

In writing, that is, in the law of Moses. He declares that the Lord has taught him through that law. That has been his rule and guide, and no arbitrary will or fancies of his own. He has modelled everything with the structure of the Tabernacle before him.

Then he once more exhorts him earnestly, directing him where to look for help. "Fear not opposition; fear not the charge, care, and trouble; fear not miscarrying in it, as in the case of Uzza; fear not the reproach of the foolish builder, who began to build and was not able to finish. Be not dismayed; for God, even my God, whom I have chosen and served, who has all along been present with me, and prospered me, and to whom, from my own experience of his power and goodness, I recommend thee; He will be with thee, to direct, strengthen, and prosper thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. God never forsakes any who do not first forsake Him." (*M. Henry.*)

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

David having laid his plans before the assembly of the people, and told them what provision he had made, asked them for voluntary contributions for the same object. They responded liberally and cheerfully, being persuaded that David was fulfilling God's will. And upon this response our Lesson begins. David rejoiced with great joy at the readiness with which the people brought the gifts, and his joy, as that of all devout men, took the form of thanksgiving to God.

The opening verse of his song of praise is the same as that which he sang when he brought the ark to Zion (1 Chron. xvi. 36), as well as when Solomon was acknowledged king (1 K. i. 47, 48). Both events reminded him of a Covenant and a Kingdom which knew no change, both were signs of an unending love to Abraham and his seed for ever. Cf. S. Luke, i. 68—70.

Thine, &c. He is the source and centre of everything that is bright and blessed. All that we can rejoice in, in our best and happiest moments, comes from Him as from a fountain.

Greatness and power were His in the original creation, **glory and victory** are His in the redemption of the people, and their exaltation to their present high position. **Majesty** in the kingdom which owed its greatness not to the work of man,

1 Chron.
XXVIII.
18

19

20

1 Chron.
XXIX.

10

11

1 Chron.
XXIX.

but to His care and favour. But no one act, no series of acts exhausts our praise. *All* greatness and goodness and majesty come from Him evermore.

These glorious words are found in the Oblation in some of the Ancient Christian Liturgies.

14 He thanks God for giving to him and his people the ability and willingness to offer. He is unworthy, he says, of the high and happy privilege which he has been allowed to exercise, for the power to give willingly and thankfully was a gracious boon from God. Cf. 2 Cor. viii. 4; Ex. xxxvi. 6. "Doth God thank His servant for doing Him honour, and offering to Him (Luke xvii. 9)? No; but that servant has a great deal of reason to thank Him."

15 A recognition of the everlasting presence of God. *We* pass rapidly across the scene, appearing and quickly disappearing; but our works, as far as they are done for God, abide and live, because *He* lives. All other deeds perish and are forgotten.

17 His consciousness of his own sincerity, and also his joy, and therefore absence of envy, at witnessing the good works of others.

18 "Thou who wast the God of our fathers; who wast in covenant with them, make good that covenant towards us, and grant that we may not forfeit the benefit of it. Make us partakers of the grace that Thou vouchsafedst to them. Those holy and earnest thoughts which are in the people now, do Thou keep there **for ever**, let them not pass away."

If any good thoughts have taken possession of our souls, if we have formed any earnest and good resolution, it is good to commit it by prayer to the custody of God, that it may be established for ever.

19 In like manner, as David has previously exhorted Solomon to walk with a perfect heart (xxviii. 9), so now he prays that God will give him that perfect heart, first (for the second will be of no use without the first) to keep the commandments of God, and secondly to build His house.

20 Then he brings the assembly to a conclusion by calling upon them to bless God.

Worshipped, lit. "bowed down before." The Heb. word is sometimes used for the worship of God (e.g. Ex. iv. 31; Neh. viii. 6), sometimes for an act of honour to men (Gen. xxiii. 12; xliii. 28, &c.). Here it apparently is used to signify that the people did honour to the king for his good and happy rule over them, and in doing so remembered that he was but God's instrument, and therefore they worshipped God.

21 **A thousand bullocks**, for peace-offerings, on which the people feasted with holy joy.

22 Solomon had been anointed king before, but in haste, consequent upon the danger excited by the attempt of Adonijah (1 Kings i. 29; 1 Chron. xxiii. 1). The present anointing is

therefore the second performed in public convocation. In Zadok the line of Eleazar was restored. See p. 255 note.

“And with this the historian brings David to the end of his day, leaves him asleep, and draws the curtains about him.”

1 Chron.
XXIX.

28

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Solomon began his reign with a public assembly of the representatives of the nation. He summoned them to meet him at Gibeon¹. The Tabernacle of God had been set up here (1 Chron. xvi. 39; xxi. 29), but the Ark had been brought by David to Jerusalem (2 Sam. vi.; 1 Chron. xiii.), and was deposited under a tent. When the Plague fell upon Jerusalem David prepared to go to Gibeon to sacrifice, but was stayed, and went instead to Moriah, and thereupon determined to build the Temple there. Solomon's visit shewed that he held the ancient Tabernacle of God in due reverence, though the Temple was now to supersede it. His visit was therefore like an honourable burial to the Tabernacle. Wordsworth well compares it to the conduct of the Apostles towards the Law of Moses in the Acts, when that Law was melting into the Christian Church. And as the Ark, which symbolized the Presence of God, belonged both to the Tabernacle and to the Temple, so the Apostles were careful to prove to the Jews that they set forth no new God, but that the Gospel was the fruit of which the Law had been the stem, that it was the fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers.

2 Chron. I.

The brazen altar. See Ex. xxxi. 9; xxxviii. 1, 2.

He put. All the old versions read “*was there,*” as our margin has it. One dot in the Heb. makes the difference. Evidently the marginal is the correct reading.

The account in 1 Kings iii. (next Lesson) is somewhat fuller than the present. There we are told that the Lord appeared in a dream, that is, a Divine ecstasy, like those of Abram (Gen. xv.), Joseph (xxxvii. 5—9), Balaam (Num. xxiv. 4), Joseph and the wise men (Matt. ii).

“The wisdom asked for was given in large measure, and took a varied range. The wide world of nature, animate and inanimate, which the enterprises of his subjects were throwing open to him, the lives and characters of men, in all their surface-weaknesses, in all their inner depths, lay before him, and he took cognizance of all. But the highest wisdom was that wanted for the highest work, for governing and guiding.” (Plumptre, Art. “Solomon,” in *B.D.*) “Solomon's wisdom was that wisdom of the heart, which loved and embraced whatever truth the human mind, by reason and experience, aided by Divine grace, was enabled to discover.” (*Wordsworth.*)

¹ For the events connected with Gibeon see also Josh. ix. 3; x. 4—6.

2 Chron. I.

13

This verse is obscure. The translators have inserted some words "*from his journey.*" Without them the literal translation is "*Solomon came to the high place which is at Gibeon to (or at) Jerusalem, from before, &c.*" This would seem to imply that he left the Tabernacle (which was at Gibeon) and came to Gibeon at Jerusalem. Bp. Wordsworth meets the difficulty by supposing this to be another Gibeon (the word meaning "hill"), that it was, in fact, another name for Moriah. But it is probable that we must follow the LXX. and Vulgate, and read "*came from the high place at Gibeon to Jerusalem, from the tabernacle,*" &c. The alteration of a letter in the Hebrew will make the difference.

14

The historian now enters into an account of Solomon's greatness. It is placed here in connexion with Solomon's prayer and sacrifices, in order to shew how God was fulfilling His promise of giving Solomon riches. The historian does not here, nor indeed at all in the Book of Chronicles, dwell on the dark side of the picture, but a dark side there was, as well as a brilliant one. We shall see that hereafter. The riches were God's gift. But Solomon to his own confusion began to misuse them. He contravened the law of God (Deut. xvii. 16), and taught his people to trust in chariots and horses instead of in the name of the Lord their God (Ps. xx. 7; cf. Is. xxxi. 1).

15

Cedar trees. Brought from Lebanon by the navy which he formed in conjunction with Hiram, king of Tyre (see ch. ii. 16).

17

Six hundred shekels, about £35. **An hundred and fifty,** about £8 15s.

The kings of the Hittites (the northern Canaanites) and of **Syria** made Jerusalem their emporium for the purchase of Egyptian horses and chariots. Here also was a bad symptom. With the Hittites it was spurious liberality to make alliance. And Syria proved one of the bitterest enemies of Israel. An adventurer, named Rezon, had recently revolted from Hadad-czer, and set up a new kingdom at Damascus (1 K. xi. 23).

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

1 Kings III.

We cannot say for certain with what king this Pharaoh is to be identified, Egyptian chronology being so uncertain. But it was probably Psusenner, the last king of the 21st dynasty. His wife's name was Tahpenes (1 Kings xi. 19). This is the first time that Egypt has appeared in Sacred History since the Exodus. It seems not unlikely that the marriage with Pharaoh's daughter was contracted by Solomon with a view to detach Pharaoh from Hadad the Edomite (see ch. xi. 14—22). There is nothing to indicate that the marriage is disapproved by the sacred historian. Such marriages were not forbidden, though marriages with Canaanites were (see Deut. xx. 10—17).

She does not seem to have had any part in leading him into idolatry. But the union was an inauspicious one. In a few years the Egyptian dynasty changed, and Shishak, as a matter of course, recognized no friendships which his predecessor had formed. He harboured Jeroboam and sacked the Temple. The after-relations of Judah with Egypt were disastrous enough.

His own house, ch. vii. **The house of the Lord**, ch. vi. **The wall**, ch. ix. 15—19.

That was the great high-place, "the lofty eminence which overlooks the whole of Judæa" (*Stanley*).

See notes on preceding lesson, vv. 7—13.

I am but a little child. Some authorities make him 12, others 15, but it seems likely that he was 20. But it is not strange that he should find himself as a child when he contemplated the vast responsibilities and labours of his position. It was well for him therefore to cast his care upon God (Pss. xxv. 8; cxxxix. 3).

The pattern instance of his sagacity "is in all its circumstances thoroughly Oriental. The King sits in the gate of the city, at the early dawn, to settle any disputes, however strange, between any litigants, however humble. In the rough and ready test which turns the scale of evidence, before so evenly balanced, there is a kind of rough humour as well as sagacity, especially attractive to the Eastern mind, then and at all times" (*Plumptre*). "Every part of the incident is characteristic. The two mothers, degraded as was their condition, came, as the Eastern stories so constantly tell of the humblest classes, to demand justice from the king. He patiently listens; the people stand by, wondering what the childlike sovereign will determine. The mother of the living child tells her tale with all the plaintiveness and particularity of truth; and describes how, as she 'looked at him again and again, behold, it was not my son which I did bear.' The King determines, by throwing himself upon the instincts of nature, to cut asunder the sophistry of argument. The living child was to be divided—and the one half given to one, the other half to the other. The true mother betrays her affection: 'O my lord, give her the living *babe* (the word is peculiar), and in no wise slay it.' The king repeats, word for word, the cry of the mother as if questioning its meaning. 'Give her the living babe, and in no wise slay it!' then bursts forth into his own conviction, 'SHE is the mother.' (*Stanley*, p. 177.) To these notes we add a good and thoughtful application by Bp. Hall, which the reader will find ably and characteristically applied to the circumstances of our own time by Bp. Wordsworth. "Even in morality it is thus also; truth, as it is one, so it loves entireness; falsehood, division. Satan, that hath no right to the heart, would be content with a piece of it: God, that made it all, will have either the whole or none. The erroneous church strives with the true for the living child of

1 Kings III.

4

5—15

16

1 Kings III. saving doctrine ; each claims it for her own ; Heresy, conscious of her own injustice, would be content to go away with a leg or an arm of sound principles, as hoping to make up the rest with her own mixtures : Truth cannot abide to part with a joint, and will rather endure to lose all by violence, than a piece through a willing connivancy." (Bp. Hall's *Contemplations*.)

Bp. Wordsworth has a very learned, thoughtful, and characteristic note upon this passage, drawing analogies, worthy of consideration, between the true and false mother, and the Church and the sectaries.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

1 Kings X.

The reign of which we have now seen the beginning was long and uneventful, yet it holds a position altogether unlike any other in Jewish history. For the first and last time Israel took its place as one of the great monarchies of the East, such a place as Babylon and Assyria afterwards took. "A petty nation," writes Professor Rawlinson, "which for some hundreds of years has with difficulty maintained a separate existence in the midst of warlike tribes, each of which has in turn exercised dominion over it and oppressed it, is suddenly raised by the genius of a soldier-monarch to glory and greatness. An empire is established which extends from the Euphrates to the borders of Egypt, a distance of 450 miles, and this empire, rapidly constructed, enters almost immediately on a period of peace, which lasts for half a century. Wealth, grandeur, architectural magnificence, artistic excellence, commercial enterprise, a position of dignity among the great nations of the earth, are enjoyed during this space, at the end of which there is a sudden collapse, the ruling nation is split in twain, the subject races fall off, and the pre-eminence lately gained being wholly lost, the scene of struggle, strife, oppression, recovery, inglorious submission, and desperate effort recommences. To persons acquainted only with the history of the West, the whole series of events appears incredible, the entire analogy of history seems against them, since in Occidental records they have no parallel, and an inclination is naturally felt to question their historical truth, to regard them as either wholly invented, or at any rate as grossly exaggerated.

"But a knowledge of the history of the East removes these impressions. In the East such a series of events is the reverse of abnormal. The rapid rise of petty states to greatness, the sudden change of an oppressed into a dominant power, is the rule. Babylon, Media, Persia, Parthia, all illustrate it. Duration of empire when obtained is more irregular. Some-

times a great power, when once formed, holds its own for many centuries, e. g. Assyria, Parthia, Sassanian Persia. But at other times a collapse occurs after a very brief space. The Babylonian empire lasted, at the utmost, eighty-seven, the Median seventy-five years. This latter instance furnishes almost an exact parallel to the empire of the Jews, for the whole period of the empire is made up of two reigns, those of a father and a son, the former a warlike prince who constructs it, the latter a peaceful one who adorns it, and makes it the admiration of its neighbours; and the collapse is brought about by a division between the two great sections of the ruling (Medo-Persic) race, and a war between them, which however has a somewhat different result from the war between the Ten Tribes and the Two. Short periods of great prosperity are, in fact, of ordinary occurrence among the States of the East, where so much more depends than in the West on the personal character of individuals, and where the vigour and energy which enable a chief to found an empire are rarely inherited by descendants born and bred up in a seraglio." (*Historical Illustrations*, p. 95.)

The framers of the lectionary have done well in omitting the history of the building of the Temple from the lessons. Having given the Chapters which tell of the preparations, as well as of the disappearance of the Tabernacle, they have omitted details which would convey but little instruction to a general congregation. And it must also be confessed that there are features in the history of the building which are painful to contemplate. The people were apparently heavily oppressed and taxed,—first the Canaanites were reduced to the state of helots, but afterwards Israelites also were subjected to the *corvée* of compulsory labour. A passion for glory mingled itself with reverence for his father's instructions, and palaces and fortifications followed each other with ruinous rapidity, pomps and vanity of a wicked world. The first lesson to day gives us one more glimpse of the king's magnificence; then we are told how he fell miserably, and ended his days in darkness and with dangers gathering around his throne.

1 Kings
III.

Sheba, Arabia Felix, in what is now *Yemen*. The ships of Solomon continually passed by that land on their way from Ezion-Geber (Suez) to Ophir.

Concerning, rather "by," the meaning being that she heard of the fame which he had, by the will of the Lord.

Hard questions. Josephus (*Ant.* viii. 5, § 3) relates that Solomon and Hiram used to amuse themselves by asking each other perplexing riddles, that Hiram was at first the loser, but afterwards, by the help of a sharp-witted boy, was able to turn the tables. The "hard questions" here referred to may have

1 Kings X.

1 Kings X.

been riddles and enigmas, but it is more likely that they were metaphysical questions, "ever-old, ever-new problems of life." She is an example of all true seekers after wisdom; teachable, humble, earnest, so that she thinks no travel or toil too great for the attainment of it. As such she received the commendation of our Lord (Matt. xii. 42). And Solomon becomes a type of Him in whom "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3), "who is the Power and Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24—30). (See this thought worked out in Is. Williams' *Female Characters of O. T.*, pp. 145—156.)

"When we come to a rich treasure, we need not be bidden to carry away what we are able. The wise lady, as she came far for knowledge, so, finding the plenty of this vein, she would not depart without her full load: there was nothing wherein she would leave herself unsatisfied. She knew that she could not every day meet with a Solomon; and therefore she makes her best use of so learned a master. It is not good neglecting the opportunities of furnishing our souls with profitable, with saving knowledge." (*Bp. Hall.*)

5 **His ascent.** The Heb. word so translated is of constant use in the Bible, and nearly everywhere else signifies "burnt offering." Bp. Wordsworth sees a mystical meaning,—the Ascent of the Divine Solomon into the heavenly Temple was by the ascent of a whole Burnt Offering.

10 **Spices.** Josephus says that some rare plants were introduced into Palestine by her. She that is taught in the word ministereth to him that teacheth in all good things (Gal. vi. 6). And in presenting to him who hath already abundance, she represents all good and devoted hearts who minister to the King of heaven the fine gold of their virtues, the sweetest odours of their obedience. They enrich themselves by giving to Him. 13 The queen of Sheba returned richer than she came. She gave as a thankful learner, she received of the munificence of a king. "We shall be sure to be gainers by whatsoever we give unto Thee, O thou God of wisdom and peace! O that we could come, from the remote regions of our infidelity and worldliness, to learn wisdom of Thee, who both teachest and givest it abundantly, without upbraiding and without grudging, and could bring with us the poor presents of our faithful desires and sincere services! how wouldst thou receive us with a gracious acceptance, and send us away laden with present comfort, with eternal glory." (*Bp. Hall.*)

11 Some suppose **Ophir** to be Arabia, others Ceylon. The former supposition is on the whole the more probable (see "Ophir" in *B. D.*).

12 **Almug trees.** Red sandal wood. **Pillars, rails, or balustrades.** **Harpes and psalteries.** Cf. 2 Chron. v. 11—13.

14 **One year,** i. e. each year.

Six hundred and sixty-six. The reader will probably

remember the awful use of this number in the Book of Revelation. It is said there to be the "number of the Beast," i.e. of the ungodly and wicked power which is fighting against God, and which is to be cast into the lake of fire. It cannot be an accidental coincidence. For as it has been truly said, "the Seer of the Apocalypse lives in the Old Testament." Now the glory and wealth of Solomon were to the Jews the representatives of all earthly glory and wealth (cf. Matt. vi. 29). The worship of the beast in the Apocalypse is the worship of earthly riches. Its votaries think to reproduce the glory of old Jerusalem, but it is only the earthly, not the spiritual glory. It is opposed therefore to the heavenly Jerusalem which cometh down from above, in which Christ dwelleth. And thus the number which spoke of earthly riches came to have an evil and unholy significance—that of riches from which all blessing has departed. But further, the very number itself was not without significance. Seven is in Scripture the number of completeness, the number of *rest*. But the number of earthly wealth cannot reach that—it gets to six, and again to six, never reaching the happy seven, always apparently nearing the seven, but tantalized by never arriving at it. (See *Maurice on the Apocalypse*, p. 251.)

Beside that, &c. import duties.

Targets. Large shields, hung apparently on the outer walls, where they glittered in the sunshine with wonderful splendour (see *Stanley*, p. 194, and *note*). They were carried by the royal body-guard on state occasions, but were afterwards taken away by Shishak.

The house of the forest of Lebanon was a long hall, forming part of the palace, receiving its name from being encased with cedar (see Mr Fergusson's plan of Solomon's palace, *B. D.* ii. 658).

Throne of ivory, i.e. inlaid with ivory intermingled with gold, like some of the famous work of Phidias. The king "sate on the back of a golden bull, its head turned over its shoulder, probably the ox or bull of Ephraim; under his feet, on each side of the steps, were six golden lions, probably the lions of Judah. This was *the seat of judgment*. This was *the throne of the House of David*." (*Stanley*.)

Stays, arms.

Tharshish was the old Phœnician colony Tartessus, in Spain, near the mouth of the river Bætis (Guadalquivir). It is naturally, therefore, connected in Scripture with "the isles" of the Mediterranean, Ps. lxii. 10. Cf. Jonah i. 3. The importance of the traffic thus opened caused the name "ships of Tarshish" to be applied to all large merchant vessels, just as the name "East Indiaman" has been used with us. It would seem probable that it is so used in the latter part of this verse, and that it was from the Arabian coasts that the ships of Tarshish brought

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1 Kings X.

the treasures here named. But 1 Chron. ix. 21 distinctly states that the ships went to Tarshish, and it is not impossible that there was an emporium there whence these things could have been obtained, including "new forms of animal life on which the inhabitants of Palestine gazed with wondering eyes." (*Plumptre.*) Bp. Wordsworth thinks that the mention of them conveys a hint of moral declension, "that wealth had brought with it luxury and effeminacy, and a frivolous vainglorious love for novel and outlandish objects, to please the eye and indulge the fancy; and perhaps for the gratification and amusement of the vacant hours of the ladies of his court, those numerous wives and concubines who are mentioned immediately afterwards by the Sacred Historian."

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

1 Kings
XI.

Many readers will remember the terrible paragraphs with which Mr Carlyle's *French Revolution* opens; first, the description by an eye-witness of the general grief and terror at the sickness of Lewis XV. in 1744 (whereby he gained the title of "the Well-beloved"); and secondly, of the contrast thirty years afterwards. Then he lay again on a sick-bed, and the only hope of his subjects was that he might die, and when his corpse was carried to the grave they looked on with jeering and laughter. The historian of these things makes no mention of King Solomon, but the parallel seems to us in many respects close. "Le Bien-Aimé," "Jedidiah," so they were named, the one and the other. And both forfeited the title, and bartered their high gifts and their high position for the unrestrained indulgence of brutal and shameless sensuality. And further, as we have noticed already, the oppression of the poor which preceded the French Revolution was not, one may venture to opine, unlike the condition of the labourers under King Solomon.

Solomon's marriages were due perhaps, in the first place, to policy. He sought foreign alliances. And then licence begat fresh lust, and he gave himself to "strange women." In like manner we may probably trace the history of his idolatry. His intercourse with foreigners led him to look with liberality on their needs, and in recognizing what was true in these he lost his horror of what was false. He had been taught a faith of his own, a faith in Jehovah, the One God. Had he held this faith pure, distinct, and supreme, his toleration would have brought him no evil. He would have recognized among the idolatries "broken lights" of God, and would have rejoiced the more in Him from whom they all came, and who had revealed Himself to Israel. As it is he went from Jehovah to the gods and from the gods to Jehovah, and blended them all together. The women under whose influence he cast himself led his powerless will hither and thither, and gratified his love of display and magni-

fidence, by persuading him to erect temples for their various abominations.

1 Kings XI.

Facilis descensus Averni. From that time his best gifts were turned to instruments of evil. He had given himself to the study of natural history, that leaped now, apparently, into the study of occult virtues. Eastern legends are full of accounts of Solomon's magic arts, and they are confirmed by the continual reference afterwards to divination, incantations, sooth-saying.

Ashtoreth, or Astarte, was the principal female, as Baal was the male, divinity of the Phœnicians. Some take it to be the moon, others the planet Venus. The name has been found on the Assyrian sculptures in the form *Ishtar*. Our word "star" (Sanskrit) is said to be the same word. The worship was that of productive power. See *B. D.* i. 123.

5

Milcom, same as Moloch (or rather *Molech*, for it is always thus in the Hebrew), was worshipped with the sacrifice of children. Tradition has it that it was a hollow figure of brass, into which, when it was made burning hot, the child was placed.

Chemosh, the national deity of the Moabites. See Num. xxi. 29; Jer. xlvi. 13, 46. The form of the deity is uncertain, but tradition says it was that of a black star. Gesenius identifies it with the planet Mars.

7

The Temples were built on the southern side of Olivet, facing the royal gardens.

Twice. See ch. ix. 2—9. At the second time God gave him a distinct warning of his danger.

9

Said, probably by the prophet Ahijah (see ver. 29 infra). The Divine goodness is displayed both in the deferring of the disruption until after Solomon's death, and also in the still leaving a portion to his son. But these things were done, not from respect to Solomon, but on account of the promise to David (2 Sam. vii. 13—16), and also in order that the Divine grace might be manifested to Jerusalem, that all might see that that grace was not frustrated by man's sin, but that the place where God had set His Name should remain.

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12, 13

One tribe. See below, ver. 30. Ahijah afterwards gave *ten* pieces of his garment out of twelve to Jeroboam, though he still spoke of *one* tribe being left to Solomon's son. For the tribe of Benjamin joining itself to Judah was reckoned as one with it. The idea plainly intended to be conveyed is that *all Israel* fell away from Solomon's dynasty, except only his own tribe and its companion which remained to it (see further in *Keil*, p. 194).

Hadad was a boy of the royal race when Joab slaughtered the Edomites. He was saved, found favour in Egypt, married Pharaoh's wife's sister, and on the death of David returned to his native land. It does not, however, appear from the text how he "became an adversary" to Solomon. Josephus says that he excited the Idumeans to revolt, but not succeeding he joined

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1 Kings XI.

himself to Rezon and became King of Syria (*Ant.* viii. 7, § 6). The LXX, on the other hand, reads in ver. 25 as follows, "So Hadad returned to his country; this is the mischief which Hadad did, he was a bitter enemy to Israel, and he reigned in the land of *Edom*."

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

1 Kings
XI

26

Hadad and Rezon had proved external adversaries to Solomon. Perhaps he might have recovered himself had he recognized the hand of God punishing him. The new adversary, **Jeroboam the Ephrathite** (i.e. Ephraimite) of **Zereda** or **Zarthan**, in all probability the same as **Zaretan** (*Josh.* iii. 16), was much more formidable, for he raised a sedition within the kingdom.

29

Ephraim had always been the rival of Judah. There had been a time when it seemed to have taken the supremacy. Joshua belonged to it. It was fertile and secure in position. And the removal of the seat of government from Shechem in Ephraim to Jerusalem had created a bitter jealousy within the tribe, which Jeroboam shared. The lesson before us gives an account of his early history as an introduction to the narrative of the disruption in the next chapter. Dean Stanley tells the story with his usual power. "At the time when Solomon was constructing the fortifications of Millo underneath the citadel of Zion, his sagacious eye discovered the strength and activity of a young Ephraimite who was employed on the works, and he raised him to the rank of officer over the taxes and labour exacted from the tribe of Ephraim. This was Jeroboam. His father had died in his youth, but his mother, who had been a person of loose character [LXX], lived in her widowhood, trusting apparently to her son for support. Jeroboam made the most of his position. He completed the fortifications, and was long afterwards known as 'the man who had enclosed the city of David.' In his native place, Zereda, he lived in a kind of royal state. Like Absalom before him in like circumstances, though now on a grander scale, in proportion to the enlargement of the royal establishment itself, he kept three hundred chariots and horses [LXX], and was at length perceived to be aiming at the monarchy." The historian tells us the inducement. He had received the communication from Ahijah of Shiloh, which follows.

The history of his birth-place, Shiloh, must have made a deep impression on Ahijah, and shown him what the too probable end of Solomon and his kingdom would be. His rending of the *new* garment (i.e. the large square of cloth which by day was thrown over the shoulders, and by night served as a coverlet) shewed the importance in the prophet's eyes of what he was doing. The symbolical action was entirely characteristic of prophetic practice.

A light. The promise is referred to also in ch. xv. 4; 2 K. viii. 19. David himself had been called the light of Israel (2 Sam. xxi. 17), and had declared that his light was from God (Ps. cxxxii. 17; 2 Sam. xxii. 29).

The promise was made conditional to Jeroboam, as it had been to David, the conditions being uprightness of walking, and obedience to the commandments of God. On the fulfilment of these his family should continue, as David's also should do.

The condition was not fulfilled, and therefore Jeroboam's dynasty ended with his son. For, indeed, his obedience failed at the first test. He was told that Solomon should not have the kingdom taken out of his hand (ver. 34), and therefore all pretext of rebellion was removed from him. His duty was to wait as David had done, trusting that what God had promised that he would do. Instead of which he took the matter out of God's hands, and apparently attempted to raise a rebellion. A marked contrast to David. For *he* had actually been anointed king, and had been relentlessly pursued by Saul. Yet he did not venture, when his pursuer's life was in his power, to take it. He possessed his soul in patience, and waited upon God. Solomon was justified in seeking Jeroboam's life, as he would that of any other rebel.

Shishak, Sheshenk I., the first sovereign of the 22nd dynasty. He became king in the 26th year of Solomon, and in his 20th (5th year of Rehoboam) he pillaged the temple. He now gives sanctuary to Jeroboam, moved by enmity to Solomon, son-in-law to the king whom he had supplanted.

The sacred historian does not tell us aught concerning the later thoughts and feelings of Solomon. If the Book of Ecclesiastes is the expression of the thoughts of his old age (see on xxviii S. after Trinity), then we see how there had fallen on him, as on all voluptuaries, weariness and vexation of spirit. And even then the recovery is incomplete. He only arrived so far as this, that with slow and hesitating voice, he lays anew the foundation of morality, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." To enquire concerning his soul's salvation would be to intrude within the veil, to pass judgment on things which belong only to the Lord our God. This much we know, that whilst his father David's name occurs continually in both the Old and the New Testament, Solomon, mighty monarch as he was, is hardly named. He dies and is forgotten.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Shechem had been the national sanctuary in the time of Joshua (Josh. xxiv. 1, 25), and its national *prestige* remained

1 Kings XI.

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1 Kings XII.

1 Kings
XII.

after his death (Judg. ix. 1). It does not appear, it is true, in connexion with the accession of Saul, David, or Solomon; and probably the revival of its national character now indicates that the ten tribes were disaffected, and were bent on having their demands complied with, or seceding. For Shechem was in Ephraim. Jeroboam had left Egypt on hearing of Solomon's death (2 Chron. x. 2), he was now summoned to be their spokesman.

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4 Their demands were perfectly just, as the aged counsellors knew. They "gave just such advice as might have been found in the Book of Proverbs." (*Stanley*.) But Rehoboam appears to have been incapable, if not imbecile. We hear nothing of him during his father's lifetime, probably he was kept apart, secluded among the women in his father's harem. His son Ahijah was hardly able to suppress a sneer at him after his death (2 Chron. xiii. 7).

The passage that follows has repeated itself a thousand times since. The courtiers giggling from the windows at Versailles at seeing the Deputies ignominiously shut out in the rain, and those Deputies adjourning to the tennis court to constitute themselves *the National Assembly*, prelude to the most momentous event in modern history,—it is but the old story repeated. See Carlyle, *French Revolution*, Vol. I. bk. v. ch. 2. "Have we not, in one sphere or other, among the patriarchs of a village, or the statesmen of a kingdom, met and conversed with some of these grave old men, who did not, perhaps, set before themselves the highest standard of moral excellence, who did not at once pronounce upon the right or wrong of an action; but whom long experience had taught the might which lies in gentle words, and the real desire there is in human beings to obey, if there be but sense and somewhat of sympathy in those who rule? Have we not also, and alas! far more frequently encountered those young men flushed with insolence and wine, who talked loudly of putting down the pretensions of inferiors, and of maintaining their own position and dignity, who had never yet learnt in what superiority or dignity consists, who had never begun to reverence their fellowmen because they did not reverence themselves; who thought they could meet the demands of suffering and wronged men, by boasting words and a frantic determination to maintain privileges which they ought never to have possessed, because they were not privileges based upon any real relations, upon any law human or divine, but merely upon accident and assumption, which must perish as rapidly as they have grown up. And yet these, as the story teaches, and as all subsequent history has proved, are the favourite and triumphant advisers of those whom their own vanity and folly have already doomed, and who want parasites to put into words the doctrine which they have already received into their cold empty hearts." (*Maurice*.)

The prophecy of Ahijah is thus fulfilled. Though God was not the author of Rehoboam's evil acts, yet He turns them to accomplish His own will, they are the messengers of His wrath, and the king's sin works out its own punishment. Rehoboam tried in vain to recover the tribes. The thing was from the Lord, as the fall of Saul was, and the revolution was almost bloodless. One man only, and he one of the oldest (2 Sam. xx. 24, 1 Kings v. 14), one probably who had counselled moderation (it is generally the case in revolution that the innocent suffer for the sins of the guilty), but who was obnoxious from the nature of his office, was savagely slain as though he were a traitor or blasphemer. The king fled in terror from Shechem to Jerusalem. The words that follow certainly imply, as Dean Stanley says, that this revolution was a national act, that the northern kingdom was, so to speak, the legitimate monarchy of the nation, and had a right to look for God's favour and blessing, as entirely as the family of David had upon their portion of the land.

Shemaiah. See 2 Chron. xii. 5, 7, 15. He appears to have been descended from David, 1 Chron. iii. 22.

The disruption was thus completed and sanctioned by God. It was in the power of Jeroboam to justify before men the step which the nation had taken, by reigning righteously and holily. As Dean Stanley shews, the Kingdom of Israel was for the time the National Kingdom. Jerusalem remained the centre place of God's worship, but a great and high work was placed within the power of Jeroboam.

He proceeded to consolidate his power. As we have already seen, it was his skill in military architecture which first brought him under Solomon's notice; he now puts that skill into use. Shechem was unrivalled for beauty of situation, and full of interest from past associations (see on ver. 1), and naturally Jeroboam made it his capital. Yet it "never became to the North what Jerusalem was to the South."

"The Sovereigns of Israel followed the tendency by which princes of all times have been led to select pleasant residences apart from the great cities of state. This difference arose partly from the absence of fixed religious associations at Shechem, partly from the succession of dynasties. It was also fostered by the greater opportunities furnished in the north for such an increase of royal residences. In the territory of Ephraim, in this respect the exact reverse of Judah, the fertile plains and wooded hills, which are its characteristic ornaments, at once gave an opening for the formation of parks and pleasure-grounds, like the 'Paradises' of the Assyrian and Persian monarchies. The first of these was Tirzah, in the hills north of Shechem, of proverbial beauty, selected by Jeroboam, and during three reigns the residence and burial-place of the royal house. Another was Jezreel. The chief of all was Samaria, which ultimately super-

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seded all the rest. In these capitals the kings resided, and were buried, as it would seem with the same pomp as that which accompanied the interment of the kings of Judah in the vaults of the sepulchre of David. (*Stanley*, p. 268.)

26 His next step was a disastrous one both in its conception and in its results. It is probable that the idolatries which were prevailing in Judah (see xiv. 22—24) were disgusting the northern kingdom, and had a large share in inducing Israel to acquiesce in Jeroboam's act. He, on his part, while fearing the results of their going up to Jerusalem, and knowing the attachment of the priesthood to the house of David, was anxious to surround his court with divine sanctions, and forms of worship. And, as before, he did not wait to see how God would preserve his Kingdom from danger, but set up two rival sanctuaries, and within each of them the figure of the sacred calf of Heliopolis, with which his previous stay in Egypt had familiarised him. His call upon the people to worship, **Behold thy God¹, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt**, was evidently intended as a protest against the polytheism of the Southern Kingdom. With the intention of obeying the first commandment, he broke the second.

Romanist writers have of course "applied" this narrative, and compared Rome with Jerusalem, and the Elector of Saxony and Henry VIII. with Jeroboam. But when our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father," He announced a law of His Universal Church which excludes one visible centre of it as much as another. (See *Maurice's Prophets*, &c., Sermon VI., especially his remarks on the Greek and Latin schism, and on that of the rival popes, and the sects of the Reformation, pp. 100—104.)

The northern sanctuary, that of Dan, was first consecrated, and Dean Stanley reminds us of the interesting tradition preserved in the family of Tobit, that when his father joined the rest of his tribe (Naphtali) in rejecting Rehoboam, he at the same time refused to join the schismatical worship, and continued to go up to Jerusalem. (*Tob. i. 4—7*.)

31 **Of the lowest of the people.** This is hardly the correct rendering. The Heb. is literally "from the ends of the people," and signifies from all tribes of the people indiscriminately. See 2 Chron. xiii. 9.

32 **The eighth month.** Evidently intended as the Feast of Tabernacles, though kept a month later, probably because of the later ingathering of the northern harvest. The present feast was intended as the solemn inauguration of the southern sanctuary of Bethel. Bethel, i. e. "house of God," had been a place sanctified in earliest times, see Gen. xii. 8; xxviii. 11,

¹ This is the right translation. Jeroboam was not a polytheist.

19; xxxi. 13; xxxv. 1, 7. The sin of Jeroboam procured for it the name of *Beth-aven*, "house of vanity" (Hos. x. 5).

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XII.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

It would appear that the warning before us came on the day that Jeroboam inaugurated the sanctuary of Bethel, the fifteenth day of the eighth month. He was standing by the altar to burn incense to his golden calves when the prophet of Judah appeared to protest against the apostasy. The prophet is not named; according to Josephus it was Iddo the seer, one of the most important prophets of the time (see 2 Chron. ix. 29; xii. 15; xiii. 22). Many persons, as the late Mr H. V. Elliott, truly writes, "dislike the history of his tragical end, and are scandalized by it. And we must confess that it requires a faith in God which is not staggered by difficulties, but at once meets the rising objections by the thought, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' before we can read such a narrative as this without some offence at the first view of it, or some secret repugnance¹."

1 Kings
XIII

The primary duty of his mission was fully and bravely achieved. He came from Judah, from the place where God had placed His Name, to protest against the new superstition, to proclaim confusion and destruction to it. The utmost desecration should befall it, men's bones should be burnt upon it, even the very bones of the present sacrificers. Thus the single unprotected prophet met the king in his pride and glory. Only Elijah on Mount Carmel appears more brave. (1 Kings xviii. 22.)

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God attests the prophet's courage by defending him from the king's wrath, and by rending the altar². The headstrong king was reduced to supplicate for a cure. "Intreat the Lord thy God," he cries, conscience-stricken, not daring at this dread moment to claim a right in Jehovah.

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The king's offer was hardly made in good faith. Like Balak with Balaam he seems to have failed to recognize the voice of the Unchangeable God in the words of the prophet, but to have thought the prophet the centre of his own visions. So Jeroboam offers a bribe, with the hope of getting his false worship sanctioned, or at least of blunting the edge of the denunciation by appearing to be publicly reconciled with the denouncer.

7

But again the prophet is found faithful. The offer of gifts moves him no more than danger had done. Nor did any temptations of expediency move him. He might have argued, "Having produced some effect upon the king shall I not go on,

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¹ Sermons before the University of Cambridge.

² The Hebrew narrative implies this. The LXX, which Dean Stanley follows, reads, "He will give a sign in that day." The Dean refers it to the time of Amos. But it seems clear to me that the narrative means that the sign occurred there and then.

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XIII.

and strike while the iron is hot, while his mind is thoroughly moved?" He knew better. His mission was to declare the sin of the king, and only that. The command was clear and positive. What else was to be done was not to be done by him; and we must see in this, as Mr Elliott shews, a solemn act of excommunication. As long as the idolatrous worship was suffered, so long there could be no national fellowship on the part of Judah. And subsequent events showed that this was God's will. No alliance between the two kingdoms, whether of war, or commerce, or marriage, ever prospered. See 1 Kings xxii. 4; 2 Kings iii. 7; 2 Chron. xx. 35—37, for proofs in the two cases first named; and the marriage of Jehoshaphat's son to Ahab's daughter produced the most terrible tragedy in the history of the monarchy (2 Kings viii. 16—20 and xi.). See too 2 Chron. xxv. 7. And the lesson remains for ever, that we should avoid all intimacies with those who do not fear or love God.

10 The prophet, then, turned back, mysterious and solitary, and obedient to the commandment to return by another way; a command given either that he might be free from importunities where his prophetic power had become known, or else that he might spread his protest more widely.

11 The old prophet who dwelt at Bethel is a proof to us that a man may have Divine gifts, may not be an habitual deceiver, but yet may, for reasons of his own, on a particular occasion use deceit, or in the plain words of Scripture—lie. Neither Prophets nor Apostles are raised out of the possibility of sinning. This man knew his own powers of persuasion, was clever and bold, and turned his skill to evil account. What were his motives we are not told. One may suppose that his dwelling at Bethel, in the midst of the idolatrous worship, and yet making no protest against it, caused his vexation and envy at hearing that the denunciation which he ought to have made had been made by another. A man who has allowed low motives to rule him would be tempted now to bring his fellow prophet down to his own standard, and by appearing to be on friendly terms with the brave and true prophet, preserve his own endangered credit in the eyes of the dwellers there.

19 And the man who was deceived, what does he teach us? That no pretences of Divine knowledge on the part of any one, though he were a prophet or an angel, must countervail the sure convictions of duty. He took the word of man when the word of God had spoken clearly to him, and had been attested as he stood before the idolatrous altar. It may be that the desire after ease, or sympathy, or homage, moved his heart to listen to the plausible words¹. The natural result of his sin would be to

¹ It is a misfortune in this case certainly that the present chapter is no longer read on the eighth Sunday after Trinity as formerly it was, for the opening words of the Gospel for that day are the best Commentary upon the Lesson: "Beware of false

undo his own mission. To enter a house in Bethel, and to eat and drink there, was to take off the interdict which God had commanded him to lay, to receive into favour and to have communion with the idolatry which he had been sent to testify against. And it was this which God would not suffer. His ambassador having undone, as far as lay in his power, God's work, God took His cause into His own hand, and reunited the broken thread of His measures, that neither friend nor foe might thwart His solemn purpose. His own messenger had publicly set His decree at naught, and proclaimed peace where God had proclaimed no peace, therefore the messenger should die.

But the instinct of mankind has made all commentators upon this history, as far as I know, speak of him with pity and reverence, echoing the cry of the old prophet who mourned over him saying "Alas my brother," and approving the act of Josiah who said "Let no man move his bones." "He died *for* his sin, not *in* it," says one writer. And Bp. Hall writes with somewhat too sharp dogmatism, "His life was forfeited for example, his soul was safe." It is simpler and better to fall back upon the blessed and comforting words of Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The commentary of Maurice, however, is so beautiful that I am sure the reader will rejoice to read it.

"A stern punishment, it will be said, for such a crime. An *actual* punishment certainly,—one which asserted the fact, that a prophet will not be more, but less, excused for his transgressions, than another man. What was the *magnitude* of the punishment, we are no judges. A man who has been witness of a great national sin and has foretold a great national calamity, who has found out the falsehood of a friend and a prophet, and who is conscious of having done wrong himself, may not think the sentence a very hard one which calls him out of a confused world; or more hard because it comes in a form which assures him that there is an eternal order which will vindicate itself in spite of his errors and those of all other men. A man of God who had learned to trust God, could trust him when he was slaying him, and see that there was a deep and awful righteousness and wisdom in the way in which the creatures of God going forth to seek their meat from Him, may, without the least departure from the ordinary law of their kind, be made the instruments of punishing man's transgressions. The prophet who betrayed him, and then had the heavy punishment of being forced to proclaim the wrong which he had himself instigated, is surely the greater object of compassion, especially if, as the narrative half leads us to suspect, his conscience was blunted,

prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

1 Kings
XIII.

and he was able to understand Jeroboam's sin without any keen sense of his own. A man with a clear apprehension of the evil doings of rulers, and admiration for those who protest against them, with a prophetic power of uttering the truth, yet with no love of truth or resolute abhorrence of falsehood, is a very painful but a very instructive spectacle. Every one must be conscious of something akin to such a state of mind, some possibility of it, at all events, in himself. He should think of *that* with trembling, and with the prayer, 'See if there be any wicked way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting.' There is something very pathetic in the homage to a truer and better man, which is expressed in the words, 'Lay my bones beside his bones.' The lion slew him for returning with me to eat bread and drink water; yet I should have been glad to die his death; for I feel that he was right within, and therefore that there is a sacredness in his carcase which I should wish mine to share.' (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 114.)

33

The witness borne by the man of God appears to have been in vain. "Jeroboam returned not from his evil way." Superstition is cursed not with barrenness, but with fruitfulness, and goes on perpetuating itself. He became more and more the slave of his false prophets, and multiplied them in the hope of stilling his conscience. And, as we know, his history and epitaph are perpetuated in the words "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." It is an awful thing to lead one man into sin,—how much more awful to lead a society,—a nation!

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

1 Kings
XVII.

The dynasty of Jeroboam ended with his son Nadab. Baasha slew him, and reigned in his stead, but no moral improvement followed the change (see xvi. 1—7). His son Elah succeeded, but was slain with all his kindred, by Zimri. The latter reigned seven days, was then besieged by Omri in his palace at Tirzah, and finding himself hardly pressed, set fire to the palace and perished in the flames. A civil war followed, which resulted in fixing Omri upon the throne. He was a bad man, and apparently descended to a lower depth of idolatry and ungodliness than any of his predecessors (Micah vi. 16), but his reign appears to have been marked with more show and success than theirs. He built Samaria on a site the exquisite beauty of which still attests the wisdom of his choice (see Stanley's *Palestine*, 243), and it became the capital of the kingdom, and remained so until the fall of the monarchy. The accession of his son Ahab is a fatal epoch. He married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the fratricide¹ king of Zidon. At her instigation Ahab introduced into Israel the worship of Baal. The conscience of the nation, it is too plain, had become besotted by the idol-

¹ See Joseph. *Ant.* viii. 13. § 1.

atry of Jeroboam; it was of no avail that he had declared himself the worshipper of the God who had delivered the people from Egypt, for the breach of the commandment had made both him and his people incapable of drawing moral distinctions. So they had gone on from bad to worse, and their consciences had become more and more blinded. And now when king Ahab introduced a foreign worship, practised by a nation which was strong and prosperous, probably it obtained wide acceptance at once. For he was evidently a man of ability, he built new cities and an ivory palace, and altogether gives us the idea of intellectual superiority over his predecessors. But he was also weak and vacillating, and under the control of his bolder and stronger wife.

Baal (i.e. 'lord') was the principal male deity of the Phœnicians. He was regarded as the author of all physical life and energy, and was worshipped under various forms. "The Baal worship was essentially the worship of mere power. I do not say that abstractedly or originally it was the worship of an *evil* power. But it was the worship of power as distinguished from righteousness. It was the worship therefore of that which man sees without him in nature. It is hard, almost impossible, for man to conceive of power apart from sound order and government. But these ideas become exceedingly weak when they are derived from nature to man, not through man to nature. When we think that the things themselves exercise the power, and do not receive it from One in whom dwells eternal justice and rectitude,—forms which denote the most violent and inexplicable outbursts of fury, the fire and the tempest, are speedily thought to represent the nature of the Baal or Baalim, of the lord or lords of the universe. At all events these are what man must address himself to. Some joyous feasts may be celebrated, with wild and reckless licence, to the gentler and humaner powers which manifest themselves in the propitious breeze, the quiet evening, the sun that ripens the autumn fruits. But the most serious services, the sacrifices which those very enjoyments have made necessary, the libations of blood, must be presented to some malevolent nature, which would destroy unless it were soothed. Thus the worship of power becomes literally the worship of evil. By a regular and awful process Baal or Baal-zebub became in the minds of his devout servants, what his name imported to Jews of later time—the Prince of the Devils." (*Maurice*, p. 127.)

What a man worships that he will grow like. And that Ahab became cruel and capricious, like the Deity which he imagined for himself, we see from the narrative of his life. Let us notice here in passing, that he was the first *religious persecutor* (xviii. 4).

Suddenly appeared Elijah the Tishbite, the greatest of the Prophets, with a stern message to the king. He is mentioned for the first time in the verse before us; and the startling ab-

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ruptness suits well with his character. We have no means of knowing even the meaning of the word "Tishbite." He appeared suddenly in the midst of that evil generation, blazing forth in the gloom, and typifying Him who shall be made manifest to the ungodly world like a thief in the night.

The significance of the prophet's message may be expressed thus: "Thou, Ahab, worshippes Baal, God of the Phœnicians; thou believest that he is lord of nature, of life and fruitfulness. I stand before (i.e. *am the servant of*) the **LORD, God of Israel**, and I will shew thee now that He, and not Baal, is the Creator and Life-giver. There shall now be no dew nor rain except according to my word."

He had prayed that it might be so, in order that the truth might be made manifest to the idolatrous people. (James v. 17.) The drought lasted three years and a half, i.e. until the people confessed that the LORD, and no other, was their GOD.

2 Having given this abrupt and short message he is com-
4 manded to hide himself, seeing that Jezebel's wrath will fall on
6 him immediately that the drought begins. "In the green thickets
which gathered round the yet unexhausted waters in the bed of the
Cherith, the Prophet first hid himself. To him, as to the Prophets
of the Jordan valley generally, the leafy covert of the forest was
no unusual refuge. Thither, we are told, night and morning,
came the ravens that frequented that one green spot, 'the young
ravens' of Palestine that cry to God—'the ravens' whom God
feedeth, 'though they neither sow nor reap'—and laid their
portion of bread and flesh at break of day, and at fall of evening,
by the side of the gushing stream; and of the fresh waters of that
gushing stream he drank and his life was preserved." (*Stanley*,
p. 296.)

The lesson specially conveyed by this narrative is frequently taught in Scripture. It is that man in wilful disobedience is reproved by the instincts of the lower creatures of God. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isai. i. 3.)

The animals which entered the ark when the ungodly world refused; Balaam, duller of discernment than the ass; the lions crouching before Daniel; the wild beasts subject to Him who was rejected of men (Mark i. 13), all teach the same lesson.

8—16

Zarephath was between Tyre and Zidon. Elijah therefore was now sent to an inhabitant of the very land whence Jezebel had come. A token to himself as well as to his people, that the Lord, God of Israel, was God of the heathen nation also, the God of the whole earth; not an exclusive God, but one from whom the poor everywhere might seek their daily bread, and on whom they might cast all their care. The narrative before us is quoted by our Lord for this purpose (Luke iv. 25), to shew that the God of Israel was not bound to Israel alone, but was able everywhere to raise up children to Abraham.

The prophet's miracle had called forth her faith. And He who saw the branch bring forth fruit, purged it that it might bring forth more fruit. The dew had fallen on her when it was dry around, but now came another sign, the wool was to be dried up by exceeding trouble. Heavy affliction came upon her because she had learned to love God and was beloved by Him. And out of this affliction came the Divine lesson that the God whom she had regarded as a Destroyer was really the Conqueror of Death, and that He is able to deliver, not only the great and holy, but those whose sins are brought to their remembrance.

(See a very devout and touching sermon on this passage in Is. Williams' *Female Characters of Holy Scripture.*)

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The third year, i.e. of Elijah's stay at Zarephath.

Nothing certain is known of this Obadiah beyond what we have here. Some writers have identified him with the prophet of the same name. One tradition makes him the third captain of fifty in 2 Kings i. 13, another makes the "certain woman" of 2 Kings iv. 1, his widow. It is evident that he was a man of very great influence, as he retained his office, the highest next to Ahab's in the kingdom, in spite of his zealous worship of Jehovah.

There seems to be some gap in the narrative. This massacre has not been previously mentioned. But it is evident that Jezebel had killed the prophets as being of the same school as Elijah, whom she regarded as having caused the drought by magic arts.

Obadiah knew the suddenness of Elijah's movements, and feared a sudden disappearance now.

Obadiah's salutation to Elijah had been one of reverence, that of Ahab may be called one of angry curiosity. It would appear that they had never met before, and that Elijah's previous denunciation had been delivered by a messenger. They stand face to face at last then, the king and the rough hair-clothed prophet. "**Art thou the troubler of Israel?**" asks Ahab. And Elijah makes answer, "*Thou* art the troubler, it is thy evil doing which has brought all this calamity on the nation. I have come to shew thee that, to prove that thy gods are false, and my God only is true." Ahab was evidently cowed, both by the calamity which had fallen on the land, and by the stern appearance and accents which he now met for the first time. He proceeded at once to obey Elijah's directions. **The prophets of the groves** should read "the prophets of Ashtaroth," i.e. of the moon-goddess, worshipped in conjunction with Baal.

Universal tradition makes the scene of the events which followed to be on the eastern summit of Carmel, commanding

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1 Kings XVIII.

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1 Kings
XVIII.

a view of the Mediterranean 12 miles distant on the NNW., and of the fruitful plain of Esdraclon on the east. The place is named *Maharrahakah*, "the burning." In the distance was visible the stately city of Jezreel, with Ahab's ivory palace and Jezebel's temple. The river Kishon at their feet wound slowly through the green plain to the sea. In a little hollow shaded from the burning sun by a grove of trees, and therefore not likely to be dried up by the drought, is a well of water, said to be perennial, and round it were now assembled the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, clad, one might believe, in their splendid vestments; and opposed to them was the toilworn, gaunt figure of the prophet of the Lord. The prophets of Ashtaroth apparently had declined the contest, there is no mention of them; Jezebel too was absent. The king and people stood around in eager silent expectation.

Elijah's opening words are a protest against religious indifference. He does not give up his cause because it appears hopeless, because king and queen and majority of the people are against him. He stands faithful, unflinching, hopeful, because he has already experienced God's care and power.

26 The scene that followed is "the exact picture of Oriental fanaticism. As the Dervishes work themselves into a frenzy by the invocation of *Allah! Allah!* until the words themselves are lost in inarticulate gasps...so the prophets of Baal performed their wild dances round their altar, or upon it, springing up or sinking down, with the fantastic gestures which Orientals alone can command." (Stanley, p. 301.)

27 The biting sarcasm of this verse, far more savage and
28 merciless in the original than in our translation, is one of the very few examples of irony in Scripture. It drove them to sheer raving lunacy.

The LXX. here inserts some interesting words: "And at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the Tishbite spoke to the prophets of the abominations, saying Stand aside now, and I will offer my sacrifice. And they stood aside, and went apart."

30 The contrast which here begins is the most impressive part of this most impressive chapter. Instead of frenzy and unrest, Elijah's acts are marked with the most calm and minute regularity. He waits for the time of the evening sacrifice, reminding the people thereby that sacrifice was appointed by God Himself, that it was therefore not a violent effort on men's part to bring Him near, but His own appointed means; he builds the altar which has been thrown down (evidently in
31 the recent persecution); uses twelve stones to testify that the people are still a part of the chosen people, outwardly separated from their brethren of Judah, but none the less under God's
31 care, and still one in his sight. He makes a trench round the
32 altar and deluges the sacrifice which he has prepared with

water, to prevent all suspicion of fraud. All this he does deliberately, then he offers his prayer. He calls upon Jehovah, as the God of the fathers of his nation, to bear witness to Himself that He is still the nation's God, to turn their hearts back again to Himself. They have fallen into an unnatural condition, are trying to be independent of their God. Evil has become their god, and holds them in hard fetters, but the Lord is able to turn them back again. To this prayer came the answer of the fire, testifying that God is the author of sacrifice and prayer as well as the acceptor of it, and that there is no real sacrifice but such as He Himself kindles.

Of course the people who had been so cruelly deceived by these false priests, and had suffered so much in consequence, were now filled with corresponding rage, and Elijah was able to slay the four hundred and fifty, Ahab himself apparently acquiescing. The slaughter was but the fulfilment of God's law (Deut. xiii. 5; xvii. 2—5; xviii. 20), and it is a witness to us, as it was to the Jews of old, of God's wrath against all who corrupt and demoralize men by trading in religious superstitions. It is the form of revelation of this truth which belonged to the old dispensation, a form which was done away by the Incarnation of Christ. Idolatry is not less hateful to Him now, but He has given us a clearer view of the judgment to come. But if the witness of the Old Testament, the visible witness of His wrath against sin had not been given, we should have been left in darkness where now we have light. God does not punish religious hypocrites with sudden death, yet the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira is the indication of an eternal law.

There is a sound, &c., consequent on the people's repentance, and their cry, "The Lord He is God." No ears, says Bp. Hall, but those of the faithful prophet could hear the sound of that coming rain.

The top of Carmel is about 750 feet higher than the spot where the sacrifice took place. Elijah's station was above this spot, but he sent his servant to one still higher—away to the west, where he could command a view of the Western Sea. The sacrificial feast, to which he had sent Ahab, was also on some higher peak of the ridge. See ver. 44, "Go up."

Cast himself down, attitude expressive of what S. James describes, "He prayed earnestly" (James v. 17). The **seven times** indicate the same thing, and also the foreknowledge of God. He withheld the shower until all was *complete*, the prophet went on praying until the time should be fulfilled which he knew that God had arranged by His power.

The distance was about 12 miles. The prophet put forth his wonderful physical strength, of which we have manifold indications, to do honour to the king. It had been his duty to reprove, rebuke and punish Ahab, and he had not shrunk

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XVIII.

from the duty. It was also his duty to honour the king's office and respect his authority. He openly does so now as an example to the people, and he does it in the most marked and self-denying manner. For it is a necessary part of Oriental state that the king should have runners by his side when going forth on horseback. **To the entrance of Jezreel**, halting there, apparently, with true Bedouin caution, which succeeding events proved to be wise.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

1 Kings
XIX.

3 The Prophet had convinced both king and people, but the ruling spirit of the kingdom was as yet undaunted, and she sent him this furious message. He fled to Beersheba, which was on his way to Horeb, a destination chosen, we may believe, that he might meditate upon the broken Law, and upon what seemed the abortive Covenant, on the spot where that Law and Covenant were given.

4 We have already said that Elijah's slaughter of the false priests was a righteous act, and in accordance with the law of God as it was revealed to him. But it is also true, as Maurice writes, that his deep despondency is the natural result of his exercise of destructive power. The sense of exhaustion, the cry, **I am not better than my fathers**, though I have done such wonders,—every prophet must have these bitter experiences, if he is not to sink into a Baal-worshipper, and after all to regard the God of Truth and Righteousness merely as a God of might. He had no command to go into the wilderness as he had to Cherith and Zarephath; he was tempted to retire from his work, as if it had failed, instead of remembering that God can save by many or by few. Therefore God sent His angel to comfort him and shew him that there was One who cared for him, and turned his solitary pilgrimage into an occasion of fresh revelation. Elijah was but a novice when he came to Horeb, he left it an initiated man. He learned that *mere* outward signs of power, the earthquake, the storm, the fire, were in themselves

5 nothing, but only symbols. But the still small voice, the inward word which spoke to the heart and the conscience, this at once demanded and compelled reverence. Even so before in this same mountain after the fire and the storm had struck terror into the hearts of the people, Moses had said unto the Lord, "I beseech thee shew me Thy glory," and in answer the Lord had proclaimed Himself "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." It is an epitome of the history of God's revelation to man. The wind, the fire and the earthquake went first, then came the still small voice of the Gospel, speaking in the accents of love.

15 Two lessons of humiliation followed, but of deep comfort too. Elijah had spoken as if the cause of God could not go on

without him, as if *his* failure meant utter failure. Now he is told that God can do without him, that he has other instruments in store, Elisha the son of Shaphat, Hazael the heathen captain, and Jehu the fierce Israelite. They shall carry on the work which Elijah has begun and shall bring it to success.

The other lesson is this: Elijah is taught that God who seeth not as man seeth, has marked 7000 in Israel, entirely unknown but to Himself, who have never joined in the Baal-worship, that there is therefore a *remnant* of good by means of which the truth shall be preserved. All this taught him not to care whether he was "better than his fathers," but to care only that God might be glorified.

I know no commentary on this chapter which is equal to Dr Stanley's (*Jewish Ch.* II. 307—311), for the beautiful and devout way in which he brings out the Divine instruction contained in it.

For the rest of the Chapter see the Lesson for S. Matthew's Day, Morning.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

"The final doom of the dynasty of Omri was called forth, not by its idolatry, not by its persecution of the Prophets, but by an act of injustice to an individual, a private citizen." (Stanley, p. 311.)

Hard by, on the east of the city, outside the walls. For Jehu passed it when entering the city from the east. Jezreel itself, now Zerin, was Ahab's summer residence, about 25 miles N. of Samaria.

Garden of herbs, as distinguished from a park of trees. An Israelite was forbidden to alienate his paternal inheritance, lest he should forget that his land was GOD'S, and he a sojourner in it. Lev. xxv. 23; Num. xxxvi. 7. There may be also a religious scruple expressed in the words, "*The Lord forbid it.*"

This peculiar mood, as of a sulky child, appears to have been characteristic of Ahab. Cf. xx. 43. It was just the kind of character that the energetic Jezebel would be sure to master.

Dost thou, &c. Better rendered in the LXX, "Is it thus that thou actest the king over Israel?"

Proclaim a fast, as if some public calamity had happened. **On high**, literally, "at the head of the assembly." Josephus states that Naboth was one of the most influential men in the city.

The false charge was brought according to the regular form of Jewish law. Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15.

Dr Stanley infers from the expression "yesternight" in 2 Kings ix. 26, that the iniquitous sentence was executed in the

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XXI.

darkness of the night. From the same passage we learn that Naboth's sons were murdered with him. The LXX. states that the doomed family were dragged all the way to Samaria for execution, but this is not likely.

15 We note here the horrible indifference which marks the words of Jezebel,—“Take free possession of what he would not sell thee.” And she tells him all that he cares to know; apparently he avoids asking particulars. She knew him well that

“What he would highly
That he would holily; would not play false,
And yet would wrongly win.”

According to the LXX. for a moment Ahab exhibited a real or affected grief, “he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth.” But it was only for a moment. He left Samaria and went down the steep hill in his chariot towards Jezreel. Behind him, in his royal chariot, were Bidkar and Jehu. (2 Kings ix. 25, 26.)

16 He came to the ill-gotten spot, “there was the vacant plot of
18 ground waiting for its new possessor. There is a solitary figure standing on the deserted ground, as though the dead Naboth had risen from his bloody grave to warn off the king from his unlawful gains. It is Elijah, come to utter the doom of the house of Ahab. He comes we know not whence.” (Stanley.)

20 **Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?** “It is thus that sinners regard God’s messages. He is their enemy. He may be discharging a solemn duty; reluctantly, unwillingly, with great pain to himself, with all kindness in his heart; it matters not; if he comes from God, if he carries God’s message, if he speaks the truth, if he loves righteousness, he is regarded as an enemy by one who will not be saved.” (Dr Vaughan’s *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, Sermon. xii. The whole Sermon is full of valuable thoughts on this passage.)

24 “Wherever the house of Ahab should be found, and wherever the blood of Naboth had left its traces, the decree of vengeance was pronounced; the horizon was darkened with the visions of vultures glutting on the carcasses of the dead, and the packs of savage dogs feeding on their remains, or lapping up their blood.” (Stanley.)

27 **Went softly**, rather “went barefoot.” The LXX. implies that Ahab put on these signs of penitence on each anniversary of Naboth’s death. Thus it appeared that “there was in the heart of Ahab a sense of better things, and that sense was recognized and blessed.” For God overlooks no effort, however feeble, toward repentance. (Matt. xii. 20.)

29 The subsequent fall of Ahab was owing to his own repeated wilfulness, and the whole action of Elisha afterwards shews that his son Jehoram might have averted the judgment upon his house, as the Ninevites did.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Ahab had been much engaged in war with Benhadad, king of Syria. "The Syrian war," Dean Stanley writes, "forms the background of the whole of the history of Omri's dynasty." There had been, however, a truce of three years, during which, for the first time since the separation of Judah and Israel, there had been an alliance, ratified by the marriage of Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, with Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat. It was an ill-omened alliance, based not upon the desire for the happiness of the people or the honour of Jehovah, but for military and dynastic power. Its result was that when the house of Ahab perished, nearly the whole royal family of Judah perished with it. (See on 2 Chron. xxiv. pp. 31, 32.)

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The first results of the alliance are seen in the chapter before us. The king of Israel desired to recover from the Syrians the fortress of Ramoth-Gilead, and, on the occasion of a state visit from the king of Judah conducted with great pomp and solemnity, proposed that they should go against it. (See 2 Chron. xviii. 2 ; Stanley, p. 315.)

2

The prophets here spoken of may have been the prophets of Ashtaroath, who, as we have already found reason to believe, escaped the slaughter of Carmel ; or, as Hengstenberg and others suppose, they were prophets of the golden calves, professing to worship Jehovah under the forms of these. But it is clear that their profession of faith in the Lord was but hollow ; the word translated "Lord" in this verse is *Adonai*, not *Jehovah*, and in Chronicles it is only *Elohim*. Afterward, when Micaiah had been sent for, they were driven to the use of the name Jehovah. There is no need to add that they were false time-servers. They were all, with one voice, clamouring for the war.

6

Jehoshaphat probably reckoned that the victories which Ahab had gained, according to the prediction of a prophet of the Lord, would induce him once more to seek counsel of him.

7

Micaiah is said by Josephus (VIII. 14, § 5) to have been the prophet who foretold the fall of Ahab as described in ch. xx. 42. "This hath wont to be the ancient lot of truth, censure and hatred ; censure of the message, hatred of the bearer. To carnal ears, the message is evil if displeasing, and if plausible, good ; if it be sweet it cannot be poison, if bitter it cannot be wholesome." (Bp. Hall.) Ahab's notion of prophecy, it is evident, was of the same false nature as Balak's. Seeing that the predictions of true prophets were accomplished, he concluded that they had such influence with the Divinity, as to induce Him to fulfil their will.

8

Hasten hither, &c. The king knew where to find him ; apparently he was already in custody for his plain-speaking (see ver. 26). Probably Ahab thought in the blindness of his super-

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1 Kings
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stitution that this imprisonment would move him to revenge himself by fresh evil predictions.

11 Acted parables were characteristic of the prophets. The metaphor here was apparently derived from Deut. xxxiii. 17. The horns of the wild bull of Ephraim were to push the enemies of the kingdom to the ends of the earth. The prophet had the reward that he sought for, that all flatterers seek—the smile of the powerful; present popularity.

15 The tones of his voice probably indicated the irony of his
16 words. On Ahab's adjuration, expressive of an earnest desire
17 for the truth, he suddenly breaks forth with this sublime but
appalling vision. It consists of two parts, divided by Ahab's
18 angry interruption. The first part is a vision of things on the
earth—the tribes of Israel, scattered on the hills of Gilead like
sheep who have lost their shepherd. The voice of God comes
to them and bids them depart to their home. The LXX.
version is more forcible, "and the Lord said, Is not GOD the
lord of these? let each one return to his house in peace." God
Himself, says Micaiah, will take charge of the shepherdless
flock. The imagery is taken, as that of the false prophet's had
been, from the Pentateuch. (Num. xxvii. 16, 17.)

19 Then the prophet, partly as in answer to Ahab's exclamation,
told him whence the prediction came to him. It was no personal
malice which prompted it, it was a vision of Heaven. The God
of Israel was sitting on His Throne on high, as the two earthly
kings before the gate of Samaria; He was surrounded by His
ministers, as they by theirs; he was marking out their destiny
with a line, when they thought that they were forming their own
20 course. And the destiny of Ahab was death. God saw his
wilfulness and the pride and renewed hardness of his heart, and
declared that his sins should be the ministers of his ruin. And
the source of these sins had been trusting in lies and vain super-
21 stitions. Herein we see the force of the words, **And there
came forth the** (not *a*, as in E. V.) **Spirit, and said, "I
will persuade Him."** "*The spirit*" means the spirit of pro-
phesy, whether true or false. For the essential principle of
prophecy is that it is spiritual, appealing to the spirit of man,
and only if that spirit becomes depraved and voluntarily chooses
22 falsehood above truth, will the spirit of prophecy become im-
pure to it. Therefore it is not an adequate interpretation to
speak of this passage as merely the expression of a Divine
sufferance. The meaning is deeper and truer. It is that by the
Law of God men are destroyed by their own sins, entangled by
the network of evil counsel which themselves have woven. This
is GOD'S Law, and in this sense He "forms light and creates
evil," and all that is done in heaven and in earth and in all deep
places, His unseen hand guides and rules.

23 Let it not be forgotten that the opposite pole of truth appears
here, which we saw also in the history of Pharaoh, (p. 138; ;

Micaiah was really warning Ahab now, in order that he might yet turn from his obstinate purpose, to God who was willing to save him.

Josephus adds to the statement in this verse, that Zedekiah challenged Micaiah to wither his hand as the prophet of Bethel had the hand of Jeroboam. It is very probable; the moral truth conveyed in Micaiah's vision had no power with him; he and such as he have no trust in anything but signs and wonders. But his act, according to Josephus, had the effect he sought, Ahab was encouraged in his obstinacy, while Micaiah uttered another warning, which implied, "Trust not to present appearances, to the empty voice of present popularity; confusion shall surely follow, and it will be seen what shall happen to lying diviners." And he followed this with one last word to the people, exhorting them to remember his words when the dreadful thunderbolt had fallen, and thereby to take a solemn warning for their own lives.

Jehoshaphat was persuaded, probably against his better judgment, and it well-nigh cost him his life. (Cf. 2 Chron. xix. 2.) Ahab, either secretly terrified at Micaiah's denunciation, or informed by spies of Benhadad's order (ver. 31), begged Jehoshaphat to go into battle in his royal robes, while he himself went in disguise. (Some commentators have conjectured that Ahab wished to get Jehoshaphat killed that he might seize upon his kingdom, but, as Keil says, such a suspicion is too low and unworthy even for Ahab.) The king of Syria's order, given concerning one who had spared his own life (xx. 42), was a verification of God's prediction.

Jehoshaphat's cry discovered to the Syrian warriors that it was not the king of Israel. But *what* he cried is not stated. It may have been his own name. But very probably it was a cry to God for help. Cf. 2 Chron. xviii. 31.

Between the joints of the harness, i. e. in that part where the breastplate is hung on to the gorget. Gesenius, however, takes it to mean "beneath the shoulder-blade." The event shewed that the victory was not due to the Syrian skill; the thirty-two captains fought in vain, but God guided what seemed a chance arrow to execute the judgment which He had foretold.

Increased. The original word signifies, "rose like a river," which with the rising becomes ever more rapid and strong.

See above, on v. 17. The LXX. adds after "country," "*for the king is dead.*" The same Version states that he stood erect in his chariot until the very moment of his death.

They washed his armour. Nearly all modern commentators agree that this translation is incorrect. It should be "and the harlots washed themselves." It is mentioned as an additional proof of the ignominy with which the apostate king was regarded, that the abandoned women of his metropolis, those who

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had probably assisted in the profligate worship of Ashtaroth, came and shamelessly bathed in the pool which was defiled with his blood. (See Wordsworth on the verse.)

39 **Ivory house**, i.e. inlaid with ivory.

40 "So were accomplished the warnings of Elijah and Micaiah. So ended what may be called the first part of the tragedy of the house of Omri." (Stanley.) Ahab left two sons, Ahaziah and Jehoram, who reigned in succession over Israel. (See Morning Lesson for S. James' Day.)

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.**2 Kings II.**

See Ascension Day, page 208.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.**2 Kings
IV.**

Hitherto Elisha has appeared as the servant of Elijah, and in his after history he was still known as he "who had poured water on the hands of Elijah." Elijah having now departed, Elisha takes his place, and holds it apparently for more than forty years. The order of the events of his life is uncertain, there being apparently some dislocation in the arrangement of the chapters. And throughout we have "the king of Israel" spoken of, without name.

In many respects Elisha is in contrast with Elijah, yet also some of their miracles are alike. (Cf. ch. iv. 2—7 with 1 Kings xvii. 14, ch. iv. 32 with 1 Kings xvii. 19.)

One of the chief points of contrast is the rough, solitary, wild character of Elijah, and the gentle civilized manner of Elisha. He had a house of his own in the royal city, and was the friend of the king. "One king was crowned at his bidding and wrought all his will. Another consulted him in war, another in the extremity of illness, another to receive his parting counsels." (Stanley.)

His work is throughout of a gentler character than that of Elijah, his miracles are "not Jewish but Christian. His works stand alone in the Bible in their likeness to the acts of mediæval saints. There alone in the Sacred History the gulf between Biblical and Ecclesiastical miracles almost disappears. The exception proves the general rule; still it is but just to notice the exception." (Stanley.)¹

8 **Shunem** was in the plain of Esdraelon. **Great**, wealthy.
10 **Little**, or upper,—it was on a balcony attached to the side of the house, to which he could ascend by the outer stairs. The enumeration of the furniture shews "how few needs he had." (Wordsworth.)

13 On the influence of Elisha with the king, see above. Theo-

¹ The reader is referred to the whole of this Author's admirable comparison, pp. 326—329.

doret well and correctly paraphrases her answer: "I rejoice in my quiet life; I go about my duty peacefully, and have no quarrel that I should seek the intercession of any one." (One of the best of *Blair's Sermons* is on this text.)

Elisha then conferred with Gehazi, and the result was, first this promise, then its fulfilment.

There is of course an interval of some years here, which we must fill up in thought with some of the miracles and works recorded in other chapters. We have already noticed that the order observed in the history of Elisha is not a chronological one.

It was evidently a sunstroke. Apparently she had not informed her husband of the child's death, but hastened to depart lest he should interfere with her, as bent on a fruitless errand. His question implies that in spite of the idolatry of the northern kingdom, the pious strictly kept the law. Her answer, **It shall be well** (Lit. *shalom*, "peace"), signifies that he must be satisfied for a while with no more definite answer. Her answer to the prophet's servant in answer to his question, **Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?** is also no doubt the expression of a general truth. She had faith in God that He ordereth all things well. But to us Christians it should mean yet more, that "the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh are in joy and felicity," that those who survive are united to those who are dead, in Him who is the living centre of the whole universe. It is well not only with those who depart, but with those who are bereaved; the experience of life teaches them so, as the years bring on their own departure.

Gehazi is a true type of worldliness; he has no sympathy, knows nothing but routine, cannot have his supposed dignity ruffled.

Elisha gave Gehazi two commands. *First*, to salute no man by the way. This was "in order that he might avoid all distraction of eye and ear, and thoroughly give himself up to prayer, in preparation for the great miracle which was at hand." (*à Lapide*.) The *second*, to lay his staff on the dead child's face. This he did, says Keil, "Not in the hope that he would actually perform the miracle, but to give a practical proof to the Shunamite and her family, perhaps also to Gehazi himself, that the power to work a miracle did not lie magically in himself or in his staff, that on the other hand it could be accomplished only as a mark of Divine omnipotence through faith and prayer. This expedient, therefore, was prompted not by the design to exalt himself, but only by regard to the believers, who relied on him, whose faith was to be purified from erroneous notions, turned from confidence in the human person of the prophet and directed only to God the Lord."

I confess that this explanation is hardly satisfactory to myself. It seems to me of a piece with his somewhat hesitating

2 Kings
IV.

14—17

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2 Kings
IV.

and tentative manner at all times. He was living a life of faith, feeling his way in each case, uncertain of procedure, but kept in the right way by hope that God would shew him the right. I hold this mission of Gehazi, therefore, to be an expression of the prophet's hope that the wonder-working staff may be, through God's will, a means of restoration. That
31 failed, then he went himself, and the child was raised, through
34 God's power, by the intense and eager sympathy which the
loving and holy man put forth. He bowed himself upon the
corpse until he felt returning warmth, and still the consciousness
35 did not return. He walked to and fro in the excitement of
anxiety, perhaps in the desire for greater heat in himself, and
in eager prayer, and then returned to his blessed work again.
His labour was rewarded at length. The sneezing¹ of the child
was the first act of recovered respiration.

Bp. Wordsworth has many mystical thoughts connecting this narrative with the work of Christ for man. But he seems to me to have on this occasion missed the centre thought of the miracle. Elisha bringing back life by *the earnestness of his sympathy*, is one of the most striking precursors of Him who healed all manner of disease *because* "He bare our burdens and carried our sicknesses."

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

2 Kings V.

Had given deliverance. According to Josephus it was he who killed Ahab (1 Kings xxii. 34). See Stanley, p. 346, n.

Under the Jewish law, he would have been compelled to live apart, because to the Jew the leprosy was the type of sin. But this law not existing in Syria, he was admitted to high affairs of state, and allowed to enter the temple of his god. Only the knowledge of God is able to teach men the heinousness and foulness of moral leprosy.

² **By companies,** i.e. on marauding expeditions. The thought which Keble in the *Lya Innocentium* has drawn from the part played by the little maid is so beautiful that I venture to quote the poem at length.

"Who for the like of me will care?"
So whispers many a mournful heart,
When in the weary languid air
For grief or scorn we pine apart.
So haply mused yon little maid,
From Israel's breezy mountains borne,
No more to rest in Sabbath shade
Watching the free and wavy corn.

¹ See Gesen: s. v. רַרְרַ

A captive now, and sold and bought,
In the proud Syrian's hall she waits,
Forgotten—such her moody thought—
Even as the worm beneath the gates.

But One who ne'er forgets is here;
He hath a word for thee to speak:
Oh serve Him yet in duteous fear,
And to thy Gentile lord be meek.

So shall the healing Name be known
By thee on many a heathen shore,
And Naaman on his chariot throne
Wait humbly by Elisha's door.

By thee desponding lepers know
The sacred writer's sevenfold might.
Then wherefore sink in listless woe?
Christ's poor and needy, claim your right!

Your heavenly right to do and bear
All for His sake; nor yield one sigh
To pining Doubt; nor ask "What care
In the wide world for such as I?"

2 Kings V.

The largeness of the presents taken by Naaman proves that he was a very rich man, as well as the earnest desire which he had to be cured. 5

The king of Israel was probably Jehoram. His exclamation on reading the king of Syria's letter is a proof of the general incurability of this dreadful disease. 7

Naaman evidently came with great ideas of his own importance and the dignity of his position. Elisha's message, therefore, was one intended to teach him to humble himself before God. Without humility he was in no condition to receive a blessing from God, there could be no faith or trust in Him. He was commanded therefore to go and wash in the Jordan, full twenty miles from Samaria. It was a trial of his humility, his obedience, his faith. 9 10

Abana and Pharpar were better to the merely carnal eye, than the waters of Israel. They were clear as crystal, while the water of the Jordan is turbid and yellow. 12

Applications of the passage, thank God, are numberless. And they all turn upon this, not to despise the day of small things. The ordinances of the Gospel—their simplicity offends the carnal and worldly. Men who would make a great sacrifice and do wearisome things if their self-love were taxed to the performance, stand aloof from simple commands because of that simplicity. "How can there be any connexion," they ask, "between a little water and the cleansing of the soul?" How, except that our Divine Elisha has commanded it.

For the way to God is faith, and it is faith which leads us to see in the Gospel ordinances the way of salvation. They are useless as Jordan stream until Christ's word gives them healing power. And when we believe that word, and obey for love to Him, we wash and are clean, we eat and drink, and are filled.

"It is a great mercy to have those about us that will be 13

2 Kings V.

free with us, and faithfully tell us of our faults and follies, though they be our inferiors. Masters must be willing to hear reason from their servants. Job xxxi. 13, 14. As we should be deaf to the counsel of the ungodly though given by the greatest, so we should have our ears open to good advice though brought us by those who are much below us. No matter who speaks, if it be well said." (*M. Henry.*)

The reproof of the servants was very modest and respectful. All reproof should make itself known to come from love and sympathy, not from self-exaltation or reproach.

14 **His flesh came again like the flesh of a little child.** A remarkable expression, regarded as a type of the washing of the soul from sin. It reminds us of our Lord's words, "except ye be converted and become as little children." It is the proper and normal state of all Christians. They strive evermore to keep within them the heart of a little child, to be encompassed all their life long with the Heaven which "lies about us in our infancy."

15 Spiritually, as well as bodily, he was blessed. His pride and vainglory had disappeared when he came now to shew forth his
16 thankfulness. Elisha's answer was intended to make quite clear to him that it was God alone who gave the health. "Before whom I stand" means, "whose servant I am."

17 Naaman's request for two mules' burden of earth shews some superstition. He believed that the Lord was a local God, howsoever powerful He might be (cf. 1 Kings xx. 23), and that He would be worshipped only on His own land. The Syrian's light was as yet imperfect, but he was faithful to such as he had.
19 Elisha's parting blessing (for such it clearly is) implies this. He treated the new convert tenderly, not expecting impossibilities of grace from him. Naaman could not have refused to enter the house of Rimmon with his master without throwing up his post, and it never entered into his thoughts that he was required to do that. He declared that henceforward his outward act of reverence should merely indicate allegiance to his master, but that his sacrifices should be made to God alone. The prophet frankly accepted the assurance, and sent him away without a word of rebuke. At the same time his own example, as refusing all gifts, was one which Naaman could ponder at leisure, and perchance learn from.

20 The sin of Gehazi is introduced with a solemn description of him in full—**Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God,**—indicating the heinousness of his sin. Cf. in the history of the betrayal, "*Judas, one of the twelve.*"

His attempt at self-deception, in professing to be acting from a high motive and with Divine sanction—as **the Lord liveth**—is characteristic of the religious hypocrisy against which those especially who have to deal with holy things have need to guard.

The tower, should be translated "the hill," i.e. either the foot of the hill on which Samaria was built, or the hill, well known then, on which Elisha's house stood. **Bestowed them in the house**, hid them away from Elisha's sight. 2 Kings V. 24

Let us not forget that the prophetic power which enabled Elisha to see what Gehazi had done will be exercised by the Judge from whom it came in the Great Day, and every deed and thought which we have cunningly hid from the eyes of men will then be laid open. 26

Is it a time? I need do no more than refer to the Poem in the *Christian Year* founded on these words (11th Sunday after Trinity).

Bp. Wordsworth, following *à Lapidè* and others, believes that this punishment was afterwards revoked on Gehazi's repentance. See his note on ch. viii. 4, where Gehazi appears again. But others suppose that the events recorded in that chapter were prior to the present. 27

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The opening words form one of many proofs that under the mild and beneficent teaching of Elisha religion prospered. The work of Elijah, we know, was necessary and was ordained to him by God. But it was destructive work, that of Elisha's was the work of building up. And here we have the school of the prophets so multiplied that they are obliged to seek a larger habitation. 2 Kings VI.

"Good disciples desire to be always under good discipline." (M. Henry.) 3

Borrowed. The Hebrew word means "asked for," or "prayed for," being part of the same verb as that used in Ex. iii. 22. Probably the man had obtained it as a present on the plea of poverty. 5

A stick, LXX. ξύλον, Vulg. *lignum*, the same words that are used in the New Testament for the Cross of Christ. 1 Pet. ii. 24; Acts v. 30, &c. It is no wonder that commentators in both ancient and modern times have seen in this narrative a mystical meaning. "The nature which God gave us fell into the stream and was drowned. It had no power to extricate itself. But the cross of Christ was thrown into the waters of Baptism and man's nature was raised up from the depth." See Bp. Wordsworth's long note, elaborating this thought. Equally quaint as well as devout is Bp. Hall's comment: "O God, how easy it is for Thee, when this hard and heavy heart of mine is sunk down into the mud of the world, to fetch it up again by thy mighty word, and cause it to float upon the stream of life and to see the face of heaven again." 6

Elisha now appears not only as the friend and helper of individual men, but as the support and champion of his king 8

2 Kings VI. and country against foreign enemies. **The king of Syria** apparently is Benhadad.

9 Elisha's counsel to Jehoram should be rather rendered, "Beware that thou *neglect* not such a place," i. e. Take care to guard it.

17 **Open his eyes, &c.** The protecting hosts of heaven were there before, but the servant wanted spiritual sight to discern them. The angels of God are ever about us invisible. Therefore it is that we constantly have such expressions as "an angel *appeared* to such a one,"—was there previously, but now became visible. The same expression is observable in the account of the appearances of our Lord after His resurrection. He was visible and invisible at will. The angels are around us, ministering spirits; the phenomena of Nature, as some suppose, are placed under their care. (See *Newman's* Sermon on "S. Michael and All Angels," II. 358; and *Maurice* on S. John, p. 145, Sermon on "The Pool of Bethesda.")

18 As the faithful servant is blessed with spiritual sight, the enemies are smitten with blindness, that is here, with an obliquity of sight which confused all their ideas and deceived them. By means of it they were led into what seemed the very jaws of death, and which would have been so had the king of Israel wrought his will. But Elisha sternly forbade him, thereby presenting a strong contrast to the prophet who with equal sternness rebuked Ahab for *not* slaying Behadad. I Kings xx. 25—42. "Thus should a prophet punish his pursuers. No vengeance but this is heroic. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

23 The act was politic as well as merciful and gracious. Love is never fruitless.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

2 Kings
VII.

The narrative of which the present chapter forms part is that of the siege of Samaria by the Syrians. The latter portion of ch. vi. (omitted in the Sunday Lessons) describes the dreadful straits to which the city was reduced. And on receiving a proof of the horror of the famine, more appalling than any previously on record, Jehoram turned his fury against Elisha. Whether this was because the prophet had foretold the famine, or had been disabled from prayer by the impenitence of the people, or whether he had urged the people to hold out because he foresaw deliverance, does not appear. But Jehoram swore that he would behead him, and sent an executioner for the purpose. But he himself followed close upon the messenger's heels, apparently having thought better of his evil purpose. He entered into Elisha's house with the half-murmuring, half-ashamed cry—"Behold this evil is of the Lord, why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"

To this question Elisha answers in the first verse of the present chapter. Jehoram's question had implied some faith, and Elisha encourages it by his promise. The prime minister, upon whom the king leaned, expressed incredulity, but Jehoram did not.

2 Kings
VII.

At the entering in of the gate, probably in a habitation prepared expressly for them. The troubles of the siege had left them uncared for and unfed, hence their resolve. **In the twilight**, i. e. of evening, see ver. 12. **The uttermost part**, the advanced posts, nearest the city.

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Cf. Jud. vii. 22; 1 Sam. xiv. 20; 2 Kings xix. 7. **The kings of the Hittites and of the Egyptians**, i. e. respectively northern and southern kings.

6

Some mischief, &c., rather, "guilt will fall upon us." For it is the duty of good citizens to give any information which lies in their power for improving the general prosperity.

9

The king suspected a stratagem, and thought the Syrians intended to decoy the besieged out of their fortress and fall upon them in the open field. A servant therefore suggested a precautionary measure. The verse is a little obscure, but the meaning is this:—"Let some one take five horses that are left to us in the city; they will be as the multitude and will fare neither better nor worse; even if they are destroyed by an ambush they will be only sharing our fate, for we also shall perish with hunger; and on the other hand if they come to no harm, neither shall we."

12

13

Two, rather "two pair," yoked in two chariots. Of course the number five in the preceding verse is merely a round number.

14

Thus was fulfilled Elisha's prediction, so remarkably that the sacred historian repeats the prophecy at full, to mark the wonderfulness of it.

16—20

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The preceding chapter has related the change of dynasty in Syria, the death of Benhadad and accession of Hazael. The present chapter relates the destruction of the dynasty of Omri, and the setting up of that of Jehu in its place.

2 Kings
IX.

Jehu was now captain of the forces engaged in the Syrian war, which was going on with energy around Ramoth-gilead as a centre. Joram himself had been there, but had been wounded by the archers and had returned to Jezreel (ver. 15).

The messenger chosen by Elisha is said by Jewish tradition to have been Jonah the future prophet. His manner was to be hasty, as of one who had an errand that allowed no delay. He

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2 Kings
IX.

6 was to be secret also, because Elisha would not expose him to danger from the soldiers of Jehoram. The commission was strictly executed, and the prophet repeats the prophecy which Jehu had heard years before, when he rode behind Ahab in Naboth's vineyard, and heard his master denounced by Elijah. (1 Kings xxi. 21—24.)

11 **Ye know the man and his communication**, i. e. apparently, "Your words shew that you have measured him rightly, for his message was indeed that of a madman." But they, seeing by Jehu's manner that he attached great importance to what had been said, spoke out abruptly, "It is a lie; tell us now." When he told them, there was not a moment's hesitation what they would do.

13 **They put their garments under him**, Oriental tokens of homage, **on the top of the stairs**, i. e. the outward staircase from the court of the fortress to the roof, standing on which he would be conspicuous against the sky to the soldiers.

15 Jehu then proposed that the news of the revolution should be carried to Jezreel by none but themselves, and this being agreed to he drove off with the headlong speed which characterized him.

Ahaziah was Joram's nephew. His visit is also mentioned in ch. viii. 28, 29.

17 **A company**, in LXX. "a dust." There is a view of at least six miles from the watch-tower of Jezreel down the valley through which Jehu must have come. Probably the first idea was that of a Syrian invasion. Jehu's detention of the messenger was, of course, to keep his enterprise a secret till the last moment.

21 Thus the son and grandson of Ahab and Jezebel met the avenger in the field of Naboth.

22 Jehu's fierce answer must probably be taken as expressing literal truth, spiritual and natural whoredoms commonly went together. (Num. xxv. 1; Rev. ii. 14.)

25 The body was thrown out, by Jehu's orders into the plat, to be eaten by the vultures and the dogs. And as he gave the order he reminded Bidkar of the day when they two heard Elijah denounce Ahab on this spot.

27 The account of the death of Ahaziah differs very much from that given in the Chronicles, and it is impossible to say with certainty what is the proper order of the facts related. But the Bishop of Lincoln's arrangement seems to be a very feasible explanation. It is this:—Ahaziah fled first to Samaria, where his uncle's family resided. (2 Chron. xxii. 9.) But being discovered there and his children being killed by Jehu (x. 13) he endeavoured to escape. He did not however take the road to Jerusalem, probably considering that Jehu's scouts would be on the look-out for him, and therefore endeavoured to reach Sidon, the capital of his grandmother's family. From hence he would be able to go by sea homewards. But he was overtaken at

Gur by Ibleam, about twelve miles short of Megiddo, and was wounded, but was able to reach Megiddo before he died.

Next, the Divine judgment falls upon the profligate Jezebel. Her proud spirit still remained unbroken, and she now adorned herself with head gear, and painted her eyes with pulverised antimony¹. The effect of this was to make the eyes appear larger and brighter, and the object, apparently, was to face Jehu with dignity as queen. Her salutation, as he passed beneath her, was one of stern rebuke. She called him "Zimri," referring to the last revolution which had happened there, when the founder of her husband's family, Omri, had trampled down the false usurper, Zimri. "Was it well with Zimri, murderer of his master?" she asked, as a warning to Jehu of what his fate would be.

Not till the triumphal feast of the fierce conqueror was over did a spark of feeling rise within his breast over the fallen grandeur. Then he sent his servants out to bury her. **A king's daughter**, 1 Kings xvi. 31.

Dr Stanley on his visit to Palestine saw the dogs prowling under the walls of Jezreel, on the same spot where this dreadful scene took place. (*S. and P.* 450.) It is said that while they will eat the rest of the human frame they always reject the feet and hands.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Sons, i. e. including grandchildren and great grandchildren. Ahab had been dead fourteen years.

We need not wonder to find the rulers of Jezreel in Samaria. They had been the accomplices of Jezebel in the murder of Naboth, and now that Jehu had so fearfully avenged that murder upon the principal in the deed, they would naturally make their escape. Jehu sent to them to gauge their feeling with regard to him, for it by no means followed that with his comparatively few followers he would be able to fight against Samaria. He would therefore try a message first. It was so successful that he enlisted them on the side of the new dynasty, and the elders of Jezreel completed the vengeance for the murder which they themselves had abetted. It is the way of ungodly friendships.

This speech of Jehu was one of cunning and flattery. He comes out and addresses the whole people in presence of the ghastly heaps, making no mention of the fact that the slaughter had taken place at his instigation. "I slew my master," he says, "so far I am responsible; but you, or some of you, I know not who, have surpassed me in your zeal. Is it not a plain proof that GOD is moving us in this matter?"

The effect was that the people looked quietly on, and suffered him to complete his work of destruction.

2 Kings

IX.

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2 Kings

X.

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¹ Gesen. s. v. זָיִן

2 Kings

X.

12 The way was now open to Samaria, and he proceeded thither. **The shearing-house** is supposed to have been at Beit-Kad, about midway.

13 **Brethren** means here, as so very commonly, near relatives, cousins, nephews, half-brothers (sons of Jehoram by concubines). They had possibly heard of the revolution, and come down to offer assistance. **The queen** of whom they speak must be Jezebel, the queen-mother. **Pit**, i. e. well.

15 **Jehonadab** was an Arab chief of the Kenite tribe, the founder, or second founder of the Rechabites, one of the Nazarite communities, of which several appear to have sprung up in the northern kingdom (Amos ii. 12), practising ascetic discipline. (See on Jer. xxxv. *17th Sunday after Trinity*.) To have the friendship of one so venerated by the people would add much influence and credit to Jehu's enterprise.

16 "Strange sight it must have been, the energetic warrior in his coat of mail, and the ascetic, as energetic in his haircloth. Deeper far the contrast within." (*Dr Pusey* on Amos.)

18 The detestable stratagem which followed, by means of which Jehu destroyed the Baal-worship out of Israel, was certainly politic. The priests and prophets of Baal were bound entirely to the dynasty of Ahab, and would probably be dangerous to Jehu. By destroying them he would win the allegiance of the older party in Israel, those who had been brought up to worship the calves.

22 As the priests of the Lord were clothed in the performance of their office by vestments prescribed in the law of Moses (which vestments were kept in the temple), so the priests of Baal wore vestments of white byssus. (See *Keil*, I. 425, n. 1.)

25 **City**, or "inner enclosure," where the great image of Baal was, the deities of Phœnicia grouped all round it. That portion of the temple in which the worshippers had been was the outer enclosure. **A draught-house**, a receptacle for all the filth of the town. So ended for ever the worship of Baal in Israel.

As for Jehu, his character is not a complicated one to the understanding. Fanatical, pitiless, brutal—this is all clear enough. His ferocity is put before us in the very plainest light. Along with this we can admire his inflexibility of purpose, his detestation of hypocrisy, and his determination to put it down at any cost. There were noble characteristics along with the base ones. For a while he must have seemed to the people and to himself to be a zealous servant of God; but when the excitement was over, when the work of destruction was done, and nothing but the duties of holiness and quiet piety remained, he was found wanting. He took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord. His zeal for righteousness did not lead to his obeying it.

30 His zeal was rewarded. Because it was honest, it pursued its aim without swerving. And this was a quality likely to form a dynasty. Four generations succeeded on the throne, Jeho-

haz, Joash, Jeroboam II., Zachariah. But the zeal which had not been according to pure godliness had no sufficient foundation. It had thrown down Baal, but not exalted Jehovah. So the people had gone on in a downward course, and not shaken off their disease.

2 Kings
X.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The present is the last chapter which we have in the Sunday lessons from the history of the Kingdom of Israel. It exhibits some bright scenes, indicating that He who would not that any should perish would fain encourage all the signs of improvement which the house of Jehu gave. The worship of Baal was gone (though as will be seen from ver. 6 of this chapter the temple of Astarte, "the grove," still remained in Samaria), and the Lord was yearning for His people to put their full trust in Him, instead of seeking after evil powers and helpless deities. For the opening words indicate that though the worst form of it was abolished, the plague of idolatry still prevailed in the nation.

2 Kings
XIII.

The withdrawal of Jehu from Ramoth-gilead, as well as the shock given to the kingdom by the revolution, probably led to the invasion of Hazael and his son. The distress of this invasion drove Jehoahaz to prayer, and GOD in answer **gave Israel a saviour**. Perhaps we are to understand by this a temporary deliverer, unnamed because he was able to do little permanent good, because the unbelief of the king and people withheld good things from them, and GOD "was able to do no mighty work among them." But taking the chapter as a whole, and noting the peculiarity of the arrangement of it, I feel sure that this **saviour** is Joash, in whose reign a brighter day dawned. The short inglorious reign of Jehoahaz has this one merit, that it was in answer to his intercession that the deliverer was given.

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Joash **did that which was evil**, but as there are degrees of sinfulness, we may fairly say that his character compares favourably with those of the other kings. Josephus speaks highly of him, probably on account of the scene with Elisha which follows.

11

On these verses see *Tuesday in Easter Week*, p. 178.

14—21

Recapitulation of ver. 3, given here to introduce the fulfilment of the prophecy of Elisha to Joash. Joash was succeeded by Jeroboam II., under whose 40 years' reign Israel attained the highest point of external splendour. But it was a false splendour, the seeds of death were already appearing above the surface. To this period belong the prophets Amos and Hosea, and we shall see on coming to them how they regarded the vaunted glory of the monarchy. The end of this reign was followed by a series of military despotisms with intervals of anarchy. (See p. 292.) The Lectionary now leaves Israel, and for the first time

22

2 Kings
XIII.

since Rehoboam, takes up the history of Judah. Before reading the next chapter it will be useful to give a *résumé* of the annals of that great Empire with which the two sister kingdoms are now brought into close contact.

NOTE ON THE ASSYRIAN KINGS MENTIONED
IN SCRIPTURE.

Note on
the Assy-
rian kings
mentioned
in Scrip-
ture.

The early history of the great Assyrian Empire forms no part of the present volume, having no connexion with the history of the Jews. It is obscure, as the early history of all nations is. According to the commonly received account there were two epochs in Assyrian history—the first ending with the capture of the capital, Nineveh, by the combined Chaldeans and Medes, and the self-immolation of King Sardanapalus, B.C. 789. The reader will find this account well given and defended in Lenormant's *Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne*. Canon Rawlinson believes this account to be legendary. Whether it be so or not, the kingdom at a date a little subsequent was strong and aggressive, and came into close contact with the kingdom of Israel.

The first of the kings mentioned in Scripture is *Pul*, called in the LXX. "Phalos," and in profane history "Belesis." The king of Israel, Menahem, having murdered his predecessor, endeavoured to protect himself from opposition by becoming tributary to Pul. (2 Kings xv.) The latter was not a Ninevite but a Babylonian, who had usurped authority over a portion of the Empire. (See Rawlinson's *Historical Illustrations*, pp. 121—124.) On his death in 747 the Assyrians were able to reunite the monarchy under *Tiglath-pileser* (747—727). Ahaz sought his aid against the coalition of Rezin and Pekah, and he gave it, slaying the one and very probably dethroning the other. (2 Kings xvi.) The narrative leaves some doubt on this point, but the Assyrian inscriptions, when compared with the Bible chronology, lead us to believe that Pekah was dethroned, that he made submission and was then restored, remaining in a state of abject vassalage until he was murdered by Hoshea. Meanwhile the king of Assyria transplanted vast numbers of the population to his own country, a precedent followed by subsequent kings.

Shalmaneser (727—722) was an insignificant monarch. There

are some bronze weights of his reign in the British Museum, but his monuments were destroyed by his successor. The chief event of his reign is his invasion of Israel in the reign of Hoshea, in consequence of the alliance of the latter with So, or Sabakah, king of Egypt. Shalmaneser laid siege to Samaria, which was defended with desperate energy for three years (vide *infra*, p. 345), during which Shalmaneser died and was succeeded by *Sargon*, who thus became the captor of the city. Sargon was one of the greatest kings, though he was a usurper. It is remarkable that his name only occurs once in the Bible, in Isaiah xx. 1. This led many commentators, in the absence of other evidence, to identify him with Sennacherib, though others (as Rosenmüller) maintained that he must have been a distinct person. The question has been subsequently set at rest by the deciphering of the inscriptions, which detail his reign at great length. He was the builder of Khorsabad, and made successful expeditions into Babylon, Media, Palestine, and Egypt. In Babylon he dethroned and imprisoned Merodach-baladan, who however afterwards escaped and succeeded for a while in recovering his throne.

Of *Sennacherib* (704—681) we shall have to speak at some length in the commentary on chap. xviii.

His son *Esarhaddon* reigned gloriously till 668. Being then grievously sick he abdicated in favour of his son. But Esarhaddon is the last Assyrian monarch named in Scripture. It therefore only remains to say that after the overthrow of Sennacherib the Empire declined; its military power decayed and its treasures were exhausted, while neighbouring nations grew strong. The Medes and Babylonians coalesced against it, Cyaxares the Mede laying siege to Nineveh, while the Chaldean Nabopolassar raised a revolt in Babylon. This combination changed the face of Asia. Nineveh was taken and burnt¹, and fell into such utter ruin that it perished out of the knowledge of men till the discoveries of Austin Layard but a few years ago once more laid it open to view, after it had been buried for 25 centuries. So ended the Assyrian monarchy. The Babylonian on one side, the Median on the other, followed. We shall come to their history in due course.

¹ The precise date is uncertain. Rawlinson places it at B.C. 625; Clinton and Oppert, 606. I would entreat every reader who has the opportunity to read Dr. Pusey's Introduction to Nahum.

Note on the Assyrian kings mentioned in Scripture.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.2 Kings
XVIII.

In the first days of the separation Judah had been much weaker than Israel. But she had been all but free from the dynastic revolutions which had proved so disastrous to that kingdom. The house of David never lost possession of the throne. The attempt of Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, to seize power had been successful only for a while (2 Kings xi.). And this stability had produced such good effects on the nation that it gradually became the stronger and more prosperous of the two, though once Jerusalem had fallen before the king of Israel. (2 Kings xiv. 11—14.) The worship of Baal in Judah had been stimulated by the overthrow of it in Israel. Athaliah had taken it under her protection. With her death it was put down, but it rose again with other idolatries under Ahaz. This king had a passion for foreign things and amongst these he included heathen deities. He established the worship of Molech in the valley of Hinnom, under the western walls of the city, and offered one or more of his sons in the fiery embrace of the idol. (2 Kings xvi.) We have seen (p. 342) how he became tributary to Assyria with the view of saving himself from the confederacy of Israel and Damascus, gaining that object but forfeiting his independence. Judah became a vassal state until the policy of Ahaz was reversed by his son Hezekiah.

The reign of Hezekiah is the point of highest interest in the kingdom of Judah. He was the best of the kings (ver. 5). And now came the great rise of the Prophetic Order in Judah. Elijah and Elisha had belonged to Israel. So had Amos and Hosea; and from the same kingdom came Jonah. (2 Kings xiv. 25.) Joel alone had addressed his word to the kingdom of Judah until the rise of Micah and Isaiah.

Hezekiah himself was a poet (Is. xxxviii. 9—20) and an encourager of sacred literature. It was by his order that a large part of the Proverbs were collected and arranged (Prov. xxv. 1), probably of the other Scriptures also.

An account of his character and public acts is given in the chapter before us.

² **Zachariah** is supposed to have been the favourite prophet of Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 5), and Stanley and others suppose that parts of his writings are incorporated into those of his namesake, the prophet of the second Temple.

⁴ It seems that the foul idolatries of Ahaz were continued into the reign of Hezekiah. But a sudden appearance before him of the prophet Micah was the means of his conversion. (See Jer. xxvi. 18, 19; *Pusey* on Micah, p. 290; *Stanley*, II. 463.) He swept away the whole of the corruptions at once. The account

in the Chronicles gives full details of the reformation, here merely mentioned, and records that he kept a solemn Passover. It is the first record of the observance of that Feast since the time of Joshua.

The high places had been sanctioned by Samuel and David as well as by later good kings. As their name implies, they were originally eminences, but were afterwards "pillars of stone, covered like Mussulman tombs, with rich carpets, robes, and shawls." (*Stanley*, 466.) Round them stood commonly a grove of trees. The places which were thus innocent and sanctioned in their origin had outlived their good intent, and had now become scenes of foul abominations (*Ezek. xvi. 16—18*), and there was no remedy but destruction. In like manner the deeply interesting relic of God's mercy in the wilderness, having become a snare, was also doomed to destruction. And inasmuch as it was perverted to a purpose altogether at variance with its intent, the king declared that its sacred character was gone, and that it was now "**Nehushtan**," a mere piece of brass¹. (On the bearing of this upon religious reformation, see *Hooker*, v. ch. lxx. 12—19.)

Contrast to the reforms of Jehu. He destroyed abuses, but "took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel" (*x. 31*). Hezekiah's religion was positive and earnest; his reforms were not revolution, he built up as well as destroyed, and religion gained in his hands by being freed from corruptions and worn-out incumbrances.

Rebelled, i.e. against the vassalage which Ahaz had accepted. He had apparently been encouraged to do so by promises of assistance from Egypt, though he afterwards found how hollow such promises were.

The conquest of the Philistines was in retaliation for their invasion in the reign of Ahaz (see 2 Chron. xxviii. 18). Hezekiah now pushed them back to their old boundary, Gaza. Dr. Stanley supposes that Hezekiah had the Egyptian alliance in view in this expedition.

From the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city; i.e. thoroughly and completely, from the temporary lodge thrown up in the fruit season to guard the vineyards (see on *Is. i. 8*) to the strongest fortifications.

The horrors of this three years' siege of Samaria are indicated by several passages in the Prophets. (*Is. xxviii. 1—6*; *Hosea x. 14*; *xiii. 16*; *Amos vi. 9—11*; *Mic. i. 6, 7*. See *Stanley*, II. 368.)

Halah was on the east bank of the Tigris. **Habor** was the river of Gozan ("by" is wrongly inserted by our translators), and

2 Kings
XVIII.

5, 6

7

8

9, 10

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¹ There is a pun in the Hebrew, which cannot be expressed in English. The Hebrew for serpent is *Nachash*. Thus it was called before; but now it is called *Nehushtan* instead, which means what we have said.

2 Kings
XVIII.

still bears the same name. It flows into the Tigris. **The cities of the Medes** were on the east of Assyria.

Thus fell the kingdom of Israel. The overthrow has been recorded in ch. xvii., but is repeated here because of its importance to Judah. Many portions of the land returned to allegiance to Judah. (See p. 289.) Samaria became the centre of a people who come before us prominently in the New Testament. Whether they were, as is commonly supposed, a mixed race of Israelites and Assyrians (see 2 Kings xvii. 24—34), or pure Assyrians who acquired some knowledge of God from their neighbours (as Archbishop Trench maintains), we cannot discuss here. The former seems to me the more probable view.

13 Sennacherib was not yet king, but is so called in all probability because he came as his father Sargon's vicegerent.

The ultimate object of the Assyrian expedition was the conquest of Egypt. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to subdue the Philistine cities. Ashdod had already fallen (Is. xx. 1), and now Lachish was besieged. Moreover, as it would have been dangerous to push forward with the hostile fortresses of Judah in rear, these also were attacked and taken. Only Jerusalem apparently remained, and Hezekiah, who had been firm up to this point, gave way at the approach of the army, and sued for peace. The account of this submission and of the tribute appointed is given in the Ninevite inscriptions nearly the same as here. It was a false step, but it was turned into a blessing to Hezekiah and his kingdom, through the arrogance of Sennacherib and the faithfulness of God to His covenant.

17 The next passage tells of renewed invasion, without any hint of the cause of it. The explanation however is found in the Book of Isaiah (ch. xxii.). The prophet had regarded the submission with indignation, and denounced those who advised Hezekiah to make it, with a severity altogether unwonted in his writings. (See on Is. xxii., *S. Matthias' Day*.) This induced the king to change his policy again, and once more declare himself independent. Hereupon, apparently, Sennacherib sent this fresh expedition. The three names here are not proper names, but titles. **Tartan** means the captain of the host (cf. Is. xx. 1); **Rabsaris**, chief chamberlain; **Rabshakeh**, chief cupbearer.

By the conduit, &c. A glance at a good map of Jerusalem (e.g. Mr. Clark's, No. XI.) will make these details clear.

In the valley of Hinnom, on the west of the city, were "the upper and lower pools of Gihon," joined by a **conduit**, or canal. This canal Hezekiah had conducted by several subterranean chambers into the city, so as to cut the water off from the lower pool and give the inhabitants the use of it. See ch. xx. 20; 2 Chron. xxxii. 3, 4; Is. xxii. 8—11.

The **fuller's field** was near the upper portion of this canal, no doubt placed here because fullers require so much water for their business, and because the unpleasant smell of the handi-

craft would not admit of its being conducted within the walls. (See Keil *in loc.*) **The highway** means the road which ran by it, the road to Joppa, by which the army from Philistia would naturally have come. In this same spot Isaiah had previously met Ahaz. (Is. vii. 3.)

2 Kings
XVIII.

Hezekiah refused to appear (Josephus), but sent out his three chief ministers. **Eliakim** had recently succeeded **Shebna** as prime minister, on account of the latter's misconduct (see on Is. xxii.), but Shebna still held the office of king's secretary. **Joah** was the keeper of the chronicles.

18

The great king. This was the regular title assumed by the Assyrian monarchs. It is symbolized on the sculptures by the king being represented as of colossal size.

19

Rabshakeh's speech is a very clever one, and well adapted for the purpose at which he aimed. He first addresses himself to the proposed alliance with Egypt, and reviles it scornfully, though not more so than Isaiah had done. Like the reeds which grow in the bed of its own river, Egypt would break under any one who leaned upon it.

21

But there was a party in Judah which did not trust in Egypt, but yet advocated resistance, trusting in the Lord. To this party he next addressed himself, and endeavoured to shake its confidence by holding up Hezekiah as an Atheist because of his religious reforms. To the polytheistic Assyrian this argument may have appeared an honest one. And the assertion lower down (ver. 25) is also in keeping with what one sees represented on the sculptures, the great king secure under the sheltering wing of his tutelary god.

22

Then he appeals to their prudence. "Think," he exclaims, "how useless resistance is, when you remember our vast hosts, and when you are not even able to raise two thousand horsemen."

23

The ministers of Hezekiah, knowing the fallacy of his arguments, yet saw how likely it was that the ignorant crowd would be led away by his sophistries. But he put their remonstrances aside with lofty contempt. He was come, he said, to shew these very ignorant people who manned the walls what a wretched condition they were in, how easy it would be for them to better it. And he no longer addressed himself to send messages to Hezekiah, but raised his voice and appealed directly to the crowd not to be deceived either by the king or by hope in their God. The gods of the other nations had been unable to deliver, why should Jerusalem expect to be an exception? We cannot identify all the places here named. They would be familiar to the hearers, who knew the great extent of the Assyrian conquests. Three of the names, Hamath, Arpad, Samaria, are found on the inscriptions at Khorsabad.

26

27

28

33

34

2 Kings
XIX.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Hezekiah's faith was shewn by his acts. He publicly manifested his humility, and his penitence for the sins which had brought this great danger on the nation, and sent for advice and help to Isaiah.

The children, &c. This is a metaphor used elsewhere in Scripture, and still familiar among the Arabs. It expresses a state of utter hopeless agony.

5 Isaiah in reply sent back a message of encouragement. There was no definite announcement of God's method of deliverance. The message was sufficient for the occasion, and so Hezekiah's faith was kept alive. When fresh menaces came, he would expect fresh words from God. There is contempt expressed in the Hebrew word "**servants** of the king of Assyria." It means literally "boys."

A rumour, the news that Tirhakah was advancing against him. (See ver. 9.)

8 **He** (Rabshakeh) **had heard,** &c. Lachish had fallen, and the sculptures represent the victorious Assyrians flaying their prisoners alive, an indication of what the Jews were expecting.

9 The news of Tirhakah's advance alarmed Sennacherib, and made him the more eager to hasten the surrender of Jerusalem. Hence the letter which he now addressed to Hezekiah.

14 It would appear (as Dean Stanley says) that Hezekiah penetrated into the most holy place, and laid the letter before the Ark of the covenant. He then pleads his cause, and states what is the true explanation of the facts which Sennacherib has so vauntingly brought forward.

15 **O Lord,** &c. Quotation from Ps. lxxx. **Thou alone,** &c. "There are not many gods, as Sennacherib has implied, each country with its own. There is but One and it is Thou, who art our own, having Thy dwelling-place the cherubim. It is true, as the blasphemer has said, that other nations have fallen before him, and their gods have been cast into the fire; but the reason was that they were no gods; they were powerless to deliver themselves; and thou, who art a jealous God, didst use the Assyrian's might to destroy them. We are not in such case as the devotees of the idols, therefore, O LORD, *our* God, shew thy power by saving us out of his hand."

20 The message of Isaiah in reply contains, no doubt, passages from Sennacherib's letter to Hezekiah (verses 23, 24), and then the prophet's comment upon them.

The virgin, i.e. the impregnable. The same metaphor is common among us.

At thee, Lit. "*after thee,*" after thy retreating figure.

23 Words closely similar to these words are found on the inscriptions of Sargon at Khorsabad, e.g. "I have laid open the thick and vast forests, and removed their glades...I have crossed

the valleys in deserts where desolation abides, and I have dug deep wells in my march." Doubtless Sennacherib expressed a definite plan in these inflated boasts, the cutting down of Lebanon and the mastery over the **strange** (foreign) **waters**, the river of Egypt.

2 Kings
XIX.

The lodgings of his borders, i.e. the lodging-place of the highest point of Lebanon,—no part shall be out of my reach. **The forest of his Carmel**, i.e. the cedar forest, so beautiful that it is like the fruitful fields of Carmel.

Here the prophet suddenly stops, and with a magnificent transition¹, speaks as in the name of God. "Thou sayest, I have done, and will do, this and that. Hast thou not heard that from the beginning of time it is I who have been the doer of these great deeds? What thou hast done has been done by my will,—now have I brought it to pass."

27, 28.

The judgment on Sennacherib. The Lord knows his ways, and will control him as an irrational animal. The hook and the bridle were used to govern these. (See Ezek. xix. 4; xxix. 4; Is. xxx. 28; Ps. xxxii. 9.)

A sign given to Hezekiah as an earnest of God's faithfulness. During this and the next year the country will be occupied by the invaders, so that men cannot in the ordinary way sow or reap, but will have to live on what grows spontaneously, but in the third year the land will be clear, and the sowing can go on as usual. And through all the misery which this invasion brings, God will still preserve a remnant of the nation. He will winnow it in his jealousy, but not exterminate it, nor suffer it to be devoured by the heathen. The promise that salvation shall come out of mount Zion shall surely come to pass, and the deliverance of the covenant people from the tyrant shall become an earnest to all succeeding generations of the deliverance of the world from bondage through Christ.

29

30

31

The promised deliverance did not immediately appear. Two years elapsed, during which Sennacherib remained making war upon the surrounding cities, before the destruction of his army. (See Wordsworth *in loc.*) The words **that night** mean, therefore, "that great night on which the promised deliverance came." The scene of the destruction is not stated. Probably it was on the confines of Egypt. (See Herod. II. 141.) Nor is anything said of the means of destruction employed, whether pestilence or storm. The Psalms which seem to have been written in thankfulness for the deliverance point to the latter (xlvi. xlviii.

35

¹ I hope it will not be rude to say that in the many times I have heard this Lesson read in church I have only once heard this passage rightly read. The readers have gone straight on, as if it were still Sennacherib who is speaking in ver. 25, not noticing the dramatic character of the passage. I cannot forbear making the remark, because it is most grievous to hear the sense of a passage so magnificent year after year destroyed. Of course there should be a pause after verse 24, and a strong emphasis on the "I" in 25.

2 Kings
XIX.

lxxvi). "The numbers destroyed are not greater than are recorded elsewhere as perishing within very short periods—150,000 Carthaginians in Sicily, 500,000 in seven months at Cairo." (Stanley.) Herodotus found a record of the overthrow of Sennacherib, on his visit to Egypt. He says that the quivers, bows, arrows, shields, were devoured by mice. Evidently he had seen it engraven on the temples, and did not understand that the mouse was merely used as an emblem of death. (See 1 Sam. vi. 4, and Milman's *Hist. of the Jews*, i. 312, 313.) The commentary of Dean Stanley is too fine to be omitted here. "In connexion with the Jewish history, the fall of Sennacherib has at once a more special and a more extensive significance. It is the confirmation of Isaiah's doctrine of the remnant, the pledge of success to the few against the many. 'Be strong and courageous, be not afraid or dismayed of the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.' Nor have its echoes ever ceased. The Maccabees (1 Macc. vii. 41) were sustained by the recollection of it in their struggle against Antiochus. It is not without reason that in the churches of Moscow the exultation over the fall of Sennacherib is still read on the anniversary of the retreat of the French from Russia; or that Arnold, in his *Lectures on Modern History*, in an impressive passage in which he dwells on that great catastrophe, declared that for 'the memorable night of frost in which 20,000 horses perished, and the strength of the French army was utterly broken,' he 'knew of no language so well fitted to describe it as the words in which Isaiah described the advance and destruction of the host of Sennacherib.' The grandeur of the deliverance has passed into the likeness of all sudden national escapes. The opening watchword of the Judæan psalm of triumph, 'God is our refuge and strength,' has furnished the inscriptions over the greatest of Eastern churches¹, and the foundation of the most stirring national hymn of Western Europe²."

36

Dwelt at Nineveh, about fourteen years longer. Then he was murdered by his sons.

Nisroch was represented with an eagle's head. The figure is common on the monuments.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Josiah's accession had been hailed with joy by the nation. The evil deeds of Manasseh were still remembered with horror, and his son Amon had too faithfully followed the evil example

¹ S. Sophia at Constantinople, and the oldest Russian cathedral at Kieff.

² Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott.

of his father. The people hoped now a better day was come. He was surrounded with good counsellors, the chief of them being Hilkiah the high priest, very probably the father of Jeremiah, Huldah the prophetess, Shaphan the scribe. An auspicious omen accompanied his accession; Hilkiah, amid the ruins into which Manasseh had thrown the Temple, found a copy of the Book of the Law, by whom hidden, and for what length of time, it is not said. The study of this book decided the king to carry out the work of Reformation which forms the chief subject of our present Lesson. But first he summoned the people together to read (rather *cause to be read*) the book to them, and announce to them his purpose. Then, leaning against a pillar, after the manner of Oriental monarchs at solemn ceremonials, he registered a vow of obedience and zeal for God, in which the people joined. Then the work of cleansing began, as eagerly and punctiliously carried out as the cleansing of the houses from leaven at Passover.

2 Kings
XXIII.

Priests of the second order, ordinary priests. **Grove**, see on ver. 6. **Host of heaven**, see xxi. 3. **Burned them**, as commanded in Deut. vii. 25.

He **carried the ashes** of the abominations to **Beth-el**, in order to defile the altar there.

Idolatrous priests. The original word is peculiar, and its meaning doubtful. But it is probably derived from a root signifying "black," and in that case will signify "given to evil and obscure practices."

The grove (Heb. *asherah*), an obscene wooden image, set up in the Temple by Manasseh, and, though afterwards removed by him, reinstated by Amon. (2 Chron. xxxiii. 15, 22.)

The licentious practices of the ancient Canaanites had been continued or revived, and women wove hangings, rather *made tents*, for the Asherah, to be used for unholy purposes. (Cf. Num. xxv. 6.)

Geba to Beer-sheba, from N. to S. of the whole kingdom.

These priests were not idolaters, but worshippers of God, and therefore were allowed to eat among their brethren. But having sacrificed elsewhere than at Jerusalem they were not allowed to come to the altar, as being ceremonially unclean. **Topheth** is derived from a word signifying "to spit out," the name being given to express the abomination of the worship of Molech which was carried on in the valley of Hinnom. And from the word "*Hinnom*" is derived *Gehenna*, the Hebrew word for hell.

The horses had been consecrated to the sun and were offered in sacrifice to it. They seem to have been stabled in the Temple-court, all the way from the door to (not "by") the chamber of Nathan-melech, **in the suburbs**—rather *courts*.

The top, i.e. roof. Cf. Zeph. i. 5; Jer. xix. 13. **The mount of corruption** was the southern portion of the range of Olivet. (Mr. Clark, Map XI.) See 1 Kings xi. 7.

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12

2 Kings
XXIII.

15 Josiah proceeds from Jerusalem to Bethel, now come into
his hands in consequence of the extinction of the northern
kingdom.

16 This violation of the sanctity of the dead is without precedent in the history of Judah. It is true, as the Bishop of Lincoln writes, that it was an awful execution of vengeance against idolatry. But we cannot help regarding it as the act of righteous but intemperate zeal carried out with the violence of a headstrong boy. The violence of the proceeding probably defeated its own object. The prophets have not a word to say in commendation, and the corruption which had reached the heart of the people was not even touched, while they prided themselves on their quickened zeal for God. (See Jer. v. 1.)

17 **Title**, rather "grave-stone." See on 1 Kings xiii. p. 315.

20 He did not stop short of executing the priests of Bethel upon their own altars, and then of defiling their dead bodies. He retaliated upon idolatry the cruelties of his grandfather Manasseh, blood for blood. Then followed in obedience to the newly found Law a Passover, greater than Hezekiah had been able to celebrate, both because of the strict observance of the ritual, and because it was attended by numbers from the northern kingdom, and the ancient unity was in a measure restored. (See 2 Chron. xxxv.)

21 Looked at from a mere worldly point of view, what an abortive observance was this Passover. The nation was on the very verge of dissolution. But like the Passover of Moses (Heb. xi. 28) this was held "in faith," in the assurance that the Lord was the God of Israel and would not forsake His inheritance. The next observance of the Passover was to see the nation weaned from idolatry (Ezra vi. 19), all in preparation for the Great Passover, which should perfectly free Israel from bondage. Thus, though the earthly kingdom passed away, the Church grew brighter in the fires, more ready to meet her heavenly King.

29 On this war between Egypt and Assyria, see the parenthetic Note which follows this chapter. Pharaoh-necho was on his way to Carchemish (2 Chron. xxxv. 20), the place where four years afterwards Nebuchadnezzar overthrew him.

What was Josiah's motive in attacking Pharaoh-necho does not appear, but one may suppose it to have been something of this kind: there was still a party in favour of an Egyptian alliance, but Jeremiah opposed it as strenuously as Isaiah had done. Josiah, in his eagerness to testify against that, seems to have thrown himself on the side of the newly-risen kingdom of Babylon¹, perhaps with the hope of making friends with it against the former enemy of his country, Nineveh. In 1 Esdr. i. 28 it

¹ This is assuming Nineveh to have fallen in 625, as Rawlinson takes it. But if with Oppert we put the event in 606, then Bp. Wordsworth's conjecture seems probable, that Josiah wished to make friends with Assyria, in dread of the rising power of Babylon.

is said that Jeremiah warned him what would be the result of his expedition.

The vale of Esdraelon, in which Megiddo is situated, has been called "the battle-field of Palestine." Here Sisera had been overthrown by Barak, and the Midianites by Gideon, and Saul by the Philistines. Here also the Crusaders were irretrievably beaten by Saladin in 1187 (see Stanley, *S. and P.* 367). The name Megiddo became a synonym for "a decisive battle¹." The deep and universal mourning for the good king was such as had never before been seen (2 Chron. xxxv. 24; 1 Esdr. i. 32; Zech. xii. 11—14; Jer. xxii. 18). He was the last royal hero of Israel.

NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF THE BABYLONIAN MONARCHY.

We have seen (p. 343) how the Babylonians and Medes took Nineveh, and put an end to the Assyrian Empire. The larger portion of it, comprising the Upper and Middle Tigris, fell to the Medes. Babylon gained her own independence and the lordship over the land of the Euphrates. This is the reason that Babylon at once becomes connected with the Bible history. Her course of operations was marked out—if she sought expansion, it must be towards the West.

And it must be remembered that Egypt was still an unconquered monarchy, as it had been in the time of Hezekiah. The accession of the young and enterprising Pharaoh-Necho was the signal for an aggressive policy, and he made war upon Nabopolassar. Interference in this war cost Josiah his life. Necho had a brief success, but soon received a crushing defeat at Carchemish (2 Kings xxiv. 7; Jer. xlvi. 2—12) from Nabopolassar's son, Nebuchadnezzar; the ultimate result being the bringing of all Western Asia under the Babylonian sceptre, and the destruction of Egypt as a military power.

In the course of this war Nabopolassar died, and **Nebuchadnezzar** (604—561) became king. We shall read much of him in the ensuing chapter and in the lessons from Daniel. He was one of the greatest men in military history. The real greatness of the Babylonian Empire died with him. He was succeeded by his son **Evilmerodach** (561—559), who was destroyed by a conspiracy headed by his brother-in-law **Neriglissar** (the Nergal-sharezer of Jeremiah xxxix. 3), who then succeeded (559—556),

¹ Rev. xvi. 16. *Armageddon* = Hill of Megiddo.

**Note on
the His-
tory of
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Monarchy.**

and was followed by his son **Laborosoarchod**, who was soon put to death. **Nabonadius** (555—538), who appears, like Neriglissar, to have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, found the kingdom on the verge of ruin; buildings and institutions alike had fallen into decay; there was corruption and intrigue everywhere. He strove with energy to avert the evil hour, but it came speedily.

Cyrus (commonly called "the Great"), King of Persia, had been brought up in the court of Astyages, King of Media, his mother being the king's daughter, and his father being a vassal of the king. But when he grew up he made war on his former patron, routed and took him prisoner. Astyages thereupon spent a peaceful old age at the court of Cyrus. The latter presently engaged in a war with Cræsus, King of Lydia, in which the latter invited help from Babylon. Consequently, at the end of the Lydian war, Cyrus turned his arms against Babylon. Nabonadius took command of the army in the field, was utterly defeated, and threw himself into a fortress. He had left the city under the charge of his son Belshazzar, and for a long time Cyrus was baffled in his attempts to take it. But at length came the dreadful day of revelry, when the hand on the wall foretold Belshazzar's doom; and that night the Persian army, marching along the dry bed of the Euphrates, entered the city, and a horrible scene of fire and massacre followed. Belshazzar was slain, and the Babylonian Empire was at an end. Nabonadius submitted to the Conqueror, and was treated with kindness, as Astyages had been.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

**2 Chron.
XXXVI.**

"The struggles of the expiring kingdom of Judah are like those of a hunted animal,—now flying, now standing at bay, between two beasts of prey, which, whilst their main object is to devour each other, turn aside from time to time to snatch at the smaller victim that has crossed their midway path. It was not now a question of choice of independence, but of a choice of foreign sovereigns." (*Stanley*.) Jehoahaz was the third son of Josiah. In Jer. xxii. 11 he is called Shallum. Probably this was his original name, altered to Jehoahaz on his accession. It would seem that the people chose him in preference to his elder brother Jehoiakim, because he followed his father's policy of

antagonism to Egypt. This would account for Pharaoh's deposition of him and his fine on the country (about £40,000). He did evil (2 Kings xxiii. 32), and was an oppressor (Ezek. xix. 3), but the people mourned over his fall. He was the first Jewish king who died in exile. Jeremiah speaks with pity of him, and declares that he is more an object for pity than his father (xxii. 11, 12). Jehoiakim, of course, as the nominee of Pharaoh-Necho, was his zealous partizan (see 2 Kings xxiii. 35). But the battle of Carchemish in his fourth year laid the Egyptian king prostrate before Nebuchadnezzar. Syria was first taken by the conqueror, then Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was defenceless now that his patron had fallen, and Nebuchadnezzar bound him to carry him to Babylon. But apparently he relented, possibly in grateful memory of Josiah, and Jehoiakim was reinstated. Nebuchadnezzar, however, carried away some of the holy vessels to his temple of Bel, and also a large portion of the population, among whom were Daniel and "the three holy children" (Dan. i. 1, 2).

For a while Jehoiakim remained on the throne as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal, then, in spite of Jeremiah's agonized warnings, he rebelled, apparently because he desired to waste on his own luxury the tribute which was demanded of him. Nebuchadnezzar was occupied for a while with other matters, and unable to come himself to chastise his unruly slave, but he sent marauding bands against him (2 Kings xxiv. 2), who filled the country with frantic misery, which was increased by a long drought (Jer. xiv.). Jerusalem was tormented by a fierce war of factions, almost as terrible as that which preceded its destruction by the Romans. Jehoiakim remained impenitent; Jeremiah entreated, warned, threatened, in vain. A mystery hangs over the king's end. According to the account in the LXX. he died peaceably at Jerusalem; another account states that his subjects killed him in hope of propitiating Nebuchadnezzar, and there seems every probability that this was the case (cf. Jer. xxii. 18, 19). The expression **that which was found in him** refers, it is said, to idolatrous marks which he had made upon his person in reverence of heathen deities, and which were seen when his corpse lay naked outside the city-walls. (See *Wordsworth in loc.* and *Stanley*, p. 539.)

The end was near now. His son Coniah, or Jeconiah, or Joachim, for by all these names he is called (the last is the LXX. name), succeeded to such greatness as remained to the monarchy, at the age of eight¹ years, his mother Nehushta acting as regent (2 Kings xxiv. 8; Jer. xiii. 18). But soon Nebuchadnezzar again appeared at the gates, and the king and his mother came out and made submission. They, and a fresh body of captives, were carried captive to Babylon. The nation was torn with anguish, as Jeremiah's writings abundantly show, at this fresh sign of the departure of their glory. They walled

¹ This seems correct, and not *eighteen*, as in 2 Kings xxiv. 8.

2 Chron.
XXXVI.

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2 Chron.
XXXVI.

up the city-gate out of which he had passed (see *Stanley*, p. 541), and eagerly looked out for tidings of him. "The tidings were treasured up with a mournful pleasure that.....he had been kindly treated by the successor of his captor (2 Kings xxvi. 27—30); that he took precedence of all the subject-kings at the table of the Babylonian monarch; that his prison garments and his prison fare were changed to something like his former royal state." (*Stanley*.) He is supposed to have written Ps. xlii. at Hermon, on his way from his beloved home.

11 Like the Greek Empire under the Palæologi, the monarchy was now little more than the capital city. But of this the walls stood unbroken and the Temple within them. To the throne, such as it was, Nebuchadnezzar raised Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah. (The word "brother" is used here, as sometimes elsewhere, for "nearest kinsman.") See 2 Kings xxiv. 17; 1 Chron. iii. 15.

Zedekiah shewed a desire to follow Jeremiah's advice, as was to be expected from a nominee of Nebuchadnezzar, and he had high and good feelings, which, had his lot been cast in easier times, might have saved the state. He and his counsellors made a solemn covenant with God, with ceremonies like those of Abraham (Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19; Gen. xv. 10). But it was soon plain that he was carried hither and thither by the changing winds, the slave now of one party of counsellors, now of another, and the sufferings of Jeremiah were greater than they had ever been. Zedekiah went to Babylon on purpose to swear allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, and as soon as he returned joined a confederacy of kings against him. For this he is denounced both by Jeremiah, and by the prophet of whom as yet we have said nothing, Ezekiel. (See Ezek. xvii. 11—21.) The later chapters of Jeremiah are full of episodes of these evil days, and of the persecutions to which the prophet was subjected, and from which the king would fain have delivered him if he had dared.

17 The Chaldeans came at length, and the city was subjected, as Samaria had been, to the horrors of a siege. It lasted for 18 months, then, on a day which is still observed as a fast by the Jewish people, the city was stormed at midnight. The Book of Lamentations supplements the dreadful narrative of the present chapter.

The king's eyes were put out (2 Kings xxv. 7), and, according to traditions, the covenant-breaker worked as a slave in a mill for the rest of his life. A month later, and Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, burnt the Temple.

21 Jer. xxv. 9, 12. The prophets had called upon the people again and again to observe the sabbath, but they would not hear. The historian tells us now that the land received her sabbath, in spite of them. The *seventy years* was like a compensation to her, an enforced time of rest. Surely a warning against desecration of the Lord's Day.

In the first year, &c., i.e. B. C. 537.

Some suppose that the remarkable expression coming from the mouth of Cyrus, **The Lord God of heaven**, is to be attributed to the influence of Daniel, but it is by no means improbable that the Persians were pure theists.

On the Restoration, see the following note and the table after it.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

We shall have some notices of the state of the Jews under the Captivity in our Lessons from the Books of Ezekiel and Daniel, and several of the Psalms belong to this period.

When at length the decree came forth for the restoration, 42,360 persons assembled under Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar) the descendant of their kings, and Jeshua the high-priest. Many preferred remaining in a land, where they appear, on the whole, to have been treated rather as colonists than captives, and where some of them had acquired much wealth. But to supply the place of these there were a great number of those who had never been taken away, who now joyfully welcomed back the returning exiles.

The event was regarded by them all, as it may be by us, as life from the dead. God's grace and love had triumphed over their sin. They brought with them the assurance which Daniel's prophecies had given them, that this restoration was but the preparation for a great and complete deliverance, for "the making an end of sin," and "making reconciliation for iniquity," for "bringing in everlasting righteousness" and "anointing the Most Holy." The very material poorness of the second Temple, as compared with the former, became, through the teaching of their prophet (Hag. ii. 9), a pledge that the spiritual Temple was preparing, heavenly and eternal, wherein "the Desire of all nations" should appear, and give them peace. The holy things of their former Temple were no more, they grieved for the loss of them, but there came an assurance from God by the mouth of the Tirshatha, that a Priest should rise up with the Urim and Thummim (Light and Truth). Neh. vii. 65. The benefits which they had received from the Captivity were very great. They sat by the waters of Babylon and wept for their lost Temple until they

2 Chron. .
XXXVI.

Introductory Note
to the
Books of
Ezra and
Nehemiah.

Introductory Note to the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

received messages of comfort from God, and they learned hereby that He was not a mere local God bound to visible ordinances, that He dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but is the Protector and Father of all. Daniel had opened his windows that he might look towards Jerusalem, and had been rewarded with the vision which told him how Michael, the great Prince of the children of his people, should rise up at the last, and those that sleep in the dust of the earth should awake. Through the earthly temple as a vista he saw even to the inner sanctuary of heaven, and to the Ancient of Days upon His throne.

The idols of wood and stone had disappeared for ever, and with them the national schism. The twelve tribes had Jerusalem only as the place of their common worship until the day when the living waters went forth from it to water the whole spiritual earth. They were all proud to call themselves after the name of Judah. "*Jeew*" was henceforth the name by which they were known, a name that is never found in the Bible before the book of Ezra.

Now for the first time Synagogues were erected, for the reading of the Law and the Prophets on the Sabbath-day. It is hardly necessary to remind the reader of the means which these furnished to the apostles of preaching the gospel of Christ. From this time, a belief in the immortality of the soul and the certainty of the better life to come, appears distinctly in the popular creed. The words of faith and hope which are found in the Apocryphal books are more distinct than any which we find in the canonical scriptures of the Old Testament. God was still, by degrees and in various methods, making the light clearer until the Sun of Righteousness arose. It would be wrong and dangerous to forget that there are features which are less satisfactory. There was an alteration in the national character which tended to evil. They had been prone to learn the idolatries of the world; they now wrapped themselves round in the proud assurance of their own religious superiority. Adversity had endeared the Law to them, and now they pushed its observance to the extremest point, and beyond it. Marriages like that of Boaz with Ruth were absolutely prohibited, and the Sabbath was observed so strictly that they were not allowed to defend themselves in times of war. We are bound to believe that Nehemiah's severity and exclusiveness were an absolute necessity of the times, but we

are also bound to learn, and to meditate on the warning thereof, that out of this exclusiveness grew the evil and wicked spirit which led the Jews to hate, and reject, and crucify their King, and brought upon them the wrath of God to the uttermost.

The following Chronological Table will be found useful as a guide to the reading of the later historical books.

Introductory Note to the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

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| B. C. | |
| 537 | <i>Supremacy of Cyrus.</i> Decree for the return of the Jews. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23. Ezra i. |
| 536 | The return. Ezra ii. The altar is set up and the foundation of the Temple laid. Ezra iii. |
| 534 | Interruption of the Samaritans. |
| 529 | <i>Death of CYRUS and Accession of CAMBYSES</i> (Ahasuerus of Ezra iv. 6). SMERDIS (Artaxerxes of Ezra iv. 7). He stops the works of the Temple. |
| 522 | DARIUS HYSTASPIS (Ezra iv. 24; v. vi.). |
| 520 | Prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah. Building of the Temple resumed. |
| 516 | Temple dedicated. Ezra vi. 16. |
| 490 | <i>Darius invades Greece. Battle of Marathon.</i> |
| 485 | XERXES (Ahasuerus of Esther). Great feast in his third year (Esth. i. 3). |
| 480 | <i>Invasion of Greece. Battles of Salamis and Plataea.</i> |
| 478 | <i>He returns defeated.</i> Vashti deposed and Esther made queen. |
| 465 | <i>Xerxes dies, and is succeeded by ARTAXERXES LONGIMANUS.</i> Ezra vii. 1; Neh. ii. 1. |
| 461 | <i>Pericles at Athens.</i> |
| 458 | Ezra comes to Jerusalem. Last prophecies of Zechariah. |
| 444 | Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem. He is governor for twelve years. Afterwards returns to Persia. |
| 428 | Return of Nehemiah. Further reforms. |
| 423 | <i>Darius Nothus.</i> |
| 420 | Prophecies of Malachi. |

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The name **Ezra** means "Helper," and **Nehemiah** "The Lord is my Comforter."

Chisleu, the ninth month, answering to our December. **The twentieth year** of Artaxerxes Longimanus. See the foregoing table.

Shushan the capital of the kingdom of Persia. The kings resided there except in the height of the summer, when they went to Ecbatana or Persepolis. It was taken by Alexander the Great, who found immense wealth there.

Nehemiah
I. 1.

Nehemiah
I.

“God has His faithful remnant in all places; a Joseph in the court of Pharaoh; a Moses also there; an Obadiah in the family of Ahab; a Daniel at Babylon; a Nehemiah at Susa; and ‘saints in Cæsar’s household’ (Phil. iv. 22).” (*Wordsworth.*)

2 **One of my brethren**, to be taken literally. See ch. vii. 2.

Nehemiah had not returned with his brethren, being in a station of high honour and profit, but he was not the less patriotic, nor did he shake off the thoughts, of his brethren. “Note, it is lawful and good to enquire *What news?* We should enquire especially concerning the state of the Church and religion, and how it fares with the people of God; and the design of our enquiry must be, not that, like the Athenians, we may have something to talk of, but that we may know how to direct our prayers and praises. Every Jerusalem, on this side the heavenly one, will have some defect or other in it, for the making up of which it will require the help and service of its friends.” (*M. Henry.*)

3 The Temple was finished and dedicated. But the city-wall which the Chaldeans had broken down had never been restored, and the city was left defenceless.

4 **The God of heaven.** A very common phrase in this book and in Ezra, expressive of the belief, which the Captivity had developed, in the Omnipresence of God. (Cf. Deut. iv. 19, and note.)

6 **Both I and my father’s house.** The confession of personal evil comes first in his confession of sin. He does not confess the sins of other people, but recognizes first that there is the same fault in him which there is in them. Therefore his confession is not hollow, but real, and it is accepted.

9 **Though, &c.,** Deut. xxx. 4. The whole passage is full of references to Deuteronomy.

11 “Little as is now known of that king—his pomp and his power, his pleasures and his flatterers, having all passed into oblivion—and great as is now the honour of his Jewish cupbearer, whose writings are dear to the hearts of millions, yet at that day the king seemed very formidable, and the attempt to speak to him on the matter which weighed on Nehemiah’s heart seemed like venturing into the lion’s mouth. **Grant me mercy in the sight of this man.** He reminded himself that, after all, the dreaded monarch was but a man, and his heart was in the power of the Lord God.” (*H. W. Burrows.*)

Nehemiah
II.

1 Thus he prayed, and bided his time, waiting still upon God. **Nisan** was our April, it was about four months, therefore, before the opportunity came to him. It was some festal day, as is expressed by the words **wine was before him**, as well as shown by the presence of the queen (vers. 6).

2 Nehemiah was terrified at being discovered, because no mournful object was ever allowed to intrude into the royal presence.

4 Very beautiful and touching, as well as full of instruction to us, are the words, **So I prayed to the God of heaven.** He had

lived a life of prayer, and had prayed earnestly on this subject, and now naturally he takes one moment, before giving an answer to the king, to offer a silent ejaculation to a yet higher Sovereign.

I set him a time. Nehemiah was governor for twelve years. But probably he returned from time to time, or he obtained extension of his leave.

The king's forest. Probably Lebanon. The concluding words are very characteristic. He speaks of himself in the opening chapters in the simplicity of real modesty; when he comes to be associated with Ezra he drops the singular, and in speaking of improvements of which he must have been the main author, he commonly drops the first person altogether. Here, when he tells how he gained his point, he does not speak of his merit, or his good management, or his favour with the king, but gives all the praise to God.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The pious governor, Nehemiah, had finished the walls, and his people were at length in security. He now convokes them together to a solemn assembly, to recognize the good hand of God upon them, and to implore His blessing. A hundred years before Zerubbabel and Joshua had done the same thing in similar circumstances.

All that we know of the priest Ezra will be found in Ezra, chs. vii.—x. and here and in xii. 26. He had been sent to Jerusalem fifteen years before, had effected some reforms, and then probably returned to the court of Persia. Now he either accompanies, or follows Nehemiah. We may note here the thorough unanimity, and absence of jealousy, between the layman and the priest.

Street, rather *broad place*, or *square*. **The water-gate** was on the east of Ophel, close to the Temple. Probably the Temple Court was not large enough to hold all the assembly.

Seventh month—Tisri.

The latter part of the verse is literally "the ears of the people were unto the book of the law," they were chained to it, and minded every word. "Take heed how ye hear."

Pulpit, lit. "tower," i. e. platform.

Stood up, in reverence.

"Ezra, like all ministers of the word, was both the people's mouth to God, and also God's mouth to them." (*M. Henry*.) Bp. Wordsworth supposes the cxixth Ps. to have been written by Ezra on this occasion.

Tirshatha, Persian word for "governor." The people wept because they saw how they fell short of the commandments of God. So ought we all to do. But they were encouraged to put away their tears, because sorrow for sins brings the assurance of peace. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. There is joy

Nehemiah
II.

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Nehemiah
VIII.

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Nehemiah
VIII.

to the Christian in believing. It is among the first-named fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22). We were sent into the world to be happy, for Christ has redeemed us and given us an inheritance in light, and this joy, **the joy of the Lord, is our strength** in performing the duties and bearing up against the troubles, of life. **Send portions**, Deut. xvi. 14; Esth. ix. 19, 22; Luke xiv. 13. **This day is holy**. It was the feast of trumpets. Lev. xxiii. 24.

14

They found written. Not that they made the discovery now, but Ezra found the place as being appropriate to the occasion. This was the feast of Tabernacles. Cf. Ezra iii. 4, and 1 Kings viii. 65, and see note, p. 219. The prophet Zechariah, who was very likely at the present celebration, speaks of the worship of the Gospel as an ever-continuing Feast of Tabernacles, xiv. 16.

15

The mount, i. e. of Olives. Cf. Lev. xxiii. 40.

16

The gate of Ephraim, i. e. on the north.

17

It would seem, as Bp. Wordsworth says, that the joy in part arose from their recognition of the partial fulfilment of the prophecy of the weeks of Daniel, and the assurance therein that the coming of Messiah was hastening on. See p. 150.

18

The eighth day, "the great day of the feast," John vii. 37.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

Introductory
Note
on the
Prophet
Jeremiah.

Jeremiah is better known to us than any of the prophets, his writings being autobiographical in a far greater degree than those of any other¹. The following passage from Bp. Wordsworth's *Introduction* is only an extract from an Essay which is all as pure gold.

"There is no prophet in the Old Testament whose life, as displayed in his writings, extends over so long a period of time of great public difficulty, and with whom we are so familiar as Jeremiah. His prophecies are his autobiography, they reveal the inmost working of his soul from his youth to his old age. He does not conceal from us his weaknesses. 'I am a child,' he says, 'I cannot speak.' He does not disguise from us his impatience and his disappointments; he reveals his feelings of discontent, and records his words of murmuring: 'Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and contention to the whole earth.' He does not hide from us, that, like the prophet Jonah, he shrank back from his prophetic

¹ The following are the only passages in the Hebrew Scriptures where he is named except by himself: 2 Chron. xxxv. 25; xxxvi. 12, 21, 22; Ezra i. 1; Dan. ix. 2.

work ; through fear of scorn, and insult, and persecutions, not only from men in high place and power, but even from his own friends and relations in his native town Anathoth. His brethren, he tells us, the house of his father, dealt treacherously with him, and sought his life and said, 'Prophesy not to us in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand.' And therefore he exclaimed : 'Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them.' He was also bitterly distressed by the seeming failure of his own prophecies and of his ministerial labours : 'Behold they say unto me, Where is the Word of the Lord ? let it come now.' He is staggered and perplexed by the fact, that he himself, the prophet of the Lord God of Israel, is the victim of injury, and that his enemies and the adversaries of the Lord triumph over him. 'Wherefore,' he asks, 'doth the way of the wicked prosper, wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?' He complains of his seeming desertion by God : 'Why is my pain perpetual, my wound incurable and refuseth to be healed ? Wilt thou, O God, be to me altogether as a liar, and as waters that fail?' He expostulates and remonstrates with God, saying that he had not coveted the prophetic office, and had not desired to be a messenger of woe to his people, and that he had been constrained to utter his prophecies by the overpowering force of God. 'I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more of His name. But His Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and could not stay. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. All my familiars watched for my halting.' And in a moment of despondency and anguish of soul, like another Job, he cursed the day of his birth : 'Cursed be the day wherein I was born ; let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings unto my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee ; making him very glad.'

"Nor was this all. Jeremiah was commanded to go forth and declare God's sternest judgments on Jerusalem ; and yet he was a man of the most loving spirit and tender affection. His heart was well-nigh bursting with sorrow when he thought of the terrible message which he was ordered to deliver. What a

Introductory Note on the Prophet Jeremiah.

wonderful depth of sympathy is there in that piteous ejaculation, 'Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.'

"These things are full of instruction to those who live in these last times. Each of us, whatever our calling, has a commission from God. Each has a message from Him to deliver in evil days. In a certain sense we are all Jeremiahs. And this is specially true with regard to some among us. They who are candidates for the sacred ministry of Christ's Church—they who have its vows upon them will often feel as he felt. They may often find themselves saying within themselves, 'I am a child and cannot speak.' When they are called upon to encounter dangerous error and to reprove deadly sin; when it is their duty to stand forth boldly as Jeremiah among the many, the powerful and the great; whenever it is their mission to denounce God's judgments upon that dangerous error or deadly sin, although that error and sin may be patronized by some who are their superiors in age and station, and it may be in intellectual gifts and literary and scientific attainments, they may then perhaps feel their heart sink within them, and may ask themselves the question, 'Who am I, that I should do this?' They may long to retire from their post at Anathoth or Jerusalem, and may sigh for some lodge in the wilderness. They may perhaps be tempted to repine at their lot, and even to murmur at God, for calling them to the priestly and prophetic office, and to arraign the dispensations of His providence in allowing wickedness to prosper, and in seeming to forsake His ministers and to allow His truth to fail. Let them not be surprised at this. Strange it would be, if in times of severe trial such emotions as these did not sometimes arise within them. They were felt by Jeremiah. But let them remember him: think of his sufferings. He stood alone in a godless age."

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, whether of the high-priest (2 Kings xxiii. 1) we cannot say (see on S. Paul's day, Morning). He was called to the prophetic office when still a child, and did not close his ministry until the fall of the kingdom. After that event some of those against whom he had testified, and who wished to discredit his prophecies, carried him to Egypt. His

subsequent fate is unknown. An early Christian tradition has it that he was stoned by the rebellious Jews at Tahpanhes.

He prophesied during the reign of four kings, and we have already seen how his book throws light upon their reigns. I can only further refer the reader to Mr Plumptre's exhaustive article "Jeremiah" in Smith's *Dictionary*. Not one in the Book is more interesting or valuable.

The first forty-five chapters are prophecies concerning Judah; chs. xlvi.—li. concerning other nations; lii. may be regarded as an Introduction to the Lamentations.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The prophet, probably writing during or after Josiah's reformation, declares that there is still no real religion in the people, that their hearts are corrupt and wicked as ever. The language is, of course, hyperbolical; there were good men living at Jerusalem, such as Baruch and Zephaniah. But the prophet means that the exceptions were so few as not to be taken into account. Cf. Ps. xiv. where in ver. 3 it is said "There is not one doeth good," yet in the next verse the existence of the righteous is recognized. Possibly there is a reference to Gen. xviii. '32, an implication that things are worse than they were at Sodom.

In the broad places, where people congregate most thickly.

Cf. ch. iv. 2. They profess zeal for Jehovah; idolatry is not *fashionable* at present, but they are as much without faith in God as ever they were.

The prophet tried at first to console himself by believing it was only the poor and ignorant who were alienated from God, but when he came to the rulers and priests he found that they had cast off all checks whatsoever.

The Chaldeans are compared to cruel and savage beasts, as combining in themselves the savage qualities of each,—the strength of the lion, the fierceness of the wolf, the swiftness of the leopard.

When I had fed them to the full. Another reading, which is now adopted by most critics is, **When I had made them to swear.** That is, when I had received them into covenant with myself, bound them to me in spiritual wedlock, then they rushed into spiritual fornication.

Assembled themselves by troops, lit. rushed furiously into.

A call to Babylon to come and do God's work of vengeance. Yet a command also not to destroy fully. God expresses His omnipotence and over-ruling providence in uttering this restraint, as saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further."

Introductory Note on the Prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah V.

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- Jeremiah**
V. 12 Disobedience to God's word is here expressly called **Atheism**.
 13 He who wilfully breaks God's law declares that God is not.
 These are the words of the unbelieving Jews, "The prophets are become wind, they are empty talkers, there is no real message in what they say, and they deserve to have their predictions accomplished in themselves."
 14 What God does through another is the word of His own power. Consequently Jeremiah's predictions shall be like God's lightnings, calling swift destruction upon the nation.
 15 Cf. Deut. xxviii. 49, from which these words are borrowed. Many of the verses which follow are also taken from the same chapter. Of course the prophet's application is to the Chaldeans. "The Chaldeans were a very ancient nation, which had immigrated into Babylonia. Their language was not Semitic, but in all probability the mother of the modern Kurdish." (*Henderson.*)
 16 **Their quiver is as an open sepulchre**, i.e. the arrows which it contains are all fraught with death.
 24 **The former rain** about October, **the latter** about March. **The appointed weeks**, between Passover and Pentecost.
 27 As a fowler fills his cage with birds by laying traps, so do they fill their houses with spoil by practising deceit.
 28 **The deeds**, rather *the words*. They are even more wicked in action than the words of bad men express, and when they have gotten power they make no use of it for righteous actions.
 31 **Bear rule**, i.e. exercise unholy and unlawful power, being supported by the Prophet's false visions. Hitherto there had been a conflict between the Priest and the Prophets, now this is exchanged for an unholy alliance. See *Stanley*, p. 519.
What will ye do, &c.? What a pitch of wickedness you will come to at last, and what horrible destruction will it bring upon you. "Those that walk in ill ways would do well to consider the tendency of them both to greater sin and utter ruin. An end will come, the end of a wicked life will come, when it will be all called over again." (*M. Henry.*)

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Jeremiah
XXII.

- 2, 3 **Down** from the Temple.
 Allusion to the oppressive measures used by Jehoiakim for raising the tribute to Pharaoh-Necho, as well as for the expensive buildings which he was rearing for himself in Jerusalem.
 4 There was yet a day of grace open to Jehoiakim. God was willing still to receive his repentance, and to bring him through trouble. The nation was eventually delivered from captivity, and Jehoiakim and his children might have shared in the victory. For, as we have seen, Jeremiah foresaw that the Babylonian tyranny, though it would for a little while prevail, had no elements of stability. It was only righteousness which

could prevail for ever. Jehoiakim was bent upon preserving his dignity, the prophet tells him that can only be done by the faithful discharge of his duty.

This house, the royal palace. This was what the ungodly kings persisted in refusing to believe. They thought there was impunity for them, because of God's promise to David. Therefore the Prophet tells them of God's solemn oath.

Gilead expresses the idea of richness and fruitfulness, **Lebanon** of strength and stateliness.

Prepare; lit. "consecrate," appoint them for this special service.

"Note, God never casts any off till they cast Him off." (*M. Henry.*)

The dead. Josiah. An annual lamentation had been kept up for him among the Jews, ever since his death (2 Chron. xxxv. 25).

See on 2 Chron. xxxvi. 4. (p. 355). Perhaps the people hoped for his return, which would free them from Jehoiakim's oppression. Jeremiah tells them such a hope is vain.

The prophet next addresses himself to the reigning monarch, Jehoiakim. His subjects were cruelly burdened by the Egyptian tribute, yet he must needs build himself a splendid and luxurious palace, as if all his business were to make a show, and to do good were the least of his care.

Windows. The Heb. is "my windows." Some think, therefore, that he had cut the windows from the Temple for his palace, thus committing sacrilege. Others render "double windows," expressing some special grandeur about them.

The **vermillion** here spoken of (*sinopis*) was a beautiful preparation of quicksilver and sulphur, and must not be mistaken for the red lead known by us under this name. (*Henderson.*)

Sarcastic. "Is it the case, then, that thou art a great king? Is thy dignity unquestionable?" referring, of course, to his ignominious vassalage. Then the prophet compares him to his father, of whom we must conjecture that Jehoiakim had spoken scornfully, as having dwelt in a mean, insignificant, unfashionable dwelling. "Well," asks the prophet, "did he not eat and drink? had he not enough for the needs of life? He had not such a fine house, but he did justice and helped the poor. And that was being a real and true king, and a better man than you, after all; oppressor, robber, murderer that you are."

There is singular beauty in the construction of this address. The prophet begins in the third person (vv. 13, 14), then without naming him he directly addresses the king (15—17), and at last mentions him by name.

Ah sister. Probably this refers to his wife, who died in captivity (see on 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9). Or it may simply mean, He shall not have such expressions of sorrow as are common to the meanest, who bury their friends with the cry of "Ah, my brother," or "Ah, my sister," as the case may be.

Jeremiah
XXII .

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**Jeremiah
XXII.**

19 As we have said elsewhere, the accounts of his death vary (see on 2 Chron xxxvi. 8). But with the present passage before us we must accept that which states, partly from tradition, partly from hypothesis, that on the coming of Nebuchadnezzar against the city, the Jews, to propitiate him, slew the wretched king and threw his body over the wall; that there it lay unhonoured and unwept, until at last it was dragged off and huddled under ground. Thus fared it with the builder of the fine palace.

20 We have next a prophecy of the short reign of Jehoiachin. The prophet calls upon Jerusalem¹ to ascend the Lebanon, whence she can see across the great desert, and there behold her king carried forth ignominiously as a captive, and herself left bereaved.

23 Jerusalem is called the **inhabitant of Lebanon**, because that mountain-range was within the boundary of the country, and was its strongest fastness. Consequently the people are spoken of as making their nest in its cedars.

How gracious, &c. Or, more probably, "What will thy pomp and glory be?" Thou wilt no more care for it then, than a woman for her ornaments in her hour of travail.

24 The godly monarchs had been near and dear to God, as signets on His right hand. His promise to David implied as much (cf. Hag. ii. 23). But because Coniah had cast off allegiance and counted himself unworthy of the honour, or because of the sins of Jehoiakim his father, God would cast him off. The latter explanation is preferable. Jeconiah was only a child, and could not have sinned as Jehoiakim had done. But Jehoiakim had destroyed his hope of reigning happily and well, and had too surely prepared for his captivity. His father's sins were to make him the Augustulus of the Jewish kingdom.

26 **Thy mother that bare thee.** Nehushta (see on 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9).

27 The false prophets had misled the people by prophesying a speedy return from captivity. (Chap. xxix. 8—10.)

28 These questions are supposed to be asked by Jews who were lookers on. And the prophet answers in the next verse.

30 The sentence of childlessness was afterwards reversed. See 1 Chron. iii. 17, 18. But probably we are to take this as a prophecy not of absolute barrenness, but of failure to place a son upon the throne. No son of his was to succeed him there.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

**Jeremiah
XXXV.**

2 The Rechabites were a tribe of Kenites (1 Chron. ii. 55) distinguished for their friendliness to the Jewish people. It is uncertain whether **Rechab** is the name of a person or whether

¹ The Heb. imperatives here are feminine, Jerusalem being as usual impersonated as a female.

“Jehonadab the son of Rechab” simply means “Jehonadab the Rechabite,” the last word expressing only the name of the tribe. It is probably derived from a root signifying “to drive,” and some think that it expresses the habit of the wild Arab tribe. Of Jehonadab we have already read in 2 Kings x. There he appears as a stern hater of Baal-worship, and it may have been on that occasion that, having been witness of the evil consequences of self-indulgence and license to the house of Ahab, he gave this command of strict asceticism to his posterity. Their obedience to it and observance of the rigid manner of life, had gained them so much respect from the house of Israel that they were treated as Levites, and allowed to enter into the chambers of the Temple. To bring them here, apparently into one of the most sacred chambers, and here to offer them wine, might appear like giving a divine sanction to their drinking it. Moreover, the fact that they had disobeyed the letter of their father’s instructions in abandoning the nomadic life, and coming to Jerusalem to dwell, might have furnished plausible excuse for breaking the other injunction as well. But their filial piety was proof against the temptation. The dwelling at Jerusalem was a necessity imposed on them by the dangerous state of the open country; to have obeyed Jehonadab’s command in that matter would be unjustifiable, for it would have been exposing themselves to needless risk; in everything not necessary they would still obey him.

“The Rechabites’ observance of their father’s charge to them is made use of as an aggravation of the disobedience of the Jews to God. For 1, the Rechabites were obedient to one that was but a man like themselves, that had but the wisdom and power of a man, and was only the father of their flesh; but the Jews were disobedient to an infinite and eternal God, who had an absolute authority over them as the Father of their spirits. 2. Jonadab was long since dead, and was ignorant of them, and could neither take cognizance of their disobedience to his orders, nor give correction for it. But God lives for ever, to see how His laws are observed, and is in a readiness to revenge all disobedience. 3. The Rechabites were never put in remembrance of their obligations to their father; but God often sent His prophets to His people, to put them in mind of their duty to Him, and yet they would not do it. This is insisted on here as a great aggravation of their disobedience; *I have myself spoken unto you, rising early and speaking*, by the written word, and the dictates and admonitions of conscience, ver. 14. Nay, *I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets*, men like yourselves, whose terrors shall not make you afraid, *rising up early, and sending them*, ver. 15, and yet all in vain. 4. Jonadab never did that for his seed that God had done for this people; he left them a charge, and left them no estate to bear the charge; but God had given His people a *good land*, and

Jeremiah
XXXV.

promised them, that if they would be obedient, they should still dwell in it; so that they were bound both in gratitude and interest to be obedient, and yet they *would not hear*, they would not *hearken*. 5. God did not tie up His people to so much hardship, and to such instances of mortification as Jonadab obliged his seed to; and yet Jonadab's orders were obeyed and God's were not." (*Henry*.) Professor Plumptre (Art. "Rechabites," in *Bible Dictionary*) has collected a large number of interesting facts on their subsequent history. He shews that they were admitted to share with the Levites the sacred functions of the Temple, resuming somewhat of their old life in later days. They are mentioned from time to time by mediæval Jewish writers, and Dr Wolff found a large tribe of them near Mecca. But we are bound to say of the prophecy, that its accomplishment must have depended upon the fidelity with which the descendants kept their pledge.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Jeremiah
XXXVI.

The warnings of Jeremiah had already kindled the wrath of the king and princes, and the prophet had been compelled apparently to go into hiding. Here he was attended by his faithful disciple Baruch, the son of Neriah. During the stirring events which took place in the 4th year of Jehoiakim (see on ver. 9), the word of the Lord came to him, commanding him to set down in writing the prophecies which he had delivered against Jerusalem, and which until now had been only put forth orally.

2 **Roll of a book**, rather "a book-roll," i.e. a roll made of prepared sheepskins.

4 **Baruch**. See ch. xxxii. 12, 13, 16; xliii. 3, 6. He was of noble family (Josephus), and his brother held high place at the court of Zedekiah (Jer. li. 59).

5 **Shut up**, either for some ceremonial reason, or because the king's anger against him rendered his public appearance dangerous.

9 The fast here spoken of was most likely proclaimed because of the advance of Nebuchadnezzar. His victory at Carchemish filled all Asia with terror, and Judah had reason to fear that she would be a prominent sufferer, as indeed she was, by that event. The king, who was altogether irreligious, probably troubled himself but little about the fast, but we are told that *they*, i.e. the people, proclaimed it.

10 **Gemariah** was well-disposed towards Jeremiah, as were his brother Abikam (xxvi. 24) and nephew Gedaliah (xl. 5—7). There were many chambers round the Temple, used by the Levites. Baruch took up his position in **the higher court** (the balcony) of one of these, and read to those assembled below.

Jeremiah
XXXVI.

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It does not appear whether Micaiah gave this information with the pious motive of turning the king to repentance, or with that of getting the prophet into trouble. But probably it was the former. The princes were evidently holding a council of state, for (as M. Henry remarks) "it should seem, though the princes had called the people to meet in the house of God to fast, and pray, and hear the word, they did not think fit to attend there themselves, which was a sign that it was not from a principle of true devotion, but merely for fashion sake, that they proclaimed this fast. Micaiah finds the princes sitting in *the scribe's chamber*, and tells them they had better have been where he had been, hearing a good sermon in the temple, which he gives them the heads of. Note, When we have heard some good word that has affected and edified us, we should be ready to communicate it to others that did not hear it, for their edification: *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*"

Jehudi was some official, but we are not told what office he held.

They were afraid both one and other. Or, as some explain it, "they looked with alarm at one another." They determined, it would seem, to shift the responsibility on to the king; it was his place to take heed to the warnings, if he chose. At the same time they knew enough of his character to recommend Jeremiah and Baruch to hide themselves. In the dwellings of Palestine in two-storied houses the lower rooms form what is familiarly called *the winter house*, and the upper *the summer house*. If the apartments are on the same story then the inner one is the winter house.

The ninth month. Chisleu. The fire was of charcoal, in a chafing dish. "At the present day these pots or furnaces have the form of a large pitcher; and are placed in a cavity sunk in the middle of the apartment." (*Gesenius*.)

Three or four leaves, rather "columns." It was written on one large roll, in parallel columns.

Penknife. Secretaries used to carry such a knife in their girdles for the purpose of sharpening the reed with which they wrote, and doubtless Jehudi had such a one. The exasperated king seized this knife, cut off column after column, and threw them deliberately one after the other (the Heb. imperfect expresses this) into the fire until the parchment was slowly consumed. The deliberation implies his wilful and reckless impiety. He was determined, one may believe, that such words should go no further. And so that men knew them not, he was ready to defy God. It is the manner of infatuated and ungodly men. "Those who had heard from their fathers of the effect of a similar reading on Josiah, might well be startled at the contrast. None of those well-known signs of astonishment and grief were seen; neither king nor attendants rent their clothes. It was an

Jeremiah
XXXVI.

outrage long remembered." (*Stanley*.) "If the princes had from the first shewn themselves affected with the word, perhaps they might have brought the king to a better mind; but frequently they who will not do the good they should, put it out of their power to do the good they would." (*Henry*.)

27 Notwithstanding all the attempts of the evil one to suppress God's word, nothing of it can fall to the ground. "Who hath resisted His will?" Imprisonment and martyrdom are powerless against it. And for those who fight against God, He has yet more arrows in His quiver, and they do but increase their own misery. When Jeremiah re-wrote his roll, "there were added many like words."

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On the death of Jehoiakim, see on 2 Chron. xxxvi. 8.

NOTE ON THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

Note on
the Pro-
phet Eze-
kiel.

Ezekiel ["Whom God will strengthen"] was a priest, the son of Buzi. Of the latter nothing further is known. Ezekiel was carried captive on the occasion described in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 7 (p. 355), and dwelt with a colony of his countrymen by the river of Chebar (see on S. Mark's Day, Evening). Here, in his 30th year, the spirit of prophecy came upon him. We know hardly anything of his life, the morsel of personal history in ch. xxiv. 15—28 is all. The 29th year of his exile is the last date that he gives, and we may suppose that he died soon after. His tomb, said to have been built by Jehoiachin, is shown near Bagdad.

His book consists of three clearly defined parts. Ch. i—xxiv. predictions delivered before the fall of Jerusalem; xxv.—xxxii. parenthetic sections concerning surrounding nations; xxxiii.—end, prophecies written after the fall of the city. The first portion consists of stern rebukes and threatenings, the last is mainly consolatory, and confident of God's mercy. It has been truly said that Jeremiah's prophecies begin and end with a vision of suffering, Ezekiel's with a vision of glory.

No man was more strict than he in observing all the requirements of the Law. The priestly character and feeling is always visible. His Vision of final victory takes the form of a spiritual Temple, wherein the Divine Ordinances are complete, all-sufficient, eternal. Yet Ezekiel put forth, more thoroughly than any other prophet had done before, the doctrine of individual responsibility. He taught the people that all souls were God's,

that the soul which sinneth it shall die ; all the ceremonial of the Law cannot save it, because God requires the sacrifice of the spirit, obedience to the law written in the heart.

See further on Evensong Lesson for S. Mark's Day. Stanley, ii. 564—576, and Wordsworth's *Introduction to Ezekiel*.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Son of man (*Heb.* Ben Adam). This title is given to Ezekiel throughout the book (more than a hundred times in all). It is given to Daniel once, the other prophet of the captivity (viii. 17), and to no other prophet. Evidently it is intended to be a humbling title, to remind the prophet that though heavenly visions are vouchsafed to him, he is yet earthly, doomed to death. It signifies also that he is sharing the lot of a downcast, captive people, humbled to the dust by reason of their sin. Apparently with this significance it was adopted by our Blessed Lord, who became a partaker of flesh and blood, a sharer in the woes and infirmities of His people.

Stand upon thy feet. For he had cast himself down in self-abasement and reverence. He is now bidden to stand up in readiness for a mission to his countrymen. "Our worship of God must not hinder, but rather quicken and excite, our actings for God." (*Henry.*)

When God spake the Spirit entered into Him ; for by His Word His Spirit enters into us, and then the Spirit within us makes the word effectual. The Spirit raised up the prophet out of the dust, and gave Him strength ; it is the special work of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. The prophet had heard the voice before (i. 28), but now it is distinct and its words audible. It bears a sad and terrible message to the prophet's nation.

A rebellious nation. The best MSS. read "nations," which will signify "heathens," an awful declaration that the Jewish people by adopting the idolatrous practices of the nations around them have at length themselves become heathens (cf. Isaiah i. 10 ; Amos ix. 7). All the changes, the warnings, the punishments which have come to them have had no effect—their fathers transgressed, and they are transgressing, unto this very day.

Impudent, lit. "brazen-faced." They are hard of face and hard of heart, their very countenance is an index to their obstinacy of disposition. And now God declares His authority, His determination that this self-will shall be broken down,—"**I do send thee unto them.** Thou shalt speak with My authority, and deliver thy message as coming straight from Me."

The Lord God is a phrase almost peculiar to Ezekiel. It reminded the captives that the God of Israel was the God of all the earth.

Note on the Prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel II.

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Ezekiel II.

5 **Shall know.** If they will hear, they shall know by comfortable and happy experience; if they will forbear and turn a deaf ear (as it is to be feared they will, for they are most rebellious), they shall know by the just judgments of the Most High. Either way the word shall "take hold of them" (Zech. i. 6), and they shall know that a prophet has been among them. "*Liberravi animam meam* is but the modern version of these still sublimer words." (*Stanley*).

6 We come in this verse to the charge given to the prophet himself. First, he is to be *bold*, and not daunted by difficulties. No man ever yet did any great work for God who was dismayed by the fear of men. **Briers and thorns**, scratching and tearing, choking the good seed and marring God's husbandry, these are to be looked for; yea, more than these, **scorpions**, venomous and malignant,—ill neighbours keeping a daily, hourly watch upon his life, and ever ready to do him a mischief. Cf. Rev. ii. 13.

7 Secondly, he is to be *faithful* in delivering his message. They were God's words, not his own; and as he was honoured by being entrusted with them, so he was not to betray his trust, and not accommodate himself to suit his hearers' fancies, and please their ears.

8 He was to be *observant of his instructions*. A roll was given to him, written within and without. It was full and explicit, and he was to master its contents. His first duty, as is the first duty of all ministers, was to learn obedience himself. Ministers who do not make personal holiness their first aim cannot be other than unfaithful ministers. The prophet was not merely to read it, or to learn it, or to understand its meaning, as an effort of the intellect. The symbolical action to which he was commanded, taught him that he was to digest it in his own mind, so as to experience its savour and power. **Open thy mouth**, prepare to eat it willingly, as with an appetite. See iii. 1—3.

9 The hand that offered it was that of Christ. We must
10 recognize all Revelation as given to us through Him. The prophet was not to swallow the roll blindly, and without examination, it was spread out before him, that he might master and know it first. His understanding and intellect, then the willing obedience of his innermost parts, were to be brought alike into the service of Him whose commission he bore. (Cf. Rev. x. 9, 10.) The scroll, when it was opened, contained the awful dirge of the dying Monarchy.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Ezekiel
XIII.

In the preceding chapter the prophet has referred to some false prophets who have come to Israel with lying words and

divinations. (Cf. Jer. xxiii. 14.) He now begins the denunciation of these. He calls them **prophets of Israel**, as opposed to prophets of God. Israel has made them for itself, they speak the vain and smooth words which Israel likes them to say, they bear no Divine message, they speak **out of their own hearts**, not by the gift of the Spirit of God.

Therefore the prophet addresses himself directly to them, if haply he may warn them of their utter folly as well as their horrible sin. Cf. 2 Tim. iii. 8, 9.

Like foxes (or jackals), crafty, voracious, hungry.

They have done nothing to help Israel in the hour of her need. The judgments of God had made rents in the kingdom, and calamities had come quickly, for profaneness and impiety had flooded the land. But no help had come from the prophets, no word of exhortation, no warning to repentance, no prayer that the Lord's anger might be turned away. They had no zeal for God nor for the welfare of men, they only sought to please, and to make gain thereby. They had flattered the people into the vain hope that the evil would never come, and that this word of theirs would be confirmed by the event.

He declares what their punishment shall be. God shall be against them. His hand shall be upon them, to seize and bring them to His bar of judgment. They who pretend to be inspired favourites of heaven, appointed teachers of God's people, shall be cut off from the commonwealth of Israel, refused any place whatever in His kingdom. Cf. Matt. v. 19; Pss. i. 5; l. 16. They shall not enter into the land of Israel, but shall wander forth like Cain, outcasts from God's presence. The register of the whole house of Israel, so carefully kept (see Ezra ii.), shall know their names no more. Thus shall they become a signal example of His judgment, and by their downfall shall it be known that He is the Lord God.

They had pretended to see visions of peace at a time when sin was raging unchecked, when judgment was already darkening the doors. And in this evil work they co-operated together, held together by an unholy alliance, which would make their downfall the greater. One built a wall of sham defence, and another whitened the rotten edifice with whitewash to hide the cracks and give it a firm and imposing appearance. O terrible warning to all preachers of the Gospel, how sorely needed it is by us all!

Soon they shall be fearfully undeceived, by that judgment of God which is according to truth. The Chaldeans' army shall make a descent upon Jerusalem, a terrible siege shall be followed by a fierce and furious storm, the artillery of heaven, the hailstones and the stormy wind, shall add to the terrors of that day of judgment, and the building and its builders shall be hurled into one undistinguishable mass of destruction. The fair words and soft promises shall be a byword then (cf. Ps. lii.

Ezekiel
XIII.

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Ezekiel
XIII.

6, 7), and thus again shall it be made manifest unto all men, that the Lord is God.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Ezekiel
XIV.

Certain officials of the house of Israel presented themselves before Ezekiel, under the guise of religious enquirers. Apparently they were strangers to him, perhaps grandees who had come on business from Jerusalem, and who would like to know something about political prospects, or the success of their negotiation, whatever it was.

2 But the word of the Lord revealed to him their true character. They were idolaters. At home, at Jerusalem, they had
3 **set up the stumblingblock of their iniquity**, their chambers of imagery, **before their face**, and though they were out of sight of their idols now, they kept them in their hearts, loved them, doated on them, their hearts continually looking back to them. How could the enquiries of such men as these be an honour to Jehovah? How could their persons be accepted before Him? Their presence was an affront to Him.

4 And therefore this shall be their punishment,—God will answer every such man that cometh to Him **according to the multitude of his idols**. He will give them up to their own evil imaginations, and send them back to the idols whom they have chosen. Judges x. 13, 14. For the judgment of God deals with men as they really are, not as they profess to be. And thus their sin is all their own, and their own deceitful hearts are the snares in which they are taken. Their consciences betray them, and are a terror to them.

12 The verses which follow declare that national sins bring national judgments. **The land**. Literally "*a land*." It is the announcement of a general truth. The measure of the iniquity of Judah was now full, and the day of judgment was come. There had been a time when God declared that if there was one righteous man in Jerusalem He would pardon it (Jer. v. 1). But that time was now gone by. Though the highest saints of past and present time were gathered within the city, they should save but their own lives. The righteousness of Noah had saved his family in the flood, though he could not deliver the world; Job, the foreigner, had interceded for his friends; Daniel was living in Babylon now, conspicuous for his holiness. But the whole mass was so corrupt that even they could not preserve it, it must pass through the fires ere it could be purified. (Cf. Jer. xv. 1.)

15 **Noisome beasts**. Cf. Lev. xxvi. 22.

19 **In blood**, i. e. in death. "See how dangerous the case of sinners is against whom God hath so many ways of fighting that though they escape one judgment He has another waiting

for them." (*Henry.*) What then is the grievousness of the punishment of Jerusalem when all God's judgments are launched at her at once.

The following note of the *Bishop of Lincoln* deserves earnest consideration. "It may be safely affirmed that, whereas the sins of *individuals* are often punished *in this world*, the sins of *Nations* never escape with impunity. The reason of this is obvious. The World is under a Moral Governor. And it is no impeachment of God's Moral Government, that a wicked man should prosper in this world; for there is a life to come, and *we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.* (Rom. xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10.) The dead will be raised, the Throne will be set, and the books opened, and *every man* shall be judged according to his works (Rev. xx. 11—15); and then each man's *personal* share in the collective acts of his Country will be disentangled from the complex web of general Responsibility, and will be a subject of divine cognizance. But there is no Resurrection for Nations. No Trumpet will awaken them. England will not stand as England before the Judgment-seat of Christ. The names of France, of Russia, of Italy and of Spain will not be heard in that universal, everlasting kingdom, and in the kingdom of God.

"What then is the inference? Since God governs the world, and since He is just and Omnipotent, and since Nations can sin as He assures us they can, they must look to be punished in this world." (*Bp. Wordsworth.*)

The remnant...shall come forth to you, as consolers in your sorrow. A godly seed shall rise up, who shall comfort the exiles in their old age by giving a promise of better things. They shall be a seed-plot of the future Church, and even those who now suffer for their sins shall lay the consolation to heart at last; and die in peace in the assurance that God hath chastened them for their profit, to bring them to Himself.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Some of the Jews had impiously arraigned the divine justice, and cried out that their fathers had eaten the sour grapes of sin, and therefore *their* teeth, and not those of their children, ought to have been set on edge.

It was, in the first place, a self-righteous, self-justifying speech, for it declared that they had not been guilty of their fathers' sins. But the prophet all through had laboured to shew them that they, even they, were sinful (cf. Jer. xvi. 11, 12), otherwise they would not be suffering as they were. The confession which God desired to hear from them was that their own sins had brought calamity upon them. Cf. Ezra ix. 13; Neh. i. 6, 7. Probably they imagined that by putting their evil thought into the form of a homely proverb they were keeping

**Ezekiel
XIV.**

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**Ezekiel
XVIII.**

Ezekiel
XVIII.

clear of blasphemy, insinuating by a sly jest what they were afraid to say in so many words. Such a proceeding is one of the commonest things in the world—the hope of cheating the devil.

It was true, for God had told them, that He visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, because a nation is a body politic, and does not die. Each generation sows seeds for its successor to reap. (See Mr Clark's note, p. 200.) But the sinfulness of the application which the Jews made was, that they got rid by it of their own responsibility, and threw their own evil deeds upon their fathers. "In ordinary times, the mutual dependence of man on man, the control of circumstances, the hereditary contagion of sin and misery, fall in with the older views which Ezekiel combats. But it is the special use of such critical calamities as that of the fall of Jerusalem, that they reveal to us in a higher and still more important sense the absolute independence of man from man; the truth that we are not merely parts of a long chain of circumstances which cannot be broken, but that we must each one live for himself and die for himself. It is, in fact, the doctrine bound up in the very idea of Ezekiel's mission. As in his own person he had exhibited the necessity of the judgment that was to fall on the nation at large, so he set forth in his own person the inalienable freedom of each individual conscience and will. In the pressure of famine and captivity without, and of corruption and idolatry within, the mere fact of such a prophet existing at all was a proof that the human mind and spirit was not entirely crushed." (*Stanley.*)

- 3 God now declares, and confirms with the most solemn oath, that His judgments are just, that He works on a fixed plan, and not capriciously. The captivity of Babylon should work out His will, and when it had done so, should come to an end. (Cf. ch. xiv. 23.) And it shall be made manifest to them that it is because they themselves have eaten the sour grapes that their teeth are set on edge.

Moreover, we must remember that it is only in temporal things that children can be punished for their parents' sins, and that God turns all temporal calamities into blessings to those who love Him. Children cannot suffer eternal misery for the sins of parents.

- 4 Assertion of the sovereignty of God. All souls are God's, for He is their Creator, King, Father. He can hate nothing that He has made, He loves all souls, so that none can perish but by their own default. Therefore when He speaks to us, "All souls are mine," let us answer, "Yea, Lord, they are thine; Give us grace to yield them up to Thee."

- 5 For let us note that God does not insist on His absolute power—He lays down equitable and unexceptionable rules, such as all men must assent to. And he first draws the portrait of

a just man, one who has kept himself free from the pollutions of sin and subjected his appetites to the voice of reason and holiness. Most of the vices specified are expressly condemned in the law of Moses. **Eating upon the mountains** is partaking of idolatrous feasts on the high places.

Hath restored, &c. Ex. xxii. 26.

We have next the picture of an impious man, who is the son of the preceding. Such cases meet us in the history of the Jewish monarchy; Hezekiah was the son of Ahaz and father of Manassch. Josiah was the son of Amon and father of Jehoiakim.

His blood shall be upon him. In the language of the Orientals the blood which a murderer has shed is said to be upon him, till it be avenged by his punishment.

“Men indeed do not gather grapes of thorns, but God sometimes does; takes a branch from a wild olive, and grafts it into a good one. Wicked Ahaz begets a good Hezekiah, who *sees all his father’s sins which he has done*; and though he will not, like Ham, proclaim his father’s shame, or make the worst of it, yet he loathes it, and blushes at it, and thinks the worse of sin, because it was the reproach and ruin of his own father. *He considereth, and doth not such like.* Considers how ill it became his father to do such things, what an offence it was to God and all good men, what a wound and dishonour he got by it, and what calamities he brought into his family.” (Henry.)

God announces another principle of His judgment. Having shewn that He will reward or punish according to the change made in the *family* for the better or the worse, He goes on to declare that He will judge the *person himself*, according as he shall change for the better or the worse, and herein He gives an invitation for the wicked man to turn and repent. And we learn also from this verse what repentance is. Aversion to sin, to *all* sin, and positive obedience to all the law of God. “We do not rightly turn from sin unless we truly hate it; and we do not truly hate sin as sin, unless we hate all sin.” (Henry.)

In the great day his sins shall be blotted out, not to torment him more. Cf. 2 Sam. xii. 13.

The sinner knows so well how far he has sunk in sin that he might be tempted to despair but for the gracious assurance that God has no pleasure in the sinner’s death. His property is always to have mercy.

The apostate was never truly righteous, though he passed for such with the world. 1 John ii. 19; Gal. iii. 3. 4. Cf. Num. vi. 12 for a typical representation.

Are not your ways unequal. It is yourselves who have brought trouble upon you. It is not God who has wronged you. “The foolishness of man perverts his ways,” makes them unequal, and then “his heart frets against the Lord.” Prov. xix. 3.

Ezekiel
XVIII.

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- Ezekiel 28 | One of the first elements of repentance is consideration.
 XVIII. 30 | Conclusion and practical application of the foregoing. The
 judgment of God shall be complete and individual.
 31 | **Cast away.** Have done with it altogether; make no terms
 with it, do not hanker after it, look not on it.
 | **Make you,** &c., i.e. be minded towards God and towards
 holiness. Exercise those holy gifts and graces which God has
 already given you. Let His grace work the saving change
 within you.
 32 | An emphatic declaration, implied before, of God's good will
 towards every creature that He hath made.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

- Ezekiel | The lesson before us is the last prophecy uttered by Ezekiel
 XXIV. 15 | against Jerusalem before its fall. The chapters which follow
 refer to other nations. The next mention of Jerusalem is the
 account of its capture.

With the view, therefore, of impressing upon the prophet the solemn character of the crisis which is at hand, God announces to him the heaviest personal affliction which a man can suffer, the severance of the dearest tie of his life, the removal of her on whom he had been accustomed to look with affection and delight. No warning which the Jews could receive of the judgment that was hastening upon them could be stronger than the witness of the terrible cost to the prophet which his office now brought upon him. Yet he was commanded to exhibit no sign of grief. He was to appear as usual, not laying aside the tire of his head (i. e. his turban) or his sandals, nor covering his upper lip as mourners were wont (cf. Lev. xiii. 45; Mic. iii. 7), nor to partake of the food which friends used to bring to mourners in token of their sympathy. And further, he was to apply this to the case of the Jews' Temple, dear to them as a beloved wife, the object of their confidence and pride. They had profaned it with their idolatrous worship, now would the Lord Himself profane it by the hand of the Chaldeans. And those who had left children behind them when they were carried into captivity, would be horror-stricken now to learn they had been put to the sword. Then their grief should be so great as to stun them, and give them no power of relief in tears. They should not dare to put on the outward signs of grief, for fear of the wrath of their conquerors.

- Yet even thus a good influence should be at work. The secret gnawings of conscience should bring them to penitence, and they should mourn to one another, and confess with shame and sorrow that they had received the fruit of their deservings.
 25 | **Their strength,** the walls and fortresses; **joy...desire,** the
 Temple and fair palaces.
 26 | See ch. xxxiii. 21. As we have already said, the prophet was

silent as regards Judah from this time until the news of the fall of the city reached him. God was speaking now by His judgments, and words were not needed.

A sign, i. e. portent; fortelling God's judgments by acts as well as by words.

Ezekiel
XXIV.
27

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

By **shepherds** the prophet means governors of the people, princes, magistrates, priests, all and any who were entrusted with the duties of ruling, tending, and feeding the Lord's people. And this would include the two kings, who were now captives in Babylon, and who were to be brought, if so it might be, to repentance. The expression is restricted, in our present manner of speech, to the ministers of God's Word and Sacraments, and assuredly he is an unworthy minister who does not feel that to him the word applies as closely as ever it did¹. But as of old so now this chapter applies with equal truth and force to kings and magistrates and civil rulers; woe to them if they use their opportunities to feed and enrich themselves, if they think of how much may be got, rather than of how much good may be done.

Ezekiel
XXXIV.

Ye kill them that are fed, i. e. that are fatted. So Jezebel killed Naboth. 3

Diseased, rather "weakly." **Driven away**, or "strayed" (Deut. xxii. 1). "When any of the flock were sick or hurt, worried or wounded, it was all one to them whether they lived or died; they never looked after them." (*Henry.*) The pathos of these verses is exquisitely touching, considered as a picture of the poor during the latter days of the monarchy. 4

The Divine compassion fills the Most High with indignation against the false shepherds. They had boasted that they had their commission and authority from Him. But He declares on the contrary, "*I am against the shepherds.*" He makes solemn oath that He will depose them from their high office, and deliver His flock from their covetous and rapacious hands. 10

And for this reason, that He Himself is the Chief Shepherd, and they are but His deputies. As soon as they forget that and regard the sheep as their own, their office shall be taken from them. 11

The cloudy and dark day. A vivid metaphor descriptive of the suffering which marked the latter days of the monarchy. It is in the cloudy and dark days of nations, in times of calamity and distress, that the sufferings of the poor call most for the care of the shepherds, and that the selfishness and greed of the 12

¹ See a striking Sermon thus applying this text in Mr Plumtre's *Theology and Life*, p. 350.

Ezekiel
XXXIV.

shepherds are most felt. Wasteful luxury in closest proximity to starvation, and not troubled by the thought of the fact,—such things have been,—have they disappeared now? And in days of trouble the poor and neglected ones wander from God into despair and unbelief. The hirelings care not for them, therefore they cease to believe in the Great Shepherd.

13 We must, of course, interpret this primarily of the return from captivity. But, as we saw so continually in reading Isaiah, all such prophecies have a far wider scope. Every word speaks Christ. And thus is introduced the prophecy of judgment, for the flock are contemplated as brought to rest and safety, and at the same time the oppressors are destroyed, “fed with judgment.”

17 God turns next to the flock, and addresses it. His judgment whilst it is comprehensive, shall also be particular and individual. It is the same truth which the prophet has announced before (ch. xviii.), “All souls are mine; the soul that sinneth it shall die.”

18 Addressed to the wealthy among the people, those who though not in the position of shepherds have yet used opportunities which their position gave them to enrich themselves, and have embittered the pittance which the poor were able to secure, by giving them hard and bitter words. It seemed a **small thing to them** to do this, they thought there was no harm in giving injurious or insolent words. And further, they were cruel to the sick and weak of the flock. “They **thrust with side and with shoulder** (for the weakest goes to the wall), and **pushed the diseased with their horns**, because they knew they could be too hard for them, when they durst not meddle with their match. It has been observed concerning sheep, that if one of the flock be sick and faint, the rest will secure it as they can, and shelter it from the heat of the sun; but these, on the contrary, were most injurious to the diseased. Those that they could not serve themselves by, they did what they could to rid the country of, and so **scattered them abroad**, as if the poor, whom Christ says we must always have with us, were public nuisances, not to be relieved, but sent far away from us.” (*Henry.*)

23 Plainly a promise of Messiah. God before has spoken of “**My flock**,” making Himself to be the Shepherd. Now He declares that He will set **One Shepherd** over them. Let us note then here the distinction of offices of the Father and the Son. The Father feeds and sends His Son to feed. The Son shall be the Prince over them, and He shall appear in the form of Man, even the Son of David. Cf. Jer. xxiii. 5; xxx. 9; Hosea iii. 5; John x. 16; Rev. xxii. 16.

25 **A covenant of peace.** Eph. ii. 14, 15; Jer. xxxi. 31; John xiv. 27. The Gospel is a covenant of peace, God is at peace with us, and bids our souls be at peace.

The evil beasts. Ref. to xiv. 15. **In the woods** where

hitherto the wild beasts have had their haunts. The metaphor signifies the destruction of all spiritual enemies by the death of Christ. Luke i. 74.

Ezekiel
XXXIV.

The places round about my hill. "For out of Zion shall go forth the Law." **I will make thee a blessing**, for those who are good work goodness, and those who have grace minister it to those who need.

26

Showers of blessings. Spiritual graces poured forth upon the Church, at Pentecost and ever since. Ps. lxxviii. 9.

A plant, rather "a planting" **of renown.** The Hebrew word is a collective noun, signifying the same as our word "plantation." Cf. Is. lxi. 3, iv. 2; as Bp. Wordsworth well says, "When our Lord called Himself the Vine, and His members the Branches, He gave a beautiful illustration of this passage."

29

Ye are men, lit. "man," Heb. *Adam*. "Ye are the human family; ye shall be reunited, as my flock, in Christ."

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

On the first fourteen verses see Tuesday in Easter-week, p. 179. Those verses comprise the vision of the dry bones. We have here a different vision, containing further great and precious promises to Israel. The prophet is taught by a symbolic action that the division between Judah and Israel shall be healed, and the unity of the Church be restored. The **stick** (or *staff*) evidently signifies royal power. The **companions** of Judah are the tribe of Benjamin: Ephraim was at the head of Israel (1 Kings xi. 26). The enmity of the two was now to depart (Is. xi. 13, 14); and instead of being two sticks, crossing, thwarting, beating each other, they were to become in God's uniting hand a mutual strength and support.

Ezekiel
XXXVII.

This prophecy was fulfilled in part by the edict of Cyrus, for a large portion of the northern kingdom returned with their brethren, and those who did not look to Jerusalem as the head and centre of their nation. Local dispersion produced spiritual union. But the sacrifice of Christ broke all barriers down, slew the enmity, and made one new man. (Eph. ii. 14, 15.) He was **the one King** who should reign over them, and to whom they should cheerfully give allegiance, and be willing in the day of His power; they should have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and in being fully cured of their idolatry, should be cured of all their transgressions. For he who hates one sin *because it is sin* will hate all sin, and where an evil deed is parted with because it is contrary to God's law, complete obedience will follow. The redeemed Israel will be saved **out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned.** Though they be still left in the way of temptation, their King shall keep them safe, and with the temptation will make a way of escape.

22

David, see above, xxxiv. 23.

24

Ezekiel 25
XXXVII.

- See xxxvi. 28 (Whitsunday).
The covenant of peace, see above, xxxiv. 25, and cf. Is. lv. 3 ;
 26 Jer. xxxi. 31—34; Heb. viii. 7—13. This kingdom shall be
 everlasting (see Luke i. 32, 33), He remaineth a King and Priest
 for ever, and because He lives and reigns His people shall live
 27 and reign also. His sanctuary shall be set up in the midst of
 them, and His presence shall remain with them. Because they
 defiled His sanctuary He took it from them (Is. lxiv. 11), but
 28 now it shall be restored to them for ever, cf. Rev. xxi. 3. And
 the presence of God in His Church shall be a witness to the
 heathen. They shall see what God has wrought, and His people's
 light shining upon them shall bring them also to glorify the
 Father who is in heaven.

NOTE ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

Note on
the Book
of Daniel.

Daniel was evidently of noble descent (Dan. i. 3), but we know nothing of his parents or early history. He was taken to Babylon in the third year of Jehoiakim, at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's first advance against Jerusalem. His subsequent history will come before us in the selected chapters.

We cannot but notice a wonderful instance of the Providence of God in the fact that the beginning of the exile carried with it the means of the restoration, the seed of life was carried down into the entombment. For Daniel, an exile in the first deportation, was not only a messenger of God to proclaim the return, but it was to his writings (*solely* we may say as far as human means went) that the edict of Cyrus was due. From his first arrival in the great world-city he began to rise to greatness; like Joseph in the city of the Pharaohs God sent him before the captive people, "to preserve them a posterity in the earth, and to save their lives by a great deliverance" (Gen. xlv. 7). The analogy between Joseph and Daniel, the one at the beginning the other at the end of the national history, is close in other respects also. Their education in all the lore of the nation in which they dwelt; the high position they attained there, unshaken by their reverence towards the God of their fathers; their holy lives uncontaminated by the vices of the people around them; their political sagacity; and their interpretation of the dreams of the heathen kings,—all these things in each case bore witness to their own kindred of the faithfulness of God's cove-

nant towards them, and to the Gentiles of the universal power and love of God.

Still more close is the parallel between the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of S. John. Daniel was the prophet of the latter days of the Old World. He stood at the close of the Old Dispensation, and looked forward over the great Sea of Time. So was revealed to him the consummation to which his world was hastening,—the vision and prophecy sealed up and Messiah cut off. S. John stood at the close of the revelation of the New Covenant, and saw the Vision of the ages to come until all things should be put under Messiah's feet. The two books are closely alike in the form which the visions take, nor must we forget that they would have little teaching for us, were it not that they were full of help and instruction and guidance for the people among whom the writers lived. Because Daniel spoke to his own people in their exile and revived their despairing hearts, therefore he is able to comfort the faithful of all ages in times of trial and anxiety.

The position of the book in Sacred Literature is thus eloquently stated by Canon Westcott: "In studying the Book of Daniel it is of the utmost importance to recognise its apocalyptic character. It is at once an end and a beginning, the last form of prophecy and the first 'philosophy of history.' The nation is widened into the world: the restored kingdom of Judah into a universal kingdom of God. To the old prophets Daniel stands, in some sense, as a commentator (Dan. ii. 19): to succeeding generations as the herald of immediate deliverance. The form, the style, and the point of sight of prophecy, are relinquished upon the verge of a new period in the existence of God's people, and fresh instruction is given to them, suited to their new fortunes. The change is not abrupt and absolute, but yet it is distinctly felt. The eye and not the ear is the organ of the Seer: visions and not words are revealed to him. His utterance is clothed in a complete and artificial shape, illustrated by symbolic imagery and pointed by a specific purpose. The divine counsels are made known to him by the ministry of angels (vii. 16, viii. 16, ix. 21), and not by 'the Word of the Lord.' The Seer takes his stand in the future rather than in the present, while the Prophet seized on the elements of good and evil which

Note on
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of Daniel.

he saw working around him, and traced them to their final issue. The one looked forward from the present to the great 'age to come;' the other looked backward from 'the last days' to the trials in which he is still placed. In prophecy the form and the essence, the human and divine were inseparably interwoven; in revelation the two elements can be contemplated apart, each in its greatest vigour,—the most consummate art, and the most striking predictions. The Babylonian exile supplied the outward training and the inward necessity for this last form of divine teaching; and the prophetic visions of Ezekiel form the connecting link between the characteristic types of revelation and prophecy." (*Bibl. Dict.* "Daniel.")

The first chapter is introductory to the whole book, after which we have two series of prophecies. *The first* (chs. ii.—vii.) exhibits the relation of the Kingdom of God to the kingdom of the world. (1stly) The four great monarchies (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Macedonian, Roman) are represented first under the form of an image of four parts (ii.), then of four great beasts rising out of the sea (vii.); the last being succeeded by the Kingdom which shall never be destroyed. (2ndly) The same relation is shewn in the protection and deliverance of those who fear God from the persecution by earthly power (iii. vi.), and (3rdly) in the humiliation of earthly kings for pride and profanation of sacred things (iv. v.). The revelations of this series, it will be seen, rest upon historical incidents.

The *second series* is entirely apocalyptic in its character. It does not follow chronologically after the other, for the beginning of it falls before the close of the previous one. Its object is to trace the fortunes of the people of God, as typical of the fortunes of the Church in all ages. It begins with the conflict between the Kingdom of God and the heathen world, taking up the second and third monarchies under the similitudes of a ram and a he-goat. Then come minute details respecting the immediate future, revelations respecting the time of Messiah's coming, concerning the final destruction of the holy city, concerning the final conflict between the Church and the evil world, concerning the resurrection of the dead and the judgment.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Daniel I.

The third year, i. e. the expedition started from Babylon (where the writer was) in that year. It reached Jerusalem the year following (Jer. xxv. 1). See on 2 Chron. xxxvi. Nebuchadnezzar was not as yet reigning king. He was regent for his father Nabopolassar, who was now infirm with extreme age. He is called "king," as Sennacherib was in the days of his father Sargon (2 Kings xviii.), as being invested with full royal prerogative.

The land of Shinar. This name is found in Gen. x. 10; xi. 2; xiv. 1; Josh. vii. 21 (*Heb.*), but had now become antiquated to the Hebrews. In the country itself it had remained, and therefore Daniel naturally uses it.

Into the treasure house, &c. So the Philistines had done (1 Sam. v. 2) in token of the triumph of their god over the Lord. But in both cases the apparent victory brought crushing defeat (1 Sam. v. 4-6; Dan. v. 3-5).

See Is. xxxix. 7; lvi. 3-5.

The word **Chaldeans** has a twofold meaning. Originally it was the general name of the inhabitants of Shinar, or Babylonia, and it bears this meaning in ch. v. 30. But it came to have a narrower meaning, the priest-caste of the country, having a special lore and language of their own. Thus it is used here. The Chaldeans are classed constantly in this book with the magicians and astrologers. See on ch. iv. 7, p. 391.

Daily provision, &c. Such was Oriental custom towards retainers of the court.

Gave names, in token of subjection. Cf. Gen. xli. 45. The Hebrew names signify as follows: **Daniel**, "God is my judge." **Hananiah**, "The Lord gave graciously." **Mishael**, "Who is as God?" **Azariah**, "The Lord helps." Of the Chaldean substitutes we only understand two. **Belteshazzar** means "Bel is the prince," and Abed-nego, "servant of Nebo." But in spite of their heathen names their heart was unchanged; it "clave steadfastly unto God."

He would be defiled because the meat had been offered to an idol (Ex. xxxiv. 15), and had probably been killed with the blood (Lev. iii. 17). Cf. Hos. ix. 3; Ezek. iv. 13, 14.

Melzar is not a proper but an official name. It means "overseer of the wine."

"It is not earthly food, but divine grace, which gives beauty. By this immediate reward vouchsafed to their faith and obedience, God shewed His presence with them, and gave them a pledge of His future help in coming struggles." (*Wordsworth.*)

The Persian Magi never educated non-Persians unless the king enjoined it. In the present case the king's word, of course, was law, and Daniel, like Moses in Egypt (Acts vii. 21), acquired the secular knowledge of the Chaldees without their debasing

Daniel I. superstitions (*Pusey*, pp. 421, 422). It will be seen in the present verse that Daniel himself ascribes all his proficiency to God.

20 **Magicians.** See on ch. iv. 7.

21 The word **unto**, according to the manner of the Hebrew tongue, does not fix a limit. Daniel lived unto the first year of Cyrus and beyond it. See ch. x. 3. But the statement is here made to remind us that he who thus came with the first company of exiles lived to see the return. See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22. He was probably twelve or fourteen years old when he was brought to Babylon, he would therefore be nearly ninety when the edict of Cyrus went forth. We may be sure that he never returned to Jerusalem, but died loved and honoured in the land which had adopted him. His reputed tomb is shewn near Susa.

“What a volume of tried faithfulness is unrolled by the simple words, *Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.* Amid all the intrigues, indigenious at all times, in dynasties of Oriental despotism, where intrigue too rolls round so surely and so suddenly on its author’s head; amid all the envy towards a foreign captive in high office as a king’s councillor; amid all the trouble incidental to the insanity of the king or to the murder of two of his successors, in that whole critical period for his people Daniel *continued.* We should not have had any statement of his faithfulness, but for the conspiracy against his life under the new Median dynasty which knew not those past years. *The president and Satraps sought in vain to find any occasion against him concerning the kingdom; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was any error or fault found in him.* The picture is the greater, because the lines which mark it are so few. They are a few simple touches of truth. It is the fact, which is so eloquent. It is not the language of panegyric to say; *Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus; Daniel was in the gate of the king; this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.* The force of the word is not drawn out; but, as perseverance is the one final touchstone of man, so these scattered notices combine in a grand outline of one, an alien, a captive, of that misused class who are proverbially the intriguers, favorites, pests of Oriental courts, who revenge on man their ill-treatment at the hands of man; yet, himself, in uniform integrity, out-living envy, jealousy, dynasties; surviving in untarnished uncorrupting greatness the seventy years of the Captivity; honoured during the forty-three years of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign; *doing the king’s business* under the insolent and sensual boy Belshazzar; owned by the conquering Medo-Persians; the stay doubtless and human protector of his people during those long years of exile: probably commissioned to write the decree of Cyrus, which gave leave for that long-longed-for restoration of his

people, whose re-entrance into their land, like Moses of old, he was not to share. Deeds are more eloquent than words. Such undeviating integrity, beyond the ordinary life of man, in a worshipper of the One God, in the most dissolute and degraded of the merchant-cities of old, first minister in the first of the world-monarchies, was in itself a great fulfilment of the purpose of God in converting the chastisement of His people into the riches of the Gentiles." (*Dr Pusey, 21, 22.*)

Daniel I.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The Book of Daniel relates three great miracles of power. The first is that in the chapter before us, the second the hand-writing on the wall (v.), the third the deliverance of Daniel from the lions (vi.). We have to remember how great was the question which the fate of the Jewish Church brought to an issue. "On the one side was the World-Monarchy, irresistible, conquering, as the heathen thought, the God of the vanquished. On the other, a handful of the worshippers of the One only God, captives, scattered, with no visible centre of unity, without organization or power to resist, save their indomitable faith, inwardly upheld by God, outwardly strengthened by the very calamities which almost ended their national existence; for they were the fulfilment of His Word in Whom they believed. Thrice, during the seventy years, human power put itself forth against the faith; twice in edicts which would, if obeyed, have extinguished the true faith on earth; once in direct insult to God. Faith, as we know, 'quenched the violence of fire,' and 'stopped the mouths of lions' (Heb. xi. 33, 34). In all three cases, the assault was signally rolled back; the faith was triumphant in the face of all the representatives of the power and intelligence of the empire: in all, the truth of the One God was proclaimed by those who had assailed it." (*Dr Pusey, 451.*)

Daniel III.

This image in all probability was a representation of Nebuchadnezzar himself. We are not told what his object was, but it was evidently a political one, all his officers were summoned to the inauguration of it. It would seem that he was claiming divine honours to himself, calling upon his people, as other kings had done, as the Roman emperors afterwards did, to reckon him among the gods. (*See Pusey, 440.*)

The image was of colossal height, out of proportion to its breadth, were the figure that of a man. But very likely it was a head only mounted on a pedestal, a reference to the king's dream (ch. ii. 38). Bishop Wordsworth conjectures that Nebuchadnezzar aimed at setting himself right in the eyes of the Chaldeans, whose suspicion and jealousy had been aroused by his honour towards the God of Daniel.

Dura. A plateau E.S.E. of Babylon, still so called.

Daniel III.

The minute specification of the officers shews how much importance he attached to their coming, and how peremptory his orders were. **Princes**, satraps. **Counsellors**, interpreters of the law. **Sheriffs**, pronouncers of verdicts and sentences.

Cornet (the same word in the Hebrew, cf. *κέρας* and *cornu*). **Harp** (*kithros*, cf. "cithera"). **Sackbut**, **psaltery**, two varieties of stringed instruments. **Dulcimer**, bagpipe. Most of the instruments here referred to are represented on the Assyrian sculptures.

This horrible punishment was peculiar to the Babylonians. (Jer. xxxix. 22.)

The **Chaldeans** (see p. 387) were jealous of the ascendancy which these Jews had gained. Apparently they were afraid to charge Daniel, who "sat in the gate of the king" (ii. 49), they therefore confined themselves to the lesser favourites. They accused them of ingratitude,—then of impiety ("they serve not thy gods"), then of contumacy.

Is it true? Rather, as in margin, "is it of purpose?" i.e. *designed*, as opposed to *inadvertently*.

"We should call these the three champions, the first three of the worthies of God's kingdom among men. They did not break out into any intemperate heat or passion against those that did worship the golden image, did not insult or affront them; nor did they rashly thrust themselves upon the trial, or go out of their way to court martyrdom; but when they were duly called to the fiery trial,.....with an exemplary calmness and sedateness of mind, they deliberately gave in their answer." (*Henry*.)

Their coats, &c. Rather, as Bishop Wordsworth reads, "*their shirts, their tunics, and their mantles*." For the Babylonians wore a long linen garment reaching to the feet, a woollen tunic above it, and lastly a mantle over their shoulders.

A very old version adds at the end of this verse, "and they sang hymns to God, and Nebuchadnezzar heard them." Here in the Greek and Latin versions follows the "Song of the three holy children," which we call *Benedicite*. This poem and the other "additions to Daniel" (*Susanna*, and *Bel and the Dragon*) which are found in the Apocrypha, are of Alexandrian origin. There is no evidence as to their date, but they are not reckoned Canonical as there is no Hebrew text of them. (See *Pusey*, 376.) But that the song expresses the belief of the three heroes we need no proof.

From Dr Child's eloquent volume "*Benedicite*," which is a commentary on this song, we extract one passage. The doctor, as will be seen, assumes the genuineness of the poem. "After so signal a deliverance, it is easy to conceive the fervour with which their hymn of gratitude was poured forth. The deepest consciousness of the merciful power of God welled up in their hearts and burst from their lips, and the whole universe was

ransacked for illustrations to typify and express it. In whatever direction they turned, they beheld nature crowded with emblems of His greatness and mercy, and they eagerly seized upon them as aids to bring their thoughts up to the fervour of their adoration."

Daniel III.

Like the Son of God, apparently an unconscious confession of Christ. For we cannot doubt that it was He. (Cf. Matt. xxvii. 54.) He vanished when His work of saving was done, and the three children were called forth by the king.

25

Four men loose. The fire had melted their chains but left them unscathed.

Nebuchadnezzar praises them for their trust in God, leading them to set at nought the king's word, when it is opposed to God's will, and to be brave to the death.

29

He "reverses their attainder" and prefers them to higher offices than ever. It was a wise act, for those are the most faithful servants of men who are faithful to God, and when we make God's favourites ours, we are sure of securing friends worth having.

30

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Twice had Nebuchadnezzar been brought to confess God's power and greatness, first when Daniel had interpreted his wonderful dream (ii.), and afterwards when the three holy children had been delivered from the fire. But the first confession was followed by a relapse into pride and impiety,—he had set up his golden image. In the present chapter we see how he had relapsed again, and is once more brought to penitence and confession. This time there is no record of a relapse, everything indicates that the dreadful affliction which fell upon him effected God's purpose, and yielded the fruit of righteousness.

Daniel IV.

It will be seen that the decree with which the chapter opens (a state-paper no doubt preserved in the archives of Babylon and transcribed by Daniel) was written by the king after his conversion to God. It is his own account of the thing that happened to him, his conclusion upon the whole matter, and the reasons for publishing it. We may notice in ver. 1, that the expression, **Peace be multiplied unto you**, is used by S. Peter, also writing from Babylon. It would seem that some reminder of the king's salutation was before him there, whereupon he takes it up and gives it a more definite force by adding "through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

2
3

Flourishing, ref. to the tree, ver. 11.

4
7

The vast plains of Babylonia, flat on every side to the horizon, offered large opportunities to its inhabitants to observe the motions of the stars. No wonder that the Babylonians became famous for their skill in astronomy, or that in their anxiety to

Daniel IV.

find out the source of light and knowledge the astronomy passed into astrology.

We cannot tell what are the distinctions involved in these four names. The Chaldeans were priests among the Magi, the others were evidently wizards, sorcerers, enchanters, diviners, but we have no record of the nature of the rites of each. (See Is. xlvii. 9, 12, 13.)

8 Nebuchadnezzar called these before calling Daniel, probably to allay jealousy, and to pay due respect to the national councillors. In like manner he is careful not to excite their anger by professing faith in Judaism, but talks of "my god," and "the holy gods."

13 **A watcher and an holy one.** Two epithets applied to the same person, an angel. The word rendered **watcher** is derived from a word signifying "wakeful."

15 **A band of iron and brass,** probably the bonds with which he was fastened in his paroxysms to prevent him from deeds of violence. (Cf. Mark v. 3, 4.)

16 The disease with which Nebuchadnezzar was afflicted was a rare one, not mentioned by any medical writer before the Christian era. It has been named *Lycanthropy*, from one form which it takes, in which the sufferer, retaining his consciousness in some respects, imagines himself to be a wolf, howls like one, and bites and tears with fury. Other sufferers having fancied themselves dogs, the disease is sometimes called *Kynanthropy*. As Nebuchadnezzar imagined himself to be an ox, the exact name of his madness would be *Boanthropy*. He ate grass, and allowed his hairs and nails to go unshorn and unpared, as if he were a beast.

I must refer the reader to the striking details which Dr Pusey has collected from medical writers (pp. 425—437), and to others gathered by Bp. Wordsworth, especially to a very interesting letter by Dr Palmer.

Seven times. Some suppose this to mean seven years. But more probably seven has the symbolical signification of *completeness*, so that the sense will be "until the appointed time be fulfilled."

19 **One hour.** Not correctly rendered. "For awhile" is the proper meaning.

25 **They,** the angels fulfilling God's will.

26 **The heavens do rule.** The heavens where God reigns. From thence all the government of the earth proceeds. An anticipation of the Gospel phrase, "the kingdom of heaven."

27 **By righteousness,** as opposed to the tyranny and pride which characterized Oriental monarchs.

A lengthening of thy tranquillity. This translation is right, and not that in the margin.

28 Here we have the third person used, and continued till ver. 34, when Nebuchadnezzar speaks again. It looks as if he has

commanded some one near, probably Daniel, to record what passed during his lunacy, and to have resumed the narrative at the point of his recovery. For twelve months the judgment did not fall. Daniel's exhortation for so long prevailed. Then the monarch's pride again burst forth.

Daniel IV.

The mighty works of Nebuchadnezzar are attested by several ancient writers (see Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, Vol. III. 355), and an account is given by himself in an inscription which has been brought from thence to the British Museum. A translation of it will be found in Lenormant, and copious extracts in Wordsworth. The reader will notice how often the words "I have built" are repeated. A number of bricks lately disinterred from the royal palace were found to be stamped, every one, with the name of Nebuchadnezzar.

An ancient historian, Abydenus, relates a tradition which he had received from the Chaldeans that Nebuchadnezzar, "having ascended to the roof of his palace, was seized by some gods." (See *Pusey*, p. 435.)

31

That he should learn a heavenly lesson and pray while yet in a semi-maniac state is a circumstance like what we so often see in insanity. One absorbing delusion does not appear to affect the patient in other respects. I once officiated for several Sundays at Bethlehem Hospital, and on the first day one of the patients discussed the points of my sermon so rationally that I had no idea that he was a lunatic. I took him for an attendant, until Dr Hood afterwards told me that he was stark mad upon one point which we had not touched. In a paroxysm of this delusion he afterwards destroyed himself.

These are the last recorded words of Nebuchadnezzar. "His character," says Dr Pusey, "is one of those which have so much of nobility, that one longs for them to have been more perfect." This is the impression which remains on one, reading his whole history. His pride and arrogance are humbled, then comes the frank, unhesitating confession of the truth. He relapses again and yet again, but there is no relapse recorded after his recovery from madness. He was an old man now, probably near his end, and we cannot but believe that he died in the attitude of mind in which we last see him, praising and extolling the care and faithfulness and long-suffering of God.

37

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

There is a gap between chs. iv. and v., during which three kings reigned over Babylon. See p. 354. We have shewn there that Nabonadius, or, as Herodotus calls him, Labynetus, being attacked by Cyrus went forth against him, leaving his son Belshazzar as regent in Babylon. Nabonadius was now closely besieged in Borsippa, and Belshazzar had full regal power, he is therefore called "Belshazzar the king." This feast was a

Daniel V.

Daniel V.

religious festival. Herod. I. 191 and Xenophon, *Cyrop.* VII. 5. 15, describing the fall of the city, say that Cyrus knew that this festival would be observed, and planned his measures accordingly. The Babylonians took advantage of this religious rite as a plea for debauchery.

Before the thousand. He was at a separate table, conspicuous before them all.

2 **Whiles he tasted,** i.e. "being excited by." **His father.** See on ver. 10.

3, 4 The repetition of **they drank, they drank,** coupled with the mention of the holy vessels, marks the writer's horror of the sacrilege, as well as his contempt of the senseless idolatry, **they praised the gods,** &c. Cf. Ps. cxv. 4—8.

5 **Hour,** rather *moment.* Lit. "in the twinkling of an eye." **The candlestick,** i.e. in all probability the seven-branched candlestick of the temple. It now threw the light upon the wall which made the terrible writing visible. **The plaster,** characteristic of the Babylonian temples. (*Layard*, 651.)

7 **The third.** The first being Nabonadius, and Belshazzar the second.

8 Probably the writing was not Chaldee but Hebrew, being the declaration of the God of Israel against the desecration of His holy things.

9 The confusion of the revellers, and the terror of the sensual boy-king, were intensified at the failure to find the meaning out.

10 **The queen.** The Hebrew word is peculiar, and means a *queen-regnant.* She must therefore have been Belshazzar's mother, the wife of Nabonadius. The latter, being a usurper, is said to have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, which will account for Belshazzar being called that king's *son.* It is entirely in accordance with Hebrew custom. There is not even a Hebrew word for "grandfather," and so Rehoboam is called the son of David. The reckless and sensual Belshazzar had forgotten Daniel; he had probably rejected his grandfather's counsellors for younger and more dissolute advisers, capable of entering with zest into his unhallowed orgies. But the queen-mother, who remembered her great father's reverence for Daniel, entered to the terrified guests and with dignity and authority reminded Belshazzar of him and recommended that he should be

13 summoned. Belshazzar thus circumstantially reminded obeyed her, and the aged prophet, now more than fourscore years old, was brought in, "alone standing fearless when all feared, the one surviving witness of the departed greatness of their empire, almost as a denizen of another world, since all of his generation had long been numbered with the dead, indifferent as to greatness, regardless of the king's displeasure, speaking words of forceful truth, explaining unhesitatingly, in the name of his God, the hitherto inexplicable words, and announcing a doom,

founded on the just retribution of God, to which the heart of man in its secret depth responds." (*Dr Pusey.*) We must note how different is the tone of Daniel to the sacrilegious Belshazzar from that which he used to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel V.

Then, or *therefore*, **from Him**, i. e. from God. **Was**, rather, "*is* written." It was still visible on the wall. And so in the next verse read "*is* written." Daniel is still speaking.

24

Mene is a passive participle meaning both "numbered" and "finished." **Tekel** means "weighed," and Daniel makes a variation on the word *Hekel*, which signifies "found to be light of weight." In like manner from **Upharsin** ("and they are dividing") he makes first *Peres*, "dividing," then *Paras*, "Persian." The kingdom is to be divided between the Medes and Persians, but the pre-eminence of the Persians is expressed in the word foretelling the division. And the force of the words "they *are* dividing" must not be forgotten. The allied nations were already in motion. The princes had arisen and were anointing the shield. (Is. xxi. 5, see Mr Birks' note there.) Within a few minutes, probably, the march of the advancing army was heard.

25

Belshazzar probably hoped by conciliating Daniel, to ward off the fatal blow. His making him the third ruler expresses the hope that the kingdom will stand. Or shall we hope that he was sobered by penitence, and died confessing the power and righteousness of God?

Darius was probably Cyaxares II., son of Astyages, and uncle of Cyrus. Cyaxares had been jealous of his nephew's successes in the field, and had detached himself from alliance with him. But Cyrus still continued to prosper, and behaved towards his uncle with great generosity. On the conquest of Babylon, says Xenophon, he gave his uncle rich presents and offered him Babylon as his royal residence. This explains the words **Darius took the kingdom**. It should be translated "*received*," that is, from the hands of Cyrus. Thus things remained until Darius died. He left no son, but had given his daughter in marriage to Cyrus, who in consequence succeeded him on the throne of Media. The term *Medo-Persian*, therefore, correctly expresses the fact. Cyrus himself, as we have seen, was half a Mede by birth, his mother Mandane being Darius' sister.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The vice-king evidently made this arrangement for ensuring the submission and good order of the newly-conquered province. The Hebrew word **princes** means "satraps." They were of course officers of less consequence than the greater satraps that one reads of in ancient history. The statement is confirmed by Xenophon: "When he was at Babylon it pleased him to send satraps to rule the conquered nations."

Daniel VI.

Daniel VI.

Of whom Daniel was first. For he had publicly foretold the event which placed Darius on the throne, and further, his loyalty and rectitude of life had been thoroughly proved.

2
4 “See here (1) the cause of envy; and that is *everything that is good* (Eccl. iv. 4); the better a man is, the worse he is thought of by his rivals: (2) the effect of envy; and that is *everything that is bad*. Daniel’s disgrace would not serve his enemies, they desired his ruin. See Prov. xxvii. 4.” (*Henry*.) They
5 seem, the writer just quoted remarks, to have had some sense of justice. They did not suborn evidence to swear treason against him, they attacked him on a true ground, his religion, a ground of real offence to themselves.

7 The proposed decree reads like insanity. But it was in conformity with Persian custom. The plotters, no doubt, set forth the plea that it was necessary, for the complete subjugation of the conquered nation, to put down Chaldean worship and substitute Persian for it. Now the Persians looked upon their king as the representative of their god, Ormuzd. (See Dr Pusey’s collection of evidence of this, pp. 442—6.) It was because of
8 this that a decree once made was unchangeable, a representative of God could not confess mistakes. The decree therefore was really a command to the conquered Babylonians to acknowledge Darius as their king. And it was for thirty days, because those who for so long had rendered religious homage to him would have admitted all that was needful, the principle of submission.

10 **Into his house**, i.e. into the uppermost chamber, where from its retired situation Orientals were wont to pray (2 Sam. xviii. 33; 1 Kings xvii. 19). Daniel was unostentatious, he did not desire to defy the decree, nor to evade it. But the words “**when he knew**,” &c., imply that he sought refuge at once in prayer, and prayed for deliverance.

11 **Assembled.** The Hebrew means “gathered tumultuously,” rushed in upon him and found him. The same Hebrew word as in Ps. ii. 1 (A. V. “rage”).

12 They dared not mention Daniel’s name, knowing the king’s regard for him, until they had pinned Darius to a full acknowledgment of the decree.

16 Darius doubtless founded his belief that Daniel would be delivered, on the deliverance of the three children from the fire.

Dr Pusey quotes a description of a lion’s den at Fez, into which prisoners were often thrown, which would seem to be not unlike that before us. “The lion’s den was a large quadrangular hole in the ground, divided by a partition into two chambers. The wall has a door which can be opened and shut from above. The keepers of the lions throw food into the one division and so entice the lions thither, then they shut the door from above and clear the other division. The whole is under the open sky, and is only enclosed with a wall over which people can look down in.” (*Pusey*, 417.)

Daniel speaks with love and compassion towards the king, who has suffered so much anxiety for his sake. He thinks more of the king's sufferings than of his own ill-usage. **His angel**, cf. iii. 28. And on the whole passage, cf. Heb. xi. 33.

Daniel VI.
21, 22

Ps. vii. 15, 16; ix. 15, 16; Prov. xi. 8. The destruction of the wives and children was not in accordance with Jewish law (Deut. xxiv. 16), but it was with Persian.

24

The decree of Darius does not enjoin upon his subjects to forsake their deities or to worship God, but only to stand in awe of Him, i.e. by not making attempts against His service. To this event we may in all probability trace the decree of Cyrus. The reverence of the Persians for the true God must have been deepened, and all would be ready to encourage His worshippers to return to their land and rebuild His temple. To this event we may safely refer the victorious cry of the Jews, "Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them."

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The first six verses of this Lesson come between Daniel's vision of the four beasts and the interpretation of that vision. The vision itself is not read in the Lesson, only the interpretation of it. But between these two things comes the Vision of the Ancient of Days and His final victory. It was necessary that Daniel should see this, it gave coherence and unity to all revelations concerning the earth. Without always keeping before our minds the remembrance of God ruling in heaven over great things and small, history would be a bewildering maze without a clue. These verses have already been commented upon, as the Lesson for Ascension Day, in pp. 205—208. We therefore pass on to the interpretation of the Four Beasts. One of the angels tells the prophet that they represent four kings, and that the sublime scene which follows is the victory of the Church. As the Lesson does not comprise the divine view of the four great empires in detail, we are reluctantly compelled to pass it over.

Dan. VII.
9—14

The reader will be well rewarded by consulting the two commentaries, already so often referred to, on this chapter, or Hengstenberg, or Keil. The most exhaustive is Dr Pusey's. (Lect. ii.)

17
18

The vision of the fourth beast however comes before us, having been retained by the compilers of the Table evidently because it belongs to Christian times, and is even yet in course of fulfilment. The other empires have been symbolized by particular beasts, a lion, a bear, a leopard. For the fourth there is no name. Words of terror and fierceness are heaped upon it, that is all. It has **iron teeth** to tear to pieces, and **brazen nails** to **stamp the residue with its feet**. We need hardly say that the great Roman Empire absorbed all the others,

19

Dan. VII.

and was ruling all the civilized earth at the time when the Kingdom of God was visibly set up in the world.

The meaning of the ten horns is one of those questions of Biblical interpretation which no man can solve to another's satisfaction. Any interpretation of such prophecy must be conjectural, and the theories upon this passage have been manifold. Dr Pusey holds that these ten horns are ten contemporaneous kingdoms still in the future, concerning which therefore we remain in uncertainty. Others, as Bp. Wordsworth, hold them to be consecutive, we living in the midst of them. The same writer holds the little horn to be Papal Rome. I cannot see my way through any of these theories. The ten horns belong also to the Book of Revelation, for S. John takes up this prophecy and it becomes part of his vision¹. I must therefore refer the reader to some Commentary on that work. That in which I have found the most help is Dr. Currey's.

25

A time and times and the dividing of time. Cf. Rev. xii. 14. Expressed elsewhere as forty-two months, as in Rev. xi. 2 and xiii. 5, and 1260 days, Rev. xii. 6. It appears to be a chronological symbol of intense trial and suffering.

Whatever be the precise interpretation of the details we have been considering, the one central idea of the chapter, repeated four times, is that God's victory shall be final and complete, and that His saints shall possess the kingdom for ever. They shall conquer their own lusts and corruptions, Satan and his temptations, death and its terrors. The prophet saw, set up on the earth, a kingdom of light, holiness and love, before which the great world-powers should crumble away, and that kingdom was only the earnest and firstfruits of the Kingdom of glory in the heavens. For that we still look. Because our King has conquered, He has assured the victory to us; because He lives, we shall live also. (John xiv. 19.)

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Dan. XII.

The divine messenger has just foretold the destruction of Antichrist; "He shall come to his end and none shall help him." The angel comes in this chapter to the end of the world, the resurrection of the dead, and the last judgment. I have elsewhere given my reasons for believing that Michael means our Saviour. (See *S. Michael's Day*, Evensong.)

1--3

Every word of these first three verses is taken up and applied in the New Testament. With ver. 1, cf. Matt. xxiv. 21, 22; Rev. iii. 5; xiii. 8; xx. 12; xxi. 27. With ver. 2, cf. John v. 28, 29; Luke ix. 26. **Many**, or *the multitude*. With ver. 3, cf. Matt. xiii. 43.

¹ Besides the general features of the two parallel prophecies, the "ten horns" and the "little horn," we may point the reader's attention to the verbal coincidences: *στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα* (Dan. vii. 8; Rev. xiii. 5); *ἐποίηε πόλεμον πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους* (Dan. vii. 21; Rev. xiii. 7).

Daniel is told now that his prophetic office is ended; he is to **shut up the words and seal the book**, and he is told also for his comfort that **many shall run to and fro**, rather, many shall *diligently read* his prophecies, and the **knowledge** of God and His mighty works **shall be increased** thereby.

Dan. XII.

Once more he sees a vision of Christ clothed in linen as the High-priest of men, standing upon the waters in kingly majesty, treading the surging billows of the world beneath His feet. Two attendant angels stand on each side ready to do His bidding. The prophet hears one of them ask Him when all these things shall be, and He holds up His hands and swears solemnly that it shall be for the appointed time (see on vii. 25); until Antichrist shall appear to have scattered all the holy seed of God to the winds. The prophet would fain enquire concerning this appointed time, but is told that his words are closed up. Until the end shall come those whose hearts are turned towards God, shall be purified by what they suffer, and shall learn wisdom, whereas the wicked shall harden their hearts and refuse to behold the majesty of the Lord.

4

6

5

7

9

10

The angel however gives him two predictions involving what appear to be definite numbers. We must deal with these in connexion with the previous announcement that God keeps the times in His own hand. The first statement appears to have reference to the duration of the power of the Antichrist. Now we have already seen that this Antichrist was shadowed out in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the expression **the abomination that maketh desolate** is applied (xi. 31) to his profanation of the temple; see 1 Maccabees i. 54. Our Lord applied the same expression to the profanation by the Jews at the time of the Roman siege. (Matt. xxiv. 15.) Clearly it is the latter of these events from which the present verse starts. The number $1290 = 1260 + 30$. The former of these two numbers was the time that the temple remained polluted under Antiochus. Perhaps the prophecy is intended to imply that the last persecution should be a month, i.e. some definite season longer than that.

11

Bishop Wordsworth believes that the number 1335 was the length of time which elapsed between the beginning of the persecution of Antiochus and his death. If this be so, and the first persecution be spoken of last, it must be regarded as a parting exhortation to the sufferers of it to endure faithfully, and an encouragement to us to endure as they did if our turn shall come.

12

And now Daniel is bidden to depart in peace.

13

Go thou thy way, i.e. to the grave. There shalt thou rest **till the end be**, thy inheritance shall remain assured to thee, and in the great day **thou shalt stand in thy lot**.

Note on
the Pro-
phet
Hosea.

NOTE ON THE PROPHET HOSEA.

Hosea was a prophet of the northern kingdom, he began to prophesy in the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II., a period, as we have already seen, of apparent prosperity but of real ill-omen for the country. He thus became the prophet of the falling monarchy, the Jeremiah of Israel, as Dean Stanley well calls him, and appears to have lived until the fall of Samaria, or until within a short time of it. His domestic life was made bitter to him, the profligacy which everywhere prevailed entering within his own doors, but "in his grief for his own great calamity he was taught to feel for the Divine grief over the lost opportunities of the nation once so full of hope. But in his own love he was taught to see, first of any of the prophets of the old dispensation, the power of the forgiving love of God." (*Stanley.*)

The chapter which forms our Lesson to-day is the last in the Book, a burst of irrepressible hope just at the moment when the anguish of the nation has reached its climax. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Hosea xiv., see *Thursday before Easter*, p. 154.

NOTE ON THE PROPHET JOEL.

The prophecy of Joel is addressed exclusively to the kingdom of Judah. There is scarcely a mention of Israel in it, and when the name does occur it refers to the southern kingdom. Nothing is told us concerning the prophet himself. He must have lived sometime before king Uzziah, as appears from the fact that Amos lived during that reign, and he quotes and refers to the writings of Joel as to a work already complete, and recognized as divinely inspired (cf. Amos i. 2 with Joel iii. 16; Amos ix. 13 with Joel iii. 18). We must take Joel, therefore, as the oldest prophet of Judah whose writings have been preserved to us. It is not a collection of writings, but one prophecy extending from his own day to the end of the world. A great

Note on
the Pro-
phet Joel.

calamity had fallen upon the land, a frightful desolating plague of locusts. The prophet calls upon the people to recognize herein the judgment of God upon their wickedness, and to call a solemn assembly, for weeping, fasting, and praying. He declares that this judgment is one of many, that one shall follow another, but that in all of them full forgiveness and restoration shall follow hearty and sincere repentance. Looking forward through the vista of these judgments, he sees in the distance the first coming of Christ, the pouring out of His Spirit upon all flesh, the exaltation of Judah and Jerusalem. And then, taking this event as a fresh stepping-stone, his Vision passes to the victories of the Church of Christ over all enemies, and ends with the second coming of the Lord.

Note on
the Pro-
phet Joel.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Joel ii. 21, see *Tuesday in Whitsun-week*, p. 125.

SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

We have already shewn that this is a prophecy of a time following the coming of Christ. It describes the great battle between the Lord and His enemies which is even now being waged, and which will end in the victory of God.

Joel III.
9

The verse before us is spoken in solemn irony. God has declared that He will gather all nations to judgment, and here He bids them prepare their war, if by any means they can fight against Him and overcome Him. Cf. Is. viii. 9, 10.

Thither cause, &c. The prophet, so to speak, after summoning the heathen to array their battle, and thus gathering them together, now suddenly calls upon the Lord to gather His mighty ones against them.

11

The valley of Jehoshaphat. The valley of the Kedron is at present called by this name, though there is no indication in the Bible or in Josephus of its being so called. Jehoshaphat had inflicted a great defeat upon his allied enemies within the memory of men then living, 2 Chron. xx. But the scene of that overthrow was the Valley of Berachah, S. W. of Bethlehem, whereas the context here implies that the nations are to be summoned near the walls of Jerusalem. The name "Jehoshaphat" means "Judgment of God," and one may suppose that the prophet intends a thought like this—"Gather the nations into the Valley of Kedron, it shall become a Valley of Jehoshaphat to them, like that in which the king vanquished Ammon and Moab. For here will I judge the heathen round about."

12

Let us remember what scenes this valley witnessed in the

Joel III.

life of our Lord. On one side was the huge eastern end of the Temple, on the other was the Mount of Olives. There was Gethsemane, and thence the Saviour was dragged to the house of Caiaphas hard by. Why should not one believe that these facts come within the prophet's vision here? The Lord summons the heathens hither to witness His sorrow, and by His pierced hands and side judges them. And wheresoever the Gospel is preached and Christ crucified is set forth, that preaching makes the spot, whatever it may be, a valley of Jehoshaphat.

13 The vision of the judgment grows clearer, and we seem here to have one event upon another, with the final judgment closing all in. The executors of His will, Babylonians, Romans, the angels of heaven, all in succession put in the sickle. The vision speaks not of the harvest in which the wheat shall be stored up, because the present ruling idea is the battle of God with enemies. It is the work of vengeance which is portrayed—there is a harvest of sinners to be mown down, “their wickedness is overflowing.”

14 **Multitudes, multitudes.** The vivid description of the completeness of the victory. The prophet sees the nations in one vast, overpowering, surging throng, coming to make war against God, bent upon overthrowing His power, not knowing that herein they are fulfilling His will, that it is He who has thus brought them together, because His day is near.

The valley of decision, rather “of hewing-to-pieces.” No doubt this is equivalent to “the valley of Jehoshaphat,” though the words present a somewhat different idea. In the one case the idea is the *judgment* of God, in the other the sequel of that judgment, the destruction of the wicked.

15 The light of the sun and moon and stars shall be eclipsed by the glory of the Sun of Righteousness.

16 From Jerusalem, the spiritual Jerusalem, the city of the Great King, the Lord will utter His voice of judgment and strike His enemies with terror; but no harm shall happen to His people, for He Himself shall be their harbour and stronghold.

17 Then nothing but holiness shall be. The prophet's vision has arrived at the final victory, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all. Cf. with this verse Rev. xxi. 10, 11, 27; xxii. 15; Is. xxxv. 8; lii. 1.

The two kingdoms are still striving, and we ourselves are living in the din and confusion of the battle. During the ages which have passed since Christ was made flesh, there have been many days of the Lord in the valley of decision, and shall be until the great day which shall bring the conflict to an end. We cannot always tell, such is our blindness, on which side the combatants are ranged. Good and evil are so mingled that

we could not always say of one, "He was all for God," and of another, "He was altogether for the devil." Names and watch-words will not tell us who are furthering the cause of the Eternal Kingdom, and who are retarding it. It is comforting to know that the judgment rests not with us, but with the Lord. It is good for us to know that within our own hearts there is a strife in which we cannot always tell the right from the wrong. It teaches us to call upon God to take His cause into His own hands, and to lead us every day to search out His will and our own spirits, and to give us a right judgment in all things. Whatever is evil, in sinners and in saints, He in His mercy fights against, and they who love Him most rejoice when He fights the battle in their hearts and destroys unrighteousness, envy, selfwill, falsehood, within them. They cannot see the issue when they look merely within themselves. But they know His promise; every prayer, every ordinance, every season of the year, reminds them that in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, in the Church which God has set up, there is a prophecy of victory.

Joel III.

Another picture of the blessedness of the Church of Christ. The Church is compared to a fruitful land, lavishing gifts of joy upon its people. **New wine**, is in the Hebrew "trodden out wine." That which has hitherto been obtained by toil shall come spontaneously. A prophecy of the free grace of God. And so of the hills flowing with milk, as though of their own accord they gushed forth with the spiritual food of childlike souls—knowledge, love, joy, purity.

18

All the rivers, every channel, however narrow and insignificant, shall become fountains of blessing. A truth fulfilled in every village-church or school-room where the knowledge of Christ is taught and He is worshipped. Each soul which is hereby brought to Him drinks of that living water.

And a fountain, &c. This refers, without doubt, to the stream of water which, as we know from many authorities, flowed beneath the Temple, and carried off the blood of the sacrifices. It is of this fountain that Milton speaks,

"Siloa's brook that flowed
Hard by the oracle of God."

The stream flowed eastward into the Kedron, and the ground immediately contiguous to it was very fertile, but as it lay between walls of rock, the rest of the land was barren. The prophet foresaw an antitype of this stream in the spiritual Jerusalem, a stream of grace and life flowing forth from the sanctuary to water the desolate earth. The valley of Shittim was in the land of Moab, the scene of Israel's lustful idolatry (Num. xxv. 1). This evil place shall become a scene of holiness, a garden of the Lord. The passage is imitated by Ezekiel (xlvi. 1—12), with a variation; he describes the river flowing into the Dead Sea (as the Kedron actually did), and changing it

Joel III.

to a sea of life and beauty. Cf. also Zech. xiv. 8, where there is yet another variation,—the living waters, he declares, shall flow both East and West, into the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea, spreading joy to the very ends of the earth.

19 Egypt and Edom stand here as the enemies of God, the one open, the other secret and treacherous. Egypt was at this time in the fulness of prosperity, no signs of its downfall appeared. Its noble river was an utter contrast to the tiny brooks of Palestine, yet while they poured forth living waters, the Nile should not save Egypt from desolation. See Dr Pusey's most valuable historical note on this verse.

20 Judah, the true, spiritual Judah, shall dwell for ever. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. "The people of God abide before and through Him here, and shall dwell with Him for ever."

21 **Cleanse**, rather "pronounce innocent." This is the meaning of the Hebrew. Will justify before men and angels. Cf. Rev. vi. 10, 11.

For the Lord dwelleth in Zion. The promise of cleansing rests upon God's ever-abiding presence. It is not "shall dwell;" He was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

NOTE ON THE PROPHET AMOS.

Amos was not trained in the school of the prophets, nor was he a prophet's son (vii. 14). He was a herdsman of Tekoa (a village about six miles from Bethlehem), and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. His ministry was mainly to the kingdom of Israel (i. 1), and he gives the date himself; "In the days of Uzziah king of Judah and of Jeroboam [II.] king of Israel, two years before the earthquake." The earthquake here referred to was of so terrible a character that it never passed out of the Hebrew traditions or literature. (See Zech. xiv. 5, and Plumptre's *Biblical Studies*, pp. 136—146.) We have no means of fixing the precise year of it, but Uzziah and Jeroboam were contemporary from 810 to 783 B. C.

Amos, then, was sent from Judah to denounce woe upon Israel, in the days of Jeroboam II., as an earlier prophet in those of Jeroboam I. (1 Kings xiii.). It is a very dark picture which he draws of the state of the monarchy. He is a little earlier than Hosea, and the difference of the two styles is what we should expect. They differ principally in this: Hosea speaks

Note on
the Pro-
phet
Amos.

of the *root* of Israel's sin, unfaithfulness to God (see p. 151); Amos attacks the sins in detail, pouring forth invectives mainly against the luxury and debauchery of the upper classes, and their oppression of the poor. This falls in with the idea that we gather from the Book of Kings. The reign of Jeroboam II. was one of material wealth and prosperity, but of ungodliness, a state of society which produces the sins which Amos denounces. The reign was followed by dreadful anarchy and bloodshed, which accordingly forms one of the main subjects for Hosea's righteous indignation.

The style of Amos, as Dr Pusey has beautifully shewn, is full of images drawn from his country life. We shall notice some of them in our three Lessons taken from this book. In spite of his unlettered condition, his prophecy is full of grand figures, the result not of art, but of sheer force and energy of character, as well as of deep and tender pity for his nation. He has been truly called a writer of unadorned eloquence. A Jewish tradition makes him one of the prophets whom the nation slew, being beaten to death by Amaziah the priest of Bethel. (See *Pusey*, p. 150; *Stanley*, 362.)

Note on
the Pro-
phet
Amos.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

The prophet begins the chapter (cf. iv. 1; v. 1) with earnest and impressive solemnity. It is not man's word, but the Lord's, which is about to be uttered. **The whole family** must include Judah, though the main body of the prophecy is against the sister kingdom.

Amos III.

Here we have an often-repeated law of God; those who are brought nearest to Him, who enter most into the enjoyment of His light and love, if they reject His law, fall the more terribly. Sin against light is the most awful of sin. (Cf. S. Matt. xi. 23.)

2

Can two, &c. Israel is not at peace with God because she refuses to agree with Him, by obeying His law. God cannot be with her unless she will be with Him. Cf. Lev. xxvi. 23, 24.

3

Another short parable. God hath roared as a lion (see i. 2; and Joel iii. 16). That would not be were not God coming to execute judgment. As the lion's roar is a warning to the prey to escape while it can, so is the voice of the Lord by His prophets a warning to sinners to repentance.

4

Amos III.

5 A third parable. Evil will not fall, unless it has been prepared, any more than the bird will be caught without a snare.

6 The sound of the trumpet without the walls strikes terror into a city: shall not the warning voice of God then move you to repentance?

By **evil** the prophet means not sin, but *punishment*. The calamities which have already fallen upon you, he would say, have not come by chance. God has sent them, and they are sent as precursors of heavier sorrows if they move you not to repentance.

7 Another assurance that He is the Sovereign Ruler of the nation, without whom nothing is done. No evil falls upon the nation without warning. The Lord has sent prophets to announce evil, if so be that penitence may ward it off. Why will ye die?

8 The warning voice has been unmistakeable. And if the nation refuse to hear, the prophets dare not refuse to speak.

These verses are the precursors of the prophet's message. Now he comes to prophesy a judgment that is hastening on the nation.

9 He summons the neighbouring nations, the Philistines and Egyptians, in a poetical figure, to assemble themselves together and stand with him upon the hills surrounding Samaria (see Pusey's striking description of its situation, p. 181), and from thence look down upon the guilty city. They would behold **the great tumults** of those who hurried to and fro in unceasing restlessness, intent upon gain, and the **oppressed** poor from whom this gain was snatched. The oppressors have lost all conscience and sense of uprightness, as if there were no such thing, so intent are they upon filling their storehouses with wrong and robbery.

11 **Therefore thus saith the Lord God.** Another solemn preface, characteristic of this prophet. Cf. ver. 13; v. 16.

An adversary, &c. Lit. "*An adversary and around the land.*" An enemy shall appear, but no sooner shall the first alarm be heard, than he shall be found to have completely environed them, and there shall be no escape. A most vivid picture of sudden destruction. **He shall bring down, &c.** the rightful punishment of the proud, they shall be abased; and of oppressors, they shall be spoiled.

12 Another striking image, taken perhaps from what the prophet himself had witnessed. When a lion had devoured a fat and strong beast and so satiated its hunger, it might be possible for the shepherd to recover some poor and worthless part, the shanks or tip of the ear; even so when rich Samaria should be devoured by the enemy, that portion only should escape which the conquerors despised and thought of no account. Of that only should "the remnant" escape which should be saved. *Now* they rest in Samaria as **on a bed**, at ease (cf. vi. 1); they recline

in sloth upon the couch, Damascus, which Jeroboam has conquered for them (2 Kings xiv. 25, 28). They laugh at the idea of any harm befalling them.

The saving of those whom the world thought worthless (cf. 2 Kings xxv. 12; Jer. lii. 16), may remind us that it is so also in the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. i. 26; James ii. 5; Rev. ii. 9; iii. 17, 18.

A warning that as the "bed" and "couch" shall afford them no rest, so neither shall their gods. In the day of vengeance God will shew His anger against the very centre of their worship, and shew that it is none of His, and has no help in it. He had borne with their idolatry, His prophets had even been tolerant of it, as compared with the sins of men against their fellow-men. The one was done in ignorance, the other in wilfulness. But none the less was idolatry an abomination to God, and when He arose in judgment to help the meek, He would also avenge the insult to Himself.

The winter and summer houses. Probably the two compartments of the royal palace. Cf. Jer. xxxvi. 22. Ivory houses. See on 1 Kings xxii. 39.

Amos III.

13

14

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Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The present chapter is a dirge on the coming downfall of the kingdom. The prophet calls upon the people to hear it, "as if a living man, in the midst of his pride and luxury and buoyant recklessness of heart, were called on to see his own funeral procession, and to hear, as it were, over himself the earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." (Pusey.)

Forsaken, or "dashed down." **The virgin.** She who once was loved and tenderly guarded, who had so fair and beautiful a prospect before her in the happy days of her youth. (Cf. the same expression used of Babylon, Is. xlvii. 1.)

The nation is to be decimated. But the mention of the few that shall be left brings into the prophet's soul the thought that there is yet a happy future open to this remnant. Though the nation shall fall and never rise again, yet God has other ways of dealing with His people. Only one thing is needful, expressed with wonderful force and conciseness, **Seek Me, and live.** But in Bethel God was not to be found. Jeroboam had professed to seek Him there, but that had ended in debasing superstition. Nor was God found in Gilgal or Beersheba, in places of which only the memories of past victory and blessing remained. These places would fall like the rest. But let the people seek the living, the ever-present God. In Him they would find all they needed, even the fulness of *Life*. In this verse we have mercy and justice joined together, and laid before the people with most striking brevity and force.

To wormwood, i. e. into the bitterness of feeling which is

Amos V.

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7

Amos V. felt by the oppressed and those treated with injustice. (Deut. xxix. 18.)

Leave off righteousness in the earth, rather, "cast righteousness on the ground." (Cf. Dan. viii. 12.)

8 The shepherd-prophet falls back upon a lesson upon which he must have meditated many a time while he watched his flocks by night. He had seen **the seven stars** (the Pleiades) **and Orion** (see on Job xxxviii. 31) slowly rolling over the heavens; he had seen the streaks of dawn coming upon the black night and bringing on the day, and again the darkness slowly gathering at eventide. And these sublime sights had affected him, as whom do they not who have to watch them from some silent and solitary place? He had learned then to love and adore the Creator of them, and now he carries the lesson to these professed worshippers of Nature, and entreats them to turn to Him who is verily Nature's God, the Maker and Ruler of all these things, the Lord is His Name.

9 Render this; "*That maketh the spoiler to flash upon the strong, so that desolation cometh upon the fortress.*" (So substantially *Pusey, Wordsworth, Keil.*) He who rules the stars and the sea, also rules the movements of men, and it is He who brings the destroyers upon nations.

10 **They**, the ungodly rulers. **The gate** of Samaria was the public place of concourse (1 Kings xxii. 10), and here judgment was delivered. The unjust judges received rebuke in this public place, and hated the rebuker. Cf. Jer. xvii. 19; xix. 2. Here probably the rebukes of Amos himself were given.

11 **Therefore.** Since they reject reproof and abhor the reprover, therefore he proceeds to pronounce the sentence of God upon them. **Burdens**, lit. "presents," therefore in this case, bribes to pervert justice. **Houses of hewn stone.** Despising the common method of building with brick. These houses were built and the vineyards planted out of the proceeds of their oppression.

12 **For I know.** Which they had not believed. Pss. x. 5; x. 6; lix. 7.

13 The prophet expresses his belief in the uselessness of all reproof. If a man regards his own comfort, peace of mind, safety from injury, he will hold his peace in this evil time, his rebukes will only bring him persecution. (*Stanley, 362.*) Cf. Prov. ix. 7; xxviii. 12, 28; Matt. vii. 6.

14 He again takes up his warning. He bids them use the same diligence for good which they have shewn towards evil.

15 **As ye have spoken.** You have comforted yourselves with God's promises to care for you. You spoke truly in saying that He had made those promises, let it be yours to seek them by making yourselves His. For though affliction hath come upon you, all hope is not lost; do right and be hopeful, trust in God.

If they will not, God's promises shall avail them nought. The judgment shall come as surely as the Lord lives and addresses them. The terrible scenes which were witnessed in the siege of Samaria amply fulfilled this heavy threat. Famine and pestilence came first, then the sword, infants were torn from their mother's bosoms and hurled down the rocks. Instead of sounds of joy and hum of busy men, were heard in every street cries of woe "in one unmitigated, unchanging, ever-repeated monotony of grief." (*Pusey*.) **The husbandman**, flying from the culture of his fields before the advance of the enemy, and the hired mourner, should join their voices in one heart-rending chorus of woe. **In all vineyards** where formerly was the joyous shout of the ingatherings, shall be a sharing in the universal wail. **I will pass through thee.** Ex. xii. 12, 30.

Amos V.
16

They had learned the expression **the day of the Lord** from Joel. He is the writer who first uses it. And as he had foretold that this day should bring blessings in its track, the self-deceivers were comforting themselves with the expectation of it. The prophet bids them throw all such hopes as theirs away, for unbelievers, such as they were, the day of the Lord was **darkness, and not light**. On every side would be terror. Escaping one they would but fall into another (for the attack of the Syrian bear is said to be fiercer and more terrible than that of the lion); if a man escaped perils out of doors and got into his house a fresh destroyer would meet him there. Will not all this shew that the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light?

17

18

19

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Some of them clung to their religious observances, thinking that these might save them. But they were vain delusions. **I will not smell** the sweet incense, the **songs** are but unmeaning and jarring **noise** to me. There is but one means by which God can be well-pleased, even the sacrifice of judgment and righteousness. Hitherto oppression and avarice have perverted righteousness, let them be removed, and let righteousness as a full stream flow onwards.

21

24

He reminds them of their life in the wilderness. *Then* they had done as they are doing now, had offered sacrifices to God, and yet had secretly carried about the tabernacle of their false gods. It was a half service, which was no service at all. **The tabernacle** was probably a little shrine, hidden away about the person. (Cf. Gen. xxxi. 34; Acts xix. 24.) **Moloch** is the Hebrew word for "king," and it is therefore not certain whether we are to take this as the proper name, the god of the Ammonites, or a general name, "your king," which may have been Osiris, or some other deity. The meaning of **Chiun** is very uncertain. Most expositors take it as a common noun, meaning "*the pedestal of your images.*" Star-worship seems to have followed that of the golden calf (Acts vii. 42). **Which ye made to yourselves.** This was the very root of their sin. God had

25

26

Amos V.

appointed a worship for them, they preferred to make one for themselves.

27

The kingdom of **Damascus** was as yet the only enemy from which they had suffered. (2 Kings xiii. 7.) They had been recently delivered from it. But now God will send them into a far-off country, whence return shall not be in their power. The fulfilment, we need not add, came in the Assyrian captivity.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Amos IX.

Amos here sees a vision of the Lord striking down the idolatrous worship of Samaria. (See on iii. 14, p. 407). The altar we take to be the altar of Jeroboam at Bethel, the centre of the false worship. On this God stands in triumph, and commands His angel of judgment to **smite the lintel**, or capital, which crowned the pillar, in imitation of the sanctuary of Solomon. The posts shaken by this blow should crumble and fall and **cut** (or as the margin has it **wound**) **the heads** of the worshippers. Their false worship should be the means of their ruin. Even for those who make their way without the falling building there shall be no escape. They shall fall by the avenging sword. Not one shall avoid His judgment, though they dig into the grave, or climb up into heaven. Ps. cxxxix. 8. But these things were impossible, He therefore takes a case which was possible, and which might prove very real. They might hide themselves in the caves of which Mount Carmel was so full, that it is said a whole army might lie concealed there. And driven from thence they would have nothing before them but the sea which washed its foot. Into that they must be driven, and there the avenging serpent should bite them. The figure, for of course it is such, appears to be taken from actual fact. Dr Pusey has collected facts showing that the sea really contains serpents of deadly venom.

4

In captivity they might at least hope to be safe. The bitterness of death is commonly past to a prisoner. But it shall not be so, the vengeance of the Lord of hosts shall be crushing and complete. Ps. xxxiv. 16.

5, 6

Let us note the sublimity of the language of these verses. The Lord but **toucheth the land**, and immediately all opposition to Him is at an end. Cf. Ps. xlvi. 6. He hath made His **stories in the heaven**, successive spheres through the vast unseen space, through the region upon region of fixed stars; they are but steps up to His Eternal Throne, where Christ sitteth on His right hand. And **He hath founded His troop** (rather, *His arch*) **on the earth**, i. e. the welkin, spanning the whole horizon, and seeming to connect heaven and earth together.

7

They had boasted that they were children of Abraham, and therefore God's people. He tells them that they are but as

children of Ham to Him, furthest of all from His knowledge. His bringing them from Egypt had lost its significance to them through their sin; so long as they were in opposition to His will, let them ask themselves wherein did it differ from the bringing the Philistines to their land from across the sea, or the Syrians from Kir.

Amos IX.

Caphtor was apparently Cappadocia. **Kir** was north of Armenia.

The sinful kingdom, i.e. any sinful kingdom; it is a general statement. Let a kingdom become opposed to God and refuse to do His will, His eyes behold it, and He will destroy it. Yet for His Name's sake, and because there are those within the nation who still fear Him, He will save some of the **house**, family, of Jacob, whilst the kingdom vanishes away.

8

For the judgment that is coming shall sift them surely and fully. They shall be scattered among all nations, but His will shall be executing itself. The people shall be tossed to and fro from the east to the west, and shall rest nowhere, as corn is tossed in a sieve. And whilst the chaff and refuse are thus blown to the winds, not one grain of corn shall be lost. Nor shall one sinner escape. And the cause of their ruin shall be, not that they have fallen into sin, but that they have refused to repent, and have said, "the evil shall not overtake us."

9

10

The prophet's message of vengeance is over. Now rises above all the promise of restoration, of the forgiving love of God, which shall shine forth gloriously when the vengeance has wrought its appointed work. While the kingdom shall fall, not to rise again, there shall rise a resting-place and refuge for the outcast members of it, who have been brought to look for their Father and Saviour. And that resting-place is the Tabernacle of David. That too shall have fallen, but God will raise it from its ruins, close up its breaches, heal the schisms, and restore it as of old. And the result shall not be blessings for themselves alone. They should gather in the heathen into their company.

11

12

Edom has been regarded by the prophet as a type of the enemies of God, and he has foretold its destruction. But there also shall be a remnant, as among all the heathen, called by God's name, and this remnant shall become a part of His Church.

The prophecy admits of no temporal fulfilment, we must regard it therefore as a prophecy of the church of Christ, embracing all nations within its circle.

S. James quotes these words at the Council of Jerusalem, adding that the eternal purpose of God expressed in them, but hitherto involved in mystery, was now made manifest. Acts xv. 16—18.

Behold, &c. Every movement of God's providence hastens on these happy days. And he describes them in a metaphor

13

Amos IX.

beautiful past all description. He has previously foretold a time of grievous famine and distress (viii. 11). Now he declares that that sentence shall at last be repealed; the land shall be so fruitful, so laden with blessing, that seed-time, harvest, vintage, all shall come together in one continuous whole, in one unceasing growth. There shall be no cessation of labour, and no cessation of blessing upon it. "No day shall be without corn, and wine, and gladness." Such is the character of the toils of the Gospel. All the works of grace go on in harmony together; each helps on the other; in one, the fallow-ground of the heart is broken up; in another, seed is sown, the beginning of a holy conversation; in another is the rich fulness of the ripened fruit, in advanced holiness or the blood of Martyrs. And so, also, of the ministers of Christ, some are adapted especially to one office, some to another; yet all together carry on His one work. All, too, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, shall meet together in one; they who, before Christ's coming, "sowed the seed, the promises of the Blessed Seed to come," and they who *entered into their labour*, not to displace, but to complete them; all shall rejoice together in that Seed which is Christ. (*Pusey.*)

14

Bring again, rather, turn again. Ps. cxxvi. 4.

"Does it seem to you that a hope so confident as this,—a hope of life arising out of death, light out of darkness,—is inconsistent with that vision of utter ruin which rose up a moment ago before us? Brethren, we shall not know the heart of the Jewish prophet,—we shall not know our own,—till we learn to see not only how these things are compatible, but why they are inseparable. Amos would not have left his sheepfolds to denounce the idolatries of Israel if he had not felt that men, that his own countrymen, were maintaining a fearful fight against a Will which had a right to govern them, and which could alone govern them for their good. He could not have been sustained in the witness which he bore if an ever-brightening revelation of the Perfect Goodness—of that Goodness, active, energetic, converting all powers and influences to its own righteous and gracious purposes,—had not accompanied revelations that became more awful of the selfishness and disorder to which men were yielding themselves. From the observations of this strife, as history and experience present it to the mind of a man, earnestly loving his fellow-creatures, there come forth only the most fearful and despairing auguries. It is precisely because he has not only experience and history to guide him, but the certainty of an Eternal God, present in all the convulsions of society, never ceasing to act upon the individual heart when it is most wrapped in the folds of its pride and selfishness; it is precisely because he finds this to be true whatever else is false, that he must hope. And oftentimes when his hope for himself is well nigh gone it is renewed as he thinks of what God has done for his race and is doing for it. This is no solitary ex-

perience of a single herdsman or prophet. Through the whole Epistle to the Romans S. Paul had been tracing out the sin of his countrymen; their rejection of the perfect Deliverer for themselves, their refusal of Him to the heathens; their desire to wrap themselves in a righteousness which would prove itself to be the very contrary of God's righteousness. He had seen and declared that the fruit of these sins would be the utter excision of his kinsmen after the flesh from God's covenant. And yet he winds up all he has been saying in these words: 'For God hath concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things. To whom be glory for ever. Amen.'" (*Maurice.*)

Amos IX.

NOTE ON THE PROPHET MICAH.

Micah the Morasthite was born probably at a village called Moresheth in the Shefelah. His ministry was exercised "in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." He was therefore contemporary with Isaiah, but did not prophesy so long, having apparently begun later (Is. i. 1) and ended earlier. He implies that the fall of Samaria is still in the future, that event occurring in the 6th year of Hezekiah. "Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah had doubtless been withdrawn to this rest. Hosea alone, 'in greyhaired might,' was still protesting in vain against the deepening corruptions of Israel." (*Pusey* p. 289.) There is so much in Micah that is like Isaiah,—more than can be accounted for by the fact that they were describing the same state of society,—that it seems evident that there was some tie between them. Very probably they were master and pupil. But Isaiah's work was mostly in the city, Micah's in the country. And Micah, if he was really a scholar of Isaiah, was not a copier. If he learned from him the connexion between man's sin and God's wrath, he did not take his phrases and notions at second-hand. He has his own style; he is familiar with the phenomena of nature; he watches the grasping of the landholders, and the hardness of the creditors.

Note on the Prophet Micah.

His denunciations of idolatry seem most to apply to the reign of Ahaz. He speaks of the idols as set up in Jerusalem,

Note on
the Pro-
phet Mi-
cah.

and of Molech sacrifices, a state of things which hardly belongs to an earlier period. But incidentally we have a remarkable passage of his ministry recorded in the reign of Jeremiah. See Jer. xxvi. 17—19. That protest apparently was the means of drawing Hezekiah from following his father's disastrous policy, and of putting off the ruin of Judah, which otherwise would have shared the fate of Israel. (See *Dr Pusey*, p. 290, and *Stanley*, p. 463.)

Probably that protest was the last public act of Micah. "This confession then of the king and of some considerable part of Judah was probably the closing harvest of his life, after a long seed-time of tears. So God allowed His *servant to depart in peace*. The reformation itself, at least in all its fulness, took place after the kingdom of Samaria had come to an end, since Hezekiah's messengers could, unhindered, invite all Israel to join in His great Passover. Probably this Micah lived to see the first dawning only of the first reformation which God wrought by His words." (*Dr Pusey*.)

The Book of Micah consists of three divisions, chapters i. and ii.; iii.—v.; vi. and vii. Each summons the people to hear God's message, threatens His judgments and foretells His mercy. It is impossible to tell how much of it was delivered before Hezekiah on the occasion of which we have spoken. The particular words quoted by the elders, *Zion shall be plowed*, &c. are found in iii. 12. Probably he spake much more of his prophecy than Dr Pusey believes that it was now that he collected into the present work the prophecies which he had previously delivered, "retaining of his spoken prophecy so much as God willed to remain for us."

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Micah IV.

We have already remarked that the section to which this chapter belongs begins with chap. iii. In that chapter the prophet has inveighed against the sins of the kingdom of Judah, and has foretold that "Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." He goes straight from this to the promises with which the present chapter opens. The adverbative "But" which our translators put in has no warrant, the

Hebrew word means simply "And." So entirely do judgments and acts of love blend together in the mind of the prophet, that he speaks of them as in one breath. This is characteristic of the style of Micah throughout, and we shall have other instances of it hereafter. These first three verses have met us already in the second chapter of Isaiah. If one prophet has borrowed from the other, it is Isaiah from Micah, as Dr Pusey has shewn. For in Micah the clauses fit one by one to the verses of judgment preceding. They are the reversal of the curse. *Zion shall be destroyed, and the law shall go forth from Zion. The mountain of the house shall be as a forest, and the mountain of the house shall be established.* The promise is the sequel of the woe. In Isaiah the words form not a sequel, but the text of a following discourse. It is possible, however, as we have said elsewhere (see p. 9), that both Isaiah and Micah quoted from an older prophet.

The prophet's confidence, then, is not shaken by his foreseeing the fall of Jerusalem. When he has met this vision face to face his hopes become fixed as on a rock. *The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established*,—the Hebrew word signifies "established for ever." The mountain was the centre of His worship, the assurance of His presence, the channel of His grace. The earthly mount Zion had been surrounded by higher hills than itself, but now the mountain of the Lord's house is to be exalted above all other mountains; nothing shall hide the sight of it from men. Cf. Matt. v. 14. In what this greatness shall consist the prophet does not say. He knows not. He knows that it must be great, because of God's faithfulness. The greatness shall be acknowledged as a blessing to mankind, people shall stream into it from all quarters. (Cf. Is. lx. 11; Rev. xxi. 25, 26.) "The flood once covered the mountains to destroy life; this flood shall flow upon it to save life." (*Dr Pusey.*)

And say. Exhorting and encouraging one another, eager to communicate to others the blessedness which they have found. And they come to be taught, casting all their care upon Him, in holy faithfulness and simplicity, ready to be led whither He will, and ready also to walk in the path which He shall thus mark out for them.

The law. The article is not in the original. The prophet means that *rule of life* in general, revelation of God's will, shall go forth from Zion. He from His holy place shall call them; they shall not be left to seek after Him, He will seek out them. For Revelation is not the history of man's thoughts about God, but of God's doings for man.

He shall rebuke. Cf. S. John xvi. 8—11. God's kingdom is won, not by compromises, nor by flattering words, but by conviction of sin.

They shall beat, &c. It is what we pray for as often as

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Micah IV.

we ask God to "give to all nations unity, peace, and concord." As far as the Gospel is accepted in the hearts of men so far does it promote peace. It is unfaithfulness to the Gospel which makes discord. The more therefore that the kingdom prevails in the hearts of each of us, the more will there be peace on earth; and peace will bring happiness and contentment. **For the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.** Implying that though this happy time seems so far off, though nations still strive to destroy one another, and universal peace seems so far from attainment that we might well despair of it, yet its coming is assured to us, not by the signs of the times, but by the word of the Lord Himself.

Israel has hitherto been inconsistent, running aside continually after other gods. It shall be so no longer, she will remain steadfast to her Lord for ever and ever.

The prophet now takes up a figure which he has used before, but has dropped for a while; namely, the comparison of God and His people to a shepherd and his flock. He will gather up the flock that **halteth** (or *that is worn out by its wanderings*), and that has been driven from the fold, and will make thereof a nucleus that shall swell out into a strong nation. Not strong in worldly greatness; it is seen afterwards that the prophet had no such thought, but strong spiritually. They are strong who fear not what man can do to them, who know that nothing can separate them from the love of Christ. No army is so strong as the noble army of martyrs. Over these the King of martyrs, the True and Faithful Witness, reigns in Zion for ever.

Still preserving the image of the flock, the prophet addresses Jerusalem as the tower of the flock, the centre of the pastures, around which the sheep shall congregate. There the Lord shall feed His flock like a shepherd, thither **the first** (or *the primitive*) **dominion shall come**, all the former glory of David and Solomon shall return. (Cf. ch. v. 4; vii. 14; Luke i. 32; John xi. 52.)

The startling transition is characteristic of this prophet's style, and it increases the force of what he has already said. He repeats emphatically that all the glories which he has foretold are no dreamer's paradise, no pleasant words in which the Jews are to wrap themselves flatteringly. There is a terrible agony for them to undergo. They will cry aloud, when their kings are gone into captivity, and their counsellors perished; yet the agony shall be a travail-pang, resulting in a new-birth unto righteousness. The nations who look on will exult to witness Judah's sorrow, not knowing **the thoughts of the Lord**, His purposes of mercy and love, bringing might out of weakness, and casting them down as ripe sheaves, to be trodden underfoot by the nation they hated and despised. The more there were of them (ver. 11) the easier to thrash them out. And this should result in blessing even to these nations. For when the

thrashing is over, there remains the corn-cars. These should God consecrate, claim as His own (Lev. xxvii. 28). They also would thus pass through death unto life. Evil would be slain in them, and so they would live unto life everlasting.

Micah IV.

The prophet now again turns to Zion, whom he calls **daughter of troops**, alluding apparently to the deeds of violence which she has lately committed, and he bids the people crowd together, to prepare for the Babylonian siege. He identifies himself with the suffering people, for he says He hath laid siege against us. The siege will be successful, and Jerusalem will be captured. This is evident, seeing that the judge will be smitten upon the cheek, a thing impossible except to a conquered people. So shall it be with Jerusalem, the ancient city of David. Whence shall help be looked for?

Micah V.

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The prophet pauses before answering the question, and then breaks forth into the prophecy which has gladdened us all from our infancy. The pause is marked by a peculiar Hebrew construction¹, and by the cry, **And thou! Bethlehem Ephratah**. The prophet at the moment when he sees the city of David falling, remembers David's birth-place, the little insignificant village, not far from his own home, and there dawns upon his soul an assurance that from thence a Deliverer shall come. And thus he contrasts, as we have seen before, the calamity of the nation with the work of the Deliverer. The judge of Israel has been smitten on the cheek in Zion, but the Deliverer shall prove a Ruler for everlasting. Jerusalem assembled, a daughter of troops, only to be defeated ignominiously, but Bethlehem, though she be little among the thousands of Judah, shall furnish Him who shall be victorious over all. In Him the former strength of Zion shall return.

Bethlehem Ephratah. The former name was that in common use, the other had now become poetic. There may be some allusion to the sorrow formerly connected with the spot (Gen. xxxv. 19), or to the meaning of the name, "fruitfulness," or to both. The name Bethlehem also means "House of bread," and the spot is still fertile.

To Me. "To do My will, to My praise and glory, to reconcile the world to Me, to rule and be head over the true Israel, the Church."

Therefore, i. e. because the Divine Ruler is thus appointed, to be revealed in due time. **He will give them up** into the hands of their enemies until Judah hath travailed (see iv. 10), and the new birth of the nation takes place in Christ. **The remnant**, those who believe,—they shall return unto (or together with) **the children of Israel**, the ten tribes. It is the same idea which we have met with before (see e. g. on Ezek. xxxvii.), that the division of the nation shall be brought to an end through the coming of the common Deliverer.

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¹ Dr Pusey.

Micah V.

4 What the Messiah will do for Israel. **He shall stand** (not sit as a Judge, but stand), helping, waiting on, His people (cf. Acts vii. 56), **and feed** them, as the Good Shepherd, with divine tenderness, but also **in the strength of the Lord**, with divine might, **in the Majesty of the Name of the Lord His God**, in the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father; **and they shall abide**, no longer be driven away from their rest and peace, but dwelling in security, as knowing that their home is where their Lord is. **He shall be great.** Luke i. 32.

5 **This Man shall be the Peace.** Eph. ii. 14, 17; Is. ix. 6; Luke ii. 14; John xiv. 27.

The Assyrian is put for the enemies of God and the Church at all times. When enemies rise up to persecute and vex the righteous, Christ will be their peace. Acts v. 41; 2 Cor. i. 4, 5. **When he shall tread in our palaces**, despoil us of worldly glory, vex the body which is of earth. **Seven** is in Scripture the number of completeness. Therefore the sense here is, we shall be able to raise up against him a sufficiency of inferior guardians, acting under the guidance of the Chief Ruler; nay, we shall have *more* than sufficiency. (For a similar use of the numbers "seven" and "eight" see on Eccles. xi. 2, *Twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity.*)

6 These shepherds of their own people shall devour the land of their enemies. Let it be remembered how often and how fully we have seen the promise given of God's lovingkindness to the Gentiles, and this passage will then be plainly seen to bear a message of goodness. The Church shall devour the nations, as Pèter was bidden to slay and eat (Acts x.): those who were defiled and unclean will become the nourishment and food of the Church of Christ, being made part of His Body. As regards the destructive metaphor, we are bound to remember that the Church of Christ blesses its enemies by waging war against their errors. It will carry war **into their gates**¹ (entrances), attacking those who thought themselves attackers, and so converting those to obedience who thought to be destroyers.

7 **The remnant** is a favourite word of Micah. It signifies here, as ever, all those Jews who proved faithful to their calling by accepting the truth of God. The exquisitely beautiful image of this verse declares that these shall quicken men to life who otherwise would wither without help. For the Church is moistened, not by contrivance of man, but by the grace of God which comes upon it abundantly from above. "The dew comes down from heaven, is not of earthly birth, is transparent, glistening with light, reflecting the hues of heaven, gentle, slight, weak in itself, refreshing, cooling the strong heats of the day, consumed itself, yet thereby preserving life, falling on the dry and withered grass wherein all nature droops, and recalling it to freshness of life....So did the Apostles bedew the souls of believers with the

¹ The marginal reading has nothing in its favour.

word of godliness and enrich them abundantly with the words of the Gospel, themselves dying and the Church living the more through their death, quenching the fiery heat of passions, and watering the dry and barren soil that it might bring forth fruits unto Christ." (*Dr Pusey.*)

Micah V.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The chapter begins with a solemn call to the nation to hear the Divine word. The prophet himself is thus addressed, "**Arise**," i. e. Micah himself. Man will not hear him, let him address himself to **the mountains and hills**, the insensate witnesses and scenes of the nation's idolatry. They at least are innocent of the sin, they fulfil the law which their Maker has appointed for them; they have not changed to and fro as the people have done; they have witnessed change upon change, themselves remaining fast. Cf. Is. i. 2. **The Lord hath**, &c. He will be made manifest to men that He is clear in the judgment. Cf. Is. v. 4; S. John viii. 46.

Micah VI.

There is a most deep and pathetic reproof contained in the simple words, **O my people**. They are twice repeated (see ver. 5). Thou art my people, I created thee, redeemed thee, loved thee dearly; what have I done that thou shouldst cast Me off? Cf. Is. xliii. 22—24; 1 John v. 3; Amos ii. 13.

Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, Lawgiver, Priest, Prophet-ess. The last name reminds them how their fathers rejoiced to sing God's praise.

Remember now. He reminds them of another signal act of grace, the frustration of the wicked plan of Balak to procure Balaam's curses upon the people, and the turning it into an instrument of blessing.

There should be a semicolon after "answered him." **From Shittim unto Gilgal** is a clause by itself, "remember now" being understood before it. He calls upon them to remember what passed between these two stations, the last in the wilderness and the first in the promised land. At the former they had sinned grievously in Baal-peor, and yet the mercy of God had followed them unto the crossing of Jordan, the fall of Jericho, and the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt (see p. 234). **That ye may know**, &c. Let these things be a proof to you of the faithfulness of God to you. It is called **righteousness**, not as though it were for the people's own deserving, but because He has bound Himself by His own promise. Cf. Heb. vi. 10; 1 John i. 9.

This question is supposed to be asked by the people, in answer to the prophet's remonstrance: "You accuse us of being ungrateful, what shall we do? We are ready to make *any* sacrifice, if you will only tell us what." **Calves of a year old**, according to the strict law, Lev. ix. 2, 3. The prophet replies

Micah VI.

that they have the means of knowing already what God requires, and refers them to the law, Deut. x. 12, 13: "Offer yourselves." God seeks not yours, but you, deeds of justice and deeds of love, humility touching yourselves; not a crouching before God in abject fear, but the humble love of the forgiven.

9 **The city, Jerusalem.** Here named as the centre of all the Jewish wealth and pride. God cries to it, His voice is mightily heard by all, but only **the man of wisdom shall see His Name**, (cf. Jer. ii. 31; Ex. xx. 18), i. e. shall give heed to His revelation, and His righteous ruling of the universe. Such a man now seeing God in a glass darkly, shall at last see Him face to face. **Hear ye the rod.** Pay heed to the judgment which is threatened upon you, and learn that He **who hath appointed it** changes not, and cannot be resisted.

10 **Yet.** After all the warnings which have been delivered. **Treasures of**, i. e. gotten by, **wickedness.** Cf. Jer. v. 27; James v. 3. **Measure**, lit. "ephah," a corn-measure of six bushels, used therefore by the corn-sellers, and consequently a scant one was a special hardship on the poor. Oppression of the poor takes different forms now, but the tremendous warning has lost none of its force. Would God that men would lay it to heart while there is time.

11 **Shall I count them pure.** Better in margin, *Shall I be pure?* The prophet puts himself in imagination in the position of a dealer and asks, How can I be pure and acceptable in God's eyes, if I have wicked balances? &c. **The bag**, &c. Cf. Lev. xix. 35, 36; Deut. xxv. 13, 15, 16; Prov. xi. 1; xvi. 11; xx. 10.

12 **Thereof**, of the city. **Full of**, or *filled by*.

13 **Therefore also will I.** Thou hast done violence, and smitten—therefore will I. Thou hast wounded the poor, therefore I will wound thee, and thou who art now living in luxury will I make desolate.

14 **In the midst of thee.** In the very centre of thy wealth. Where thy rapacity has raised thee up, there will I cast thee down. **Thou shalt take hold**, or grasp thy money, when the spoiler comes, but to no purpose.

16 **Are kept.** Heb. "are diligently kept." There is zeal and earnestness displayed in practising sin. "Their feet are swift to shed blood." There is no mention in Kings of the statutes of Omri, and we cannot tell, therefore, with certainty what special laws are alluded to. That they were of some deep heinousness we may judge both from his character and from that of his son Ahab. But he was a king of Israel, and therefore it was the height of wantonness for the people of Judah to introduce them into their land, and the prophet describes their act as an infatuation, committed as if for the very purpose of bringing themselves to desolation.

The reproach of My people. They had always boasted

themselves God's people; it was their chief glory. Now this was to become their special humiliation, that the heathen would triumph over them, and taunt them on this very point. See Ezek. xxxvi. 20; Joel ii. 17; Ps. xlv. 13—16.

Micah VI.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The prophet's work of denunciation is ended. He now utters a most pathetic complaint over the suffering which is coming upon his nation. His first comparison expresses the *desolation* of the scene which he witnesses. Whereas formerly Judah was as a fruitful vineyard, she is now despoiled of her beauty and pleasantness. **My soul desired the first-ripe fruit.** "Such is the longing of God for man's communion and salvation; such is the thirst of His ministers; such their pains in seeking, their sorrow in not finding" (*Pusey*.) Cf. Hosea ix. 10.

Micah VII.

Good, i.e. here "merciful." **Perished**, by a violent death. Cf. Is. lvii. 1. He bemoans a two-fold sin among his people, open violence, and secret treachery. They are so eager to do evil, that evil has become their good. The Hebrew word rendered **earnestly** implies this. They strive and vie with each other in sin, as though for an honourable distinction.

All alike, princes, judges, great men, openly practise corruption; they have wrought it into a regular system which defies unravelling. This appears to be the meaning of the word rendered "**wrap it up**," intertwine, twist into a strong band.

The best, i.e. gentlest. **As a brier** which robs and tears the sheep.

What must the worst be?

The entangled and perverse ways of the people have put all relationships out of joint. Selfishness is everywhere, and has dissolved the ties of nature, kindred, gratitude. When the soul has lost the love of God, even natural love dies out.

All human help being at an end, the prophet with the more earnestness lifts his eyes unto the hills, for the help of Him who made heaven and earth (Ps. cxxi.). **Look**, lit. gaze intently, look eagerly as a watchman. **The God of my salvation** became, as Dr Pusey says, a wonted title of God, speaking of past deliverances, as well as of confidence and of hope. Pss. xviii. 47; xxv. 5; xxvii. 9; lxii. 8; lxx. 6; lxxix. 9; lxxxv. 5; Heb. iii. 18.

The prophet still identifies himself with the people, and expresses his penitence for his own sins, as well as for theirs. See on Is. vi. 5, p. 36, and Dan. ix. 10.)

Mine enemy, Babylon and Edom originally; them, all, whether men or devils, who rejoice over the fall of God's people.

When I sit in darkness, i.e. in captivity. At that time God gave light by means of Daniel and the three holy children. Cf. Is. ix. 2.

I will bear, &c. This is the temper of all true penitents. Cf.

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- Micah VII.** 1 Sam. iii. 18; 2 Sam. xvi. 10. **Until, &c.** Until God shall see that the punishment has wrought its work. He calls it "pleading his cause," because, though the enemies were doing God's will, they were none the less unrighteous and cruel themselves.
- 10 **Shame shall cover, &c.,** because her blasphemies were now to be put an end to. She had said, "Where is thy God?" And now God would reveal Himself, and restore His people, and the Medes and Persians should tread down the oppressor. Cf. Pss. cxxxvii.; cxlvi. 8.
- 11 **Walls.** The original signifies fences of a vineyard. Cf. Is. v. 5. **The decree,** i.e. God's decree for the fall of the city. This should now be reversed, and His vineyard should again be
- 12 restored to His favour. **He shall come.** Rather "there shall come," the sense being indefinite. There shall be a coming of men from all quarters, **from Assyria, and from Egypt.** For the Hebrew word rendered "fortified cities," is a variation on the name of Egypt. The sense therefore, is "from the extremities of East and West." Such words can only be regarded as partially fulfilled in the return under Zerubbabel. The perfect fulfilment must be in Christ.
- 13 Here we note again the startling contrast, expressing so wonderfully the unity of God's purposes. Along with the promises of unspeakable, immeasurable love, is joined, and again repeated, the assurance of His sore judgment against sin. The people are earnestly assured that there can be no escape from that, it is as sure as the destruction of their enemies. And this vision of dreary misery, of captivity and suffering, leads to the
- 14 prayer which follows. The prophet lays down his own pastoral office, and calls upon God to take up His. No power but Omnipotence can help them now. It is a most touching and beautiful end to the book. I have, in the Introduction, expressed the probability that Micah died early in the reign of Hezekiah. He is, therefore, now doing the duty of the dying Pastor. "Lord, to me the night cometh. I foresee the storms which will beat upon Thy people after I am gone, I commit them to Thy care. They are thine heritage. They will dwell solitarily as in a wild forest, but feed them there as in Carmel, and comfort them in their sorrow." Cf. Is. xxix. 17; Jer. l. 9.
- 15 God's answer to the prayer, the first words referring to the last words of the prayer. **Marvellous things,** wondrous works of mercy. Pss. ix. 2; xxvi. 7; lxxi. 17.
- 16 These are again the words of the prophet, prophesying what shall follow the putting forth of God's power. **Their might,** i.e. their own, they shall be annoyed to find it of no avail against God. **They shall lay, &c.** As put to silence; cf. Job xxi. 5; xl. 4. **Their ears, &c.** They shall be stunned with terror.
- 17 These judgments shall lead them to deep penitence and confession of sin, to fear of God, and obedience. And so all things shall be subdued unto Him, and all the ends of the world shall

see the salvation of our God. The prophet ends with a song of praise. The might of God is declared to be shewn, not so much in the works of His Creation, as in His miracles of mercy and forgiveness. He "declareth His Almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity." Greater is the work of Redemption than the work of Creation.

All their sins. "Not 'some,' for it is impious to look for a half pardon from God" (S. Ambrose ap. *Pusey*). **Into the depths,** &c. They shall "sink as lead in the mighty waters," washed away by the blood of Christ.

"There is a special propriety in these words, '*Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea,*' because they are grounded on those words of Moses at the Exodus, and after the passage of the Red Sea (the mercies of which have just been commemorated by Micah, *v.* 15). In his song of victory, after that glorious deliverance, Moses said, 'Pharaoh's chariots and his host *hath He cast into the sea.*' And Miriam said, 'Sing ye to the Lord; for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He *thrown into the sea.*'" (Exodus xv. 4, 21.)

The miraculous mercies of the Exodus, and of the deliverance of Israel by the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and by the way opened to them through the waves of the Red Sea, in which they themselves passed through a wall of waters on their right hand and on their left hand, from out of the land of bondage into the wilderness, on their way to Canaan, being baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. x. 2), were figurative of the far greater and more miraculous mercies which God bestowed on all true Israelites in Christ, Who is the true Passover (1 Cor. v. 7; John xix. 36); and of their deliverance from the land of spiritual bondage, Sin, Satan, and Death, and of the overwhelming of their spiritual enemies in the Red Sea of the Blood of Christ, through which they pass in their Baptism (as *Theodoret* here observes), out of the bondage of their ghostly Egypt, and enter on the way of salvation, which leads them on their earthly pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan of their everlasting rest. See the words of the Church in her Baptismal Office, (and how much is suggested by those few words!): "Almighty and everlasting God, Who of Thy great mercy didst save Noah and his family in the Ark from perishing by water, and also didst safely lead the children of Israel Thy people through the Red Sea, *figuring thereby Thy Holy Baptism.*"

Well, therefore, may Micah use these words, when he is foretelling the redemption of Israel by CHRIST, and the forgiveness of their sins, and the blessings received by them, and communicated by them to all Nations, received into covenant with God by the Sacrament of Baptism, in which the Blood of Christ is applied to the washing away of sins, and to the purchase of His Universal Church (Acts xx. 28). (*Bp. Wordsworth.*)

Micah VII.

18

19

NOTE ON THE PROPHET HABAKKUK.

Note on
the Pro-
phet Ha-
bakkuk.

We have no distinct statement as to the time at which Habakkuk exercised his office, but it seems likely that it was in the reign of Manasseh. He prophesied the invasion of the Chaldeans, within the days of his hearers, but he spoke of it as a thing which must seem to his hearers incredible (i. 5). Now we are told in 2 Kings xxi. 10—16, and in 2 Chron. xxxiii. 10, that in the time of Manasseh God foretold such a calamity, and that it should make both the ears of all who heard it to tingle. And we are also told that this was announced by “prophets.” In all probability, one of these prophets was Habakkuk, who, as far as we know, was the first to announce this awful judgment. The message was afterwards taken up by Zephaniah and Jeremiah.

The prophecy of Habakkuk is expressed in general terms, and has no historical or special allusions such as those with which the Book of Jeremiah is filled. This confirms the idea that we must put this book at a somewhat earlier date than Jeremiah, and not, as some commentators have done, in the time of Jehoiakim.

We know nothing of Habakkuk beyond what we find in the book. The last words of it imply that he was officially qualified to take part in the liturgical services of the Temple. He must therefore have been a Levite. The absurd legend about him at the end of the story of Bel and the Dragon deserves no notice beyond mention.

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Habakkuk
II.

In the previous chapter the prophet has foretold the impending invasion of the Chaldeans, and describes it in dark and alarming colours. Then he addresses himself to God as though in expostulation. In fact the chapter begins in this tone, (ver. 2—4), and also ends with it (12—17). He then declares that he will set himself on the watch-tower, to see what God will say to him in answer to his expostulation. The expression is of course a figurative one, taken from the custom of ascending high places for the purpose of looking into the distance (2 Kings ix. 17; 2 Sam. xviii. 24). It signifies preparing the soul to receive the word of

God. "The prophet extricates himself from worldly thoughts, so that he may not judge according to his own fancies, but may learn from the testimonies of God." (*Calvin.*)

Habakkuk II.

When I am reproved, or "when I make complaint." That is, he waits for God's word to his soul, in order that he may be able to make answer to himself and to the people concerning the expostulation which he has uttered to God. Thus he draws a distinction between his own speaking, and the speaking of the Spirit of God within him.

God's answer. He first commands the prophet to put it into writing, indicating thus the great importance of it. Cf. Is. viii. 1; Jer. xxx. 2. **That he may run**, &c., may take warning and flee from the wrath of God.

For an appointed time. The time for it is fixed. No opposition of man can hinder it, nor can it be hurried faster than God's will doth allow. If it seem to tarry, wait for it; for it will not *fail*. The two words both translated "tarry" are different in the original.

With this preface the prophecy itself commences.

His soul, &c. This must be intended as a description of the Chaldean. His pride (and it will be remembered how often we have seen that this was a characteristic vice of the Babylonians) prevented his being upright. Therefore he would be liable to fall.

But the just shall live by his faith. Lit. *but the just, by his faith shall he live.* The word translated "faith" is derived from a root signifying *to be firm*, and is used to express both the fidelity of God to His promises, and the fidelity of man to his word. When used to express the relation of man to God it signifies firm attachment to Him, firm confidence in His promises. (See Gen. xv. 6; Neh. ix. 8.) The contrast here consists in this. The man whose soul is lifted up depends on himself, vaunts of the Babylon that he has built, and deems himself impregnable. But the just man is he who relies not on himself but on the solid rock of God's promises. And so long as he does this he must live. "His heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord." The prophet intends the people to lay the lesson to heart in preparation for the coming suffering. Their trust in God will be tried then. Let them, therefore, watch and guard it, for if they keep it they will pass safely through the storm.

How St Paul quotes the clause controversially three times we can only mention here. The reader must consult a Commentary on the New Testament. Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Heb. x. 38.

Another special sin of the Babylonians. **Because he transgresseth by wine**, rather, *because the wine is treacherous.* It betrays and excites him into sins of pride, insolence, impiety. Dan. v. 2; Prov. xxiii. 31, 32.

Neither keepeth at home, should be rendered *and he abideth not.*

1

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3

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5

Habakkuk
II.

We have next a song composed of five threatening sentences. The first is upon the *rapacity* of the Chaldeans.

6 **These**, the people he has "heaped to himself."

8 **How long?** A cry of woe over the misery which his apparently interminable rapacity is causing.

Thick clay. Many interpreters have adopted this translation, supposing it to refer to the enormous mass of bricks with which Babylon was built. But it is more likely that the correct rendering is *with a mass of pledges*. He has loaded himself with foreign property like an unmerciful usurer, whom now his debtors assemble to curse. (So *Keil* and *Gesenius*.)

7 **Bite thee.** There is a striking *double entendre* here. The reference to the usury in the preceding verse leads to the thought of "interest," but the prophet says that instead of it they shall have *viper-bites*, the word, thus rightly rendered, being nearly the same in sound as that meaning usurer's interest.

9—11 The second woe, upon the Chaldean's *cunning and base avarice*. As an eagle builds its nest on high, out of the way of harm, so does the Chaldean seek to elevate and strengthen his rule by robbery and plunder, that it may never be wrested from his family again, that he may be delivered from calamity. The 10th verse tells the result of this—he has consulted (or devised) shame to his house when he thought to strengthen it; and in so doing he has brought guilt upon his own soul and thrown it away. The whole house which he has built will cry for vengeance upon him, because every part, stone and timber, have been gotten by fraud.

12, 13 The third woe, against *bloodshed and oppression*. The Chaldean built his cities and fortresses with the blood and sweat of his captives. But the Lord of hosts seeth from heaven, and it is His will that **the people shall but labour for** (rather than *in*) **the very fire**. All their labour will be thrown away, for the fire shall come and waste it. They **wear themselves for very vanity**, there is no stability in their work, it shall fall to ruins. It must be so, **for the earth shall be filled**, &c., and nothing which is hostile to His will can stand. We have the same thought in Isaiah (xi. 9), and doubtless Habakkuk is quoting that here. But the connexion is entirely different. Isaiah spoke the words to express the glory and blessedness of the kingdom of Messiah. Habakkuk quotes them to shew that no *other* kingdom can stand.

15—17 Fourth woe, the *wanton cruelty* of the Chaldean towards the conquered. This is expressed by a figure taken from ordinary life, a man giving his neighbour intoxicating drink that he may be amused by the sight of his shame. Cf. Nahum iii. 5; Is. xlvi. 3. The Chaldean entices the nations by cunning to put them to shame. But the meanness shall recoil upon himself, and the success of his wicked schemes in which he hoped

16 to exult, will cause him to be held up to execration and con-

tempt. Put aside for a moment the thought that this is a figure, and take it as a literal truth, then let young men ponder that truth well, and lay it to heart.

The Chaldean had presented his bottle to his neighbour for a cruel purpose. And now his turn shall come. The Lord shall present a cup to him, the cup of His wrath, and he shall drink it to the dregs.

The Chaldeans in addition to their cruelties on men had committed wanton mischief upon beautiful Lebanon, cutting down the wood for their state buildings, and exterminating the wild animals. Cf. Is. xiv. 8. All this shall be visited upon them.

Fifth and last woe, against *idolatry*. This, coming last, expresses the utter helplessness of the Chaldeans when their judgment comes. They are trusting to their idols. Therefore the prophet suddenly begins his woe with the abrupt question, What use will your idols be?

The **teacher of lies** means the idol, so called here, because it leads the devotees to a confidence which will bring them to ruin. They will expect help from it, and find it dumb. They will cry **awake** to a piece of wood, **arise** to a block of stone.

It shall teach. This is not correctly rendered. It is a question. "*Should it teach?*" An expression of astonishment at such a delusion.

Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, they have lavished money and art upon it, and it is only a dumb idol after all.

Contrast between the dumb idols and the living God. **His holy Temple**, i.e. primarily, of Jerusalem, for there is the place where He has set His Name (Is. lvi. 1; Ps. xi. 4). Therefore the whole earth and all its kingdoms must be still before Him.

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The prophet's song of praise and prayer is supposed by some to have been written upon Manasseh's repentance (2 Chron. xxxiii. 15, 16). It is closely connected with the preceding chapters. The prophet is deeply agitated by the revelation of the terrible judgment which God will execute first of all upon Judah (chap. i. 5—11) then upon the Chaldeans. He prays that the Lord will carry out this work of his "within years," and in the midst of His wrath still show mercy.

Habakkuk the prophet; expression used to remind the readers that it is not a mere effusion of subjective emotions, but taught to the author by the Spirit of God. **Upon Shigionoth;** this is a musical direction, apparently signifying that it is to be sung after the manner of a stormy, martial, and triumphal ode. The root of the word is found in the preface to Ps. vii., a song also characterized by vehement emotions and abrupt transitions. The word is derived from a root signifying "to reel to and fro."

Habakkuk II.

17

18—20

20

Habakkuk III.

1

Habakkuk
III.

2 **Thy speech**, i. e. the prophecy of judgment. **Revive Thy work**, i. e. the work of love and power, such as was shown in the exodus. The prophet is still referring to the twofold announcement he has received, and the expression **in the midst of the years**, or *within years*, has reference to the promise of the "appointed time" beyond which the judgment should not tarry (chap. ii. 3); for though the revelation of God will bring sorrow and terror, it will also bring the overthrow of ungodly power and the consequent establishment of the kingdom of God. The earnest longing of the saints of God for this consummation is expressed in the double repetition "within the years."

3 The majestic abruptness here is almost unparalleled. We have a description of a Theophania reaching to ver. 15, and drawn from lyrical descriptions of the revelations of God in the earlier times of Israel (e. g. cf. ver. 3 with Deut. xxxiii. 2; ver. 5 with Ps. xviii. 8, and lxviii. 25; and ver. 10—15 with Ps. lxxvii. 16—20).

Teman, Edom. **Paran**, the high mountain-land east of the Arabah. The mention of the two localities, West and East, implies that the glory of God spread itself over the whole horizon. As Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 2) depicts the appearance of the Lord at Sinai as a light shining from Seir to Paran, so does Habakkuk also make the Holy One appear thence in His glory. As at the first God came down to His redeemed people to establish His covenant with them, so will He come at the last to liberate them from the bondage of the world and dash their enemies in pieces. (Cf. Obad. 9; Amos i. 12; Judges v. 4, 5; Isaiah lxiii. 1.)

Selah. This word is used about seventy times in the Psalms and thrice in Habakkuk. In all probability it is derived from a root signifying "to raise up," and is a musical direction. When the song was sung in the temple, the musical accompaniment was either to begin or to strike in more strongly, perhaps with a blast from the trumpets blown by the priests. Here, of course, this was to symbolize the lofty thought of God coming in His majesty and spreading His glory over heaven and earth.

4 **Horns**, rather "bright rays." The image is taken from the rising sun. When the Lord comes, a brilliant light will spread over the heavens, the first rays of it shooting above the horizon.

His hand. (Cf. Deut. xxxiii. 2.)

And there was the hiding of His power. His splendour formed the covering of His omnipotence; it was dark with excess of light,

"Hid in a glorious privacy of light;"

no mortal eye is able to gaze upon it. (Cf. Ps. civ. 2; 1 Tim. vi. 16; John i. 18.)

5 He comes to execute judgment upon an unholy world;

plague and fever-heat are His satellites to fulfil His will. (Cf. Deut. xxxii. 24.)

Measured, rather, "caused it to reel." **The Everlasting**, &c. (Cf. Nahum i. 5; Micah i. 4.) **His ways are everlasting**, i. e. He now goes along, as He went along in the olden time. **Cushan** (Ethiopia), **Midian**. These nations are mentioned as being inhabitants of the two shores of the Red Sea, over which the prophet represents God as coming.

The prophet now addresses God Himself. The question is poetical in form, expecting no answer, but affirmative in substance. The anger of God was kindled over the rivers, His wrath was against the sea. There is a reference certainly to the passage of the Red Sea and the Jordan (cf. Exod. xv. 19; Ps. cxiv. 3, 5), but of course they are regarded as symbols of all opposition, past, present, or to come. The next words remind us that God's most terrible judgments are yet **chariots of salvation**; they have for their object the deliverance of His people.

Thy bow was made quite naked, i. e. it was stripped of its covering to be used in war. The next words are singularly difficult; our version follows the Vulgate, the sense being, "Thou didst reveal Thyself in power on account of the oaths which Thy word made with the tribes." But there are many and apparently insuperable difficulties against this rendering, and Keil's version seems to me more probably right: "Chastising rods are sworn through the word," i. e. these fearful judgments are according to the solemn oath which Thou didst take, that Thou wouldst execute vengeance upon Thine enemies; see Deut. xxxii. 40-42.

The language concerning the mountains and rivers is somewhat different from that in ver. 6. There the mountains are spoken of as crumbling to ruins because the prophet is speaking of God's power over nature; here he is speaking of the judgments on the people, therefore the mountains are represented as rising in terror, and the sea as uttering its cries.

Not only is earth in chaos, but the heaven has clothed itself in darkness, sun and moon have hid themselves in their habitation, at the sight of God's glittering spear. The idea expressed in the word **habitation** is a common orientalism, the place from which the stars come out when they rise, and to which they return when they set.

Thine anointed, the king of Israel, not one particular king, but the king as the representative of the sovereignty of God, and therefore always the type of Christ.

Thou woundedst, &c. The prophet represents the Chaldean dynasty under the similitude of a house, and describes God as wounding at one stroke its head, i. e. roof, and also its foundation up to the neck (i. e. the part where the roof joins the walls). The destruction is sudden and complete, and the whole building is dashed in pieces.

Habakkuk
III.

6

8

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10

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13

Habakkuk
III.

14 **Staves, or spears. Villages,** rather *marauding hordes*. The sense of the whole verse is, "Thou dost use the spear of the king to destroy his own hostile troops, turning them one against the other in their confusion." Cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 20; 2 Chron. xx. 23, 24; Ezek. xxxviii. 21; Zech. xiv. 13.

15 The Exodus is ever present to the prophet's eye, as the type of all victories of the Israel of God, whether past, present, or future. He introduces it here as signifying that no obstacle can stand in the way of God's vengeance, He will drive through the sea to seek out His enemies everywhere.

16 The prophet describes his own feelings at receiving the announcement of God's victory. His first feeling was fear and trembling, his second (ver. 17) exultation.

The last clause of this verse would be better rendered, **When he that cometh... shall invade, &c.**

17 **The fig-tree, &c.** Famine and desolation will be produced by the Chaldean invasion.

Then he closes by identifying himself with the whole congregation. He appropriates to himself and to them the promises of God, confidently assured that He is the God of salvation.

"The saddest of all prophecies ends with a song,—the stringed instruments give out a music which is deeper than all the discords and wailings of creation. Brethren! may it be granted to us with purged ears to hear that music; may it have an echo in our inmost hearts! We shall hear it best, we shall join in it most fervently, when we have confessed how little fruit we have ourselves brought forth to God, when we have mourned over the dryness and barrenness of God's Church. Then when we have felt how death is written upon all things, we shall begin to know the power of the risen life; we shall understand the truth,—Jesus Christ was crucified in the flesh, that He might be quickened in the Spirit, and that, together with His own body, He might quicken us and the whole universe." (*Maurice.*)

NOTE ON THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

Note on
the Prop-
het Ze-
phaniah

Zephaniah was descended, in the fourth generation, from *Hizkiah*. This name is the same in the Hebrew as *Hezekiah*, and in all probability it is the great king who is here named. The prophet lived in the reign of Josiah (i. 1), probably in the course of the Reformation. His picture of the moral state of the nation, like that of his contemporary Jeremiah, is unfavourable, yet perhaps somewhat more hopeful. He foretells the coming desolation of Judah by the Babylonians, yet holds out the hope that she may yet escape by timely repentance (ii. 3). But the

hope is a faint one, and the chapter before us contains the real ground of the prophet's confidence, the same that the prophets utter with one mouth,—the desolation shall come, but it shall purify. Then, after night is passed, there shall be a glorious dawn, Zion shall be enlarged, and see her enemies overthrown.

Note on the Prophet Zephaniah.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

To her, &c. Jerusalem. Cf. Is. lix. 3.

The voice, of the prophets and the law, Jer. vii. 28. The first two clauses of the verse express the attitude of Jerusalem towards the commandments of God, the two following, her attitude towards His mercy and love. She neglected both one and the other. The moral condition of the great men described, (Cf. Prov. xxviii. 15; Ezek. xix. 2; Nah. ii. 12), and of the religious guides of the people.

Zeph. III.

They gnaw not, rather "they lay not up the bones for the morrow," i.e. they are so ravenous and insatiable.

2

Light, lit. "frothy," overflowing with frivolous words.

3

Jerusalem sins in this frightful manner, without observing that God is continually making His righteousness known. He **is just in the midst of her.** (Cf. Deut. xxxii. 4.) His prophets continue daily to declare His righteousness, His law is ever before the eyes of the nation, and yet **the unjust** [or *the perverse one*] **knoweth no shame,** is so sunk in unrighteousness, as not to be ashamed of his misdeeds.

4

The Lord Himself speaks to them, and calls them to witness what He has done to other nations, and to learn therefrom to repent. But they will not hear, **they rose early** in their eagerness to sin.

5

6

Therefore wait, &c. Some take this as an address to the unbelievers, with ironical meaning. But the word rendered **wait,** is always used to express the attitude of a faithful soul (e.g. Ps. xxxiii. 20). It is addressed to those who believe in God, and who are amazed and perplexed by the sight of all this shameless sin. Wait, ye faithful ones, for the day of the Lord.

7

8

For my determination, lit. *my righteousness.* The object of all God's judgments, to turn to the nations pure lips; cf. Ps. xvi. 4; Hos. ii. 6; Is. vi. 5, and cause them to confess His Name. **With one consent,** lit. *with one shoulder,* the metaphor being taken from bearers who carry a burden with even shoulders.

9

The heathen, being thus converted, will bring from their distant home an offering to the Lord; and that offering shall be **the daughter** of the Lord's **dispersed,** members of the Israelitish nation scattered abroad in the world. *These* shall be their (literally) **meat offering** (*minchah*). Cf. Is. lx. throughout, and Rom. xi., where the thought is that the conversion of the Gentiles shall be the means of bringing Israel to salvation.

10

Zeph. III.

11 by the Lord from the sins that have defiled it, and will no longer
 12 boast itself with sinful and vainglorious pride over being the
 13 possessor of God's temple. Jer. vii. 4. Instead of this it will be
afflicted, (lit. *bowed down*) with the sense of its own weakness
 and proneness to evil, **and poor** in spirit. It will not practise
 injustice, nor speak deceit.

We know that this announcement is not yet realized. But
 it has *begun* to be realized. For the Catholic Church is *holy*,
 its members are "called to be saints," the time of perfection
 begins with the Christian life in us, it struggles with sin during
 our sojourn here, it will be fully realized hereafter. We have an
 exact parallel in 1 John iii. 9, "Whosoever is born of God
 sinneth not."

14 The prophet calls upon Zion to rejoice in the fulness of her
 salvation. **Zion—Israel**. The two parts of the nation are
 17 reunited in the vision. Cf. Ezek. xxxvii. 17. **He will rest**, lit.
he will be silent in His love. The expression of silence denotes
 love deeply felt, which is absorbed with tenderness and admira-
 tion. "He will acquiesce in thee, with full confidence in thy
 faithfulness and love. So the Psalmist compares himself to an
 infant, composed to sleep in tender trust and silent love on its
 mother's breast." (*Wordsworth.*) Ps. cxxxi. 2 (lit. *I have made it*
silent).

18 **Them that are sorrowful**, &c., i.e. who mourn because their
 exile prevents them from taking part in the festival. **The re-
 proach of it** is the taunting which the heathen make for the
 desolation of Jerusalem and the separation of her feasts. See
 Lam. i. 7. This was a **burden** to all lovers of Zion.

Cf. Ps. cxxxvii. 5; Amos vi. 6; cf. Mic. iv. 7

20 The prophet closes with gathering into a fair garland some
 of the most comforting prophecies which had been delivered by
 prophets in old times. See marg. ref.

NOTE ON THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

Note on
 the Book
 of Eccle-
 siastes.

In old times it was the unquestioned opinion of both the
 Jewish and Christian Churches, that the author of this book was
 Solomon. But this opinion is now by very many abandoned.
 It is said that there are allusions and expressions which indicate
 that the writer must have lived at a late period of Jewish litera-
 ture, very probably during the Persian rule. The question
 cannot be discussed in this short Introduction, but the reader
 will find a most interesting essay on Ecclesiastes in Smith's Dic-
 tionary. The canonicity of the Book has never been disputed,

the question being not *de Auctoritate*, but *de Auctore*. The arguments of Hengstenberg seem to me to be of great weight, in which he contends that the Book cannot possibly be Solomon's, but that the writer personates Solomon for the purpose of pointing his moral more effectually. There is certainly no *a priori* argument against this, any more than there is blame to be ascribed to any other writer who may adopt a similar form of composition. As the article to which I have above referred well says: "In the literature of every other nation, the form of personated authorship, where there is no animus decipiendi, has been recognised as a legitimate channel for the expression of opinions or the quasi-dramatic representation of character. Why should we venture on the assertion, that if adopted by the writers of the Old Testament, it would have made them guilty of a falsehood, and been inconsistent with their inspiration? The question of authorship does not involve that of canonical authority. A Book written by Solomon would not necessarily be inspired and canonical. There is nothing that need startle us in the thought that an inspired writer might use a liberty which has been granted without hesitation to the teachers of mankind in every age and country."

The subject of the Book is the perplexities of human life. Looked at from one point of view, we might say that the writer, possessed of great abilities and capacities for happiness, has played experiments with life, preferring pleasure to duty, pursuing knowledge and amusing himself with metaphysics, as if the world were an attractive puzzle for him in idle hours; then, wearying of that, plunging into dissipation; then determining to be a wise philosopher, and hating that; and at last giving up all pursuits, and regarding life as a weary, stale, flat, unprofitable mockery. He begins like Faust, passes on into Jaques.

Yet there is a better side on which to view the writer. It does not follow *after* the misanthropy which we have noted, but runs alongside it, and sometimes one feeling predominates, sometimes the other. We note two good traits especially in him. The first is the belief in *God's righteousness*, leading, as such belief always must, to a desire after righteousness in himself and in others. Amid all his sad utterances, this desire ever and anon comes to the surface. Secondly, he goes further, and

Note on
the Book
of Eccle-
siastes.

**Note on
the Book
of Eccle-
siastes.**

believes in God's love. He recognises the benefit of visiting the house of mourning: by it, he says, "the heart is made better," and he declares that God for a loving purpose has set prosperity and adversity, the one against the other.

The Book, therefore, is not a formal treatise. It displays to us the writer's thoughts and the processes of thought, the reasonings to and fro; it gives us the sceptical utterances, and the faith which reasons them down. He points to no definite object, as the prophets do, to the coming kingdom of Christ, or the future glory of God's children. God has not given him the spirit of prophecy, but the spirit of meditation, of enquiry, of speculation. He makes his way by the help of these, with slow and faltering steps, through the problems which human life puts before him. The sins and offences of his youth have enfeebled him, and partially darkened his perceptions, but God is merciful, and guides him on towards the light. Thus he comes at last to peace of mind. Not indeed to exultation, or a clear vision of the glory that shall be revealed, but to the knowledge that there shall be at last a righteous judgment of God. Of this he is assured. But his burdened spirit cannot rise, as long as he remains in this life, to see in the future the victory of good, the songs of a redeemed world.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mattins.

Eccles. XI.

What we have said in the preceding introduction, will partly explain, it is hoped, the reason for the choosing of this passage for the Sunday before Advent. I have endeavoured to shew that the writer, though he speaks of the future, speaks in a totally different manner from that of the prophets. To them the light which rests upon the future springs from the Christ to be revealed in due time. They foresee that the kingdom of God shall be set up among men. The writer of Ecclesiastes has no such word. His meditations have led him to the conclusion that God has prepared a judgment to come, and that is all. We may see in this chapter the anticipation of death, the warning to be prepared for it, the assurance of a judgment to come. But there is an ignorance of the *manner* of this judgment. Its announcement comes to us with the voice of the dying year, and clouds rest about it. Advent will tell us whence the judgment shall be,—“Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.”

It is impossible to say definitely what circumstance led to

the exhortation with which the chapter opens. Bishop Wordsworth, for example, who holds the Solomonic authorship, believes that it had reference to the expulsion of Levitical priests from Israel by Jeroboam, and to the need of liberality towards them by the people. Hengstenberg believes that the writer lived in the time of the Persian empire, and was exhorting his people to remember how fleeting all earthly possessions were. We can therefore leave this question alone once for all, and deal with the whole chapter on general principles. It opens with a number of condensed parables.

The first is taken apparently from an Egyptian custom at the overflowing of the Nile. When the river has subsided, and has left pools on the land, the people are said to go out in light boats and scatter their seed on the surface, to sink down into the mud, and to produce a rich harvest in due season (cf. Is. xxxii. 20). So the sense is, "Go forth with thy seed, true words, kind deeds, zeal to serve God and do good to man, wherever there is the possibility of doing it." Do not scrutinize the chances of success at each step. Have faith in God. The seed will come up in due time.

Seven is the number of completeness in Scripture. The sense therefore is, "Do all the good that lies in thy power; yea, seek to do more. Do not stint thy preparations exactly to the number of bidden guests, but be ready for another if thou art called upon. **For thou knowest not**, &c. His need may be great, and thine own may soon be great also." Cf. Ps. cxii. 9; Matt. v. 42.

Clouds and **rain** are common images to express the judgments of God. Ps. xviii. 10; Nah. i. 3; Matt. vii. 24, 25. When the judgments of God are prepared they will infallibly break. But He knows their destination. He rules over all, and it is idle to be terrified by the uncertainties of the future. We cannot guide the tree which the lightning strikes. It will fall the way which God has appointed, and we can only hold our peace and trust in Him. Cf. Matt. vi. 34.

The same truth repeated, and used as an argument against inactivity. The husbandman cannot change the wind, nor bring down the rain. Therefore it is idle to waste his time in forebodings and fears, and to leave his work undone. The winds and the rain are God's charge, it is man's part to work.

Of the spirit, rather *of the wind*. Cf. John iii. 8. The mysteries of God's providence are not our care. We can leave them to Him. Cf. Ps. cxxxix. 13—15.

Be active daily, and let not duty slacken. In evil times be the *more* active, do the morning duty and the evening, not troubling thyself which of the two is likely to prosper, or whether *both* will prosper. If duty call thee to both, do them, and leave results to God.

Nor should men take a despairing and melancholy view of

Eccles. XI.

life. It is a gift from God, therefore is not to be despised, but to be accepted thankfully, and enjoyed as God gives the power. 8 Only it must be enjoyed with wisdom and reflection, with the memory that this bounding life of to-day will be followed at last with the long sleep of death. (This must be the meaning of the "many days of darkness.") The thought seems for a moment to recall the saddest mood of the writer.

9

There are some who take these words as spoken in bitter and relentless scorn, as if the Preacher, having experienced the happiness of life himself and now being cast down, would say, "Be happy and merry, do not check yourself in the gratification of your desires, and then go to the judgment." But such advice is foreign to his purpose. There is sadness in it, but no scorn. The Preacher meant what he said. **Rejoice, young man, in thy manly strength;** God gave thee for enjoyment those overflowing energies of body and mind. Cf. Prov. xiv. 30; xv. 13. Only with enjoyment and cheerfulness let there be innocence. Keep in view always the memory that there is a judgment to come, and this will keep liberty from degenerating into license, and merriment from impurity or profanity.

10

Sorrow, rather *discontent*, i.e. with God and His dealings. The Preacher is still exhorting to cheerfulness, to innocence with it, and he gives the reason for both,—**Childhood and youth are vanity**, they will pass quickly away. If they be not enjoyed while they last, they never will be, and if they be enjoyed sinfully, there is the judgment to follow.

XII. 1.

The true means of healthful enjoyment—early piety. As this is the time for enjoyment, so is it for learning the ways of God. This is the bloom of life, throw it not away to the devil, for once lost it cannot be recovered. God *created* you in His own image, therefore you cannot fulfil the law of your being apart from Him. *Remember* Him because He *is* your Creator, it is unnatural not to think of Him through whom you live.

The evil days are evidently a joyless old age. An ungodly youth will bring at last the consciousness of a wasted existence.

And then we have a wonderful picture, "a full-length and finished portrait" of a joyless old age, drawn in the lively colours of youth, in order that the young man may see what he will come to if he remember not his Creator in the days of his youth. For it seems to me clear that we ought not to take the picture as a mere physical description of old age under all circumstances. It would not be true of those, let them be as decrepit as they may, whose lives have been given to God. *They* are happy, cheerful, contented.

2

The lights of heaven only shine upon the happy. When the eye is blinded, the sun goes down. (Cf. Is. v. 30; Jer. iv. 23; Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8.) **The clouds return**, &c.; as soon as one trouble is over another comes. Those who are young have the means of shaking off trouble. The sunshine follows the showers.

Eccles. XII.

But the aged man, who has no consolations of religion to rest upon, has no joy, no resource to fall back upon, whilst to him who has made peace with God, "it shall come to pass that at eventide there shall be light." (Zech. xiv. 7.)

The body is now described under the image of a decayed tenement (cf. 2 Cor. v. 1), every part of the comparison having an exact meaning. **The keepers**, the arms which ward off danger, **tremble** with palsy; **the strong men**, the legs which sustain the body, **bow themselves** under its weight; **the grinders** are the teeth; **those that look out of the windows**, the eyes, "the windows of the soul;" **the doors**, the ears, which are the means of communication with the outward world; **the sound of the grinding** (or *the mill*), the voice, which becomes feeble and almost unintelligible; and **he** (i.e. the old man) **shall rise up at the voice of the bird**, the sleep of the aged being so light and easily disturbed that the chirping of the bird wakens him; and yet he takes no pleasure in sweet melody and song, **the daughters of music**, i.e. the musical faculties, **are brought low**. **Afraid of that which is high**, because there is so little strength or breath left that every height is dreadful; and **fears are in the way**, defenceless impotence sees terrors wherever it goes, and apprehends danger in every movement. **The almond tree shall flourish**¹, the head will be hoary with silver hair, and **the grasshopper**, the lightest weight, or the smallest annoyance, **shall be a burden** which presses the old man down². **And desire shall fail**, the old man is indifferent to what pleases him most, and he cares for nothing now in the world.

And all these things point unerringly—they are symptoms concerning which we never err, that **man goeth to his long home**, literally *his eternal home*. To this earthly life he will never return again, his place shall know him no more. **And the mourners** (i.e. the hired mourners) **are moving in the streets**, are getting ready to make outcry of lamentation at his funeral.

Or ever, i.e. *Before*. This refers back to the opening words of the xiith chapter, "*Remember now thy Creator.*" **The silver cord**; that is, *the thread of life*, which binds soul and body together, said to be of silver because of the value of life. **The golden bowl**³, the vessel of the body which holds the oil of the

¹ Gesenius renders the Heb. verb "*shall be spurned*" instead of "*shall flourish*," and explains "the old man shall refuse this food, once so pleasant to him." But the E. V. seems to be right.

² The explanation of Parkhurst is ingenious: "The dry, shrunk, shrivelled, crumpling, craggy old man, his backbone sticking out, his knees projecting forward, his arms backward, his head downward, and the apophyses of the bones in general enlarged, is very aptly described by that insect. And from this exact likeness, without doubt, arose the fable of Tithonus, that living to extreme old age, he was at last turned into a grasshopper." Parkhurst, s. v. **הַנֶּבֶל**.

³ My late dear friend, the Rev. C. F. Secretan, in a Sermon on this passage, has the following: "Here are images to represent the mystery of soul and body parting.

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spirit. **The pitcher**, the individual life which draws its portion for the time, out of **the fountain**, the great general life of the world. **The wheel** moving so rapidly, working so unceasingly.

All this is uttered to warn us to seek earnestly and humbly for such a life as shall not be thus dashed in pieces, that eternal life which is offered us through Christ in God.

7

The dust, the earthly body, so described because of its origin. Gen. iii. 19. It will return to the earth, and leave the spirit free. It will leave the chamber of death unseen, will leave weeping friends. But it will know its home. **It will return to God who gave it.** It will go to Him to be judged. The Chaldee paraphrase here reads, "And the spirit of thy life shall return, that it may stand in judgment before God, who gave it to thee." Cf. Rom. xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10; Heb. ix. 27.

8

Here begins the epilogue of the Book. No doubt there is a connexion of this verse with the preceding, for it is an assertion of the vanity of all worldly things apart from God because they are ended by death. But the main purpose of the sentence here is to introduce the thoughts which follow. The vanity of earthly things conducts to the fear of God, and since all things around are smitten with the doom of death, it is the part of man to be united with the living God.

The name **Preacher** occurs in ch. i. 1, 2, 12, in vii. 27, and in xii. 8, 9, 10. The Heb. word means "*the assembler*," the verb being that commonly used for the calling together of the congregation, e.g. Deut. iv. 10, "gather me the people together," &c. The present passage probably contains the reason why the name is given; the **Preacher taught the people knowledge.** Evidently the writer, whether Solomon or one personating him, refers to the wisdom which was the means of gathering the people from all quarters, and to the proverbs in which he expressed it.

9

The word **Moreover** is of great importance. *Vanity of vanities* is one fact of the universe, but there is a *Moreover*, something above and beyond visible things. And to tell what it is was the object of his book. And for that end he **sought to find out acceptable words**; words which shall touch men's hearts, and win them to God, and withal **upright words.** Prov. viii. 6—10, forms a remarkable commentary and explanation of this expression.

10

What do we know of Death? It is like a lighted lamp suspended in the temple, fed with sacred oil; and the silver cord by which it hangs is snapped, and the bowl is dashed upon the pavement, and the golden oil is spilled, and its light extinguished in darkness. It is like a pitcher let fall at the fountain, or a wheel worn out at last, that has done its duty so many years in raising water from the well, and now it will move no more. Such is death. Some sudden blow snaps the cord of life, our over-worked frame yields at last to the wear and tear of work, and refuses to do its office any more. What cord is broken, what was the tie that bound body and spirit in one, we do not know. Life is a mystery and Death is." It is a mystery which the revered writer has now penetrated, and as I look back upon his self-denying, simple life, I am thankful to have this opportunity of expressing my reverence for his memory.

Here he makes a general statement, which may have referred primarily to the canonical books, but which is universally true; **the words of the wise are as goads**, they pierce and penetrate deep; they stimulate as well as correct.

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11

The word **by** in the next clause is wrongly inserted by the translators; the sense is, **the masters of assemblies are as nails driven in**. These "masters" are the teachers who have the ability and influence to gather men together as learners. Their work is for the strength and stability of the people, and they are **given from one shepherd**, i. e. God Himself. (Gen. xlviii. 15; Ps. xxiii. 1; John x. 2.) All good teaching whatsoever comes from Him, He is the source of all knowledge and all wisdom, the One Teacher and Inspirer of men. A beautiful confession, at the end of a book of speculations, that all that men know, whether of nature or of grace, they know from the Creator, whose kingdom is infinitely great, and who has given power to man to search out its laws in those parts which lie within his reach.

And further; or *and for the rest*. The offer is complete, it remains for thee to accept the offer. **My son**, the author's farewell address. The loving expression, like "dear reader," indicating his conviction, such as all men have who have written in earnestness of purpose, that his words will be pondered after he is passed away, and that though he is dead he will still be speaking, almost as if face to face.

12

Be admonished, i. e. take instruction wherever it is offered thee, from all the wise whose words come in thy way.

Then he tells what wisdom can and cannot do. The wisdom of this world can never come to a conclusion concerning the highest things. It brings no solution to the enigmas of life. There may be an allusion to Solomon's studies in Natural and Occult Science. They brought him no satisfying. And if we accept the latter date for the writing of the book, there may also be a reference to the introduction of heathen literature among the Hebrews. The writer does not condemn this literature as *bad*, but he declares it unsatisfying because inconclusive.

Study (lit. *eager desire*) **is a weariness to the flesh** for the reason just given, because the student is disappointed of his hope, is "always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth." It is the reverse of what we are told concerning the meditation upon Divine things. Ps. i. 2; 1 Tim. iv. 15.

But having told us what can *not* satisfy, he tells us what can, what will give rest to the intellect and peace of mind. **Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter**, of all the things which I have been discussing, the pleasures, the sorrows, the riddles of life. *God is the highest good*. That is his conclusion. If in all the questions which come before us we put God above all, try every question and guide every action by His law, we shall find rest. **For this is the whole man**. The words "duty of" have been inserted by the translators. They are not in

13

Eccles. XII. the original, and the sense is clearer without them. It means "man is born for this, therein consists the whole man, everything that is human, according to the Creator's intention, is comprised in fear of God and obedience to His commandments." It is the contrast to "All is vanity." Good is good and evil evil, woe to those who confuse them, for God will bring everything into judgment, and will separate them the one from the other.

14

"O how exceeding necessary is it that our light and thoughtless nature should at all times remember, and be reminded of, the strict and unavoidable account awaiting us, so that we may never forget it! How easily one or another may be called upon to render his account ere he is ready! Should we not therefore be ever preparing, if we do not desire to be put to confusion, but to receive such a sentence as we desire and can count blessed." (*Luther.*)

Evensong. FIRST ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

Haggai II.

The rebuilding of the Temple under Zerubbabel was begun B. C. 535, but through the opposition of the Samaritans, and the consequent faint-heartedness of the people, the work was discontinued for 15 years, until the second year of Darius Hystaspes. In that year came the word of the Lord to Haggai. He addressed himself first to Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the result was that the work recommenced on the "first day of the sixth month." This is told us in the first chapter.

1

The 2nd chapter contains three messages from God. The first, which forms our Lesson to-day, is concerning the glory of the Temple; the second is concerning the fruits of the earth, the third, concerning the downfall of the kingdoms of the earth.

The present message was delivered on the twenty-first of the seventh month, i.e. on the Feast of Tabernacles, not quite four weeks after the renewal of the works at the Temple. The sadness which had been manifested at the first laying of the foundation (*Ezra iii. 12*), owing to the comparative smallness, had been renewed now—apparently, because of the flagging enthusiasm of the people, as they became more and more conscious of the material inferiority which this building would display. Accordingly, the feast of Tabernacles came round and found them dispirited and joyless, the more that there had been a very bad harvest, and they looked in vain for signs of the blessing of God.

(i. 10.)

3

The prophet begins by admitting the poverty of the new building compared with the old. It was about 68 years since the latter had fallen, there must have been many who remembered it.

4

Nevertheless, they are not to let their courage fail, but to be comforted and work, because the LORD of hosts will be with them. And in confirmation of this promise, the Lord declares that

5

the word which He covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt, remains good; they are not cast off, and His Spirit is with them. By the Spirit is meant that Divine power which God puts into the hearts of those who love Him, to strive, in spite of obstacles, to do the work appointed for them, it is the energy of faith. The omnipotence of God is their helper. For God has a mighty end in view, and the events in which they live are leading up to it. The foretelling of it is prefaced by the solemn words: **For thus saith the Lord of hosts.**

6

Yet once, or *once more.* The previous shaking was at Sinai, when the covenant was established with Israel. The approaching shaking will be much more violent; it will affect all nations, and all peoples. And this should come in **a little while.** We must interpret this of the tremendous changes which soon afterwards began to take place in the world. The great Persian monarchy was shattered in pieces by Alexander the Great. His empire was almost immediately dissolved, and then the powers of the world were crushed together by Rome. "Wherever Rome's victorious eagles flew, there the ancient deities fell, and their authority was destroyed." The whole Pantheon of the Gentile world was shattered and broken at the era of Christ. "What is truth?" was the cry both of frivolous jesters and of anxious hearts.

And all over the world, in consequence, there was an eager longing for a Deliverer. The Captivity of Judah probably spread far and wide the hope which the Prophets had kindled. Hence the title which Christ received, **the Desire of all nations.** His entry into the Temple filled it with glory. Not indeed that we are to take His mere entrance as the fulfilment of the prophecy. It was the beginning only of the fulfilment. For He entered the Temple when He was presented there by His mother (Luke ii.), in order that He might be obedient to the law, and the building was thereby made the pledge that the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar had not destroyed the covenant, but that the renewed Temple was a renewal of that covenant. From that time, indeed, the ancient symbol lost its meaning. Christ was the end of the Law, as well as its fulfiller. Now the Tabernacle of God was set up among men, for He was the Living Temple, God made One with us. This was the real glory of the Temple, not that Christ entered its walls, but that out of it came His New Covenant with man, the Righteous Branch from the root of Jesse.

7

The silver is mine, &c. Therefore be not distressed because you have less to bestow upon the walls of the building. "Every beast of the forest is mine" (Ps. l. 10).

8

This is the gift of God that is desired most—*Peace.* It was what the Jews longed for now, after their Captivity and harassed return. It is what we desire when we are harassed with the burden of sin, and our hearts ache with the pain of it. The

9

Haggai II.

Gospel brought Him to us who is the Prince of Peace, and who gives us the Peace of God which passeth all understanding.

One need not enlarge upon the fitness of this chapter as the Lesson before Advent. It is also chosen as the Lesson for the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*. What has been said above will explain the fitness of this also, especially when read along with the Epistle for the day.

NOTE ON THE PROPHET MALACHI.

There is no prophet of whom so little is known. It is not even certain whether "Malachi" is a proper name, or a description of the writer's office; it means "*Messenger of the Lord*." It is clear that Malachi lived after the Temple of Zerubbabel was finished and the ritual restored. Some have supposed that he lived in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, but the absence of his name from the list of workers in the Book of Nehemiah renders this somewhat improbable, and there are allusions in the Book which lead us to suppose that the prophet lived in the generation which followed that of Nehemiah. By this time the good work of Nehemiah had been partially undone, his reforms had been perverted to evil purposes, as it is evident from the first that they might easily be. We may say that in several respects the ministry of Malachi presents the dealings of God to us from an altogether different point of view to that of the great Reformer and his fellow-helper, Ezra the scribe. Malachi protests against the evil use to which the priests were putting Nehemiah's elevation of their condition, his exclusive nationality, and especially his regulations concerning marriage. (See Plumptre's *Biblical Studies*, pp. 307—320, one of the most interesting of the essays.)

This decay and corruption, everywhere discernible in matters connected with the covenant between God and Israel, the neglect of religious duties on the part of the priests, the licentiousness, and unbelief of the people, leads him to look forward to the vindication of Himself which he is sure the LORD will make. His vision of the forthcoming day of the Lord is contained in our Sunday Lesson from this Book; it takes a form somewhat different from those of the preceding prophets, and became the means of shaping the expectations of the religious Jews.

Note on
the Pro-
phet Ma-
lachi.

When we find at the time of the coming of Christ that there were those who "waited for the consolation of Israel," for "the day-spring from on high," who expected the coming of Elijah the prophet, and of the great and terrible day of the Lord, we can trace the influence of the last of the prophets. The prophecy was sealed up with him, and when the Book of Revelation opens again, we are met with the echoes of his voice.

Note on the Prophet Malachi.

Evensong. SECOND ALTERNATIVE LESSON.

The prophet just before describes the people, especially the priests, as confusing evil and good, and asking mockingly, "Where is the God of judgment?" To this the Lord abruptly replies that they shall see,—He will suddenly come to His Temple; but that first He will send **His messenger**. The expression is taken from Is. xl. 3, and plainly refers to John the Baptist. It is an historical fact that no prophet arose from Malachi to John, and the declarations in the New Testament are explicit, Matt. xi. 10; Mark i. 2; Luke vii. 27.

Mal. III.

(ii. 17.)

Prepare the way; see on Is. xl. 3.

Suddenly. "The Lord always comes as a thief in the night to those who sleep in their sins." (*Kvil*.) He shall come to judgment, and yet His coming shall bring a blessing with it, for He shall still come as the **Messenger** (or *Angel*) of the **Covenant**, as He who had been their Protector and Saviour from the beginning (Ex. xiv. 19; xxiii. 20; xxxiii. 14; Joshua v. 14; Judges vi. 21).

Whom ye delight in. The prophet speaks it in praise of them, and for their comfort. But he immediately proceeds to warn them that the coming shall be awful as well as glorious—He shall be Judge as well as Saviour, and all things that offend and do iniquity shall be banished from His presence. The Baptist refers to these words in Matt. iii. 12.

A refiner's fire. Jer. vi. 29.

He shall sit. Christ became a Judge from the time of His incarnation, His perfect human life being a test by which mankind are measured. He is ever judging the world, and will continue until the finishing at the Great Day. (John v. 27.)

It is especially said that He shall purify the sons of Levi. The prophet has spoken before of their miserable degeneracy (ch. i. 6, 7; ii. 7, 8). Since therefore they, the ministers of the religious life of the nation, were quite corrupt, the regeneration must begin with them, and pass on until it has leavened the whole people.

An offering in righteousness, i.e. accompanied by the sacrifice of the heart and will to God. (Cf. Ps. iv. 5.)

We have seen in the preceding chapter that the Coming of

2
3

Mal. III.

Christ to the Temple, such as the prophets intended to describe, was symbolized by the Infant Jesus being brought thither by Mary; in like manner, the purification of the sons of Levi was symbolized by the cleansing of the Temple. (John ii. 13—17.)

4 **The days of old.** Perhaps the first years of the sojourn in the desert (cf. Jer. ii. 2), or the sacrifice of David (1 Chron. xxix.). The prophet foretells that the sacrifices shall be well-pleasing, the conviction arising from his assurance of God's blessing upon His people, but it was not revealed until the time came how full, perfect, and sufficient the satisfaction would be. No sacrifice that we can make is pleasing to God, except by virtue of its reference to the Sacrifice once offered.

5 The fire of God which refines is also a fire of judgment upon the wicked.

And fear not me. This points to the source from which all sins flow.

6 The unchangeableness of God is the guarantee for the sureness and completeness of His judgments, as well as for the salvation of everything that is worth preserving (cf. Amos ix. 9).

7 Having announced to the people that He will suddenly judge the wicked, the Lord explains the reason why He has hitherto withheld His blessing and His salvation. The fault has been in the people themselves. They have transgressed the commandments of God (Isaiah xliii. 27; Ezek. ii. 3), and yet they regard themselves as righteous. The prophet therefore proceeds

8 to give one instance of their sinfulness, they had robbed God in tithes and offerings, and therefore had been cursed with barren fields and blighted vineyards. Let them amend this and bring in their tithes, and they will learn whether or not He is the righteous God, when He pours out His blessing in richest abundance. **The devourer.** The locust.

9—11

12 Cf. Zech. vii. 14; viii. 13, 23.

13 He gives another instance of their sinfulness; they have been unbelieving and murmuring, having declared that it is vain to serve God.

15 **We call, &c.** The prophet for a moment identifying himself with the murmurers. We say that the wicked are set up, and that those who tempt God escape. Then he suddenly leaves them, and joins those faithful few who wait upon and fear God.

16 **Then, i. e.** in consequence of the ungodly murmurings of the others. These faithful ones encourage and strengthen themselves in their faith and fear by religious conversation, and the prophet says that God took heed of these, and their names were written before Him in a book of remembrance. This expression seems to be taken from a Persian custom of entering in a book the names of those who deserved well of the king. (Esther vi. 1; Dan. vii. 10; cf. Ps. lvi. 9.)

It seems not unlikely that the prophet is referring especially to the growth of something like a brotherhood, or order, or

“guild,” “bearing a silent witness by lives of holiness and devotion, associated by the bonds of prayer and mutual love, handing down from generation to generation the tradition of higher truths and better hopes. Such, in the period that followed, were the Chasidim, or Brothers of Mercy, in whom Judas the Maccabee found his most trustworthy supporters; such, in the time of the New Testament, though not mentioned in it, were the Essenes, who, by the shores of the Dead Sea, and elsewhere, passed their time in labour and in prayer, and exhibited in their social organization the pattern of a devout communion.”
(*Plumptre.*)

Mal. III.

They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels. This should be translated, *They shall be to me for a peculiar treasure in that day which I am creating.* This day is of course the day of judgment, when the glory of the children of God will first be revealed, and His Israel will reach the mark of its heavenly calling.

17

This has reference to the statement of the murmurers, that there was no difference between the righteous and the wicked; the servants of God shall be made His peculiar treasure, and the ungodly—in the words which follow (for there is no break whatever) he describes their fate. The opening words are made use of by the Baptist (Matt. iii. 1, 10).

18

“Our Lord says the law and the prophets were until John (Luke xvi. 16). Malachi twice foretells the coming of the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ (ch. iii. 1; iv. 5), and it is interesting to observe how the Baptist, at the beginning of the Gospel, takes up and repeats the language of the last of the prophets.

IV. 1

“Standing at the threshold of the New Testament, he echoes the voice of Malachi, standing at the exit of the Old; and he reaches forth his hand and takes from the hands of Malachi the torch of divinely-revealed truth which had been delivered down in an unbroken series, through successive generations of inspired men, for a thousand years from the hand of Moses.”
(*Wordsworth.*)

The proud. Whom the ungodly had called happy; see iii. 15.

The Sun of Righteousness is clearly Christ. The title appears to have suggested to Zacharias the expression “the Day-spring from on high.” (Cf. Pss. xix. 5; lxxxiv. 11; Isaiah lx. 19.)

2

His wings, i. e. his rays. “As the rays of the sun give light and warmth over the earth for the growth and maturity of the plants and living creatures, so will the Sun of Righteousness bring the healing for all hurts and wounds which the power of darkness has inflicted upon the righteous.” (*Kcil.*)

Go forth, rather, leap. Like stalled calves, which are driven from the stall to the pasture.

The prophet draws to an end by shewing to the people what it is their duty to do, if they would be healed by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. They had departed from the ordinances

4

Mal. IV.

of their fathers (iii. 7); he bids them return; and in so doing, places a closing sanction on Holy Scripture from beginning to end. (Cf. Rev. xxii. 18, 19.)

5

Elijah the prophet. The same as the messenger of iii. 1, John the Baptist. The description given here is expressly applied to him by Gabriel, and our Lord confirmed the application (cf. Matt. xvii. 10, 13).

The Baptist is called Elijah apparently because Elijah was the founder of the prophetic order, and the Baptist became the representative of all the prophets when he pointed out Christ, and so passed away. He was as Elijah too in the power and energy with which he rose up to lead back his ungodly generation to the God of their fathers. By setting forth the fear of God as the ground of morality, he shewed the way for the reconciliation of fathers to children, and children to fathers. There may be also, as many Christian writers have supposed, an indication of his position between the Jewish fathers and the Christian children, the uniter of them in one. He took up the solemn words with which the prophet concludes, the warning that sin must always produce God's curse, but he knew also that God had provided some better thing for them, even the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. **With a curse**; these are the last words of Malachi. **Blessed**, this was the word with which Christ began when He promulgated to the great multitude the law of His Kingdom (Matt. v. 3).

S. ANDREW'S DAY.

Mattins.

Isai. LIV.

On this chapter see *First Sunday after Epiphany*, p. 62. It remains here only to point out why it is chosen for to-day.

It is the chapter immediately following the Great Prophecy of the Passion of Christ, the prophecy which tells how "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied."

The Prophet passes straight from that to the present chapter, which is a song of praise for the foundation of the Christian Church. We might call it the Church's birth-day Hymn. Now S. Andrew's day is the first in order of the Saints' Days, being so placed because he was one of the first two disciples. Let the reader ponder the deep and solemn importance of this morning's Second Lesson. John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness, his disciples around him, when Jesus passed by, and John cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Andrew and one other of the Baptist's disciples (probably S. John) heard this and were deeply moved by it, and followed the Lord. They had seen no miracle done by Him, had not even heard Him speak. They were only moved by this mention of "the Lamb of God," and their thoughts immediately flew to the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Their master

John I.

35—42.

could only have had one meaning in what he said, namely, "Behold the Messiah." Therefore it was that they followed Him. And He invited them into His dwelling. What he spake to them on that solemn evening we are not told. Not a word is recorded. We only know that next day S. Andrew hastened and said to his brother Simon, "We have found the Christ." In this narrative then, so wonderfully simple and compressed, we have the history of no less an event than *the birth of Christianity*. It was born out of the words "Behold the Lamb of God," and this alone would account for the choice of the present chapter.

Let it be remembered also that John and his disciples were in the wilderness, figuring thereby the desolation and barrenness into which the Church of Jerusalem had fallen. In the wilderness the cry was heard, "Behold the Lamb of God," and the new birth began. And then compare with this fact the glowing and happy words of the Prophet, foretelling the day when in the birth of the Christian Church Judah shall live again, and bring forth children, yea and have *many more* children than before, "enlarging the place of her tent," and "inheriting the places of the Gentiles."

Evensong.

See *Third Sunday after Epiphany*, p. 69.

In the Morning Lesson we had the prophecy of barren Judaism rising into newness of life. The present chapter is a prophecy of the call of the Gentiles. The circumstance in S. Andrew's life which led to its being selected here is recorded in the 2nd Lesson. He was the means of bringing certain Greeks to see Jesus. And thereby were fulfilled the words, as they had never been fulfilled before, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not."

S. THOMAS THE APOSTLE.

Mattins.

We have already seen (pp. 72—77) what was Job's position at this moment. Not understanding from what cause his suffering arose, and half-distracted by the vain attempt to discover, he had arraigned the wisdom and justice of God. God in answer spoke to him from the whirlwind, and shewed him by lessons from the creation His own greatness and man's littleness. We have here Job's confession that the lesson has answered its purpose. The strange but wonderful monsters of the sea are a proof to him that God can do everything and that no thought can be withholden from Him, or, as the margin has it, that no thought of His can be hindered. He had heard the truth stated before, but now it had arisen upon him with a clearness to which he had been a stranger. It is a good sign of his peni-

Isai. LIV.

†—4

Isai. LXV.

John XII.

20—41.

Job XLII.

2

3

Job XLII.

tence that he takes up the reprovng word of God (xxxviii. 2) and applies it to himself as confessing that it was deserved. He had said in the days of his pride that if his adversary could bring a charge against him, he would joyfully embrace it and bind it on his shoulder (xxxi. 36); he now, like a true and brave man, fulfils his engagement, though in a manner very different from what he had imagined. He becomes his own Nathan, and says, "Thou art the man." He has rashly pronounced an opinion, he says, upon things which lie beyond his power of comprehension.

4 Here again he quotes God's words, acknowledging His justice. God has been questioning him, condescending to the position of a disputant, Job will ask of Him that he may learn more from His divine wisdom.

5 He had heard holy men speak of God from his youth up, he had doubtless professed his belief in God, but now faith comes into his soul with all the living energy of realized conviction. Every devout man whose experience is worth anything has passed through a state like this. Though he has heard the truth from pious teachers and by the ministry of holy ordinances, he has yet felt that something more is necessary for his inner life, namely, personal communion with God. Job has seen God face to face, and the vision has filled him with such a sense of his own unworthiness as he has never known before. He repents in dust and ashes. He had been sitting in them before, he had chosen them as a sign of misfortune and unhappiness, now he makes them the symbol of his penitence.

John XX.

27.

The fitness of this passage as a Lesson for S. Thomas' Day will be at once apparent. The apostle, who found that no thought could be withholden from his Lord, who had uttered things that he understood not, who had heard by the hearing of the ear but at last saw, shewed his hearty repentance when he confessed that Jesus was his Lord and his God. True and loyal to his Master he had always been (John xi. 16), as Job had been, but the turning point of his life, that which made him fit for an apostle, was his seeing with the eye what he had before only heard as though uncertainly. Perhaps we ought to add that in one respect the faith of the ancient patriarch was yet more blessed than that of the apostle, for he cried, "Mine eye seeth Thee," when it was the spiritual eye, not the bodily. We must surely apply the Lord's words to him, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Evensong.**Isaiah****XXXV.**

On the details see *First Sunday after Christmas*. As the Lesson for S. Thomas' Day this must be compared with the 2nd lesson. There we are told that when our Lord spoke of going away to prepare a place for His disciples, S. Thomas, according to his character, sadly answered, "We know not whither Thou

goest: and how can we know the way?" Our Lord replied, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and thereby claimed to Himself to be the fulfiller of the promise which the xxxvth of Isaiah so fully gives of *the Highway* along which "the ransomed of the Lord" shall pass.

Another point of fitness is the encouragement which the Lesson gives to those of a fearful heart. It bids them "Be strong, and fear not," because their God is at hand. And we see in this apostle's case, how, by the loving care and guidance of his Lord, he was able to accept the promise, when in the fervour of his heart he was able to cry out with joy, "My Lord and my God."

CONVERSION OF S. PAUL.

Mattins.

The "servant of the Lord" cries aloud to the Gentiles. We have already seen that this title is applied to collective Israel, and evidently it is so here. But Christ was the Flower of Israel, the perfect and Incarnate servant of the Lord. And this prophecy evidently and distinctly points to Him. "Israel was from the very first the God-given name of an individual. Just as the name Israel was first of all given to a man, and then to a nation, so the name which sprang from a personal root has also a personal crown. The servant of Jehovah is Israel in person, inasmuch as the purpose of mercy, upon the basis of which and for the accomplishment of which Jehovah made Jacob the father of the twelve-tribed nation, is brought by him into full realization. Israel, as an entire nation, formed the basis of the idea; Israel regarded as a people faithful to its calling, the centre; and the personal Christ, the apex." (*Delitzsch.*) And every man who in the power of Christ, and under His headship, turns men to righteousness becomes entitled to the same high title. It is therefore fitting that this chapter should be read to-day, on which we commemorate the Conversion of S. Paul to be a servant of the Lord, by being a preacher of Christ to "the Isles" of the West, the Gentile world. And therefore, though we shall lose the meaning of the chapter if we forget that it refers above all things to Christ, we may see now how far it also applies to His servant S. Paul.

The Lord, &c.; cf. Gal. i. 15; Acts ix. 15; xiii. 2; Rom. i. 1.

My mouth, &c. See the following passages in which such words are written concerning Christ, Rev. i. 16; xix. 15. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the same figure is used of the word of God generally, without particular reference to the Incarnate Word (ch. iv. 13); and we must say of *every* word which is spoken in God's name and blessed by Him to the salvation of men, that it is a sharp sword, Eph. vi. 17. In this light we must view S. Paul's preaching. **In the shadow**, &c. He is protected by God from all assaults of the enemy, and he is a **polished shaft**

Isaiah
XXXV.

Isaiah
XLIX.

Isaiah
XLIX.

4 (arrow) to pierce hearts and inflict wholesome wounds upon them. And he is **hidden in a quiver**, so as to be drawn forth and discharged in God's time. The apostle's preaching was met with opposition or contempt by many, and the thought no doubt many a time entered his mind that his labour was wasted. But such thoughts were only for a moment. His righteousness and his work were with the Lord, laid up with Him until the day of reward. See John iv. 36.

5 Moreover, his labour was to extend beyond the children of Jacob, even to all the nations around. The words, **Though Israel be not gathered**, are an incorrect translation. It should be, "*That Israel may be gathered to Him.*" This was the first work of Christ, and of His apostles also. See Acts ix. 22—30; xxii. 17—21. But it was *only* the beginning.

6 The principle of interpretation which I have endeavoured to follow throughout receives distinct proof in this verse. The latter part of it is distinctly applied to our Blessed Lord by the aged Simeon (Luke ii. 32). But it is as distinctly applied to himself by S. Paul twice. Acts xiii. 47; xxvi. 18.

7 The Lord addresses His servant, and gives him assurance of victory, in spite of his present humiliation.

And He shall choose Thee. Rather, "because He hath chosen Thee." When kings and princes shall see Him who was once brought so low, now exalted to be Lord and King, they will rise up from their thrones to do Him reverence, and will worship the LORD in gratitude, because He hath so highly exalted Him.

8 **In an acceptable time**, &c. God accepts the propitiation of Christ, and blesses the souls that He has redeemed, and **sets Him for a covenant**, for a bond of Union, between Himself and man, for a Restorer of the land that is fallen into ruin.

9 This would no doubt refer in the minds of the people to the exiles in Babylon, and rightly so; for their restoration home was through God's sovereign grace. But they were a foreshadow of the liberation of ourselves, prisoners of Satan, walkers in darkness by reason of sin.

10 And now the prophecy turns from the servant of the Lord to those who are His, and we have a description of the return of the redeemed.

Heat. Heb. "the mirage" (see on xxxv. 7). It shall not **smite** (rather "*blind*") them, but God shall lead them by springs of water.

11, 12 The people returning are represented as a flock. They find pasture everywhere without going about for it—they can go straight over mountains without being distressed.

The land of Sinim. All commentators, I believe, are united in believing that this means China.

We have spoken in the course of the commentary of the points where this chapter is brought into contact with S. Paul's

life. It only remains to remind the reader that the prominent feature in that life is the marvellous heroism and endurance shewn in the Apostle's wide missionary work. And one might almost say that the chapter before us is echoed by the wonderful narrative of the later portion of the Acts of the Apostles.

Isaiah
XLIX.

Evensong.

Hilkiah. Possibly, but by no means certainly, he is to be identified with the high-priest of the reign of Josiah (2 Kings xxii. 4). See Introductory note, p. 364. **Anathoth.** Now *Anuta*, about 4 miles N. of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah
I.

In the thirteenth year, i. e. at the very time when Josiah's reformation was in full vigour (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3). The prophet was probably now about 20 years old. His ministry continued until the end of Zedekiah's reign. He omits the names of Jehohaz and Jehoiachin in this preface, evidently because the reign of each was so short.

2

3

The terms in which his prophetic office was committed to him make the chapter one of striking fitness for the festival of S. Paul. Cf. Gal. i. 15. Both the Jewish and the Christian prophet are told that God has appointed to them their work by His own eternal counsel. He knew them and sanctified them, or set them apart. Both were ordained as prophets to the nations; Jeremiah, it is true, was primarily appointed to preach to the Jews, but he had a mission to the Gentiles also, chapters xlvi—1. Cf. Acts ix. 15; xiii. 2; xxii. 14, 15.

4, 5

Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak to great men and multitudes, as prophets must; I cannot speak finely or fluently; cannot word things well, as a message from God should be worded; I cannot speak with any authority, nor can expect to be heeded, for **I am a child**, and my youth will be despised.

6

"It becomes us, when we have any service to do for God, to be afraid lest we mismanage it, and lest it suffer through our weakness and unfitness for it; it becomes us likewise to have low thoughts of ourselves, and to be diffident of our own sufficiency." (*M. Henry*.)

"Say not, though thou art. My strength is sufficient for thee." The prophet had two reasons given him why he should take courage. First, he had God's *mission*,—**thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee**, and he had God's *presence*,—**I am with thee**. Cf. Acts xxvi. 16—18 (the Second Lesson); the parallel is most close.

7

8

Cf. Is. vi. 6; Dan. x. 16; Ezek. ii. 9.

9

"Jeremiah was set *over the nations*, the Jewish nation in the first place, and other nations, some great ones besides, against whom he prophesied; was set over them, not to demand tribute from them, or to enrich himself with their spoils, but to *root out*, and *pull down*, and *destroy*, and yet withal to *build*

10

Jeremiah
I.

and *plant*. (1) He must attempt to reform the nations, to *root out* and *pull down*, and *destroy* idolatry and other wickedness among them, to extirpate those vicious habits and customs which had long taken root, to *throw down* the kingdom of sin, that religion and virtue might be *planted* and *built* among them. And to the introducing and establishing of that which is good, it is necessary that that which is evil be removed. (2) He must tell them that it would be well or ill with them according as they were, or were not, reformed. He must set before them *life and death, good and evil*, according to God's declaration of the method he takes with kingdoms and nations, ch. xviii. 7, 10. He must assure those who persisted in their wickedness, that they should be *rooted and destroyed*, and those who repented, that they should be *built and planted*. He was authorized to read the doom of nations, and God would *ratify it*, and *fulfil it* (Isa. xlv. 26), would do it according to His word, and therefore is said to do it by His word. It is thus expressed, partly to shew how sure the word of prophecy is—it will as certainly be accomplished as if it were done already; and partly to put an honour upon the prophetic office, and make it look truly great, that others may not despise prophets, nor they disparage themselves. And yet more honourable does the gospel-ministry look, in that declarative power Christ gave his apostles to *remit and retain sins* (John xx. 23), to *bind and loose*, Matt. xviii. 18." (*M. Henry*.)

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE,
COMMONLY CALLED, THE PURIFICATION OF
S. MARY THE VIRGIN.

Mattins.

This command to dedicate all the first-born of both man and beast to the service of God is peculiar to the law of Moses. There is no evidence of similar practice among the heathens. The enactment was intended to remind the people that the first-born were God's, both by creation. they "opened the matrix," and by redemption. For when the destroying angel passed over the houses of Egypt, slaying all the first-born of man, and also the first-born of cattle (ver. 15 and Ex. xii. 29), he was stayed from those of Israel by the blood. Hence the first-born of man were to be His ministers, those of cattle victims for His sacrifices.

Abib, Deut. xvi. 1, p. 218.

4
13

The ass was probably the only unclean animal which the Israelites had in the wilderness. Being unclean it could not be used for sacrifice; see Num. xviii. 15. They were therefore to redeem it with a clean animal, and with the addition of the fifth part of the value, Lev. xxvii. 27. If this was not done, the neck of the animal was to be broken as a safeguard against covetousness and sacrilege. The owner would not choose such an alternative as this (which was prescribed by way of

Exodus
XIII.

penalty and fine, in order that the precept might not be evaded), and therefore he would redeem the ass.

The first-born of man was to be redeemed with five shekels of the sanctuary. Num. iii. 47.

Exodus
XIII.

Christ, in obedience to this command, was presented to the Lord as the first-born of Mary, and His true humanity was thus attested. Moreover, He set an example of obedience to the law. But further, in presenting Himself to God in His Temple, He presented us also, for He is the first-born among many brethren. For His brethren's sake He sanctified Himself (John xvii. 19), and they are *all* God's first-born. One of the highest names of the Church is "the Church of the first-born" (Heb. xii. 23). Cf. Collect for the day, and Gal. iii. 27; Rev. v. 9; Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 15.

Evensong.

Haggai ii. 1—10. See *Twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity.*

S. MATTHIAS' DAY.

Mattins.

A man of God, we know not who, was sent to Eli to foretell the destruction of his house. This message would thus become (1) a call upon Eli to repent, and (2) a warning to all ages of the "horrible punishment" which shall fall upon worthless priests. It is thus well chosen as a Lesson for this day, which reminds us of the fall of Judas, and will kindle within us, if we read it aright, the heartfelt prayer of the Collect for the day.

1 Samuel
II.

27

The man of God begins by reminding Eli of the grace manifested to the house of his father, i.e. Aaron, in the appointment of it to be the keeper of the sanctuary, the minister of the sacrifices of the holy people. This is put in the form of a question as an appeal to Eli's conscience which he cannot deny, but is obliged to confirm. The utter heinousness of the sons of Eli follows as a consequence.

28

Kick, or "trample underfoot." This word is applied to the sins of Hophni and Phinchas, then mention is made of the special sin of Eli, he honoured his sons above God.

29

God's promises are conditional on obedience, as His threatenings may be averted by repentance.

30

To "cut off the arm" signifies to destroy the strength. Cf. Job xxii. 9; Ps. xxxvii. 17.

31

Thou shalt see, &c. That is, "Thou, the High Priest, and the High Priests who succeed thee, shall see My tabernacle fall into decay even whilst I am guarding and blessing My people. The sins of the priests shall be so visibly punished upon them,

32

1 Samuel
II.

that whilst Samuel is restoring them, whilst the Philistines confess their defeat, whilst the monarchy is taking root, still the tabernacle shall be forgotten and trodden down."

Shiloh (see ch. iv.) became a desolation. The tabernacle was removed to Nob, and there Saul had all the priests put to death. Then it was removed to Gibeon. And thus Shiloh became forgotten and neglected.

The words **for ever** at the end of the verse, mean literally "*all the time*," i. e. as long as thy house shall exist.

33 The misery of Eli's family shall be perpetually renewed
34 by their having to witness in their ministrations the neglect
into which the sanctuary had fallen. And as far as Eli himself
was concerned, the death of his sons, which he should live to
witness, should be a sign to him that after his death the rest
of the judgment should fall.

35 Yet the priesthood itself should not die, God would remain
faithful in His love and goodness to His people while He cut off
the infidel priests, and He would raise Himself up a faithful
priest. Primarily the prophecy refers to Samuel. In the interval
of confusion when the worship of the tabernacle was suspended,
He was specially commissioned to perform priestly acts. It
refers also to Zadok, who was placed by Solomon in the place
of Abiathar, 1 Kings ii. 35. It was fulfilled in Christ, who,
superseding the priesthood of Aaron, remaineth a priest for
ever. It was fulfilled too in Matthias, because when Judas,
like the sons of Eli, used his high office for the basest of pur-
poses, he was cast out of the priesthood, and his habitation was
made desolate, and God raised Himself up a faithful priest in
Matthias. It is fulfilled unto this day in a thousand ways
unknown to us, for when priests are faithless, openly or secretly,
to their office, and neglect the souls which God has committed
to them, God raises Himself up those who do His work. That
work shall be done, whether men prove faithless or no; He hath
sworn in His holiness that His kingdom shall be established.

Evensong.

Isalah
XXII.

15 The post held at this time by Shebna was the highest next
to the throne; so important that it was sometimes held by the
heir-apparent (2 Chron. xxvi. 21, and cf. 1 Kings iv. 6; xviii. 3).
It was the post of minister of the household, resembling the
Merovingian "mayor of the palace," or the grand vizier of a
Caliph.

Shebna appears to have advised king Hezekiah to the sub-
mission described in 2 Kings xviii. 14. See the note on it (p.
346) in which it is shewn that the nobles appear to have wished
for that submission to be made in the hope that they would
thus be able to preserve their riches and luxury unmolested.
In the same note we have said that Isaiah denounced the sub-

mission, and in the Lesson before us he pours forth a malediction upon the minister, "which for its personal severity stands alone in his writings." (*Stanley.*)

His anger is directed against the selfish pride, arrogance, ambition of the minister, his splendid equipages and the grand family sepulchre which he is making for himself.

His treasurer. The words are contemptuous,—"*that steward there.*"

The words **And say**, are not in the original. The omission indicates more clearly that the words are God's own words.

The questions imply a prophecy of Shebna's impending fate,—"*Thy sepulchre will be of no use, thou wilt never lie in it.*"

Blunt (*Undesigned Coincidences*) conjectures Shebna was a foreigner. There is no mention of his parentage as there is of other officers of state.

Notice the incisive force of the thrice repeated "**here.**" It is not here that thy resting-place shall be,—Jerusalem is no home for thee.

With a mighty captivity, rather *With the hurling of a strong man*, "like Lichas hurled from the rock by Hercules." (*Wordsworth.*)

Will surely cover thee, rather *will pack thee up together* (so Stanley, Wordsworth, Delitzsch). The expression of course is still contemptuous. Having thus rolled him up, God would hurl him as easily as a ball into a far country, viz. Babylon, and his fine equipages should turn to his shame, and his office should know him no more. Whether this prophecy of evil was entirely fulfilled, or whether, as we may hope, Shebna's repentance averted it, we have no means of knowing. Later we find one portion fulfilled, for Eliakim holds his place, and Shebna has the inferior office of scribe.

Of course this passage is chosen because of the remarkable analogy between the ambitious and worldly Shebna and the ambitious and worldly traitor Judas. He too, instead of coming to his grave in peace, gave the name Aceldama to the scene of his horrible death. The transfer of his office to Matthias is further prefigured by the rest of this Lesson. Eliakim is to be invested with the official robe and girdle, and to be as a father to the people, fulfilling high office as the king's representative. The key of the king's house admitting or refusing access to the royal presence was to be laid upon his shoulder, where the badge of office was worn. He was to be as a nail such as was used for the fastening of a tent¹, an image of the grace which God gives to all faithful ministers of His word to prevent the winds and the storm from injuring His people. He was to be

Isaiah
XXII.

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

¹ Gesen. s. v. יָתֵב

Isaiah
XXII.

a nail from which glory was to hang, the glory of the people both great and small, who were to be blessed by his wise administration. This, when we apply the analogy to the Christian church, would express to us the part of Matthias and of all faithful apostles. **The offspring and the issue** of God, **vessels** both of honour and dishonour, all receive the word of life, and each one in its place is blessed.

25

It would seem that here, as is so common with Isaiah, his vision passes from his immediate subject, the substitution of Eliakim for Shebna, to the great event of which this is but one type, the overthrow of ungodliness and the substitution of faithfulness in its place. It was fulfilled in Judas and Matthias, in the Jewish and Christian churches, and will be fulfilled in all nations and in all churches until the end shall come, **for the Lord hath spoken it.**

THE ANNUNCIATION.

Mattins. Gen. iii. 1—16.

See *Sexagesima Sunday*, p. 104.

Evensong.

Isaiah LII.

7

How beautiful. The expression refers to the beautiful appearance of the feet of the holy messenger, springing over the mountains as with the spring of a gazelle, to bring the tidings of redemption to Jerusalem. So eager is he to proclaim God's love that his feet seem to have wings. The passage is evidently chosen for its fitness to describe the message of Gabriel to the blessed Virgin, and through her to Jerusalem and to all the ends of the earth. He is described as proclaiming **peace, good, salvation**, and as summing up all in the announcement **thy God reigneth**. The original (translated by Delitzsch *reigneth royally*) implies the idea that God had seized upon the government, had risen to royal sway. Up to this time, when His people were in bondage, He might seem to have lost His dominion (cf. ch. lxiii. 19), but now His glory shines forth in all its splendour, and as a consequence deliverance is at hand. See the application which S. Paul makes of the words in Rom. x. 15.

8

Thy watchmen. The prophets, who should see the end of the captivity. The prophet foretells that as God had given the nation prophets heretofore, so He would give them still. The words are intended as an encouragement to the people. They should see the restoration not afar off, not delusively, but **eye to eye**, as closely as when one man looks into the face of another. (Num. xiv. 14.)

9

Jerusalem is now called upon to raise her songs of victory—

for she is to rise triumphantly out of her ruins. The Lord has wrought out salvation through judgment. He has **made bare** His arm, like a warrior seeking to fight without encumbrance. It is a **holy arm**, for it acts in holiness,—all its deeds are holy. It has hitherto been concealed, but now is made manifest before all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will confess its mighty power.

This cry is addressed to the returning exiles. They are leaving a land of idols, bearing with them the vessels of the Lord. And they are directed not to take with them any of the evil things of the land of their captivity, as their fathers had done from Egypt. They were to be clean—the Heb. expresses “cleanse yourselves.” It is the duty which lies upon every baptized Christian—“Thou hast been redeemed from sin by the blood of Christ; be holy, keep thyself from the defilements of the world from which thou hast been delivered.”

The exiles are not to go out in haste as from Egypt. There shall be no loitering, and no distrustful hurry. The salvation shall be complete. God shall both go before them, and close the procession. “Those that are in the way of their duty, are under God’s especial protection; and he that believes this will not make haste.” (*M. Henry.*)

S. MARK'S DAY.

Mattins. Is. lxii. 6—end. See p. 68.

There are two or three points which we may note, which indicate why this passage was chosen for to-day.

i. Its connexion with the Epistle for the day. Its opening words, **I** (that is *Christ*) **have set watchmen**, are in close unison with the words “*And he gave some,*” &c.

ii. The images of power and victory in the Lesson are very suited to the work of Christ, as S. Mark sets it before us. See further in the note on the Evening Lesson.

iii. To these points we may add the words in the 10th verse, expressing the same idea as that of the words with which S. Mark’s Gospel abruptly opens.

Evensong.

The thirtieth year, i. e. of his life. It was the age at which, according to the Law, the priest could enter on his functions. Ezekiel was called to be both priest and prophet, therefore at the same age that our Lord was called by the Spirit to His ministry.

The river of Chebar, or Habor (2 Kings xviii. 11), flows into the Euphrates at Carchemish. Here the prophet, removed from the city where God had placed His name, into a land full of

Isaiah LII.

10

11

12

Ezekiel I.

Ezekiel I.

idolatrous temples, yet apparently triumphant over the earth, was sitting among the captives, hopeless and despairing, when he saw visions of God. It was the first time that a revelation was given to one of the chosen people outside the limits of their land, a revelation of the truth that God was not bound to one place nor to visible ordinances. But there was no rough breaking with the past. He to whom this was revealed was no cosmopolitan, he was the strictest of observers of the law. Thus it was that he became the means of showing how the law was not to be abolished by what was passing; there was a spirit and life in it which he partially unfolded, and foretold yet further that it should afterwards appear.

Probably there is a significance in the use of the Name **God** here. He saw in the strange land a vision of the universal Creator and Ruler of all things, and learned to identify with Him the covenant LORD of his own nation¹.

2, 3

The heavens were opened. Cf. Mark i. 10, 11. The prophet gives the dates carefully, and uses the word **expressly**, to shew that the vision was no dream or fancy, but entirely real and objective. "As truly as the summit of any mountain existed though it was lost in mists, so truly did God live though none confessed Him; as truly as the summit of a mountain discovered itself, the mists gradually rolling away, so truly did God unveil Himself to the man himself, forcing him to recognise His presence and to feel that he stood in the most wonderful relation to Him. This revelation could only be described as the coming forth of a Light; it was not the light of an outward sun, it must be the Light of which that which is gathered up in outward suns is the image. It was not a bodily eye which received this light, but it *was* an eye, you could give it no other name. God Himself must have opened it that it might behold Him; in His light it saw light." (*Maurice.*)

4

The form of the vision vouchsafed to him is quite unlike those of the older prophets. It is no longer the simple cloud or flame of fire, but a complexity, corresponding to those truths of God's providence which are now opening before him. There was a whirlwind coming from the north, such as oftentimes sweeps over the vast sand-plains of Mesopotamia (see Layard's *Nineveh*, p. 82), carrying with it a great cloud, of everchanging shape, and of such beauty and radiance as to make its more terrible ministries forgotten. The lonely captive had seen these things in his distress, now comes the revelation that they are verily angels and ministers of God doing His pleasure. The prophet foresaw a storm gathering round the whole horizon ready to fall in its fury upon Palestine. But in the midst of it and above it were signs that God had not utterly forsaken His people; He was

¹ It is probably not without significance either that the names of the two great prophets who belonged to the monarchy, Isaiah and Jeremiah, are compounded of the name *Jehovah*: those of the captivity, Ezekiel and Daniel, of *Elohim*.

there, and not past their finding. For Ezekiel saw **four living creatures** also. He was familiar with stone figures of such form as he describes; he had seen them in the vast Assyrian palaces; they are almost as familiar to us by recent discoveries. The Chaldeans had turned the various forms of animal life into some image of Divine power, they had struggled in their blindness of sight to represent under these forms such broken lights of God as they had found. The prophet had been forced to enquire within himself what they could have signified, in this strange land where was no temple to Jehovah. And now the vision throws light upon the things which he had seen. **Four** (the number of universality) **living creatures** (they are called cherubim in x. 9, and elsewhere) appeared in the midst of the cloud, all bearing **the likeness of a Man**. These creatures, like those to which men were bowing down, themselves had the appearance of a heavenly Man, as though God Himself were bearing their likeness. They had **four faces**, looking towards every quarter of the earth, **four wings** to bear them whither they would. The Chaldean had sought to find God in fashion as a man. The evil imaginings of his heart had indeed made gods many and lords many; every movement of his spirit towards an object of desire, of fear, of hope, had resulted in new idols, none meaningless, but none satisfying, because he had no ideal to rest upon. He continued to add to his Pantheon, but it came no nearer to the filling. But upon the Jewish priest, who had been taught from his youth up to believe in a living God deeper than all the thoughts which were within him, who had made man in His own image, upon him light concerning the idols dawned. Had not the cherubim which overshadowed the mercy-seat borne a witness also, which until now he had not perceived? The reverence for strength and majesty which the Chaldean had expressed by the lion, for usefulness and labour by the ox, for high imagining and searching after heaven by the eagle, for intelligence by the man, all were beginning to find an explanation now. The figures, partly animal¹, as if to testify that they were of the earth, were still human; **they had the likeness of a man**, and they were yet winged as though capable of soaring to distant worlds. The living creatures were all distinct, the appearance of each betokened its kind, each had its place. Yet they were united, they moved in an unswerving course, one spirit held them together, directed their movements, and amid infinite diversity preserved unity. What did the wonderful vision signify to the Israelite but this, that the vast universe of which he was receiving altogether new experience, and which had seemed to him before only a confused storehouse of idols

Ezekiel I.

5

6

10

11

¹ The calf having a divided hoof, was a clean animal: some suppose therefore that the description in verse 7 is intended as a symbol of purity. The Chaldee has "as it were the sole of a round foot," ready to move in any direction.

Ezekiel I.

was in reality governed by One God, whose perfections men in their ignorance tried to make incarnate?

The vision was thus a protest against the material worship. It came on the whirlwind and in the fire, it was glorious and beautiful to look upon, it was not a vast mass of figures, there were four only, and one spirit above guided and moved them. The yearning which had striven in vain to satisfy itself in multiplying images of stone, might be taught to see in this vision what was true in the conceptions, what was righteous in the desires, and how they found their fulfilment and satisfying here. *One Spirit, one alone, and that not springing from earth, but coming from above, borne down upon the whirlwind, this was the very beginning of the vision.* And more,—towering high above the living creatures, borne upon a chariot, and more glorious than the sun in the firmament, was One, whose appearance was as the glory of the Lord. At the sight of Him the prophet fell as one dead. This was the vision of Ezekiel introductory to his message to his nation. It was a vision concerning which he always waited for light, and found it more and more. The light was fully given when God became Man and dwelt among us.

(ver. 28)

It will be seen that I have been unable to follow the Bishop of Lincoln in holding this vision to be a prophecy of the four Gospels. But of course so far as each Gospel brings forward some particular characteristic of our Lord's work, so far we may apply a corresponding part of Ezekiel's vision to it. Christian symbolism commonly represents S. Mark under the form of a winged lion. The figure is familiar to us in the Chaldean sculptures, and the sculptors meant by it to represent strength, majesty, swiftness. This is what *we* mean in our imagery, for these are the characteristics of our Saviour's work which S. Mark brings out. "Strong Son of God" is the quotation which oftenest rises to one's lips in reading this Gospel. Oftentimes it has been pointed out that "straightway" is this Evangelist's favourite word. Twice it is thrice repeated in as many verses. It occurs forty-two times, more than in all the rest of the New Testament together. The Lion of the tribe of Judah is bounding upon His prey, incessantly striking down evil. "S. Mark," says an eloquent prelate," ventures to tell us how the Son of God *felt*, how 'He was moved with compassion;' 'perceived in His spirit;' 'looked round about with anger, being grieved;' 'called unto Him whom He would;' ' marvelled at unbelief;' 'was much displeased;' 'beholding, loved;' 'sighed deeply in His spirit.'

"Nor is this vividness merely the product of an opulent fancy. It is the consistency in details of a picture, whose central figure is 'drawn in lines of fire.' Those rapid and decided touches are inspired by the conviction of the love, the glory, and the strength of 'Jesus, the Son of God.' The canvas may seem to a merely critical eye to be overcrowded, the facts to be hurriedly accumu-

lated. But if there is the hurry, there is also the glow and energy of life. There are words that flash out like the sword of God. High above all towers the one central figure. The natural blindness and littleness of the disciples, nowhere else so fully exhibited, enhances His majesty. They who cried with with fear, when the gust from the mountains which they knew so well swept the waters of the lake on which they had rocked from childhood, bring out the calmness of Him who says to wind and wave, 'Peace, be still!' In no other evangelist does the divine death stand out with greater elevation than in the quiet, compressed, 'tremendous, passionless simplicity' of St Mark's narrative." (Bp. Alexander, *Leading Ideas of the Gospels.*)

Ezekiel I.

S. PHILIP AND S. JAMES.

Mattins. Is. lxi. See p. 66.

Evensong.

The prophet Zechariah had already seen four visions of God (see *S. Peter's Day*), bringing such a revelation of glory that he sank down into a sleep, like that of the apostles at the transfiguration of Christ. He was awoke by the interpreting angel to behold fresh things of God.

Zechariah IV.

The new vision was that of a golden candlestick, like the seven-branched candlestick of the temple, but with three differences. First, it had a **bowl upon the top of it**, to supply the branches with oil. The temple candlestick was filled by the priests. Secondly, it had seven pipes to each of the seven lamps, forty-nine therefore in all. And thirdly, it had two olive-trees whereby an unfailling supply of oil to the bowl was secured.

The prophet seeks an explanation of all these things, and is gently reproved for his want of understanding. But when the explanation seems about to be given, the angel speaks words for Zerubbabel, of which we do not at first sight discern the bearing. They have this object,—they tell him, in reference to his work, what is the source of his strength and success. He will prosper, not by human strength, but through the Spirit of God.

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That the prophet caught a portion of the explanation from these words, is clear from the fact that he no longer questioned concerning the whole, but only concerning the olive-trees (ver. 12).

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The candlestick was a symbol of the Jewish church in its outward organization. It contained seven burning lamps representing the knowledge of God given to it that it might send forth light into the darkness of an estranged world. As the disciples of Christ were to let their lamps burn before men (Matt. v. 16; Phil. ii. 15), so was the church of the Old Testament also. The lamps received their power to burn from the oil, a symbol of the Spirit of God indwelling in the Church to give it life and

Zechariah
IV.

power. The candlestick which Zechariah saw was fed, not by might nor by power of man, but from the bowl, which sent the oil down from above, and would not suffer the light to wax dim. The symbol therefore reminded Zerubbabel what the calling of Israel was, viz. to be the enlightener of the world, and wherein its strength lay, viz. in dependence upon God's Spirit. He is told that the **great mountain**, the opposition of the world, which vaunts itself as if it were omnipotent, shall be levelled to a **plain**, and that he who has begun the temple shall bring forth the **headstone** of completion amidst the **shoutings** of the people, crying, **Grace, grace unto it**, i.e. "May it stand for ever, blessed with the blessing of God." And this completion shall be an earnest of yet greater blessings. Thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me.

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10 **For who, &c.**, i.e. no one has. No one who hopes to accomplish anything great despises small things. The whole period from Zerubbabel to the coming of Christ was a day of small things; everything which was done for the worship of God seemed insignificant. But, says the prophet, if they look upon it all in the light of obedience to God's will, He will look with joy upon the work of Zerubbabel. The latter part of the verse should be rendered, *For they shall joyfully look upon the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, those seven. They are the eyes, &c.* The seven eyes of God are of course the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit which shine upon in order to bless; the promise therefore is that they shall bless Zerubbabel during the course of his work.

All this, it is clear to us, must lose its meaning unless we regard it as fulfilled in the church of Christ. His Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost to animate the builders of His spiritual temple, and to abide in that temple for ever. Before Him mountains became plains, heathens became Christians, and when His kingdom shall at the last have put down all opposition, the shoutings of the angels will declare the victory. Meanwhile, God keep us from despising small things; no work that is done for the love of Him can be small, His eyes sweep over the whole earth to bless everything which His faithful children do.

The prophet sought for explanation on one topic, namely, the two olive-trees, and was told that they were the two anointed ones. Many interpreters take these to be the Jews and Gentiles, but this destroys the significance of the symbols; for how could the Jews and Gentiles supply grace to the church? The meaning must be that the gifts of the Lord were conveyed to His church by two media anointed with oil. They were the priesthood and the civil government represented by Joshua and Zerubbabel, and they prefigure in the Christian church the priesthood and the monarchy of Christ.

S. BARNABAS' DAY.

Mattins.

This blessing was apparently spoken by Moses, as soon as he received notice of his approaching death, and just before ascending Mount Nebo. It is characterized throughout by a tone of joy and hope. In the preceding chapter, "The Song of Moses," he 'has uttered his last earnest and sad warnings, foretelling what shall surely be the end of apostasy from God. But it would be unfitting that His last words should be words of terror. Had not God brought the people safely to the dwelling-place that He had promised them in spite of their misdeeds? It was an earnest that His love should not fail. There *must* be a grand future for a nation which had been so favoured as this.

The terms in which the blessing of the tribes is expressed, bear the proof with them that the blessing was a spiritual one. Except to the seed of Israel who were faithful to their calling the words had no adequate fulfilment. Those who accepted Christ for their King, and for the fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers, reaped the fulness of the blessing of their lawgiver. The chapter before us is chosen for to-day, because it contains a glorious blessing upon the Levites, and we have in the case of Barnabas, the faithful Levite, one instance of the entire fulfilment of that blessing.

The opening words depict the elevation of Israel to be the nation of God, and shew that it was glorious in *origin*, in *nature*, in *final purpose*. First in origin. The Lord appeared in majesty at Sinai to give the people their law and become their King. See on Habakkuk iii. 3, 4, p. 428. **Ten thousands of saints,** angels. Cf. Jude 14; Dan. vii. 10; Acts vii. 53.

A fiery law. There is some uncertainty as to the meaning of the original. Probably the meaning really is "lightning flashes." (So Wordsworth and Keil, and see on Hab. iii. 4.)

He loved the people. There is no question, I believe, that this does not represent the force of the Hebrew, which signifies "Yea, He loveth all nations." The dying lawgiver looks forth into futurity, and sees the love of God towards all the creatures of His hand, no longer hidden, but proclaimed to them all. The mention of the heavenly saints leads on to the declaration that the Lord embraces all earthly creatures who give Him their love. Cf. Acts xv. 17, and Deut. xxxii. 43. (The change from the third person to the second, **All His saints are in thy hand**, sounds a very harsh construction in English, but is not uncommon in Hebrew.) **Sat down at thy feet**, i.e. as ministers and learners of His will.

Moses commanded us, &c. Instead of saying "God gave Israel a law through me," he personates the listening nation, identifying himself with it, because he would have the people

Deut.
XXXIII.

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Deut.
XXXIII.

adopt his very words, and because what God gave was binding upon him as upon all the rest. Cf. Hab. iii. 19.

The inheritance was the Law, the national possession and privilege.

5 **He**, the Lord. Ex. xv. 18; Deut. xxxii. 15.

Jeshurun, i.e. "Righteous nation." See on Is. xlv. 2, p. 52.

Were gathered together, as His subjects waiting for His command, at Sinai.

6 The blessings of the tribes begin with Reuben, because he was the firstborn son. **Let Reuben live, and not die**, as he might have died for his sin (Gen. xlix. 3), but God had mercy on him. **Let not his men be few**. They had decreased since the last census. Moses therefore prays that the tribe may not perish out of the land, and at the same time implies an exhortation to walk warily. For it will be seen, on looking at the whole chapter, that Simeon is fallen out altogether, and not named. Simeon was next to Reuben in age. His omission must not lead us to conclude that he was left without a blessing, for he is included doubtless in the general blessing in verses 1 and 29. Cf. Rev. vii. 7, where his restoration is shewn to us.

7 The blessing of Judah is founded upon that of Jacob (Gen. xlix. 10), and is a prayer that as Judah was to lead the van in the march of conquest, so he might have a prosperous return to his people when the war was over. It is also a prayer, therefore, for the victory of Christ's kingdom, in the mouth of those who believe that Christ was the Flower of Judah.

8 In the last words of Jacob, Levi had been coupled with Simeon in words of stern reproof, "I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel." But Levi in the wilderness had been zealous for God and His honour, and the judgment had been turned into a blessing. The tribe received the honour of serving the Lord in His Tabernacle, consequently the words of Moses here speak nothing but blessing.

Thy Thummim and thy Urim, i.e. "*Thy truth and Thy Light*." What was the precise manner of the revelation of God's will in the Urim and Thummim we cannot discuss here. We know from Ex. xxviii. 29, 30, that there were twelve gems inserted in the High Priest's breastplate, and that he was bidden to consult these when he sought to know God's will. The reader will find an interesting examination of the question in Smith's Dictionary ("Urim and Thummim"). But whatever was the precise character of the mode of revelation, the possession of it was a pledge that the Lord would give His people light and holiness, and the preservation of the pledge was entrusted to the tribe of Levi. Moses prays that it may remain thus; and following the analogy which we trace all through, we find here a prayer on behalf of the church of Christ that the "priest's lips should keep knowledge," that the holy things ministered by their hands, the mysteries of the word and sacraments, may be

filled with life and grace, that God will cause His Holy Spirit to shine upon them, so that they may reflect as in a mirror His Will and His Love. (See Bp. Wordsworth's admirable note on Ex. xxviii. 30.)

Deut.
XXXIII.

At Massah and Meribah it was primarily the people who strove with Moses and Aaron, and thereby tempted God, but God turned this into a means of proving the heads and leaders of the nation, and trying their faith. In this trial Levi proved himself a holy one, rising up in defence of the honour of the Lord, and keeping His covenant even to the denial of kindred. See Ex. xxxii. 26—29; and cf. Matt. x. 37; xix. 29; Luke xiv. 26.

9

Cf. Lev. x. 11; Malachi ii. 7; Ezek. xlv. 23. When Barnabas therefore, as we are told in the Second Lesson, separated himself from his unbelieving kindred, and brought **his substance, the work of his hands**, to the Apostles' feet, he was realizing to the full the blessing pronounced upon his tribe; he was the true and faithful Levite; his service was accepted, and no weapon forged against him or against such as he can prosper.

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Evensong.

The prophecy of Nahum is directed against Nineveh. The preaching of Jonah had led the people to repentance, and averted the destruction of their city for more than 100 years. But they had fallen back into ungodliness, cruelty, profanity, and now Nahum rises to renew the cry of vengeance. The city at the time when he wrote was still in the height of its power, oppressing the nations, and apparently already afflicting Judah. In all probability the prophet was contemporaneous with king Hezekiah.

Nahum I.

The burden of Nineveh. The word "burden" is only used of heavy and awful announcements. We shall see indeed, in reading the chapter, that it is also full of comfort to the afflicted. For the denunciations are directed against the guilty city on the ground that it has oppressed the nations, the judgment upon it will be an act of mercy to all God's afflicted ones. Even so the destruction of the sins which are our enemies is our deliverance and consolation. The very name of the prophet reminds us of this, and marks a fitness for the festival of "The son of consolation,"—**Nahum** "full of exceeding comfort."

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Elkoshite probably means "of Elkosh," a little village in Galilee.

The opening words form a magnificent and stately poem, based upon the revelation of God to Moses in the clefts of Horeb (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7), but especially dwelling on the truth that He is a God of vengeance against sin, His very love is a fire which burns up iniquity.

2—6

After the declaration of God's wrath against sin, the prophet

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Nahum I. suddenly cries **The Lord is good**, His goodness being shewn in the manifestation of His wrath. We have had just before a question asked, **Who can stand before His indignation?** and here we have an answer. Not those who trust in their own goodness, but those who trust in Him. **He knoweth them**, and as He sweeps along in a tempest of wrath and fury, He keepeth them that not a hair of their head perisheth.

8 There is a terrible force in the use of the word **thereof** here; it refers back to the over-running flood, and signifies that this particular place is the very object against which the fierce flood is directed and for which it was set flowing. The **place** is of course Nineveh; although it is not yet named except in the title, it is to come to utter extinction, and darkness is to cover it.

9 Probably the first clause should be translated *What think ye concerning the Lord?* It is addressed apparently to the people of Judah with a view of comforting the anxious minds which might have doubted the power of God to effect a complete deliverance. The prophet bids such altogether to lay their fears aside.

10 **While they be folden together as thorns**, i. e. interlaced and twisted so as to tear anyone who would attempt to interfere with them. (Cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7; Micah vii. 4.) But God will laugh to scorn their fancied security; the words that follow are prophetic of the manner in which Nineveh shall fall. There is some doubt whether the account of the fall of Sardanapalus (given by Diodorus Siculus) is not legendary. Dr Pusey supposes that the army of Sennacherib may have perished during a drunken carousal. Drunkenness, as we know from many sources, was a special vice of the Assyrians.

11 **One come out of thee.** Sennacherib out of Nineveh (2 Kings xviii.).

12 **Though they be quiet, and likewise many**, should be translated *Though they be unconsumed, and therefore many.* Their unimpaired numbers and undiminished strength shall not save them, they shall be mown down like the dry grass before the scythe. It reminds us of Alaric's stern sentence to the desperate Romans, "The thicker the hay, the easier to mow it." The latter part of the verse is again addressed to Judah, and in ver. 14 the address returns once more to Assyria. There is a distinction in the Hebrew not expressible in English. Israel is addressed in the feminine, Assyria in the masculine.

14 **No more of thy name be sown.** The Assyrian line was absolutely to cease, a prophecy literally fulfilled when Nineveh fell. Assurbanipal, the son of Esarhaddon and grandson of Sennacherib, was the last king. Probably he was already born when the prophet wrote. **I will make thy grave**, properly, "I will make it *there*," i. e. in the house of thy gods, literally fulfilled in the case of Sennacherib (Is. xxxvii. 39). He perished where he hoped for aid (cf. Ezek. xxxii. 23).

The **good tidings** are of course those of the deliverance of Israel. In a yet higher sense they were the tidings spoken by the Son of consolation when He went forth to proclaim the truth which should make His nation free. Whilst the tramp of the Romans was already heard came the voice to Israel, **Oh! Judah! keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows**, for "the prince of this world is cast out," thy King is ascended into heaven, and all who trust in Him shall ascend with Him, and no enemy shall be able to do them violence.

Nahum I.
15

S. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S DAY.

Mattins.

Mal. iii. 1—7. See on *Twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity*, p. 443.

Evensong.

Mal. iv. See as above.

S. PETER'S DAY.

Mattins.

The present Lesson possesses as striking a fitness for to-day's festival as does the call of Jeremiah for that of the Conversion of S. Paul. We have here the mission of Ezekiel to the house of *Israel*.

Ezek. III.

My words. All, and only, that which God spake to him (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 13). The prophet is told that his work will be a hard, and at first sight a forbidding one; he will experience opposition and failure; the people will not hearken to God, nor will they hearken to His prophet. We are reminded of the words of our Lord, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John xv. 20.)

Ezekiel, it would seem, was naturally timorous, but God tells him that He has endowed him with firmness. He must put on courage, remembering whose message it is which he bears. The more impudent the wicked are, the more resolutely must he and all ministers speak. (Job xvii. 8.) "When vice is daring, let not virtue be sneaking; when God has work to do. He will spirit men for it, and give them strength according to the day." (*M. Henry*.)

Took me up: *lifted me up in soul*. In this state he heard a rushing sound declaring that the glory of the Lord is blessed, that glory which he had seen above the firmament (i. 26—28). It was blessed **from its place** in heaven; it was now on its way to the earth. Probably we are to consider this as the endowment of Ezekiel with supernatural strength. A marvellous prefigurement of Pentecost, where the sound of a rushing, mighty wind, and the tongues of fire which gave the Apostles grace to sing God's praise, were the instruments of turning the vacillating

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Ezek. III. Peter into a bold and unflinching preacher to his nation. (Acts ii. 14; iii. 12; iv. 8, 13, 19, 23—31; v. 19—21, 29, 42.)

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The description here will apply equally both to the Prophet and to the Apostle. Each was lifted up by the Spirit, and carried forward to his work, each went in the bitterness and the heat of spirit, which must be the lot of all ministers who have to preach to the hardhearted; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon them, because they knew that He had promised His blessing at the last.

Evensong.

Zech. III.

He, i.e. God. Throughout God shews the prophet visions, and an angel interprets them (see Dan. x. 10). The first vision in this chapter is that of Joshua the High Priest (see Hag. i. 1) about to supplicate God for his nation. Satan stands at his right hand, the place of an accuser (Ps. cix. 6). It seems clear to me that this is the passage referred to in Jude 8, 9. There we are told that Satan and Michael disputed about the body of Moses, by which apparently is signified the Jewish church, as the Christian church is called the body of Christ (see 2 Mac. xv. 12, and cf. Hammond's Annotations on St Jude, p. 851). Satan's opponent here is called, first "the angel of the Lord" and then "the Lord," and I have given my reasons elsewhere for identifying S. Michael with him; (see on Dan. x. S. Michael's Day). Satan is now opposing Joshua on the ground that he is laden with his own and the people's sins, and therefore has no right to stand before the Lord; but the Lord rebukes the accusation on the ground, not that the High Priest is innocent, but that He has chosen Jerusalem. If the High Priest's sinful nature had been sufficient to cause his deposition, the office must have ceased altogether, because all men sin. But he has been saved from the captivity as a brand from the fire, he, and all the nation concentrated in him. This, therefore, is a token of the love of the Lord. Sin brought the nation into exile, but that love brought it back, and so testified that it was not cast off.

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After the repulse of the accuser, Joshua is cleansed from his guilt (cf. Is. iv. 4; lxiv. 6; Rev. iii. 4; vii. 13, 14). The figure under which the cleansing is expressed indicates at the same time the sovereign grace of God. He commands the angels who serve Him to take off the filthy garments, and declares to Joshua the forgiveness of his sin. (Cf. Luke xv. 22.) The Hebrew word translated **change of raiment** signifies costly robes such as were only worn on festal occasions. They who are washed in the blood of Christ are sanctified and glorified as well.

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At this moment the prophet feels moved to utter the prayer, and the answering of the prayer implies that it was not super-

fluous, but was well-pleasing. We may call it a layman's prayer, a prayer that the Lord will give to His church a faithful priesthood, for Zechariah asked that the distinctive dress of the priest might be put on Joshua's head, that he might be qualified to accomplish the expiation of the people. The angel of the Lord standing by when the prayer was granted signifies that it is the power of Christ which is effectual in the ministers of the church.

Then follows a prophetic address to Joshua, in which the angel of the Lord protests (rather *testifies*) to Joshua what is the significance of his office in the kingdom of God. If all through this chapter we bear in mind that the angel of the Lord is supreme and Joshua His servant, we shall find the analogy between the Jewish priest and S. Peter most close, both in what has preceded and in what follows. As Satan opposed the one, so did he the other, and only the power of Christ was able to deliver him, to convert him that he might strengthen his brethren (see Luke xxii. 31, 32; Mark viii. 33).

The address of the angel was an address to the whole Jewish priesthood, as is evident from the context. Even so the Lord's charge to S. Peter was a charge to all the Apostles, and to all Bishops and Pastors to the end of the world. Therefore says our church at the Consecration of a Bishop, "Be to the flock of Christ a shepherd, not a wolf; feed them, devour them not. Hold up the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring again the outcasts, seek the lost. Be so merciful, that you be not too remiss; so minister discipline, that you forget not mercy: that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear you may receive the never-fading crown of glory."

There is one sentence in this verse which is somewhat difficult, **I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.** The Hebrew word translated "places to walk" is an unusual one, and its precise meaning uncertain. The LXX. and Vulgate render it "those that walk," the sense being, I will give thee angels to carry thy prayers to the Lord, and bring back blessings from Him. Another interpretation (Calvin, Wordsworth, Keil) is, "I will give thee walks," i.e. free access among the angels to Myself. This will have reference to the fact that hitherto the High Priest could only enter the Holy of Holies once a year, whereas now God promises that faithfulness shall be rewarded with free and unlimited access to Him, and points forward to the time when Old Testament restrictions shall be done away. This seems on the whole to suit the context best, and we adopt it.

Having given this promise of free communion with Himself, the angel of the Lord calls upon Joshua and his fellows (for, as we have said, the promise is to Joshua only as the representative of the whole Jewish priesthood) to hear another announcement. This announcement begins with the words, **For they are men to be wondered at.** The Hebrew word

Zech. III.

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Zech. III.

translated *for* is often used as an asseveration *Verily*, and should be so rendered here. The wonder or miracle which is seen in them is that they have been laden with guilt and now are absolved by the grace of God, as the deliverance from exile shews. And even this marvel of grace is in itself a promise of yet greater wonder to come, the redemption of mankind by the Eternal Priest. This is expressed by the words which follow, **I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.** This title of our Lord was given originally by Isaiah (xi. 1, 2; liii. 2); it was taken up by Jeremiah (xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15). It seems here to be used with a twofold meaning, first, it indicates the continuance of the house of David, and therefore the acceptance of Zerubbabel before God, and secondly, the gift of *righteousness* to the nation. The former idea is that prominent in Isaiah, the latter in Jeremiah.

9 But the image is immediately quitted for another, that of the **Stone**. Many expositors take this stone to signify Christ, others suppose it to be the nation and kingdom of God. We incline to the former view, as evidently did those who appointed the present Lesson for this day. Christ is the corner stone, the rock on which the church is built. He is the stone laid before Joshua and his fellows, before the Christian Apostles, the foundation on which they were to build up the spiritual temple with the living stones, which are all true believers. The metaphor seems to be used here in contrast to the great mountain of the world spoken of in chap. iv. 7; *that* mountain is to become a plain, *this* stone is to grow until it fill the whole earth (Dan. ii. 35).

It is not quite clear whether there are seven eyes graven on the stone, or whether there are seven eyes looking upon the stone, but we believe it is the latter (see iv. 10, p. 462). In this case the plain meaning will be that the eyes of God will be directed upon Christ, and the parallel passage will be "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Cf. Is. xlii. 1.) Its being engraved into beauty will signify the high exaltation which His manhood received through His resurrection and ascension. Though His visage was more marred than any man's, He is fairer than the children of men, God has blessed Him for ever. And the sufficiency of His atoning work is expressed in the words which follow: **I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.** His atonement will not have to be continually repeated like that of the Levitical priesthood, the day of Calvary will complete the work for ever. (Cf. xiii. 1.)

10 The concluding words express the repose, the peace and the prosperity which will follow the forgiveness of sins.

S. JAMES THE APOSTLE.

Mattins.

The Moabites had been subdued by David (2 Sam. viii. 2), and had remained tributary to the kingdom of Israel, but now had allied with some other eastern tribes (2 Chron. xx.), and thrown off the yoke. The historian having mentioned the fact, goes on to explain why Ahaziah could not bring them back; he was disabled by a fall. The **lattice** was probably a balcony in an upper window.

2 Kings I.

Baal-zebul means Baal (Lord) of flies, the significance of which is doubtful. Many suppose that the original word was Baalzebul, i.e. Lord of the heavenly habitations, and that the Jews distorted it into the present form to express their contempt; others think (especially as Ahaziah would hardly speak in scorn of a God that he was about to consult) that Baal was worshipped at Ekron with special reference to his fly-destroying power (just as one reads of Notre Dame des Victoires, de Bon Secours, &c.), that this particular modification differentiated his shrine at Ekron.

2

The angel of the Lord, who effects all manifestations of the invisible God to the covenant people.

3

The consultation of a false god was not merely a transgression of the law, but a practical rejection of the Lord. But it will be with us all as it was with Ahaziah, God is angry with us if we do not ask of Him. If we would obtain His blessing, we must be instant (Matt. xv. 26, 27), earnest (Luke xi. 5), importunate (Luke xviii. 5). Ahaziah was punished with death because he did not pray to God. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" (Jonah ii. 8).

4

The messengers were awe-stricken at the appearance of the unknown Elijah; they saw at once the importance of what he said, and turned back to their master, who immediately recognized by their description the stern reprovor of his father Ahab. He sent for him, plainly with the intention of killing him.

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What the captain had done to deserve death we are not distinctly told. Either he thought Elijah no true prophet, in which case the expression "Thou man of God," especially as addressed to one who had been so prominent and had wrought so many miracles, was an insult to the Lord, or he believed in Elijah's divine mission and yet profanely endeavoured to arrest him. In either case his judgment was just. The king in audacious or blind obstinacy sent another, whose offence was yet more heinous, he was more peremptory than his predecessor, while he had yet that predecessor's fate before his eyes.

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The third captain, wiser than his predecessors, humbly entreats for grace, and at once receives it; a proof that even the stern prophet would fain save and not destroy. That Elijah's

13

2 Kings I.

act was not one dictated by insulted personal feeling, but a righteous act of vengeance, is clear from the statement that the fire of God came at his calling. He was a faithful representative of the Spirit of the Lord. Dr Stanley's expression that our Lord repudiated his act with indignation is certainly therefore misleading (ii. 290). The fault was in the two disciples who would fain have changed the Gospel into the Law again, and turned back the mercy of God. They did not understand that their Master came to blot out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and to bring in a ministry of peace.

Second
Lesson.
Luke IX.
51—56.

Evensong.

Jer. XXVI.

9 The present passage in the life of Jeremiah took place soon
after the accession of King Jehoiakim. He had declared that
the Temple should fall and the city be made desolate if the
11 people repented not, whereupon prophets, priests, and people
clamoured for his death, misrepresenting his words as if he had
been a traitor, and ignoring the fact that he had declared the
14 judgment to be contingent on their impenitence. He told them
that he was willing to die rather than to be unfaithful to the
15 Lord who had sent him to warn them, but that if they should
dare to put him to death they would only bring swift destruction
upon themselves.

This Lesson, we need hardly say, is chosen on account of the resemblance between the case of the prophet and that of S. James the Apostle. We have no record of his preaching in the Acts of the Apostles, but we have no doubt that he who was named "Boanerges" by the Saviour for his bold and uncompromising character, must have rebuked vice as boldly as his brother, the beloved disciple, denounced the heresies and immoralities of later days. The Apostles, one and all, had received from their Lord the announcement of the fall of the Temple and the destruction of the city; S. James was one of the four who had heard Him describe the event in detail (Mark xiii. 3). And what they had thus heard in the ear they went forth after His ascension and proclaimed upon the house-tops. The announcement was received by the Jews with an anger like that of their fathers at the preaching of Jeremiah. Stephen was slain by them for announcing the same truth, and we are expressly told that when the ungodly king Herod put forth his hand and killed James with the sword (evidently on some similar ground), *it pleased the people*. But the Lord had sent him to preach, and the Jews had Jeremiah's words before them to warn them. What the prophet had spoken to their fathers, his book still said to them, "Know ye for certain that ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof."

"Shall I take it ill of a man that tells me of my danger,

while I have an opportunity of avoiding it, and not rather return him thanks for it, as the greatest kindness he could do me? Those that persecute God's ministers, hurt not them so much as themselves." (*M. Henry.*)

Jer. XXVI.

S. BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE.

Mattins. Gen. xxviii. 10—18.

See p. 124. All that need be added to the Commentary there is, that Nathanael is in all probability the same as Bartholomew.

Evensong.

Some commentators take the **Prophet** of whom Moses here speaks to be the whole order and course of the prophets, leading up to Him who is *the* Prophet, even Christ; others hold that it refers to Christ exclusively. The latter was the view of Athanasius and Augustine in ancient times, and of Luther in more modern days. The former was the view of Origen, Calvin, Grotius, and others.

Deut.
XVIII.
15

The argument in favour of the former view is summed up convincingly by Mr Espin. The passage occurs in the midst of regulations concerning the *orders* of rulers by which the people were to be governed as soon as they entered Canaan. They are forbidden in the preceding verses to resort to magic or sooth-saying, on the ground that God will give them all needful instruction. To point them *merely* to the distant future would be not to the purpose. (*See Speaker's Commentary*, I. 869.)

Adopting therefore the view that Moses was promising his people guidance and instruction after he was gone from them, and giving them an assurance that they should not be left in darkness, we must interpret this as a promise, *first*, that an Order of Prophets should arise and continue as long as Israel remained a nation. But remembering also that the promise was given by inspiration of God, we must also recognize the truth that the promise met a fulfilment higher than even Moses thought of. At the time of our Lord's coming the Jews were interpreting the verse of a Prophet who was to come. John i. 21; iv. 25. It is quoted by New Testament writers as accepted by the Jews in this sense, and Christ is pressed upon the Jews on this ground, amongst others, that he fulfils the description given by Moses. (Acts iii. 22; vii. 37.) And the voice of God at the Transfiguration ratified the expectation, and by adopting the words **unto Him shall ye hearken**, declared that the Prophet was come. Matt. xvii. 5.

This verse confirms the view taken above, inasmuch as it supplies the reason why a prophet was needed. The people had entreated for one to stand between them and God, a Mediator

16

Deut.
XVIII.

and Interpreter, so that there should be no need of the terrors of Sinai to make God's will known to them, nor of seeking after heathen superstitions. The indignant rebuke of Elijah was called forth because Ahaziah sent to Baal-zebub, as if God had not raised up prophets in the midst of Israel. Then comes a warning on the part of Moses against false prophets, and he gives a test by which to try the false prophets. None can make a mistake, and yet claim supernatural guidance. It will be a proof of presumption if he profess to be inspired, while his predictions fail.

The chapter is chosen for to-day for this reason, that Nathanael (whom we have already identified with Bartholomew) was first attracted to Christ by the repetition of this prophecy of Moses. "We have found him," said Philip, "of whom Moses and the prophets did write," evidently referring to the prophecy before us. And when Nathanael hesitated on the ground that the supposed prophet came from Nazareth, Philip offered him Moses' test. "Come and see," he said. And when he came, our Saviour gave him a proof that He had verily prophetic power. He referred him to something which had taken place under the fig-tree, something known only to himself and God, probably a prayer that the promised Messiah, the King of Israel, might speedily appear. It was the application of this test which converted Nathanael. He believed at once, thankfully and joyously.

S. MATTHEW'S DAY.

Mattins.

1 Kings
XIX. 15

Elijah receives this command in the cave at Mount Horeb (see on *Eleventh Sunday after Trinity*). He had complained that his work was all thrown away, that the people were no better for it, and that he was the only man left who believed in God. The answer to this was the command to return, not indeed direct to the kingdom of Israel whence he had come, but to the wilderness of Damascus; that is by the road which ran to the east of the Jordan. He was then to anoint Hazael, the savage captain of the king of Syria, to be king in his master's place. He was also to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha to be prophet in his own place. By these the work of God in the destruction of idolatry was to be carried on. Elijah's work, as far as it was seen, was drawing near the end, yet none of it was to be lost; it would be carried on through Elisha, and the master's influence would always remain upon the disciple. Now we have already seen (Ascension Day, Evening Lesson) that the ascension of Elijah and his casting his mantle on Elisha was a figure of the Ascension of our Lord. And therefore the present commission to Elijah to do works by the hand of others is a shadow of the working of Christ in his Apostles; and this is one reason for the choice of the present Lesson for S. Matthew's day.

Moreover, let it be remembered that though Elijah was directed to anoint Hazael and Jehu, the actual fulfilment of the direction was carried out by other hands. Elisha anointed Hazael, and an emissary from him anointed Jehu. All this shews that Elijah's work was still transmitted onwards, from one generation of prophets to another; a type of the endless work of Him who by His Church is with us always even to the end of the world.

1 Kings
XIX.

The prophet is here taught further, that whilst the work of destruction of evil shall go on, there is also a remnant of good, which shall be the nucleus of the true Israel. The 7000, unknown to man, whom God saw that they had not bowed the knee to Baal, were like those who in the midst of apostate Israel afterwards were prepared to eternal life, and were baptized by the Apostles on the day of Pentecost as the first fruits of the Christian Church. They are, praise be to God, the beacon-light to all faithful ministers ever since who sorrow for the iniquities which are done around them, and are many a time tempted to despair. The Lord knoweth them that are His, where our dim eyes see them not.

18

There are in this loud stemming tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat¹.

Twelve yoke of oxen, &c. That is, there were twelve ploughs at work, one following the other, as is usual in Syria. Elisha as the master came last with his team, which shews that, like S. Matthew, he was a man of substance. Elijah, by casting his mantle upon him, indicated that he was investing him with the prophetic office. It was like our Saviour's call to S. Matthew, "Follow me." (Matt. ix. 9.)

19

The prophet's answer plainly signifies, "Go back, if thou wilt; I have no desire to constrain thee. Give me thy free service or none." Cf. Matt. viii. 21, 22; Luke ix. 61; xiv. 26; all which passages are plainly references of our Lord to the present narrative.

20

Elisha apparently felt the force of the prophet's gentle rebuke. He did not go back to kiss his father and mother, and so run the risk of being detained by their solicitations. He went back to his team, made a sacrificial feast for himself and the prophet and his servants, dressing it with fire from the wood of his plough, and shewing thereby that when God called he was ready to obey, and that with all cheerfulness. The farewell feast, as well as the entire surrender of all earthly things, both remind us of S. Matthew, and may have operated on his mind as an example, when the Saviour called him.

¹ *Christian Year.* S. Matthew's Day

Evensong.**1 Chron.
XXIX.**

This Lesson is another beautiful instance of self-denial and sacrifice of worldly substance for the glory of God and the good of His Church.

1 **The palace.** The Hebrew word is only used here and in Esther and Nehemiah. And there is another Hebrew word in the chapter only found in those books. These things prove the late authorship of the book (see p. 290).

2 **Stones to be set,** rather, of which a beautiful cement may be made.

8 **Jehiel** was the Levite treasurer (xxvi. 21).
On the rest of the lesson see p. 299.

S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

Mattins.

Gen. xxxii. See on p. 125.

Evensong.**Dan. X.**

Seventy-two years had passed (see ver. 1) since Daniel had been brought into the court of Nebuchadnezzar. His people had returned to Jerusalem. God had given him proof upon proof of His goodness through the manifold changes of the world which he had seen. It was now the Passover month Abib, the holy feast was just over; the soul of the aged prophet was sad within him, yet was probably kindled to greater earnestness of prayer by the memory of the feast. Suddenly he saw the vision which is now before us. Cf. Rev. i. 10.

5 **Uphaz; Ophir. Beryl; topaz.** A comparison of this and the following verse with Rev. i. 13—15 leads to the undoubted conclusion that this is a vision of Christ.

7 Cf. Acts ix. 7.

8 Cf. Rev. i. 17; Ezek. i. 28; and see on Is. vi. 5, p. 36.

10 The Vision of the Son of God in His majesty has appeared, now a **hand** touches the prophet to reassure him. The speaker appears to be not the Mighty One, but an Angel, probably Gabriel. Ch. ix. 21; viii. 17. He tells him that he has been sent to interpret the great Vision to him.

12 God watches and marks every movement of the soul towards Himself. See on ix. 23, p. 149. On the present occasion, as the context shews, Daniel had been praying for the safe restoration of his people to their home, and their prosperous journey across the desert. But there had come to him for a while a sense of desolation and desertion. Whether by reason of some untoward news, or of a failing of revelation to his spirit, he remained, he tells us, for three weeks in sorrow and anguish of spirit. See verses 2 and 3 of this chapter. Now he is told

the reason. The **prince of Persia** has been withstanding the angel during these three weeks. What are we to make of this? It is clear that we are to understand some *supernatural* contest which was going on, some spiritual power militant against the Church. Daniel had not seen or known of it, but he was sorely troubled by the visible results of it, whatever they were. On one side then had been Gabriel, on the other "the prince of Persia." Is it not clear that the latter is an angel? It might be thought a heathen way of talking if I called him the *genius* of the kingdom, yet it would not, I believe, express other than a true idea. I do not see how to avoid the conclusion that it signifies an angel who is guiding the destinies of the kingdom. An angel had charge of the healing waters of Bethesda, and of the Sun and Four Winds, and it does not seem unreasonable to accept the idea of tutelary angels of kingdoms. But of what character then is this angel? For he withstood Gabriel for a while. I cannot conclude from that statement that he is a messenger from Satan. May not one suppose that in parts of the angelic world there was a confusion of the understanding, a partial ignorance and blindness? To a Persian, we may well suppose, there might be feelings, not base and malicious, but distrustful and hesitating as to the expediency of suffering the Jews to return. And if Gabriel speaks of the presiding spirit of Persia having this distrust for a while and opposing the Jewish march, is not that according to analogy?

But the angel goes on to tell that **Michael, the chief of the princes** (see margin), came to the help of the Church, and so the good angel remained with the kings of Persia. Thus Daniel learns for his strength and comfort that Michael, i.e. as we have taken it, the Angel of the Lord, is fighting on the people's side, therefore though the contest shall be long, the final issue is not doubtful.

Michael is mentioned here and in the following passages, ver. 21; xii. 1; Jude 9; Rev. xii. 7. I take him to be referred to also in Zech. iii. 1. (See on *S. Peter's Day*, p. 468.)

The passage in the Revelation seems to shew that Michael is a name of Christ, this being His title as King of the angels. There was war between Him and the devil, and it is renewed as often as the devil accuses man as a rebel and God as a tyrant, and as Christ pleads before His Father the blood of reconciliation. This awful contest, which from the beginning till now wages all over the earth and seems sometimes to tear our very selves to pieces, what shall be the end thereof? Let the Epistle of to-day make answer. The causes and the issues are above and beyond *our* reach. There was war *in heaven*, the Dragon fought against Michael, and prevailed not. Satan like lightning fell from heaven.

Again the vision of Christ appears. His majesty strikes

Dan. X.

13

14

16

Dan. X.

18

Daniel dumb, but once more the interpreting angel returns and brings him strength. He foretells that when Persia has disappeared, the prince of Græcia shall come. In the following chapter he tells that this shall lead to yet fiercer persecution of the Church (fulfilled under Antiochus Epiphanes). But though the persecution shall be mighty, your nation, says the Interpreter, shall be kept safe under the guardianship of Michael your prince. This is **noted in the scripture of truth**, in the decrees of God which alter not, the book of life.

S. LUKE THE EVANGELIST.

Mattins.

See p. 64.

Isaiah LV.

More than one instance may be given of the fitness of the present Lesson for S. Luke's day.

1. The healing and restoring power of God is the subject of the whole Lesson. We may compare it with the words of the Collect, "that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine which he taught all the diseases of our soul may be healed."

2. The peculiar characteristics of S. Luke's Gospel are the plenteousness of the Redemption wrought by Christ, His free and overflowing mercy, and the justification of man through faith in Him.

I will venture to quote without comment a few extracts from the Bishop of Derry's *Leading Ideas of the Gospels* (Serm. III. "S. Luke"), and will ask the reader to meditate on this chapter in connexion with them.

"Few words are more familiar to all students than *χάρις* (grace) and *πίστις* (faith); *χάρις* occurs about 146 times in the N.T., only on 21 occasions outside S. Paul's and S. Luke's writings; *πίστις* is found in some 243 places, only 53 times outside S. Paul and S. Luke." (p. 87.)

"In those passages which are peculiar to S. Luke all is Christ's gift. So is it with the lower blessings of healing. Unto many that were blind He gave sight (*ἐχαρίσατο βλέπειν*)." (p. 89.) "The key-note and leading idea of this Gospel is forgiveness. It is the Gospel of free grace, of free and abounding pardon." (pp. 91, 92.)

"All through S. Luke's Gospel the ear can detect rhythmic bursts and choral vibrations." (p. 104.)

"Christ, in S. Luke, meets our misery and greatness, meets our guilt and aspirations, meets the abject things which perhaps we are, and the noble and glorious things which we would be. He meets our sin by the word of forgiveness, by the Parable of Love, by the Anguish in Gethsemane, by Paradise offered to the dying Penitent, by the redeeming death, to lay hold on which is life." (p. 113.)

Evensong.

This book has two titles. It is called in Greek *The Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach* (of whom nothing whatever is known), in Latin *Ecclesiasticus*, because it was early used as a "Church Reading-Book." It was written in the latter part of the 3rd century before Christ, and is of course valuable as giving us an insight into Jewish theology and ethics at that period. Probably the writer was a Jew of Palestine, not of Alexandria, as is sometimes supposed.

In the present chapter the writer speaks on a question which has agitated the minds of men from his day to our own, namely, the sovereign and resistless will of God, viewed along with the free will of man and the use of remedies. Probably there was much fatalism in the world in the writer's time, much despondency and self-introspection. (See article "Ecclesiasticus" in *Bible Dict.* p. 481, col. 2). He meets these things by the praise of the physician's skill, and ascribes that skill to God's sovereign power and to His free gift.

The Lord hath created him. He touches on the connexion between miraculous and natural agencies, and declares that the sweetening of the waters of Marah was a case of the use of a natural agent, extraordinarily blessed, it is true, but blessed in order that we may recognize in all natural agents the hand of God, and a sign of his love to his creatures. The apothecary, in fact, is repeating the healing art of Marah in a thousand cases, and with the selfsame means in reality, namely the power of God granted to him. The healing wood of Marah, and the bark to the ague patient, both come as gifts from the selfsame Hand. From the physician's skill the author turns to the moral and spiritual acts which ought to accompany it. Use the physician's skill, he says, but along with it **pray unto the Lord.** *repent of thy sin,—make an offering of thy substance.* Having done these things, as confessing that the issues of life and death are in the hand of God, then trust thyself with good courage into the hands of the physician.

And the physician also is bidden to pray for a blessing on his skill and attention.

The sermon given in these words on the relation of prayer and natural laws after all contains the substance of what is still our duty. To seek after knowledge, to patiently investigate the works of the Invisible Maker, and leave no means neglected for the discovery of His appointments, and withal to recognize His power over all these things, to commit ourselves and the things around us to His sovereign care—this is what the son of Sirach bids us do,—and who has tried without finding help and comfort?

There are abundant evidences in the Gospel of S. Luke that "the beloved physician" loved his art, and had entered deeply

Eccclus.
XXXVIII.

1—4
5
6, 7
8
9
10
14

Ecclus.
XXXVIII.

into the study of it¹. There are yet plainer proofs that higher far in his conceptions was the desire for the well-being and deliverance of the souls of men, because a life is prepared for them which has no end.

S. SIMON AND S. JUDE.

Mattins.

Isaiah
XXVIII.
9—end.

See *Third Sunday in Advent*, p. 20.

This passage is chosen as the Lesson for to-day for three reasons.

1. It is a prophecy of the "foolishness" of Apostolic preaching, and withal of the success of that preaching.
- 15 2. The terrible warning addressed to those who refuse the Word of God reminds us of the like warning in the Epistle of S. Jude.
- 16 3. The last verse is that on which the beautiful collect of the day is based.

Evensong.

Jeremiah
III. 12

The present message was sent to **the north**, that is to the lands where the ten tribes were in exile, Babylonia and Media.

I will not cause &c. The phrase implies that they shall *no longer* experience the anger of God. But some eminent interpreters render it, "*I will not suffer the sunshine of My countenance to sink from you.*" the image being taken from the sun setting beneath the horizon and leaving the world in darkness.

- 13 Conviction and confession are indispensable for forgiveness.
- Hast scattered** &c. The Israelites had not confined their idolatry to one place, such as Bethel, but worshipped idols of all nations around.

- 14 The interpretation of this verse is not easy. To begin with, there is much doubt as to the meaning of the Hebrew word rendered **I am married**. It is a word used but seldom. The rendering in our Version follows that of the Vulgate, and on the whole seems the preferable one: "Turn to me, for though you have forsaken me and loved other gods, I have made you my bride, and will again receive you as such."

Then what is signified by the numbers, **one** and **two** which follow? Apparently it means that so minute will be God's search, so intense His love, that He will mark every individual that turns to Him. If there be but one in a foreign city, or if it be but two of a single tribe (this is a more correct rendering than family), He would bring them back home. Cf. Deut. xxx. 1—5; Amos ix. 9; Ezek. ix. 4.

¹ See Ep. Alexander as above, pp. 93—97.

Pastors. Rulers like Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, not excluding spiritual guides. See on Ezek. xxxiv. p. 381.

We come here to the passage which led to the choice of this portion of Scripture for to-day's Lesson. Simon is known to us as "the Zealot," and "the Canaanite." The latter word does not mean "inhabitant of Canaan," but is only the Hebrew equivalent of "Zealot." The two words are therefore identical in meaning. There can be no question that this Apostle originally belonged to that faction which was so conspicuous for its fierce advocacy of the Mosaic ritual. When he was converted to the faith of Christ he must have brought all his earnest zeal into the service of Christ. He was as zealous as ever, but it was in God's true cause, not for a decayed and broken system, which was past preservation, and the use of which was ended. (See Gal. iv. 12.)

This is exactly the conversion which is prophesied by Jeremiah. When God shall have visited His people, turned their captivity, given them "pastors according to His heart," then they shall be zealots, but not for empty forms. **They shall say no more, The ark of the Covenant of the Lord.** There had been a time when the Ark was their most sacred, most cherished possession. It was the token of the presence of God among them. And their zeal for it was then holy and approved by God. But a time should come when this token should cease to be, because God had revealed Himself as the Father of all men. It is remarkable that in Ezekiel's great Vision of the spiritual Temple (xl.—xlviii.) there is *no Ark*. For in that Temple the Ark is Christ. He it is who is the channel of all help and salvation from God to man. When Simon the Zealot learned *that* truth, his zeal, we may be sure, burned more brightly than ever it had done. But it was zeal for the true covenant of God, even the Gospel, not for the ark. For that he cared no longer.

And the absence of the Ark would be a boon to him, not a privation. It was because the substance was come, that the shadow had vanished away. Not the ark now, but all Jerusalem, should be called the throne of the Lord. For there, in the mother Church, Christ should be revealed as the King of all the earth, and all nations would look thither for salvation. Ps. lxxxvii. 5; Heb. xii. 22.

Neither shall that be done, rather, *neither shall it* (the ark) *be made any more.* After the removal of the ark and the cessation of the ceremonial observances, the Gentiles were to be admitted to share all the privileges of the Church, and Judah and Israel were to be no longer separated. Amen. We wait for thy lovingkindness, O Lord.

Jeremiah
III.

15

16

17

18

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

Mattins.Wisdom
III.

The beautiful book which bears the title of *The Wisdom of Solomon* is the work of an Alexandrian Jew, who in all probability lived in the second century before Christ. "The theological teaching of the book," says Dr Westcott, "offers the nearest approach to the language and doctrines of Greek philosophy which is found in any Jewish writing up to the time of Philo." The writer, as so many of the great Christian writers of Alexandria afterwards were, is a Platonist, i. e. he has become acquainted with Greek philosophy, and sometimes blended it with his Jewish belief, and sometimes suffered it to modify those beliefs. Thus he seems to hold the eternity of matter, for he speaks of God having by His Almighty power "created the universe out of matter without form" (xi. 17). He believes in the preexistence and transmigration of souls (viii. 20). His teaching concerning the immortality of the soul and the judgment to come is very positive, but there is nothing Messianic in his view of the future; and in this respect he is totally unlike the prophets. He is the first writer who identifies the tempter of Eve with the devil (ii. 24). It will thus be seen that he anticipates in many particulars the teaching of the New Testament. The significance of his personification of Wisdom, carrying on the teaching of the Book of Proverbs (Prov. viii), and leading the way to the revelation of the Word and Wisdom of God in the person of Christ, can only be hinted at here, as our Lessons are not taken from those chapters. (See Dr Westcott's Article in *Bible Dictionary*, III. 1782, col. 1.)

The present chapter speaks of the state of the righteous after death. The writer (apparently alluding to Antiochus Epiphanes) has previously described the wicked as persecuting the righteous even unto death, and as feeling triumphant in their apparent victory. Then he continues, **But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God.** They are not annihilated, nor sent forth to wander, as pale phantoms, in infinite space. He who held them here holds them still, and therefore no harm can touch them. (Cf. Deut. xxxiii. 3.) It has been said that we Christians know no more of the state of the dead than Plato did. And it would be difficult to contradict the statement. The true consolation for mourners, the true faith concerning All Saints is, that the souls of the saints are in the hand of God. Therefore there is no break in their life, in their peace. They are—we know not where, but they are safe with Him. No torment can touch them. The Gospel of Christ gives us the ground for the doctrine which this writer's faith put forth. The souls of the righteous are in joy and felicity, because they

are gone where Christ is; because His death has thrown a light upon their path.

The Saviour hath passed through the portals before thee,
And the lamp of His love is thy light through the gloom.

Their hope. in death. The wicked appear to be triumphing over them. All outward appearances seem against them. They grow weak, sink down, find no help at all. Death claims them and carries them away. But all through the dark hour One is with them whom no eye sees but that of faith. His merciful form bends over them, and their hope grows brightest when the earthly sun goes down.

Received them as a burnt offering. The reader may be reminded of the following passage in Polycarp's prayer at the stake: "I bless Thee that Thou hast counted me worthy of this day and of this hour, that I should have part in the number of Thy witnesses, in the cup of Thy Christ, so to attain to the resurrection of eternal life of soul and body through the incorruptibleness of Thy Holy Spirit. Among these witnesses may I be received before Thee to-day for an acceptable offering according as Thou hast prepared me, and hast manifested beforehand Thy will."

In the time of their visitation, in the hour when Christ shall come to them, in their death. At that moment their glory shall burst forth (1 Cor. xv. 52). They shall not merely rest and lose their pain, but shall expand into intense, conscious, joyous life, as suddenly as sparks catch among the stubble. Matt. xix. 28; 1 Cor. vi. 2.

They that put &c. Prov. xiv. 26; xvi. 3; Jer. xvii. 7. 8; Ps. lv. 22; 1 Pet. v. 7. Two special characteristics of saints are named here. The first is *trust in God*, the second is *faithfulness*, i. e. fidelity. The marginal reading is preferable to that in the text: "Such as be faithful shall abide with Him in love."

Faithfulness is throughout the New Testament constantly put forth as a mark of saints. Eph. i. 1; 1 Tim. vi. 2; Rev. xvii. 14. It is shewn towards God (Matt. xxiv. 45), His word (Jer. xxiii. 28; 2 Cor. ii. 17; iv. 2), His people (3 John 5). It can be shewn by work (2 Chron. xxxiv. 12), by silence (Prov. xi. 13), by reproving (Prov. xxvii. 6); in small things (Luke xvi. 10—12), and in great (2 Kings xii. 15; Neh. xiii. 13; Acts vi. 1—3). And it is attained by union with Christ. See the Evening Second Lesson, ver. 11.

He hath care &c. Rom. viii. 28; Ps. xxxiii. 12; lxx. 4; 1 Pet. i. 4, 5; 2 Pet. i. 10.

Evensong.

The subject of the present Lesson is the confidence of the righteous in the future judgment, contrasted with the confusion of the wicked. Then those who have vaunted themselves proudly

Wisdom
III.

6

7

8

9

Wisdom
V.

Wisdom 1
V.

2 and despised the saints, "making no account of their labours,"
3 shall find the tables turned. The greater part of the chapter
4 is occupied with the description of their utter confusion. They
5 shall bitterly cry out at the sight of the victory of those they
6 had so proudly mocked at, whose life they thought madness,
7 and their death without honour. "While these," they shall say,
8 "have been exalted even unto God, we have wandered into
darkness, no ray of light illumines our path; 'the way of trans-
gressors is hard,' as we have found, it is a way of drought, of
crooked paths, of misery and unquiet. We had this world's
happiness, it is true, outward show and riches, but they are as
vain and as powerless to comfort, as the keel of a ship is to
furrow the waves, or a bird, or an arrow, to leave its mark in
the air that it passes through."

These comparisons meet us in other passages. Job ix. 25,
26; Prov. xxx. 19. There is a celebrated passage in English
Ecclesiastical History which will occur to some readers. When
Paulinus went to Northumbria to preach the Gospel before
king Edwin and his council, a discussion arose upon what he
had preached, "the first recorded Parliamentary debate" one
calls it, and one of the council spoke thus:

"The present life of man, O king, seems to me, in com-
parison of that time which is unknown to us, like to the swift
flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper
in winter, with your commanders and ministers, and a good
fire in the midst, whilst the storms of rain and snow prevail
abroad; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door, and imme-
diately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry
storm, but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately
vanishes out of your sight, into the dark winter from which
he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space,
but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly
ignorant. If, therefore, this new doctrine contains something
more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed." (Bede,
Eccl. Hist. p. 213.)

16

The truth here put forth is, indeed, the special subject of
the present Lesson; the vanity of all earthly things, and the
incompactibility and perfection of the heavenly inheritance.

The "glorious kingdom," the "beautiful crown," draw their
beauty from the Giver; and none shall take them away nor
shall their beauty fade, because it is the arm of the Most High
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